



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 3 – EDUCATION

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2025-2026

Supplementary questions

Portfolio Committee No. 3 – Education

**Education and Early Learning, Western Sydney
(Houssos)**

Hearing: Wednesday 27 August 2025

Answers due by: Responses due by Tuesday 23 September 2025

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2025-2026 SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Questions from Dr Amanda Cohn MLC

Air Quality

- (1) What guidance is currently provided to schools who are seeking to improve classroom ventilation?
(a) When was this guidance updated?

The Department of Education provides support to schools with their specific ventilation requirements through local Asset Management Units.

- (2) Where portable air purifiers are provided for classroom ventilation, what guidance or monitoring supports their use?

Please see answer to supplementary question 1.

Synthetic turf

- (3) Will you prevent or remove installation of synthetic turf at Education facilities in bushfire zones given its flammability?

All NSW public schools have been assessed for their bushfire and grassfire risk. Where schools are in areas prone to bushfire and grassfire, their emergency management plan includes a response which addresses the local context and facilities of each school.

Questions from Ms Abigail Boyd MLC

Lambton High School

- (4) Is the Minister aware of community concerns regarding green space at Lambton High School being removed for the development of a 12 court basketball facility?
(a) Given the importance of access to green space for the physical and mental wellbeing of students, will the Minister commit to advocating for the protection of green space for students at Lambton High School?

Lambton High School maintains an annual Sporting Licence Agreement with Newcastle City Council to provide open space for students.

The development of the new basketball facility will not impact the school's continued use of the adjacent council-owned sports field.

Closure of Chatswood Community Preschool

- (5) Is the Minister aware of community concerns regarding the decision of Willoughby City Council to not renew the lease at Chatswood Community Preschool which has been providing families with high-quality, affordable, community-run education for 44 years, in favour of a for-profit long daycare service?
(a) What is the Minister doing to address these concerns and protect community run early childhood services from being taken over by larger for-profit providers?

Decisions made by Willoughby City Council regarding lease arrangements are a matter for council.

The NSW Government provides funding to deliver affordable quality preschool education for 3 to 5-year-old children enrolled in eligible community run preschools under the Start Strong for Community Preschools program.

Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs)

(6) What is the total government spending on SSPs, for each financial year in the last five years?

School budgets are allocated by calendar year, not financial year. Budget allocations as at School Budget Allocation Report (SBAR) Adjustments for all Schools for Specific Purposes (SSP) are as follows:

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total SSP funding	\$375,692,779	\$398,322,532	\$413,982,136	\$453,041,845	\$476,113,018

(7) How many new SSPs have been built or commenced being built since 2023?

The Department is reviewing how it can better meet the needs of students with disability. In responding to recommendations by the Disability Royal Commission, the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into children and young people with disability in NSW educational settings, and the NSW Auditor-General's Report on Supporting students with disability, the department has committed to reviewing provisioning requirements for new SSPs, with a focus on opportunities for better integration and operability.

(8) What is the total number of SSPs in NSW, in each of the last five years?

In 2024 and 2025, the number of Schools for Specific Purposes (SSP) was 117. Information for other years is available publicly at the NSW Public Schools dataset for 2020 - 2023:

<https://data.nsw.gov.au/data/dataset/nsw-education-nsw-government-schools-by-school-type>.

(9) What is the total number of primary schools with support classes in NSW, in each of the last five years?

In 2020, there was 426 primary schools with support classes in NSW.
In 2021, there was 445 primary schools with support classes in NSW.
In 2022, there was 472 primary schools with support classes in NSW.
In 2023, there was 507 primary schools with support classes in NSW.
In 2024, there was 545 primary schools with support classes in NSW.
As at August 2025, there are 570 primary schools with support classes in NSW.

(10) What is the total number of secondary schools with support units in NSW, in each of the last five years?

In 2020, there was 290 secondary schools with support classes in NSW.
In 2021, there was 300 secondary schools with support classes in NSW.
In 2022, there was 308 secondary schools with support classes in NSW.
In 2023, there was 311 secondary schools with support classes in NSW.
In 2024, there was 318 secondary schools with support classes in NSW.
As at August 2025, there are 327 secondary schools with support classes in NSW.

Suspensions and expulsions data for 2023

(11) Answers to my supplementary question 443 received 24 March 2025 (see [link](#)) failed to answer the questions asked. The answer provided was: "The department is committed to transparent reporting of suspension and expulsion"

data in NSW public schools. 2024 data is not yet available. The public factsheet will be made available online at <https://data.nsw.gov.au/data/dataset/nsw-education-suspensions-and-expulsionsin-nsw-government-schools>.” The department has previously provided disaggregated data when asked, for example in response to my supplementary questions provided on 24 October 2023. Why hasn't this data been provided on notice or in supplementary questions since then?

- (a) The data that I requested in questions on notice 3274 is not contained in what is publicly available. Can you please provide a proper answer to these questions, for the year 2023, and if possible any of 2024?
- i. If this is not possible, is it because the department does not collect this data, or another reason? Please explain.
 - ii. For example, some of the questions asked were in regards to how many times an extension was approved for suspension times. Does the department monitor the extensions that it approves?

The department is committed to transparent reporting of suspension and expulsion data in NSW public schools. The 2024 data is available at <https://data.nsw.gov.au/data/dataset/nsw-education-suspensions-and-expulsions-in-nsw-government-schools>.

Workers compensation

- (12) How many workers' compensation claims have been lodged by Department of Education staff in the past 12 months?**

The department publishes workers compensation data in its Annual Reports which are available at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategies-and-reports/annual-reports>.

- (13) What proportion of claims are lodged late (beyond the legislative 48-hour timeframe), and what systems are in place to reduce delays?**

Approximately 7% of injury notifications are reported outside of 48-hour timeframe.

The department has a robust centralised incident report and support hotline that supports and assists a school or workplace to respond to an incident or emergency event, as well as to support management of incident/injury reporting.

Injury notifications reported to the hotline are sent electronically to the claims services provider via a workflow notification system for work-related injuries.

The department actively reviews its systems, including integrations with Allianz, to improve reporting compliance and minimise any delays to injury reporting.

Dedicated Work Health and Safety Advisors support schools to review and strengthen incident and injury reporting practices, consistent with the requirements sent out in the department's Incident Notification and Response procedures.

- (14) Has the Department analysed whether particular roles (e.g., principals, special education teachers, casual teachers) are disproportionately represented in claims?**

General occupational data is available to the department to consider within its claims risk profile.

- (15) What feedback mechanisms exist for staff to report concerns about the psychological safety of the claims process itself (e.g., treatment by insurers,**

investigators, or RTW coordinators)?

Work health and safety issues need to be dealt with promptly and should be resolved at the local level wherever possible.

To address psychosocial concerns within workplace recovery at work processes, workers are encouraged to first try to resolve them by talking to their Recovery at Work advisor or by raising with a manager.

If the issue persists or requires immediate attention, employees should follow the department's issue resolution procedures or incident notification and response procedures for escalation and resolution of concerns as appropriate.

Concerns about workers compensation claims processes may also be raised with the Independent Review Office, SIRA or the Personal Injury Commission.

(16) Has the Department been subject to any notices, audits, or sanctions from SIRA relating to workers' compensation management?

SafeWork NSW, on behalf of SIRA, have made enquiries and issued Notices to the department that require the provision of information and evidence in respect of workers compensation claims. Improvement Notices have also been issued.

The department's workers compensation legislative obligations, including the requirement to have a compliant return to work program, were audited by SIRA as part of their compliance audit and performance review of the TMF. The department was not subject to any regulatory action arising from this audit.

(17) What steps are being taken to improve data collection and transparency around injury trends and claims outcomes across the public school system?

The department publishes workers compensation data in its Annual Reports.

The department is taking action to strengthen internal reporting processes that will support both internal and external reporting of return-to-work outcomes, performance and compliance, including for any consolidated whole of government reporting to be established under the NSW Government Return to Work Strategy 2025-28.

(18) What training do principals and managers receive on their obligations to report injuries?

- (a) How many staff have actually completed that training, and what proportion of school leaders are non-compliant?**
- (b) How does the Department ensure principals and school staff are properly trained in their obligations to report workplace injuries within statutory timeframes?**

All new staff are required to complete an online Work Health and Safety (WHS) training module and existing staff must undertake an annual competency assessment to maintain knowledge and compliance.

- (a)** Approximately 2,535 school principals have completed the WHS Induction e-Learning module, a compliance rate of 99.8%.

- (b) The department's WHS Advisors provide principals with support to complete an annual WHS Self-Assessment Tool, which includes reminder actions to review and confirm staff training obligations for incident notification.

A dedicated webpage is available to all departmental staff, providing up-to-date information on Incident Notification and Response Procedures as well as the Recovery at Work program.

There are a range of awareness WHS and recovery at work training courses available to all department staff, including principals and workplace managers.

A specific Recovery at Work e-Learning module provides practical information about the return at work process, outlining injury reporting requirements, as well as describes the department's arrangements to assist staff to recover at work following injury.

Dedicated WHS and Recovery at Work Advisors provide advice and assistance to principals and workplace managers in their implementation of the department's policy and procedures.

(19) How does the Department work with icare to protect injured workers from undue surveillance or adversarial claims management practices?

The department will take action to work with its Claims Services provider and iCare in respect of employee concerns about claims management practices where required.

(20) How does the Department incorporate workers' compensation injury data into its broader occupational health and safety planning for teachers?

Dashboard reporting is available to public school Executive Directors, Directors, Educational Leadership and school principals to provide insight into the incidents and the risk profile of operational areas and networks across the state, enabling a review of trends to inform broader planning at the local level.

(21) What governance or audit mechanisms exist to ensure that workers' compensation obligations are being met consistently across all regions and school types?

Dedicated Recovery at Work staff support the consistent implementation of the department's Recovery at Work program across all schools and workplaces.

Key performance reporting provides an overview of health and safety performance and compliance across the department, including identification of emerging risks and trends.

Recovery at work practices are subject to the department's internal audit program.

The department also works closely with its Claims Service provider and SIRA to ensure compliance with legal obligations.

(22) What are the injury trends in the last financial year?

The department publishes workers compensation data in its Annual Reports.

There were 5,449 workers compensation claims reported in FY2024/25. This is a 5.5% decrease when compared to 5,767 claims in FY2023/24.

(23) If icare denies or delays a claim, what steps does the Department take to

support the staff member directly?

The department's Recovery at Work program outlines the approach and support available to manage an employee's recovery and return to work to ensure all employees with an injury, illness or personal health condition are supported in the workplace.

The same recovery at work process is applied for staff with non-work related (or personal) health related injuries or illnesses, with some small differences because the employee is not covered by the workers compensation scheme. This includes support for staff should a workers compensation claim be reasonably excused or disputed by the Claims Services provider.

(24) Has the Department ever raised concerns with SIRA about the way icare manages claims for Education staff?

No.

**(25) Has the Department ever received complaints from its staff about being subject to surveillance or intrusive investigations?
(a) If so, what did you do about it?**

The department is not aware of complaints received from workers about surveillance.

There have been on some occasions, a concern or complaint raised by staff about the process of factual investigations undertaken by providers on behalf of the Claims Services provider. In these instances, the department take steps to respond to the employee and engage with Allianz about the matters raised.

(26) How many staff are currently on return-to-work plans, and what is the average duration?

As at 30 June 2025, the department was supporting 2,672 staff (2.6% of the workforce) in their recovery and return to work following workplace injury.

Approximately 61% of staff being supported in their recovery at work are undertaking suitable work duties as part of a recovery at work program.

The department does not readily capture data on the average duration of return to work plans.

New school infrastructure

(27) With significant new dwellings proposed across the Inner West, Bays West, Pyrmont and Ultimo is there an identified school capacity issue in these areas?

There is identified school capacity within the stated areas. Among public schools there is currently available capacity for approximately 800 additional students. Among public high schools, there is currently available capacity for approximately 300 additional students. The department engages regularly across government to ensure that the educational needs of local communities are met, including when growth is planned.

(28) What are the Department's plans for new school infrastructure in these areas?

See answer to supplementary question 27.

(29) What is the Department's position on new schools proposed on flood affected land?

Site selection for new schools must follow the School Site Selection and Development Framework, which outlines key criteria for assessing the suitability of potential sites. The framework can be found at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/efsg/design-framework/site-selection-guidelines>.

(30) Is the Department being consulted on a proposal for a new school in Wentworth Park, Glebe?

(a) Is the Department aware that Wentworth Park is severely flood affected?

Please see answer to supplementary question 27.

Early Childhood Education Advisory Group (ECAG)

(31) How many times has the Early Childhood Education Advisory Group (ECAG) met?

(a) Can you provide the minutes of these meetings since 2019?

(b) Can you provide a complete list of all the groups who are in ECAG?

(c) Who determines which organisations are part of ECAG?

The Early Childhood Education Advisory Group (ECAG) typically meets monthly from February - December each year, with 2-3 of the meetings being held in-person for extended consultation. ECAG is a confidential advisory forum. All meeting papers and discussions are classified as confidential under the Terms of Reference.

Membership to ECAG is through nomination by the relevant organisation to the Department of Education, or by invitation. Nominations are decided by the Chair, Executive Director Policy, Partnerships and Workforce Advocacy and/or the Deputy Secretary, Early Childhood Outcomes. The following organisations are currently represented on ECAG:

- Australian Childcare Alliance NSW
- Barang Regional Alliance and Gudjagang Gulgul
- Big Fat Smile
- Catholic Schools NSW
- Community Early Learning Australia
- Department of Education Preschools
- Early Childhood Australia
- Early Learning and Care Council of Australia
- Family Day Care Australia
- Family Day Care NSW
- Goodstart
- KU Children's Services
- Local Government Education and Care Managers Group (Northern Beaches Council)
- Macquarie School of Education
- Network of Community Activities
- Network of Community Activities
- NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG)
- Outside School Hours Care Australia (OSHCA)
- The Association of Independent Schools of NSW
- The P&C Federation of NSW
- The Y NSW
- University of Wollongong

Voluntary contributions

(32) Can you break down the total 2023 voluntary school contributions (\$29,276,065.20) to indicate how much came from parents and how much came through structures such as the Parents and Citizens Association (P&C) or the finance/resourcing committee?

The total voluntary school contributions figure for 2023 is only from parents/carers.

- (33) Can you break down the total 2023 subject contributions (\$41,627,280.97) to indicate how much came from parents and how much came through structures such as the Parents and Citizens Association (P&C) or the finance/resourcing committee?**

The total subject contributions figure for 2023 is only revenue from parents/carers.

- (34) How are voluntary contributions monitored by the Department at a school level, in terms of how much is collected and where exactly the funds are spent?**
- (a) How does the Department monitor whether schools are breaching the policy around the type of contributions they can request, for example communal classroom items?**
 - (b) How does the Department monitor whether principals are consulting with the P&C association when determining the budgeting process?**

All revenues, including voluntary contributions, and expenses at each school are recorded and classified at the transactional level in the general ledger. While the expenses are not matched to a revenue source, the department monitors all schools' financial performance in the general ledger.

There is regular communication, in the form of reminders, for principals and staff that financial contributions are voluntary, all students have access to the full curriculum in public schools, free of charge and no student can be denied the opportunity to meet syllabus requirements because of non-payment of school contributions. Further, voluntary school contributions in 2025 remain capped at \$110 for secondary schools and \$51 for primary schools.

The Director, Educational Leadership (DEL) provides differentiated line management support to principals in their pivotal responsibility for leading and managing their school. The DEL collaboratively supports principals to analyse school and system data to inform evidence-based decision-making and resource allocation for improved student progress and achievement.

- (35) Is there a cap on voluntary contributions for extra-curricular activities?**

No.

- (36) What is the process for schools returning funds to the P&C where required?**
- (a) Are you aware of any instances where schools are not returning funds to the P&C, or are investing the contributions that were intended for the P&C into the school's general funds?**

Parent and Citizens (P&C) Associations may request for schools to collect money on their behalf, such as for membership fees or donations. Processes for the management of third-party money (including revenues collected on behalf of the P&C) are described in the Finance Management (Schools) Procedures and the Finance in Schools Handbook. These funds can only be held on behalf of a third-party and must be transferred to the third-party in the same calendar year they are received. P&C related funds must be transferred at least monthly.

The department is aware of occasional instances where funds collected on behalf of the P&C has not been transferred in a timely manner. In those instances, the department has performed a detailed review of all relevant transactions and worked with the school to improve local procedures to ensure accurate recording and timely transfer of funds. Where outstanding balances are identified, these amounts have been transferred to the P&C.

Disability

(37) The PC3 *Inquiry into the experiences of children and young people with disability in education settings* heard evidence about the difficulties siblings of students with disability face. Has the government considered introducing support for siblings, such as the idea of introducing individual learning plans for siblings of people with disability?

(a) Our inquiry heard evidence that in some instances, teachers lack adequate skills to handle disabilities in the classroom, leading to reliance on siblings to help support and teach students with disability. What are you doing to address this?

The department is committed to inclusive education for all students and is investing in disability-specific professional learning for teachers, principals and support staff. Resources like the Inclusive Practice Hub and specialist training courses help build staff capability to support students with disability effectively.

In 2026, a dedicated school development day will focus on disability, neurodiversity and inclusive education, offering practical strategies to strengthen inclusive practices across NSW schools.

The Department is not considering individual learning plans for siblings of students with disability.

(38) In relation to recommendation 11 of the PC3 *Inquiry into the experiences of children and young people with disability in education settings*, which was supported by the government, what action has been taken to increase the number of appropriately qualified Deaf teachers, and implement professional development strategies based on an inclusive education capability framework for principals, teaching assistants and teachers of Deaf children?

Scholarships and sponsorships are open to diverse applicants, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing. The department also works with NSW universities to train new teachers in inclusive education and offers practical placements through its Inclusive Education Professional Experience Hub.

The department launched a scholarship program in 2019 targeting qualified teachers wishing to retrain in inclusive or special education, with eligible teachers able to study while maintaining their current permanent position. Casual and temporary teachers are permanently appointed to a special education teaching position on completion of their studies. The program also includes a pathway for a master's degree with a specialisation in deaf and hard of hearing or blind and low vision.

The department has engaged with NESA, the Deaf Australia network and Deaf Connect to support the development of agreed requirements for teachers of Auslan.

The Department has developed guidance for schools to support students who are Deaf, deaf or hard of hearing so they can access learning equally. A copy is available at [https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/campaigns/inclusive-education-hub/pdf/resources/peer-info-sheets/deaf-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing/Peer Information Sheet - Deaf, deaf or Hard of Hearing Secondary.pdf](https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/campaigns/inclusive-education-hub/pdf/resources/peer-info-sheets/deaf-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing/Peer%20Information%20Sheet%20-%20Deaf,%20deaf%20or%20Hard%20of%20Hearing%20Secondary.pdf)

(39) In relation to recommendation 12 of the PC3 *Inquiry into the experiences of children and young people with disability in education settings*, which was supported by the government, what action has been taken to increase the number of qualified specialist vision teachers for blind and low vision

students, to be engaged for all students who are blind/ low vision?

Please see answer to supplementary question 38

- (40) In relation to recommendation 14 of the PC3 Inquiry into the experiences of children and young people with disability in education settings, which was supported by the government, what action has been taken to establish culturally safe policies and procedures for First Nations students with disability, in consultation with First Nations peoples and their representatives?**

In February 2025, the department released the Guiding Principles Framework in Leading Aboriginal Education to enhance leadership capability of NSW public school principals and school leaders. The Guiding Principles Framework support school leaders in shaping inclusive and responsive school environments and improving educational outcomes for all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students.

- (41) In relation to recommendation 16 of the PC3 Inquiry into the experiences of children and young people with disability in education settings, which was supported by the government, what action has been taken to invest in specialist and allied health workforces to support children and young people with disability?**

States and territories have worked closely with the Commonwealth on health funding and reform of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) since National Cabinet in December 2023. Governments are working together on how and when Foundational Supports will be rolled out after they sign an agreement on health funding and foundational supports. This process is being led for NSW by The Cabinet Office.

- (42) I understand the government was addressing the capital investment needs for educational infrastructure while considering the Disability Royal Commission's recommendations. Has the government completed its process of reviewing funding prioritisation for infrastructure decisions?**

The Department is considering the findings and recommendations from recent inquiries and the Disability Royal Commission.

The department provides significant funding to support students with a disability, including low-level adjustments for disability equity loading, Integration Funding Support, and funding for Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs).

The department is committed to fostering inclusive educational environments that effectively support all students. Support classes are part of all new schools and major upgrades and are provided as needed at existing schools.

- (43) The government accepted in principle recommendation 7.2 of the Disability Royal Commission relating to preventing the inappropriate use of exclusionary discipline against students with disability. Has the government reviewed the current behaviour policy in accordance with this recommendation?**
- (a) In relation to this, has the government begun reviewing provisions governing the registration of non-government schools to impose obligations relating to exclusionary discipline in the non-government sector that are commensurate with those of the government sector?**

From Term 1, 2024, the Department implemented a new Student Behaviour Policy, developed in collaboration with key stakeholders. The policy upholds safety in schools and

promotes proactive, preventative, and evidence-based approaches to behaviour support, such as the explicit teaching of behaviour and inclusive education strategies. Suspension remains an important safeguard where safety is at risk, and the support associated with the policy prioritises student wellbeing, engagement, and early intervention, including system notification mechanisms to identify suspended students requiring proactive support.

Recommendation 7.2 of the Disability Royal Commission (DRC) is currently being progressed nationally, with a review of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) underway.

Alongside this, the NSW Law Reform Commission is undertaking a review of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (ADA). All schools must comply with the DDA and the ADA. NESA is considering all regulatory requirements on NSW schools while progressing its response to the DRC.

The Department of Communities and Justice is the lead agency coordinating the NSW Government's response to the Disability Royal Commission (DRC). Information on how NSW is progressing with its implementation of the DRC, including for Education-specific actions, will be made available through public updates.

(44) In 2020, the Department provided information to the Budget Estimates committee regarding all abuse complaints made against staff in the last 3 years regarding the treatment of children. In 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024 the Department stated it could not provide the information requested due to privacy concerns although this was never an issue for many years between 2013 and 2020 though FOI and Budget Estimates. Given the data presented in 2020 did not allow identification of individuals, on what basis has the Department determined there are privacy concerns regarding the release of their information?

(a) Could the Department provide details regarding all abuse complaints made against staff in the last 5 years regarding the treatment of children with a disability? (please provide the number, details and outcomes of complaints)

The department does not provide details and outcomes of reports and investigations at an individual level due to privacy and confidentiality obligations.

The department works closely with the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) in meeting its responsibilities to investigate 'allegations of reportable conduct'. This includes any sexual offence or sexual misconduct, ill-treatment of a child, neglect, assault, offences under S43B and 316A of the *Crimes Act 1900* and behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child. The department reports its investigation findings of reportable allegations and the action it takes to the OCG.

The table below details the investigations opened in the period 1 January 2021 to 5 September 2025 following the receipt of allegations of a child protection nature involving at least one student identified on the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD). This includes matters that may still be under investigation. Investigations are employee based, and the figures below may relate to one or more individual students per investigation.

Investigations opened – conduct towards students	1 Jan – 31 Dec 2021*	1 Jan – 31 Dec 2022*	1 Jan – 31 Dec 2023*	1 Jan – 31 Dec 2024*	1 Jan – 5 Sept 2025*

counted in NCCD**					
Crossing professional boundaries (non-sexual)	10	10	15	4	3
Ill treatment	33	17	21	18	1
Neglect	13	12	12	4	0
Physical	21	21	33	8	8
Psychological harm	4	0	1	0	0
Sexual misconduct	13	12	11	8	2
Sexual offence	1	8	6	7	2
Unprofessional conduct	0	0	1	3	0
TOTAL	95	80	100	52	16

*data may differ from previous responses due to data remediation and cleansing

**PES' conduct type grouping categories were revised in 2022 which may affect comparability with earlier publications of these figures

The table below details the numbers of investigations closed in the period 1 January 2021 to 5 September 2025 following receipt of allegations of a child protection nature involving at least one student identified on the NCCD, the outcomes of these investigations and the action taken (if any) by the department and matters opened prior to and during this period.

Investigations closed by outcome - conduct towards students counted in NCCD	1 Jan – 31 Dec 2021*	1 Jan – 31 Dec 2022*	1 Jan – 31 Dec 2023*	1 Jan – 31 Dec 2024*	1 Jan – 5 September 2025*
Not sustained	31	28	15	28	13
Remedial action	26	21	39	31	12
Disciplinary action	18	19	19	11	4
Dismissal**	14	11	16	18	11
TOTAL	89	79	89	88	40

*data may differ from previous responses due to data remediation and cleansing

** includes temporary contracts terminated and employees allowed to resign

OOSH tendering process

(45) How often does SINSW conduct “walk throughs” with providers at schools when an OOSH tendering process is underway?

Walk throughs are not a part of the standard process of Out of School Hours Care (OOSH) tenders.

(46) How often does the Department request attendance information and financial information from OOSH providers?

(a) How often does the department ask OOSH providers questions such as “what can we do to help you increase attendance”?

At least once a year, as a part of annual performance reviews.

(47) Parents have raised concerns with the lack of parent consultation during OOSH tendering processes, with many saying they were not aware it was happening until they found out the community or parent run service was being replaced by a corporate provider. What are the requirements for schools

consulting with parents, regarding the costs, benefits and compliance history of different providers competing in the tender process?

The department OOSH tenders are published on www.buy.nsw.gov.au. Prior to being published, the incumbent OOSH provider and school principal are notified that the tender will be released. OOSH services that are operated by a Parent and Citizen (P&C) Committee are not required to go to tender.

(48) What is the policy for managing the transfer of assets in OOSH services when a new provider wins a tender?

If a new OOSH provider is successful in a tender process, the previous/incumbent OOSH provider must remove all of their owned equipment. The new OOSH provider will re-establish the area with their own equipment.

Training

(49) How many staff have undertaken face-to-face disability training? Please provide the number, and as a percentage of total staff.

The department is conducting a statewide School Development Day (SDD) focused on disability, neurodiversity, and inclusive education in Term 2, 2026 across all schools. The SDD will build practical knowledge and capability to support the educational needs of students, particularly those who are neurodivergent.

Department staff also have access to a wide range of resources and professional learning opportunities to build their knowledge, capability and confidence to meet the needs of students with disability. This includes:

- Courses about the Disability Standards for Education.
- A suite of on-line courses addressing a range of diverse disabilities.
- An inclusive practice hub which provides a range of resources to inform inclusive teaching and learning practices.

The Disability Standards for Education Leaders is mandatory training for staff who are substantive, active or relieving as a Director Educational Leadership, Principal, Deputy Principal, Assistant Principal or Head Teacher. This training must be completed on commencement and revisited every three years.

(50) How many principals have undertaken face-to-face disability training? Please provide the number, and as a percentage of total principals.

Please see answer to supplementary question 49.

(51) How many principals have undertaken face-to-face training in legal requirements for child protection and abuse allegations? Please provide the number, and as a percentage of total principals.

Please see answer to Budget Estimates Hearing 25 February 2025 supplementary question 14.

(52) Are either face-to-face training in legal requirements for child protection and abuse allegations; or face-to-face disability training, mandated for all staff to undertake?

Please see answer to supplementary question 51

- (53) The minister recently announced new curriculum packages to be introduced to support teaching staff. How much will these packages cost?**
- (a) Are these purchased from a commercial provider?**
- (b) How will the Department evaluate the quality of these packages?**

The department's curriculum support packages are internally produced within existing staffing and operating resources and provided at no cost to NSW public schools.

The curriculum packages are in addition to the range of support material the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) provides for all new syllabuses including professional learning, content examples, teaching advice and sample units of work.

The department applies a multi-stage assurance process to curriculum resources including:

- alignment checks to NESA syllabuses and departmental policy
- peer review by subject specialists
- explicit teaching and pedagogy review by the Effective Teaching Practices team
- editorial, accessibility and plain-English checks
- teacher feedback and final sign-off.

Post-release, a structured evaluation process including teacher feedback and usage analytics will inform updates to maintain quality and relevance.

Identifying and responding to domestic and family violence in schools

- (54) How will the Department of Education implement the domestic and family violence NSW Common Approach to Risk Assessment and Safety Framework (CARAS) to ensure school staff have the capability to identify domestic and family violence and assess or manage risk?**

In alignment with the NSW Common Approach to Risk Assessment and Safety Framework (CARAS), the department's approach is to enhance the capability of school staff to identify domestic and family violence and appropriately assess and manage associated risks.

Departmental staff use the NSW Mandatory Reporter Guide which is a key tool designed to assist in the identification and reporting of concerns related to domestic and family violence, among other child protection issues. This guide provides clear guidance on recognising indicators of risk, making informed decisions, and initiating appropriate responses consistent with legal and policy obligations.

Schools are supported to fulfill their mandatory reporting obligations and refer students and their families to appropriate support services for domestic and family violence concerns via the department's Child Wellbeing Unit and/or the Incident Report and Support Hotline. A professional learning module on domestic and family violence was also published in September 2025 and is available to all staff.

Consent and respectful relationships education

- (55) Early childhood settings, primary, and secondary schools have an essential role in preventing violence. What is the NSW Government doing to fund and support primary prevention initiatives in early childhood settings, primary, and secondary schools to address the drivers of sexual, domestic and family violence?**

Under the Pathways to Prevention: NSW Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence 2024-2027, the department is funded to develop and deliver the Respectful Relationships Education (RRE) program.

The RRE program provides teachers, leaders and school staff with access to resources, professional learning, and system-based expertise to implement and embed evidence-informed whole-school approaches that address the drivers of gender-based violence and promote gender equality.

Resources, support and professional learning are being delivered and evaluated with 10 case study schools in 2025.

Further targeted support will be provided for the 2026 implementation of the RRE program.

Similarly, as part of the 2023 early childhood education and care (ECEC) Workforce Election Commitment, the department partnered with TAFE NSW to deliver the ECEC Professional Learning (PL) Program which aims to provide ECEC professionals with equitable access to fee-free, high quality professional learning to boost retention, decrease burnout and provide advice on active and constructive responding to children in an age-appropriate fashion. This program continues.

(56) How much funding is allocated per school for respectful relationships education?

From 2024-2028 the department is funded by the Australian Government under the Consent and Respectful Relationships Education Measure.

The department also receives funding under the Pathways to Prevention: NSW Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence 2024-2027.

This funding has enabled the department to recruit a specialised workforce to support NSW public schools to plan, implement and evaluate Respectful Relationships Education practice, curriculum and policies.

Schools who are part of the RRE program receive \$10,000 direct funding to be part of the program. This funding supports teacher relief enabling staff to be upskilled, and to evaluate and improve their practice.

(57) How will the NSW Government ensure a consistent, coordinated, and quality approach to consent and respectful relationships education across NSW schools, rather than an ad hoc approach?

The Respectful Relationships Education program developed by the department is being trialled in 10 case study schools in 2025.

An evaluation will ensure the program model of support, resources and professional learning meet the diverse needs of leaders and staff across a range of schools.

A specialised workforce will engage directly with schools and clusters of schools to ensure functional implementation of the RRE program and its components.

This program has been developed using the evidence collected by OurWatch and the Victorian Education Department in their implementation of RRE.

The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) has included strengthened age-appropriate content on consent and respectful relationships in each stage of learning in the new NSW mandatory Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) K–6 and 7–10 (2024) syllabuses. This content is essential learning for all students of NSW.

In line with NSW legislation, all schools, including registered non-government schools, must have an educational program based on NESA syllabuses for the mandatory key learning area of PDHPE.

(58) Consent and respectful relationships education is most effective when it is ongoing and has a whole-of-school approach. Is the NSW Government implementing an ongoing and whole- of-school approach in early childhood settings, primary schools, and secondary schools?

(a) If not, why not?

The department's Respectful Relationships Education program is built on a whole school approach.

Program supports, professional learning and resources target change across the school curriculum, practices and culture.

(59) What is being done to increase the capacity of schools and teaching staff to effectively deliver consent and respectful relationships as part of the curriculum?

The department is developing new curriculum resources, tools and advice which embed age-appropriate learning about respectful relationships.

Professional learning will be delivered for all school staff and leaders.

The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) has published a range of support materials, including professional learning, content examples, teaching advice and sample units of work, to support the implementation of explicit content on respectful relationships and consent in the mandatory NSW Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) K–6 and 7–10 (2024) syllabuses. These support materials are available for all NSW teachers.

(60) What evaluation is being conducted to measure the capability of teaching staff to deliver consistent and ongoing consent and respectful relationship training?

The evaluation of the Respectful Relationships Education (RRE) program is being led by the department's Developmental Evaluation team.

The evaluation employs a developmental approach based on program effectiveness.

This approach helps to ensure that the evaluation is responsive to the unique context of each school and changing circumstances while producing findings that play a developmental role in the delivery of the program as it unfolds.

The program is supported by a longitudinal evaluation comprising an exploratory case study, systematic literature review, and evaluation of RRE system leaders and school-based implementation.

(61) Is there an evaluation process to measure the impact of consent and respectful relationships education in NSW schools?

Please see answer to supplementary question 60.

PES

(62) How many formal complaints are submitted annually to the Department, broken down by source and type?

In 2024, for complaints managed via the department's complaints management policy submitted through the online Feedback and Complaints form, there were 5,897 submitted by the community, which includes parents, carers, community members and former employees. Complaints can also be submitted directly to schools who maintain their own local records. For reports to the Professional and Ethical Standards Directorate (PES) concerning allegations of employee misconduct, there were 4,531 reports in 2024.

(63) What percentage of complaints are resolved in favour of the complainant, and what constitutes a 'resolved' case?

All complaints submitted via the online Feedback and Complaints form are referred to the principal or the workplace manager for appropriate management action. The complaint manager is responsible for addressing the concerns that have been raised, including deciding what action to take to address the concerns identified and communicating the outcome to the relevant parties.

Reports of employee misconduct to PES are not managed via the department's complaints management policy. Reports are investigated by PES or referred to the principal or workplace manager for appropriate management action.

(64) Has the Department ever conducted a post-satisfaction survey amongst complainants, and if so can they make this data public?

Please see answer to supplementary question 63.

(65) What action, if any, has the Department taken in response to repeated calls for independent oversight of PES or the Department from Royal Commissions, Audit NSW and Parliament?

The department is not aware of the specifics of the repeated calls referenced.

PES is oversighted by the NSW Ombudsman. In relation to investigations, PES is also oversighted by the Office of the Children's Guardian (reportable matters) and the Independent Commission against Corruption (serious wrongdoing and corruption). The Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) is an appeals body that can hear and determine Unfair Dismissal Applications and Public Sector Disciplinary Appeals in respect of some disciplinary decisions. PES has been the subject of independent reviews in 2019 and 2023. These reviews made some recommendations as to improvements to practice.

(66) Why does the Department maintain a complaints structure where the person complained about is often the one investigating the complaint?

For reports to PES concerning allegations of employee misconduct, the person subject of the report is never the person investigating the matter. PES actively monitors and manages conflicts of interest to ensure investigators and decisions makers are independent. Investigations are conducted in line with the relevant employment legislation and the Guidelines for the Management of Conduct and Performance with a focus on procedural fairness.

All complaints submitted via the online Feedback and Complaints form are referred to the supervisor of the subject of the complaint. Any conflict of interest is managed in accordance with the department's policies and procedures.

(67) What mechanism, if any, allows for community or parental feedback to influence the Department's policy on complaints handling?

The Department of Education's online Feedback and Complaints form allows for feedback on any of the department's procedures and policies.

(68) What timeline does the Department envisage for reforming complaints processes, and will those reforms include independent oversight?

A revision of the Complaints Handling Policy was completed by the department in 2024.

The department consulted with both internal and external stakeholders over a 14-month period. This included meetings, workshops, focus groups, and invitations for feedback on draft procedures. Consultation with key external stakeholders included:

- Primary Principals Association
- Secondary Principals Association
- Special Education Principals and Leaders Association
- Public Service Association
- NSW Teachers Federation
- Parents and Citizens Federation
- NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc
- Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
- Association of Children's Welfare Agencies
- Family Advocacy
- Ethnic Communities' Council
- Gifted NSW
- Isolated Children's Parents' Association
- Multicultural NSW
- Office of the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People
- The Smith Family
- Learning Ecosystems
- Inclusive Education
- Parent and Carer Research (ORIMA)
- The Disability Advocacy Futures Program.

(69) What percentage of cases are finalised within the Department's own time benchmarks (e.g. 3, 6, 9 months)?

(a) Since 2022, how many cases have exceeded the 9 month investigation timeframe?

There are multiple factors that impact on the timeliness of investigations including the involvement of other statutory agencies and the health and wellbeing of individuals. In 2024, approximately 92% of investigations were completed within 9 months.

(70) How many staff have been suspended for more than 12 months pending a PES outcome?

Ten employees have been suspended without pay for more than 12 months while subject to a PES investigation into allegations of misconduct. PES applies Premier's Memorandum M1994-35 Suspension of Public Employees from Duty, when deciding on suspension of employees with or without pay.

(71) How many PES investigators are currently employed, and how many have resigned in the past year?

(a) Has investigator turnover contributed to delays, and what steps are being taken to ensure resourcing is adequate?

There are 66 investigator positions in the Professional and Ethical Standards directorate including:

- 42 investigators
- 12 senior investigators
- 12 principal investigators.

In 2024 and 2025 (to September 2025), 15 Principal Investigators/Investigators separated, with 4 of these being resignations. Separation is defined as resignation, retirement, transfer to another PS Agency, transfer to another role within the department, cease temporary engagement, and voluntary redundancy.

Following realignment within PES, the number of investigator roles has increased and the department remains committed to resourcing PES to deliver on its functions.

(72) What is the current average caseload per investigator?

As at August 2025, PES investigators had an average case load of 11-12 investigations.

(73) What is the average cost per investigation, and has this changed since the 2019 Tedeschi Review?

PES does not measure the cost of investigations which vary in complexity and length.

(74) What is the annual budget allocation for PES, and has it increased or decreased since the 2019 Tedeschi Review?

The number of investigator positions in PES has increased from 39 full-time equivalent (FTE) in 2019 to 66 FTE in 2025. The department's staffing expenditure is reported in the department's Annual Report each year.

(75) What measures have been put in place since the 2019 review to prevent confirmation bias in investigations?

All investigators in PES are highly experienced and possess qualifications across various disciplines. PES supports investigators through on-the-job training and ongoing professional development.

Investigations are carried out in compliance with relevant legislation, including the employment acts, the *Children's Guardian Act 2019*, the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988*, and the *Ombudsman Act 1974*.

In his 2019 review of PES, Mark Tedeschi AM KC found no evidence of confirmation bias in PES investigations. Likewise, Chris Wheeler's 2023 internal audit of PES also identified no evidence of confirmation bias.

(76) How does PES ensure procedural fairness for both the person subject of allegations and complainants?

Allegations of employee misconduct are not managed through the department's complaints management system; therefore, there are no complainants in these cases.

PES conducts investigations in accordance with relevant employment legislation and guidelines, with the care and protection of children as the highest priority. PES' approach is protective rather than punitive.

Procedural fairness is integral to the investigative process, including the following safeguards:

- Individuals subject to allegations are advised to seek independent advice.

- Individual subject to allegations are informed of the specific allegations against them and invited to provide additional information, either verbally or in writing and to nominate witnesses who may offer exculpatory evidence. No negative assumptions are made if an employee chooses not to respond.
- Once preliminary findings are made by the delegated decision maker, the employee is given an opportunity to make submissions regarding those findings and any proposed disciplinary or remedial actions. At this stage, the employee receives the evidence and the department's analysis of it.

Oversight of PES investigations in reportable conduct matters is provided by the Office of the Children's Guardian. Additionally, investigations are overseen by the NSW Ombudsman and, in cases involving serious wrongdoing or corruption, the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Some decisions can be appealed to the Industrial Relations Commission.

(77) What data does the Department provide to the NSW Ombudsman, ICAC or the Office of the Children's Guardian regarding PES investigations?

(a) Has the Ombudsman raised concerns with the Department about PES investigation delays or fairness since the 2019 review?

The department complies with its legislative responsibilities to provide data to oversight agencies.

(a) No

(78) How many PES findings have been overturned or varied by the NSW Ombudsman, ICAC, or the Industrial Relations Commission in the past three years?

The Independent Commission Against Corruption and the NSW Ombudsman are not appeal bodies concerning decisions made by public agencies. The Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) is an appeals body that can hear and determine Unfair Dismissal Applications and Public Sector Disciplinary Appeals in respect of decisions to dismiss and other disciplinary decisions. For the period 4 September 2022 to 4 September 2025, the IRC has set aside one PES decision and varied one PES decision.

(79) Does PES publish anonymised case outcomes or data to help schools understand standards and precedent?

Yes.

(80) What systems are in place to ensure consistency of decisions across similar cases?

Delegated decision makers meet regularly to discuss decision making and particular cases, to ensure consistency. Where matters may result in dismissal, direction to resign or demotion the delegated decision maker consults with a disciplinary advisory panel.

Oversight is provided by multiple agencies, including the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Office of the Children's Guardian. Some decisions made by the Department can be appealed to the Industrial Relations Commission.

(81) What safeguards exist to minimise psychological stress on staff under investigation?

PES provides all employees subject of allegations information about accessing the Employee Assistance Program and union support. PES maintains regular contact with staff under investigation and shares information about the investigation's progress.

(82) Has PES undertaken any staff wellbeing impact assessments of its processes?

Please see answer to supplementary question 81.

(83) What feedback mechanisms exist for principals or staff who have experienced the PES process?

Stakeholders involved in PES investigation processes are encouraged to raise concerns or provide feedback directly to PES. Any complaints received are directed to the Executive Director PES, who then assigns a senior officer, unconnected to the original matter, to review the issues raised.

PES maintains regular engagement with key stakeholder groups, holding quarterly meetings with representatives from the Primary Principals Association and Secondary Principals Council and regular consultation with the NSW Teachers Federation and the Public Service Association.

Stakeholders also have the option to escalate concerns to external bodies such as the Office of the Children's Guardian, the Independent Commission Against Corruption, and the NSW Ombudsman.

(84) Which recommendations from the Tedeschi Review remain only "accepted in principle" rather than fully implemented, and why?

All recommendations have been implemented.

(85) What role does the new case management system play in improving timeliness and consistency of investigations?

PES undertook an open procurement process in 2020 for a case management system. As a result, the existing PES case management system was upgraded. This enhanced system facilitates continuous improvement in PES practices, particularly in ensuring consistency and timeliness.

(86) Has PES considered establishing a misconduct database to track patterns across cases?

PES utilises data from its case management system. The PES Principal Systems and Data Analyst oversees the directorate's projects and duties concerning data development, analysis, and reporting.

(87) How does PES explain its decision-making in controversial cases (e.g. restraint of students with disability, asbestos management incidents)?

(a) In the case of the six-year-old student restrained in a high chair, why did PES determine that the conduct did not amount to misconduct?

PES considers each case based on its individual merits.

(88) How many staff subject to PES investigations have lodged workers' compensation claims for psychological injury since 2020?

The Department does not hold this data.

(89) What safeguards exist to minimise stress and psychological harm to staff under investigation?

Please see answer to supplementary question 81.

(90) How many principals have requested additional support in managing PES

processes at their school?

PES provides support to principals in relation to managing complaints, direct management action of poor conduct and managing underperformance.

- (91) Who approved the development of the NSW Department of Education document given to Directors Educational Leadership titled, “Paving the way forward to manage underperformance effectively: Professional and Ethical Standards, Employee performance, School Performance Capability Building Summit: Supporting Students Success through School Leadership, June 2021”?**
- (a) Given that an industrially agreed Management of Conduct and Performance Policy already exists, why was this developed?**
 - (b) If this was not an official Department of Education document (according to the answer to question 102 received [20 December 2024](#)), why does the front page of the booklet and slideshow contain the words “NSW Department of Education” and display the NSW Government logo?**

Please see answer to Budget Estimates 2024-25 - Supplementary hearings – 2 December 2024 - supplementary question 102.

- (92) Under what legal or policy authority is the Department permitted to cease performance management proceedings before an employee has satisfactorily completed the process?**
- (a) When performance management proceedings are ceased before completion, what happens to the employee’s record?**
 - i. Does the Department treat the performance concerns as unresolved?**
 - ii. What safeguards exist to protect the employee from ongoing stigma or reputational damage?**
 - (b) If the Department stops performance management before an employee has satisfactorily completed the process, and if this action is not supported by any legislation or policy, does this not amount to an admission that the action was never warranted in the first place?**
 - i. If not, why not?**

It is the delegation of the principal to instigate performance management processes. The aim of all performance management is to support the employee to improve to the standard required. Where this does not occur, improvement programs may be ceased when an employee separates from the Department of Education.

Section 6.8 of the Teaching Service Improvement Program procedures outline this process. The Professional and Ethical Standards Directorate (PES) may refer appropriate matters to an impairment pathway where warranted.

When performance management proceedings are ceased before completion, the employees record remains flagged with any conditions for future employment noted. The records remain confidential.

Improvement programs align to policy and procedure. Principals work with PES to ensure they act within the procedures. Every matter is considered on its merits and unique case circumstances.

- (93) Does the Department have a formal, enforceable policy governing, or procedures for, Expressions of Interest?**
- (a) Does the Department accept that the current unregulated EOI system causes psychological harm to staff left in limbo, and risks being used as a management tool to displace staff without fair process?**

(b) Will the Department commit to developing a set of consistent procedures for Expressions of Interest?

The department has guidelines on the Expression of Interest (EOI) process for non-executive public service roles.

The guidelines provide advice on a number of areas including:

- When a hiring manager would use an EOI to fill a role
- Eligibility to participate in the EOI process
- How to assess who is successful for a role through the EOI process

The EOI guidelines provide a framework to fill short term opportunities across the department in a fair, streamlined and flexible way that reflects the fact that an EOI is not a formal recruitment process and supports business areas to fill roles in a timely manner to meet educational and operational needs.

Complaints handling

(94) Under what section/s of the Complaints Handling and Procurement Policy is the Department authorised to engage former employees to manage complaints and reviews?

- (a) Can the Department attest that for every engagement of a former employee, conflict of interest declarations were made and recorded, and that probity requirements were met?**
- i. If not, why not?**

Section 4.1 of the Community Complaints procedures and Staff Complaints procedures provide guidance on nominating a complaint manager; however, does not explicitly reference the use of external contractors to assist in managing complaints. Decisions to engage an external contractor to assist with the management of a complaint or complaint review are made locally by line managers, after assessing risk and considering the nature and seriousness of the concerns.

Section 3.2 of the procedures include guidance on the declaration and management of Conflicts of Interest in the complaint process which would be part of any engagement of an external contractor. The hiring manager is responsible for ensuring that all on boarding procedures are conducted in accordance with relevant policies.

(95) How much has the Department spent on engaging former employees over the past five years, and what were the outcomes of their complaints and reviews (supporting the Department vs the complainant)?

Decisions to engage an external contractor to assist with the management of a complaint or complaint review are made locally by line managers, after assessing risk and considering the nature and seriousness of the concerns. The contracted officer provides information and independent advice to inform the decision making and complaint outcome made by the complaint manager. The complaint outcome is not held centrally.

(96) What safeguards are in place to ensure impartiality and psychological safety, when engaging former executives in complaint handling?

The department's Code of Ethics and Conduct provides direction and guidance on professional conduct standards that promote adherence to department and NSW public sector values. All employees are expected to abide by the Code. All contractors engaged by the department are made aware of the department's Work, Health and Safety Policy in their induction. The Employee Assistance Program is available for all department employees.

(97) According to the answer to question 467 [received 24 March 2025](#), “assistance in the management of a small number of complaint reviews was provided between June 2023 and March 2024”. Can you confirm whether Ms Thorpe has ever been involved in any complaints management?

(a) Is Ms Thorpe still being engaged by the Department, either as an individual or as part of a company or agency?

Decisions to engage an external contractor to assist with the management of a complaint or complaint review are made locally by line managers, after assessing risk and considering the nature and seriousness of the concerns. As external contractors are engaged locally, data on the engagement of specific individuals is not held centrally.

I am advised that the previous engagement of Ms Thorpe ended in March 2024 and she is not currently engaged by the department as an individual or as part of a company or agency.

(98) Who within the Department decides how former colleagues are paid, at what rate, and under what Award or industrial arrangement are these payments made?

Decisions to engage an external contractor to assist with the management of a complaint or complaint review are made locally by line managers, after assessing risk and considering the nature and seriousness of the concerns.

(99) Are former employees required to provide written quotes in line with NSW procurement requirements?

The department expects managers to adhere to the department's policies and procedures when engaging external parties, this includes adherence to NSW procurement requirements.

RAW Practices

(100) Can the Department confirm that HSSW officers are responsible for progressing conversations on RAW Plans, including resolving barriers and negotiating changes?

(a) What are the ramifications if they fail to do so?

The Department of Education's Recovery at Work Program ensures employees with an injury, illness, or health condition receive workplace support. Collaboration, consultation, and open communication are key to recovery at work, allowing issues to be resolved promptly. Quick resolution prevents barriers to an employee's return to work. The recovery plan is reviewed regularly with the employee, doctor, line manager, Health Safety and Staff Wellbeing (HSSW) team and other people involved in the employee's return to work to discuss progress and barriers. All parties must sign the plan to confirm agreement and commitment. All involved should work together to resolve barriers. If unresolved, employees can escalate issues through the department's staff complaints or issue resolution procedures. The program provides information on resolving return-to-work barriers or disputes.

(101) Section 3 of the RAW Program states recovery planning is independent of PES, yet the Department confirmed PES involvement in RAW planning. How does the Department reconcile this contradiction, and what safeguards or independent oversight exist to ensure PES's disciplinary role does not compromise procedural fairness, health disclosures, recovery and rehabilitation, or psychological safety?

The recovery at work plan is developed in collaboration with the employee and other key people involved in the return to work.

Where there is a concurrent return to work and active conduct or performance matter involving the Professional and Ethical Standards Directorate (PES), consultation with PES is initiated to ensure that any risks or decisions requiring consideration in respect to return-to-work planning are addressed appropriately.

The Health, Safety and Staff Wellbeing Directorate may review existing medical information or request new medical information from the employee's treating doctor (with the employee's consent) so the department can determine if the employee is fit to participate in departmental processes or if adjustment to the process is required. Recovery at work and performance support and improvement processes continue independently of each other.

Participation in performance support and improvement processes are inherent requirements for staff. Where there are concurrent workplace processes and health-related matters, Professional and Ethical Standards is consulted in the development of the recovery at work plan so the department can determine if the employee is fit to participate in departmental processes or if adjustments to the process are required.

The Recovery at Work program provides this information for staff.

(102) Given SIRA's 2024 TMF Report found 9 of 10 agencies had non-compliant return to work (RTW) programs (and the tenth agency was excluded), how was the Department's program assessed as compliant?

The department's Return to Work Program was deemed compliant in this Audit.

Section 51A transfers

(103) What process exists to ensure staff subject to Section 51A transfers are fully informed, in writing, that they have no internal right of review and their only avenue is the Industrial Relations Commission or courts?

Please see answer to supplementary question 496 from the February 2025 Budget Estimates hearing.

(104) Why are there guidelines and panels for compassionate Section 51A transfers but not for non-compassionate (employer-initiated) transfers, given both are covered by the same legislation?

Please see answer to supplementary question 499 from the February 2025 Budget Estimates hearing.

(105) How does the Department ensure compliance with Section 51A(9), particularly the requirement that an employee consent or be given the opportunity to return before their substantive position is filled or the transfer exceeds 12 months?

(a) Has the Department ever breached this obligation, and if so what remedies were provided?

Please see answer to supplementary question 503 from the February 2025 Budget Estimates hearing.

(106) Is a formal WHS risk assessment undertaken for every employee moved under a Section 51A transfer?

(a) Is the employee consulted and provided with a copy in every instance?

Please see answer to supplementary question 502 from the February 2025 Budget Estimates hearing.

Unattached positions

(107) What is the Department's definition of an "unattached" position, and is this descriptor referenced in any Act, Award, or Agreement?

(a) On what legal basis are employees placed into this status?

The term "unattached" is sometimes used as part of operational language aligned with employee management to describe a typically temporary appointment of a permanent member of the Teaching Service to a position that is not within a school's organisation structure and not filling a vacant position.

The transfer of a permanent member of the Teaching Service to an "unattached" position is actioned under s51A of the Teaching Services Act 1980.

(108) How many staff have been designated "unattached" in the past five years?

(a) What are the reasons for each?

(b) On average how long have they remained in this status?

As at September 2025 there has been a total of 5 staff members appointed to a temporary "unattached" position over the past 5 years for reasons relating to employee management.

Of the 5 staff, only one staff member currently remains appointed to an "unattached" position. This appointment commenced in August 2024.

(109) Who has the authority to place an employee into "unattached" status, and who monitors staff while in this position?

(a) What rights of appeal or review are available to affected staff?

The transfer of a permanent member of the Teaching Service to an "unattached" position is actioned under s51A of the Teaching Service Act 1980. The following officers have delegation to approve such transfers:

- Secretary
- Deputy Secretary
- Executive Directors, Public Schools
- Executive Director School Workforce
- Director, School Recruitment
- Director, Shared Services Human Resources

The Teaching Service Act 1980 does not provide a right of review. Should a member of the Teaching Service wish to, they may pursue external review options.

(110) Is a formal WHS risk assessment undertaken for every employee moved into "unattached" status, and is the employee consulted and provided with a copy?

Where a health and safety and/or workers compensation related matter is identified in relation to a potential decision to transfer a staff member to an "unattached" position under s51A of the Teaching Services Act 1980, appropriate consultation is undertaken with the department's Health, Safety and Staff Wellbeing Directorate to ensure that all current and relevant information is provided to the decision-maker.

ECEC risk ratings

(111) What are the names of the early childhood education and care services currently holding a high risk rating?

The NSW ECEC Regulatory Authority's approach to risk profiling considers factors including a service's quality rating, compliance history, complaints and incidents, as well as other insights gained from regular compliance and monitoring. The Authority's internal risk-based approach uses a risk profiling tool to guide operational effort.

Based on the Authority's internal risk indicators, as of 1 August 2025, approximately 82% of services in NSW are in the very low, low or medium risk categories. Less than 5% are in the highest risk category.

Early child education and care services are required to provide families with a copy of their compliance history upon request.

(112) What are the names of the early childhood education and care services currently holding a very high risk rating?

Please see answer to supplementary question 111.

(113) How is a service's risk rating calculated?

(a) What are the inputs and their respective weightings when calculating risk?

Please see answer to supplementary question 111.

ECEC RA complaints

(114) How many internal complaints have been made by staff working in the ECEC RA for each financial year from 2019/20 to 2024/25?

Employees are able to raise workplace concerns directly with the decision maker, principal or workplace manager at the time of or at a reasonable point after an event or situation. Managers or their delegates are responsible for addressing workplace concerns that are brought to their attention and can decide on what action to take based on the nature and seriousness of the issue.

The department's Complaints handling policy and Staff complaint procedures provide direction and guidance on how the department receives, addresses and follows up complaints. Originating staff data is not held centrally.

Questions from the Opposition

Box Hill School Development

(115) Minister Houssos mentioned during initial hearings that there are "5 separate school projects underway" in Box Hill. What are these projects?

A new high school at Box Hill; the first high school built in the Hills since Labor was last in Government. A new primary school at Box Hill, a new public preschool at Box Hill, a new primary school at Gables, and a new public preschool at Gables.

In contrast, the Liberals and Nationals did not deliver a single school or preschool in Box Hill despite student population growth of 1,114%.

(116) When asked why Lot 48 on Terry Road will no longer be acquired by Government for the purpose of new school development, it was stated that this area is one of flood-risk. Can the flooding reports be released?

The Minns Government has acquired the land of the temporary Box Hill public school site on George St for a future permanent school.

Planning documentation for the new Box Hill Public School and Box Hill High School is available at: <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/part-5/new-box-hill-public-school-and-box-hill-high-school>.

Richmond Road and bridge upgrade

(117) Minister, you stated in a joint media release dated 2 July 2025 that Stage 1 construction for the New Richmond Bridge project was expected to be completed in late 2026. According to the project timeline on the NSW Transport website, updated on the 22 July 2025 however, completion of stage 1 is now expected sometime in 2027. Can you explain why there has been a blowout in this timeline?

- (a) When in 2027 is that stage now expected to be completed?**
- (b) What impact is this expected to have on remaining stages of the project?**
- (c) How will you ensure that a cost blowout doesn't eventuate and that the project will be completed within the already allocated Federal and State funding?**
- (d) What date is the New Richmond Bridge expected to be completed?**

This question should be directed to the Minister for Roads.

Western Sydney Transport Infrastructure

(118) Regarding the Western Sydney Airport Line (full extent north-south from Tallawong to Macarthur) when will the business cases for the north and south extensions be completed?

- (a) Will the Government commit to a timeframe for delivery?**

This question should be directed to the Minister for Transport.

(119) Regarding stages 5a and 5b of the Mulgoa Road upgrade, when can the community expect the missing 2.2km section upgrade for the vital north south connection to the airport (due to be open for business in 2026) to be delivered?

Please see answer to supplementary question 118.

(120) What is the government's timeframe to complete the strategic business case for the Castlereagh Connection?

Please see answer to supplementary question 118.

Independent Regulator and Reforms

(121) Minister, in your 25 June press release you stated that New South Wales would "proceed immediately with nation-leading reforms to prioritise child safety over provider profit." What specific reforms were you referring to? How will you be prioritising child safety over provider profit?

A Reform Bill is currently before Parliament – the Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Amendment Bill 2025. The Bill proposes a suite of changes to the regulation of

the sector, including the introduction of a 'paramount consideration of the rights and best interests of children' whenever decisions are made or functions are exercised under the Law.

Among other things it means that for services it displaces competing duties. The Bill makes clear that the child's best interests prevail over competing corporate obligations (such as directors' duties under the Corporations Act to act in the company's interests).

The "paramount consideration" principle is not standalone – it informs the whole scheme. It underpins the tougher penalties, the new enforcement tools, the transparency measures, the regulator's enhanced powers, and the sector's quality improvement obligations. Together these reforms make "paramountcy" both a guiding legal principle and a practical enforcement reality.

The Bill proposes tripling all penalties under the Act and Regulations with a further tripling of penalties for large childcare providers. This is to discourage businesses from accepting penalties from wrongdoing as another cost of doing business and to instead act as a deterrent and to drive genuine improvement and change.

(122) You also indicated that amendments would be made to the Children's Education and Care Services National Law to increase penalties for breaches. What will those penalty increases be?

Please see answer to supplementary question 121.

(123) You announced plans to amend the law to place children's safety as the "paramount consideration." What will this mean in practice for services and providers? They're just words aren't they Minister?

Please see answer to supplementary question 121.

(124) You committed to mandating the public release of compliance actions in the early childhood sector. Where will this information be published, and when will it become available?

The independent review completed by former Deputy Ombudsman, Mr Chris Wheeler (the Wheeler Review) acknowledged the constraints of the National Law and recommended that the Regulatory Authority allocate the necessary resources to enable us to publish the maximum amount of information about compliance actions that we are permitted to publish under the applicable legal limitations.

The NSW Regulatory Authority has commenced publishing detail of all enforcement action types permitted under the National Law. Since 22 August 2025, details of compliance notices and emergency action notices issued since 1 January 2025 were published for the first time on the NSW Department of Education website at: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/regulation-and-compliance/compliance-and-enforcement-actions>.

These enforcement actions are in addition to cancellations, involuntary suspensions, enforceable undertakings and prosecution details, which were already available on the website.

In addition, the Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Amendment Bill 2025 proposes expanding significantly the powers of the regulator to ensure families are kept informed. For example, by requiring services to display their full compliance histories; by allowing the regulator to inform families of investigations at their child's service; and by allowing the regulator to suspend a service's rating during an investigation.

Standalone Regulatory Agency

(125) Minister, you have said that a new independent regulatory agency will be

created with stronger powers and accountability. What specific powers will this agency have?

- (a) What accountability mechanisms will apply to this new regulator?**
- (b) When will the agency be established and operational?**
- (c) What budget has been allocated to establish and run this agency?**
- (d) What governance structure will be in place for the agency?**
- (e) Will the Minister issue directions to this agency, and how will it differ from the existing regulatory framework?**

A new standalone regulatory agency, independent of the Department of Education, will be created with stronger powers and accountability. It will report directly to the Minister.

Initial establishment of the independent regulator is targeted for before the end of 2025. Planning is underway to determine the budget requirements as part of the establishment of the independent regulatory authority. The Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Amendment Bill 2025 is currently before Parliament and that Bill proposes additional powers for the regulator.

The Minister will have the power to issue directions, guidelines and expectations to the new regulator.

CCTV Installation

(126) You have said the regulator may require services to install CCTV cameras where safety concerns arise. What thresholds or triggers will determine when cameras are required?

At the Education Ministers Meeting (EMM) held on 22 August 2025, Education Ministers agreed to a National assessment of CCTV in 300 services. The Commonwealth will invest up to \$21 million for the assessment and this assessment will commence in the last quarter of the year and deliver advice on best practice use and operation.

A copy of the Education Ministers Meeting Communique is available at:

<https://www.education.gov.au/download/19434/education-ministers-meeting-communique-august-2025/41840/document/pdf>.

Thresholds and triggers of when cameras are required will be determined as part of the trial.

(127) Do any early childhood services currently have regulator-mandated CCTV in operation?

There are currently no services with regulator-mandated CCTV in operation.

Oversight of For-Profit Providers

(128) In your press release you accused the former government of allowing for-profit providers to grow to two-thirds of the sector without adequate oversight. What evidence or data supports that claim?

The proportion of ECEC providers operating services in NSW that are private-for-profit as at 30 June 2025 is 63.4%.

(129) What additional oversight measures have you introduced specifically for for-profit providers?

The department adopts a risk-based approach to funding compliance including annual audit of services receiving NSW government funding. The department regularly introduces new measures as part of its continual improvement approach.

(130) If you believe for-profit providers have grown without oversight, why is your government still approving their operation?

The NSW Department of Education's Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Regulatory Authority under the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (National Law) has, of course, provided oversight of the approval of new centres under the law. The reference to lack of oversight goes to the former government's failure to oversight the use of government funding levers or regulatory controls to affect the provision of quality care throughout the sector. Oversight of compliance is ongoing and the Regulatory Authority actively monitors compliance and takes proportionate, risk-based regulatory action where standards are not met. This includes issuing emergency action notices, prohibiting individuals, and, where there is an unacceptable risk to children, suspending or cancelling approvals. Where a service ceases to operate because approval has been withdrawn or otherwise, Start Strong funding stops immediately.

Action is not taken on the basis of whether a provider is for-profit or not-for-profit, but on whether it meets its obligations under the National Law. Where providers fail to meet these obligations, the Regulatory Authority will take compliance action and may withdraw approvals. In 2024–25, more than 3,800 compliance actions were issued, a 13% increase compared with 2023–24 — and 12 service approvals and 42 provider approvals were cancelled.

(131) Will your government move to close existing for-profit providers in the sector?

Please see answer to supplementary question 130

Weapons in Schools

(132) What measures is the Government taking to reduce weapons in our schools?

The NSW Government is taking a comprehensive range of measures to ensure a safe learning environment for all students and staff.

The department's Incident Notification Policy and Procedures promote awareness of weapon-related incidents and provide support to schools through the Incident Report and Support Hotline. Strict policies prohibiting weapons on school premises are enforced, supported by laws that criminalise the possession of weapons at schools.

Schools run programs to educate students about the dangers and consequences of carrying weapons, fostering a culture of safety and respect. Counselling and conflict resolution services are also available to address underlying issues. Supporting students who are experiencing self-harm, suicidal ideation and/or behaviours is an important aspect of the role of school counsellors and school psychologists. School counselling staff are provided with professional learning and guidelines to support this work, and the government has committed to increase the School Counselling Service by an additional 250 full-time equivalent positions by January 2027.

NSW Police work closely with schools by conducting regular visits, providing rapid responses to incidents, and offering advice through Police Liaison Officers who support secondary schools with crime prevention programs.

Under the Suspension and Expulsion procedures in public schools, principals issue an immediate suspension to any student who engages in serious behaviours of concern, including being in possession of, or using, weapons such as knives or firearms, or using an implement as a weapon. During suspension, students are removed from school so appropriate supports can be implemented, risks addressed, and a successful return planned.

Students and staff are encouraged to confidentially report concerns or incidents involving weapons to help maintain safety. Together, these initiatives form a coordinated approach to minimise the presence of weapons in schools and ensure a safe, supportive educational environment.

(133) One former principal suggested metal detectors as a potential option – what do you think of that?

The department does not support schools using metal detectors on students. The NSW Police work closely with schools to monitor and respond to threats involving weapons, including regular visits and rapid response to incidents.

(134) There were also 17 counts of self-harm with a weapon at school – what is the Government doing to ensure students have the right supports in place to prevent these self-harm incidents from occurring?

The NSW Department of Education is actively collaborating with NSW Health to advance initiatives aligned with the Towards Zero Suicides framework. This includes developing clear guidelines for schools to respond effectively to self-harm and suicidal behaviour, alongside dedicated training.

To support student wellbeing, the department employs over 2,200 specialist staff including Student Support Officers, Wellbeing Nurses, School Chaplains, and Student Wellbeing Officers. Schools and staff also have access to a wide range of professional learning opportunities, with approximately 60 external programs tailored to meet diverse local student wellbeing needs. This is in addition to a variety of programs and services available in non-government schools.

Schools play a vital role in preventing and responding to self-harm through various strategies, including:

- Providing immediate care to ensure student safety and wellbeing, collaborating with families to develop safety plans and conduct risk assessments where appropriate.
- Offering early intervention and ongoing support via government-funded school-based counsellors, psychologists, and wellbeing staff.
- Training teachers and school staff to recognise signs of self-harm and mental health issues, enabling timely and appropriate referrals to professional help.
- Partnering with external mental health services, community organisations, and healthcare providers to connect students with specialised support.
- Fostering safe, inclusive, and supportive school environments that reduce stigma around mental health and encourage help-seeking behaviours.
- Utilising wellbeing data and screening tools to identify at-risk students early and provide prompt support.

These initiatives reflect the NSW Department of Education's ongoing commitment to nurturing student wellbeing and preventing self-harm in schools.

(135) We can see from the data – four of those incidents involved a knife – did any of them involve a firearm? If yes, how many?

The Incident Notification and Emergency Response Unit does not collect this data.

(136) How many students have been suspended in 2025 for weapon related incidents?

The department collects suspension and expulsion data, with published factsheets made available online at <https://data.nsw.gov.au/data/dataset/nsw-education-suspensions-and-expulsions-in-nsw-government-schools>. 2025 data is not currently available.

(137) Can you provide a breakdown of what those incidents are and what kind of weapons were involved?

Please see answer to supplementary question 136.

(138) Professor Cross's report notes that cyberbullying interacts with developmental systems at the individual, family, preschool and community levels. What specific actions is the government taking to address this? Are you working with other agencies, and what tangible measures have been implemented?

In November 2024, the Premier announced that the Schools Advisory Council (SAC) would begin developing a statewide approach to address bullying in NSW schools. In December 2024, the SAC agreed that the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) would convene a cross-sectoral working group to develop an anti-bullying framework, covering both face-to-face and cyberbullying, for use in all NSW schools. This work is currently underway.

The framework is being developed in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders from across NSW and Australia. This includes students, parents, school staff, community members, and relevant federal and state agencies, such as the 3 NSW school sectors, the eSafety Commissioner, NSW Police, NESA, and NSW Health.

Bullying

(139) Are you aware of the work done by the NSW Mental Health Commission around students experiencing bullying in government schools? Why has this data not been updated since 6 September 2023?

In 2024, updates were made to the Tell Them From Me survey structure and length. This meant that survey results from 2023 and 2024 could not be simply compared.

The reporting of students' bullying experiences on the Mental Health Commission website are planned to resume from 2026, using data from the 2025 NSW Public Schools Survey.

(140) The 2023 data showed more than a quarter of primary and secondary students reported experiencing bullying in NSW government schools. What is Education doing to collect real-time data on bullying? Where is this information available, and how can parents access it?

From 2025, data on students' experiences of bullying is centrally collected on an annual basis using the NSW Public Schools Surveys. The results from these surveys are provided to schools and they are encouraged to share insights with their school community.

(141) Can you advise whether the figures on bullying have improved since the 2023 release?

In 2024, the Tell Them From Me student survey showed that 27.6% of primary school students and 27% of secondary school students reported experiencing bullying at school.

In 2023, 29% of primary school students and 28.4% secondary school students reported experiencing bullying at school.

(142) In 2023, the data showed 29% of primary students and 28.4% of secondary students in government schools reported experiencing bullying. Have those figures improved, and what data is available for 2024?
(a) When will that data be publicly released?

Please see answer to supplementary question 141.

- (143) It appears the source of the Mental Health Commission data was the Department of Education's Tell Them From Me student survey. What were the results of the 2024 tell them from me survey in relation to bullying?**
(a) Is that data publicly available and if so where?

Please see answer to supplementary question 141.

- (144) Can you confirm when the final results of the replacement NSW Public School Survey will be available?**

The results from the NSW Public School Survey were provided to participating schools earlier this year, following the completion of the survey.

Declining Student enrolments - Minister

- (145) Minister, how many students are currently enrolled in New South Wales public schools? Can you provide the Committee with the latest data?**

NSW public school enrolment number data is publicly available online at <https://data.nsw.gov.au/data/group/education-and-training>.

- (146) Are you concerned about the continuing decline in public school enrolments across New South Wales?**

The department is committed to ensuring that every public school is the school of choice for local families.

- (147) Can you provide any data on the shift of students from public to private or Catholic schools in the last two years?**

The department does not hold data for students outside NSW public schools.

- (148) What impact is declining enrolment having on school budgets and staffing allocations?**

In NSW public schools, enrolment numbers are one factor contributing to a school's funding and staffing allocation under the Resource Allocation Model (RAM).

Schools also receive funding based on the rural or remote location of the school and the profile of their students (i.e. socio-economic background, indigenous student numbers, levels of disability or additional learning needs and English language proficiency).

- (149) What specific measures is your government taking to attract more students into the public school system?**

Under Our Plan for Public Education, the department is working to increase the enrolment share of NSW public schools. Public schools remain the sector of choice by a significant margin, and the Government is determined to win back enrolments through targeted reforms and investment.

We are lifting student outcomes through the implementation of the NSW knowledge and skills-rich syllabuses, supported by explicit teaching. Schools are also supported with enhanced transition to school and transition to high school resources, and a strong focus on high potential and gifted education so students can access more opportunities in their local public school.

To attract and retain the best teachers, the Government has delivered improved pay and workload reforms, alongside a program of permanent teacher appointments to reduce vacancies and provide greater stability for schools.

Record funding is being invested into public education infrastructure, including new and upgraded schools and the expansion of public preschools across NSW, ensuring that students and families have access to modern, high-quality learning environments.

(150) Can you point to any evidence that these measures are actually working?

Please see answer to supplementary question 149.

(151) You have said repeatedly that teacher pay and addressing workforce vacancies are the solution. Why have those measures not translated into improved enrolment numbers?

Increasing community confidence in public education is a priority of the Department of Education, and one that requires sustained efforts over an extended period. There are many factors that can affect school enrolment trends including, changing demographics, school access and housing supply. Attracting and retaining quality teachers is only one of many actions the department is taking to address the issue.

At the beginning of Term 3, the number of permanent teacher vacancies had dropped by 61% to be at its lowest level in 4 years. Fewer vacancies mean consistency for students, less strain on schools and increased confidence for parents that more students have a permanent teacher in their classroom.

(152) Have you set enrolment growth targets for public schools? If so, what are they for 2026 and beyond?

Please see answer to supplementary question 149.

**(153) Will you commit today to setting clear, public enrolment targets for public schools and report annually to Parliament on whether they are being met?
(a) If not, how can parents have confidence that your government is serious about reversing the trend?**

Please see answer to supplementary question 149.

Politicisation of Schools

(154) Why was a federal Labor candidate (Zhi Soon, Candidate for Banks) included in a state government media release about NSW education infrastructure?

On 16 April 2025, the Minns Labor Government announced a \$1.5 million investment in the Peakhurst West Public School aquatic facility, after years of neglect by the Liberals at both a state and federal level.

This was the first significant investment in maintenance or upgrades at the facility for 35 years, with local Liberal MPs Mark Coure and David Coleman having not delivered any money for the aquatic facility while in government.

As a local resident, who was born and raised in the area, and someone whose career has been in education policy, Zhi Soon is a strong advocate for investment in school infrastructure.

(155) Does the Minister believe it is appropriate to politicise school infrastructure upgrades by including federal election campaigning in a state government announcement?

The Minns Labor Government is proud to deliver the \$1.5 million dollar investment in the Peakhurst West Public School aquatic facility. This investment has secured the future of this valuable community asset for current users of the pool as well as generations to come. It is inexcusable that the Liberals refused to invest in the Peakhurst West Public School aquatic facility when it had the chance and allowed this pool to deteriorate to a point where its future was under threat.

It is disappointing the Liberals continue to criticise this investment.

(156) Can the Minister clarify whether NSW Education funding decisions are being influenced by federal election campaigning considerations?

Education funding decisions are based on need.

Start Strong Pathways Program

(157) What funding allocation, if any, has been made in this Budget for the Start Strong Pathways Program?

Program arrangements are currently in place until December 2025. Consideration is being given to future arrangements and further advice will be provided once available.

(158) Can you confirm whether the program will continue beyond 31 December this year, or is it due to end?

Please see answer to supplementary question 157.

(159) Has the Government committed to simply rolling over the existing program, or are there changes planned to its structure and delivery?

Please see answer to supplementary question 157.

(160) When will the Department provide clarity to providers about the future of the program, given that organisations are already being forced into contingency planning?

Please see answer to supplementary question 157.

(161) What assessment has been made of the impact on children, families, staff, and volunteers if the program is not continued in its current form?

Please see answer to supplementary question 157.

(162) What specific analysis has the Department undertaken on the impact of losing playgroups in regional and rural areas, where they are often the only early childhood option available?

Please see answer to supplementary question 157.

Foundational Supports & Budget Allocations

(163) What role does the Department of Education see itself playing as a lead agency

in delivering foundational supports for children aged 0–9?

States and territories have worked closely with the Commonwealth on health funding and reform of the NDIS since National Cabinet in December 2023. Governments have agreed to build system readiness, such as developing national standards and an outcomes framework. Governments are working together on how and when these services will be rolled out.

In NSW, the Cabinet Office is the lead for inter-governmental relations on foundational supports, with the Department of Communities and Justice responsible for the design of such supports.

(164) What budget allocation has been made to support these foundational supports, particularly in partnership with other agencies such as DCJ, Health, and Aboriginal Affairs?

Please see answer to supplementary question 163.

(165) How will these budget allocations support the intent of Minister Butler’s recent comments on foundational supports resting heavily on ECEC and primary schools?

Please see answer to supplementary question 163.

(166) What consultation has been undertaken with the ECEC sector and providers, such as playgroups, to inform the Department’s approach to foundational supports in this Budget?

Please see answer to supplementary question 163.

Asbestos in Schools

(167) How many asbestos inspections were conducted in NSW public schools in the last calendar year?

- (a) How many asbestos inspections were conducted in 2024?**
- (b) How many asbestos inspections were conducted in 2023?**

The department completes a rolling cycle of 5-yearly proactive asbestos resurveys at schools and other sites constructed prior to 2004 as per the legislative requirements under the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 (NSW), Clause 426, which mandates that asbestos registers be reviewed at least every 5 years.

Under the Minns Labor Government the number of asbestos resurveys has increased compared to the former Liberal National Government. In 2022-23, under the former Liberal National Government – 115 asbestos resurveys were completed. In 2023-2024, 536 asbestos resurveys were completed. In 2024-2025, 629 asbestos resurveys were completed. A similar number are planned for 2025-26.

Since 2023, a number of reforms have been implemented to the department’s protocols to manage asbestos in schools, including improving awareness of requirements and training. Schools and principals have received training and communication to help ensure their requirements are clearer when dealing with suspected asbestos finds. Additionally asbestos management training is required to be completed by principals, public service senior executives, asset service officers and WHS advisors.

(168) Of the inspections conducted, how many identified asbestos as present or requiring remediation?

Every school has an Asbestos Management Plan and Register which can be found online. These registers are updated publicly within 24 hours of changes being made.

If any immediate action is required, this is undertaken by licenced contractors under the supervision of an independent hygienist. The department undertakes asbestos remediation where necessary as part of its capital works projects, planned maintenance, and emergency and urgent repairs.

(169) How many schools in NSW currently contain asbestos?

Please see answer to supplementary question 168.

(170) How much was spent specifically on asbestos removal and remediation in schools in the past two financial years?

The 2025-26 budget has allocated \$28 million specifically for asbestos management and asbestos remediation projects. This is in addition to asbestos-related works funded through other capital and maintenance programs.

(171) What is the total allocation for asbestos management in the 2025/26 Budget, and how does it compare to previous years?

In 2024-25 Budget \$20.5 million was allocated. In 2023-24 Budget \$12.5 million was allocated.

(172) Is the Government confident that the current inspection regime is adequate to protect student and staff safety?

Under the Minns Labor Government the number of asbestos resurveys has increased compared to the former Liberal National Government. Funding for asbestos remediation and asbestos management has also increased.

Killara High School / Lindfield Learning Village: Local Enrolment Area

(173) How was this change communicated to the impacted local community of Killara and Lindfield?

Changes to enrolment boundaries are published online and are also be communicated through letters, email updates, school and newsletters. Meetings occurred in Term 1, 2025, initiated by the department's School Utilisation Team, involving Directors, Educational Leadership and principals from impacted schools.

(174) Just to clarify that the changes were not exposed due to a parent went on a website and sounded the alarm that led to a [SMH article on 3 March 2025](#)?

Please see answer to supplementary question 173.

(175) Do think it is acceptable that parents and students find out about these changes by seeing it on a website or reading it in the paper?

Please see answer to supplementary question 173.

(176) Was the original change of enrolment area to start in 2026?

Following community feedback, transition arrangements have been extended to include both the 2026 and 2027 school years.

(177) Given that Lindfield Learning Village is an innovative education model, and Killara High is a traditional education model, shouldn't parents and students be given choice?

The Department of Education's Enrolment of Students in NSW Government Schools Policy entitles parents and carers to enrol their child at the local school within the designated intake area which the child is eligible to attend. Students whose permanent place of residence falls within this boundary will be offered a position at the school. While parents may apply to enrol their child in the school of their choice, a non-local application can only be considered if places are available.

Lindfield Learning Village and Killara High School are both comprehensive public schools, offering the same NSW curriculum. Lindfield Learning Village and Killara High School have been exploring opportunities to work together and with other local schools to support strong curriculum delivery and expand opportunities for students.

(178) Like co-ed schools and single sex schools have joint enrolment areas, couldn't this also happen for Lindfield and Killara families and students?

The approach taken reflects demographic changes in the area and aligns with each school's capacity, maintaining equity of access across the broader school network.

(179) Why were changes made for it now it start in 2028 instead of 2026, as reported in the [SMH on 4 March 2025](#)?

Please see answer to supplementary question 176.

(180) Why not make the joint enrolment area permanent?

Please see answer to supplementary question 176.

(181) When Lindfield Learning Village opened in 2019, was there are hard local enrolment area?

Please see answer to supplementary question 176.

(182) When did the Department of Education decide there would be hard enrolment areas for Killara and Lindfield?

Please see answer to supplementary question 176.

(183) In the case of a student who was in the now Lindfield Learning Village enrolment area who does not want an innovative education model, what are their options?

Please see answer to supplementary question 177.

(184) Could this push more families to walk away from public education, and choose independent and catholic schools?

Families make enrolment decisions based on a variety of factors, including location, school offerings and individual student needs. NSW public schools provide high-quality education and programs to meet the needs of students and their communities.

(185) In relation to the changes, was the Northern Sydney District Council of P&C Associations briefed?

Please see answer to supplementary question 173.

Kambora Public School: Recess

(186) Is the Department of Education considering putting Kambora Public School into recess? The school community believes a decision has already been made, with a [SMH article on 18 June 2026 stating they were “quietly abandoned”](#). Is that the case?

Following local consultation on the future educational provision, the school will be placed into recess from January 2026. This was communicated to parents and local stakeholders on 17 September 2025.

(187) When was the last time a metropolitan primary school placed into recess?

Due to demographic changes in the area, the decision was made, following local consultation, to place Kambora Public School into recess from 2026. The last time a metropolitan primary school ceased educational provision was in December 2014, however at this time the school was closed immediately and did not go into recess.

(188) When did the Department of Education see any warning signs in relation to enrolment at Kambora?

Changes to the local catchment areas for Kambora Public School were explored in 2024 but modelling suggested this would not likely result in an increase in enrolments, due to the current oversupply in classroom spaces across the primary schools in the area which has resulted from changing demographics in the area.

The school has had a significant number of non-local enrolments (over half of its total student enrolment) over the past decade, alongside a declining local enrolment. In recent years, families have sought non-local enrolment at nearby public schools, citing reasons relating to Kambora Public School such as the small cohorts in each year group and limited extra-curricular and social opportunities for their children.

(189) What actions did the Department of Education undertake to boost enrolments?

Please see answer to supplementary question 188.

(190) If Kambora does go into recess, how will other primary schools react that have had declining enrolments?

Please see answer to supplementary question 188.

(191) Is Kambora just the first school in what will become a trend of placing schools into recess?

Please see answer to supplementary question 188.

(192) To the Secretary, how would it feel to be a Secretary that had a Sydney primary school go into recess on your watch?

I am advised the Secretary is committed to delivering quality public education provision across NSW.

(193) Would you agree that one reason for a declining enrolment was due to local enrolment areas not being enforced?

Please see answer to supplementary question 188.

(194) If yes, then why does the Department of Education have such strong local enrolment areas for Killara High and Lindfield Learning Village, but not for Kambora?

Please see answer to supplementary question 188.

(195) What is the current policy of local enrolment areas?

The Department of Education's Enrolment of students policy is available at:
<https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2002-0006>.

Data

(196) How frequently is data updated within the New South Wales Department of Education?

Data within the department is updated at varying intervals, depending on the type of data and its source. Different data collections have different reporting cycles.

(197) Can you confirm that the data provided by the Department, particularly on the data.nsw.gov.au site, is always accurate?

The department supports the NSW Open Data Policy, which aims to improve public access to government data. Sharing open data streamlines reporting, enables value-adding and supports transparency.

Metadata and notes are provided with each dataset to understand the data sets context, scope, and any limitations. Data is sourced from a range of operational systems and collections, each with its own timing, definitions, and validation processes. Although rigorous quality assurance is applied before publication, occasional discrepancies or delays can occur. Any identified issues are corrected as quickly as possible.

(198) Why does the publicly available website currently state there are around 2,000 support classes in public schools, while reporting in the Sydney Morning Herald today indicates there are actually about 4,000?

The data set on support classes published on the NSW Data Hub lists the schools with support classes. A school can, and often has, more than one support class.

The NSW Government has delivered an extra 260 support classes in NSW public schools this year, making it easier for students with disability to access high-quality learning environments, closer to home. As at August 2025, more than 26,000 students were enrolled in mainstream support classes and more than 6,120 students enrolled in SSPs, accessing more than 4,810 support classes across NSW Public Schools.

Classes have now been established in more than 30 schools that were without a previous support class provision, giving them the resources to provide extra support. This work forms part of the NSW Government's commitment to delivering support for students with disability closer to where they live.

(199) How do you explain this discrepancy in the data?

Please see answer to supplementary question 198.

(200) How can parents have confidence in publicly available education data if it is

outdated or inaccurate?

Please see answer to supplementary question 198.

Consent and respectful relationships education – the primary prevention of violence
(201) Early childhood settings, primary, and secondary schools have an essential role in preventing violence. What is the NSW Government doing to fund and support primary prevention initiatives in early childhood settings, primary, and secondary schools to address the drivers of sexual, domestic and family violence?

Please see answer to supplementary question 55.

(202) Is the funding for violence prevention in education settings adequate? Why or why not?

The department is funded by the Australian Government from 2024-2028 under the Consent and Respectful Relationships Education Measure. The department will receive \$17.66 million over 4 years to support consent and respectful relationships education.

Under the Pathways to Prevention: NSW Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence 2024-2027, the department will receive \$8 million over 4 years to support consent and respectful relationships education. This is the first investment of this level for primary prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence in NSW.

(203) How much funding is allocated per school for respectful relationships education?

Please see answer to supplementary question 56.

(204) How will the NSW Government ensure a consistent, coordinated, and quality approach to consent and respectful relationships education across NSW schools, rather than an ad hoc approach?

Please see answer to supplementary question 57.

(205) Consent and respectful relationships education is most effective when it is ongoing and has a whole-of school approach. Is the NSW Government implementing an ongoing and whole- of-school approach in early childhood settings, primary schools, and secondary schools? If not, why not?

Please see answer to supplementary question 58.

(206) What is being done to increase the capacity of schools and teaching staff to effectively deliver consent and respectful relationships part of the curriculum?

Please see answer to supplementary question 59.

(207) What evaluation is being conducted to measure the capability of teaching staff to deliver consistent and ongoing consent and respectful relationship training?

Please see answer to supplementary question 60.

(208) Is there an evaluation process to measure the impact of consent and respectful relationships education in NSW schools?

Please see answer to supplementary question 60.

Western Sydney

(209) In a media release on the 21 August 2025, the Minns Labor Government announced \$63 million for infrastructure in Western Sydney. \$11.7 million of this funding is allocated to projects in Box Hill. This funding was collected through the fund formally known as the Special Infrastructure Contributions (SIC) fund, paid for developers. Can you confirm how much funding remains from those contributions for Box Hill projects?

This question should be directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.

(210) What funding is the Government going to provide to cover the shortfall in the developer contributions (CP15) arising from the capping of local developer contributions by the State Government?

Please see answer to supplementary question 209.

Planning and Development for The Hills Shire Council

(211) When is the NSW Government going to make a budget provision to support The Hills Shire Council, to recover from the decision to artificially cap developer contributions in the northwest sector where the budget deficit is currently around \$200M and growing?

This question should be directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.

(212) Is there intention for the NSW Government to compensate Councils for the work they do assessing State Significant Development Applications?
(a) (If yes) when is this likely to occur?
(b) (If no) why not?

Please see answer to supplementary question 211.

(213) What is the cost per annum to the NSW taxpayer, when state government officials have to intervene after private certifiers have approved substandard buildings?

Please see answer to supplementary question 211.

(214) Is the NSW Government concerned about what the housing crisis means for the health of the Hawkesbury/Nepean River?
(a) (If yes) What action is being taken to address these concerns?

Please see answer to supplementary question 211.

(215) Will the NSW Government consider contributing funds to Local Government Councils' for animal shelter facilities, given the current overcrowding being experienced throughout NSW?

This question should be directed to the Minister for Local Government.

Richmond Road and Bridge upgrade

(216) Minister, you stated in a media release dated 2 July 2025 that Stage 1 construction for the New Richmond Bridge project was expected to be

completed in late 2026. According to the project timeline on the NSW Transport website, updated on the 22 July 2025 however, completion of stage 1 is now sometime in 2027. Can you explain why there has been a blowout in this timeline?

Please see answer to supplementary question 117.

(217) When in 2027 is that stage now expected to be completed?

Please see answer to supplementary question 117.

(218) What impact is this expected to have on the remaining stages of the project?

Please see answer to supplementary question 117.

(219) How will you ensure that a cost blowout doesn't eventuate and that the project will be completed within the already allocated Federal and State funding?

Please see answer to supplementary question 117.

(220) What date is the New Richmond Bridge project expected to be completed?

Please see answer to supplementary question 117.

Western Sydney Transport Infrastructure

(221) Regarding the Western Sydney Airport Line (full extent north-south from Tallawong to Macarthur) when will the business cases for the north and south extensions be completed?

(a) Will the Government commit to a timeframe for delivery?

Please see answer to supplementary question 118.

(222) Regarding stages 5a and 5b of the Mulgoa Road upgrade, when can the community expect the missing 2.2km section upgrade for the vital north south connection to the airport (due to be open for business in 2026) to be delivered?

Please see answer to supplementary question 118.

(223) What is the government's timeframe to complete the strategic business case for the Castlereagh Connection?

Please see answer to supplementary question 118.

Penrith Beach

(224) Why has the government not committed funding for the permanent use of Penrith Beach for swimming and recreation uses to benefit the growing and underserved Western Sydney population?

This question should be directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.

Blacktown Hospital

(225) Minister, as you may be aware from media reports, patients have been photographed sleeping on the floor of Blacktown Hospital. At the time, the Premier was reported as saying that fixing this was a "top priority". How is the Government responding to this crisis in public health?

This question should be directed to the Minister for Health.

(226) Is the Government prepared to provide an immediate injection of funding?

Please see answer to supplementary question 225.

(227) Is the Government reviewing the population boom in Greater Western Sydney and the current inadequate infrastructure associated with public health?

Please see answer to supplementary question 225.

(228) What are the current bulk billing rates for GPs in Greater Western Sydney? Compare the rate over the last two years?

Please see answer to supplementary question 225.

(229) What are the current mental health resources available in Greater Western Sydney? How many specialised doctors are available and required hospital resources and facilities

Please see answer to supplementary question 225.

Greenfield Development

(230) Minister on the front page of the SMH this week, it discusses the impact your government's levies and taxes are having upon development in the Western Suburbs, with developers saying it's no longer feasible to build large-scale projects in these areas. The article talks about the government's Transport-oriented development scheme and your low and mid-rise housing policies that are focused on density and infill, rather than greenfield developments that allow families to still have a backyard. The end result of turning your back on greenfield developments, as highlighted by the UDIA, is that the government is not delivering the housing volumes the public expects and the government has stated it would deliver. Is it the case that you are essentially abandoning greenfield developments – which provide families with the housing options they want – due to a lack of desire to make the requisite investments in infrastructure that are needed in this area?

This question should be directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.

(231) You say that you don't want to leave communities stranded with no water, sewer services, or a lack of access to transport and roads. Isn't this then the case in Western Sydney that the government is failing to meet aspiring home buyers in Western Sydney?

Please see answer to supplementary question 230.

Climate teaching

(232) Mental health workers recognise that younger children may not be mature enough to fully comprehend the complex issue of climate change, making intensive teaching potentially harmful by inducing anxiety rather than constructive engagement. How is the Government responding?

The new K–6 primary syllabuses use age-appropriate content for complex issues such as climate

change. In the Human Society and its Environment K–6 (2024) syllabus, students learn about what makes places unique and the different ways to conserve and manage them. In the new Science and Technology K–6 (2024) syllabus, students learn to understand natural phenomena and ways in which science and technologies can be used for the benefit of humanity and the planet.

Legal issues bulletin 55

(233) Minister, I seek an update on the release of the revised Transgender students in schools, legal issues bulletin 55, LIB55. During the last Budget Estimates I was informed it was under review and was informed, “It’s due term 1 this year.

The *Equality Legislation Amendment (LGBTIQA+) Act 2024* amended the *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995* to enable both parents of a student under 18 to provide a school with an altered record of the student’s sex subject to certain conditions being met.

As a result, the department needed to consider its response to requests to amend student records, including technical changes to its systems.

This process is being informed by recent advice from the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages about how it would implement this change. The Registry’s implementation affects what changes the department needs to make to its systems and the final content to be included in the Legal Issues Bulletin (LIB).

The department will need to conduct some further consultation in relation to the content of the Legal Issues Bulletin (LIB) in light of the amendments contained in the *Equality Legislation Amendment (LGBTIQA+) Act 2024*.

(234) Please explain the delay? What circumstances has led to the delay?

Please see answer to supplementary question 233.

(235) When will the revised legal issues bulleting 55m, LIB55, be released?

Please see answer to supplementary question 233.

School Infrastructure

(236) Has the NSW Education Department spoken to the NSW Planning Department about the impact of Government’s housing reforms on Education sector?

Under the Minns Labor Government, the Department has improved its engagement with government agencies, councils and developers to assess new housing developments and incorporate projected dwelling yields into student enrolment forecasts. These enhanced insights inform student enrolment projections and help better identify where and when new school infrastructure may be required.

The Minns Labor Government’s Enrolment Growth Audit has also strengthened the department’s forecasting and planning capability through detailed enrolment data analysis and interagency collaboration. Its recommendations continue to shape school planning priorities and investment.

The Enrolment Growth Audit highlighted the planning failures of the former Liberal National Government. The Audit can be found at <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/we-build-schools/enrolment-growth-audit.html>. Further evidence about the school infrastructure planning failures during the time of the former Liberal National Government was heard during the public hearings of ICAC’s Operation Landan.

Forums such as the Urban Development Program Committee, and initiatives such as Transport Oriented Developments, have provided greater clarity on where education infrastructure is most needed.

(237) Please document when the last discussion was held, when, where, who attended and what was discussed?

Please see answer to supplementary question 236.

(238) Please elaborate on the Minister's most recent visit to the Hills area. Where did she visit, when and who did she meet with.

The Acting Minister of Education and Early Learning visited Rouse Hill High School on 5 September 2025, alongside the Attorney General and Member for Greenway Michelle Rowland to turn the sod on the Minns Labor Government's major upgrade to the high school. The upgrade will include 11 new classrooms and two new science labs, enabling the school to grow its capacity. This was a project the former Liberal National Government failed to deliver during its 12 years in office.

(239) What Schools in the Hills area has the Minister visited in the last 12 months?

Both the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Education and Early Learning, and the Acting Minister for Education and Early Learning have visited many schools across NSW in the last 12 months.

This includes the new Box Hill Public School on 2 July, where the Acting Minister and Premier revealed designs for the new permanent Box Hill Public School and public preschool and the new permanent Box Hill High School. Work also got underway on the new public school at nearby Gables. The new high school in Box Hill will be the first new high school in The Hills since Labor was last in Government.

It should be noted the former Liberal National Government had no plans for any new schools in Box Hill, despite 12 years in office and student enrolment growth in the area of 1,114%.

The failure of the Liberals and Nationals to properly plan for growth in the Hills led to hundreds of demountables being imposed on school sites. More than 72% of the demountables on schools in the Castle Hill electorate were placed there by the Liberals. This includes at Castle Hill High School where 42 of 51 were placed there by the Liberals (with none placed under the Minns Labor Government). Furthermore, at Ironbark Ridge Public School, in the Kellyville electorate, 18 of the 22 demountables were placed there by the Liberals (with none placed under the Minns Labor Government).

(240) What modelling has been done to calculate additional schools required as a result of low-to- mid rise and TOD precincts?

(a) Please provide modelling per TOD precincts?

Please see answer to supplementary question 236.

(241) What do the results reveal for each TOD?

Please see answer to supplementary question 240.

(242) Does the NSW Education Department have concerns about the ability to keep up with the NSW Government's planning agenda?

Under a Minns Labor Government, families across NSW can have much more confidence that our fastest growing suburbs will have the world-class, quality public school infrastructure that they need.

In contrast, the former Liberal National Government failed to deliver schools in rapidly growing areas of NSW, including in The Hills.

(243) Are there concerns about the ability of future governments to fund additional schools needed for booming population?

(a) Any funds allocated to meet this additional educational need and requirement?

The Minns Labor Government is investing a record \$9 billion in new and upgraded schools, which is more than at any time under the Liberals and Nationals.

(244) Is there an update regarding a new primary school at Hills Showground?

The Minns Labor Government is delivering a major upgrade to Excelsior Public School in Castle Hill, which includes 22 new classrooms.

This is in addition to the major upgrades to Matthew Pearce Public School and Rouse Hill High School, as well as the new primary schools in Box Hill and Gables, and the new high school in Box Hill. Furthermore, the major upgrade to Castle Hill Public School was completed in June 2025.

(245) Any land sites identified or under review?

The work of investigating potential school sites across NSW is an ongoing process.

It should be noted, that while the former Liberal National Government planned and delivered the North West Metro, it failed to provision or acquire any land near a Metro station for a new school including at Bella Vista, Castle Hill, Cherrybrook, Hills Showground, Kellyville, Rouse Hill or Norwest.

(246) Does the Hills Shire have the most overcrowded schools in the State based on actual enrolments v capacity?

The Enrolment Growth Audit highlight the failure of the former Liberal National Government to properly plan and deliver the schools our fastest-growing suburbs needed. This includes in areas such as Box Hill, which saw student enrolment growth of 1,114%.

The Minns Labor Government is committed to addressing the failures of the Liberals and Nationals. That is why it is investing in 7 new schools and major upgrades across the Hills, including 2 new primary schools in Box Hill and the first high school in the Hills since Labor was last in government.

(247) Is the NSW Education Department concerned that overcrowding in Hills Shire schools will become significantly worse?

Please see answer to supplementary question 246.

(248) Castle Hill High school is operating at over 200% capacity and has 50 demountables. What plans are there to address capacity issues at the school?

It should be noted that 42 of the demountables at Castle Hill High School were placed there by the Liberals and Nationals who, after 12 years, left office with no plans to replace them either through an upgrade or a new school.

The Minns Labor Government is committed to addressing the failures of the Liberals and Nationals. That is why it is investing in 7 new schools and major upgrades across the Hills, including 2 new primary schools in Box Hill and the first high school in the Hills since Labor was last in government.

(249) Has the department investigated options for another public high school in or near Castle Hill?

(a) If not – why not?

Please see answer to supplementary question 246.

Teacher vacancies

(250) How does the Government response to a new survey of nearly 5000 primary and secondary teachers by the University of NSW that has found 90 per cent of teachers are experiencing moderate to severe levels of stress. Results also show more than two-thirds of Australian teachers experience moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety and depression – twice the national average. How is the Government responding?

Supporting the wellbeing of teachers and school staff is a core priority under the department's Staff Wellbeing Strategy 2024-27.

Significant action is already underway, including implementing workload reduction initiatives to ease administrative demands, strengthen psychosocial hazard management, and expand access to wellbeing supports in NSW public schools. This includes an enhanced Employee Assistance Program, additional work health and safety advisors in NSW public schools, and the rollout of digital and app-based wellbeing tools. The department also monitors staff wellbeing through the People Matter Employee Survey, People at Work Assessments, and feedback from school leaders to guide ongoing improvement.

(251) What efforts are in place to address teacher retention?

Teacher resignations and retirements in NSW schools have fallen from a peak of 3.8% and 2.0% respectively in 2023 to approximately 2.6% and 1.5% respectively at the beginning of 2025. While this is positive, the department is continuing to focus on teacher retention. A range of measures to improve teacher retention have been implemented including:

- the largest pay rise in a generation for teachers, making NSW teachers among the highest paid in the country.
- the creation of more permanent teaching and support positions in schools through the Temporary Workforce Transition Initiative.
- addressing workload by reducing administrative burden, improving mandatory training and professional learning requirements, improving administrative processes through utilising AI assistance, and providing additional administrative support in schools.

The recently announced Early Career Academy for Teachers will also drive a range of development and retention strategies that support teachers to perform at their best in the profession over the long term. The Academy's objective will be to provide a coordinated, wrap-around approach to supporting our early career teachers ensuring we attract the best teachers for tomorrow, setting them up for a successful career in public education.

CFMEU meetings

(252) Since 28 March 2023, have you met with the Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU) that was not disclosed in accordance with the Premier's Memorandum M2015-05 Publication of Ministerial Diaries and Release of Overseas Travel Information?

I am advised:

In accordance with the Premier's Memorandum M2015-05 Publication of Ministerial Diaries and Release of Overseas Travel Information, all Ministers publish extracts from their diaries, summarising details of scheduled meetings held with stakeholders, external organisations, third-party lobbyists and individuals. Ministers are not required to disclose details of the following meetings:

- meetings involving Ministers, ministerial staff, parliamentarians or government officials (whether from NSW or other jurisdictions)
- meetings that are strictly personal, electorate or party political
- social or public functions or events
- meetings held overseas (which must be disclosed in accordance with regulation 6(1)(b) of the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018 and Attachment B to the Premier's Memorandum), and
- matters for which there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

Ministers' diary disclosures are published quarterly on The Cabinet Office's website (<https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/cabinetoffice/access-to-information/ministers-diary-disclosures>)

ETU meetings

(253) Since 28 March 2023, have you met with the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) that was not disclosed in accordance with the Premier's Memorandum M2015-05 Publication of Ministerial Diaries and Release of Overseas Travel Information?

I am advised:

In accordance with the Premier's Memorandum M2015-05 Publication of Ministerial Diaries and Release of Overseas Travel Information, all Ministers publish extracts from their diaries, summarising details of scheduled meetings held with stakeholders, external organisations, third-party lobbyists and individuals. Ministers are not required to disclose details of the following meetings:

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- meetings held overseas (which must be disclosed in accordance with regulation 6(1)(b) of the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018 and Attachment B to the Premier's Memorandum), and
- matters for which there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

Ministers' diary disclosures are published quarterly on The Cabinet Office's website (<https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/cabinetoffice/access-to-information/ministers-diary-disclosures>)

Ministerial disclosures to The Cabinet Office

(254) On what date did you last update/make a ministerial disclosure to the Premier and the Secretary of The Cabinet Office?

I am advised:

The Ministerial Code of Conduct (Ministerial Code) requires Ministers to make certain disclosures to the Premier and the Secretary of The Cabinet Office. I comply with my obligations under the Ministerial Code.

Department(s)/Agency(s) Employees

(255) In relation to redundancies, will this be made available in your respective Department(s)/Agency(s) Annual Reports?

I am advised:

Information about any redundancies within agencies is published in the agency annual reports. Published annual reports can be accessed on agency websites.

Department(s)/Agency(s) Annual Reports

(256) Do you have plans to print the 2024-25 annual report(s) for each department / agency in your portfolio?

(a) If yes, what is the budgeted expenditure for printing for each department / agency?

I am advised:

Annual reports should be prepared in accordance with the Treasury Policy and Guidelines – Framework for Financial and Annual Reporting (TPG25-10).

State Records Act

(257) Have you and your ministerial office had training and/or a briefing about the State Records Act from State Records NSW and/or The Cabinet Office and/or Premier's Department?

(a) If yes, when?

I am advised:

The Ministers' Office Handbook provides guidance in relation to recordkeeping obligations under the State Records Act 1998.

The Cabinet Office also provide guidance, advice, training and support on these obligations for Ministers' offices.

Further information is available on State Records NSW's website (www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/dciths/state-records-nsw).

All Ministers' offices are expected to comply with their obligations under the *State Records Act 1998*.

Department(s)/Agency(s) Gifts and Hospitality Register

(258) Does your portfolio department(s)/agency(s) have a gifts and/or hospitality register?

(a) If yes, is it available online?

i. If yes, what is the website URL?

I am advised:

The Department of Education's gifts and hospitality register is available at:
<https://education.nsw.gov.au/rights-and-accountability/corruption-prevention>.

Ministerial staff disclosure of gifts and/or hospitality

(259) Does your ministerial office keep a register of gifts and/or hospitality for staff to make disclosures?

(a) If yes, what is the website URL?

I am advised:

All Ministerial staff are required to comply with the Gifts, Hospitality and Benefits Policy for Office Holder Staff attached to the Ministers' Office Handbook and available on the NSW Government website.

(260) Have any staff members in your office been the recipient of any free hospitality?

(a) What was the total value of the hospitality received?

(b) Are these gifts of hospitality declared?

I am advised:

All Ministerial staff are required to comply with their disclosure obligations under the Gifts, Hospitality and Benefits Policy for Office Holder Staff and I expect them to do so.

A breach of the Policy may be a breach of the Office Holder's Staff Code of Conduct.

The Policy includes disclosure obligations for Ministerial staff in respect of gifts, hospitality and benefits over \$150.

If a Ministerial staff member is required by their role to accompany their Office Holder at an event that the Office Holder is attending as the State's representative, or where the Office Holder has asked the staff member to attend, then attendance at that event would not constitute a gift or benefit for the purposes of the Policy.

Ministerial Code of Conduct

(261) Since 28 March 2023, have you breached the Ministerial Code of Conduct?

(a) If yes, what was the breach?

I am advised:

All Ministers are expected to comply with their obligations under the NSW Ministerial Code of Conduct (Ministerial Code) at all times.

The Ministerial Code sets the ethical standards of behaviour required of Ministers and establishes practices and procedures to assist with compliance.

Among other matters, the Ministerial Code requires Ministers to:

- disclose their pecuniary interests and those of their immediate family members to the Premier
- seek rulings from the Premier if they wish to hold shares, directorships, other business interests or engage in secondary employment (known as 'prohibited interests')
- identify, avoid, disclose and manage conflicts of interest
- disclose gifts and hospitality with a market value over \$500.

A substantial breach of the Ministerial Code (including a knowing breach of any provision of the Schedule) may constitute corrupt conduct for the purposes of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988.

Senior Executive Drivers

(262) As at 1 August 2025, how many senior executives in your portfolio department(s) / agency(s) have a driver?

I am advised:

No senior executives employed by the department have a driver.

GIPA Act - Disclosure Log & Ministerial Offices

(263) Does your Ministerial Office have a disclosure log in accordance with the Government Information (Public Access Act) 2009?

(a) If yes, what is the URL?

I am advised:

The Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, Minister for Western Sydney's Office disclosure log is available on the Department of Education website.

GIPA Act - Disclosure Log & Departments/Agencies

(264) What is the website URL for the Government Information (Public Access Act) 2009 disclosure log each of your portfolio department(s) / agency(s)?

I am advised:

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/rights-and-accountability/information-access/disclosure-log>.

TikTok

(265) Are you on TikTok?

(a) If yes, do you access TikTok from a NSW Government device?

I am advised:

The Circular DCS-2025-01 Cyber Security NSW Directive - Restricted Applications List advises how NSW Government agencies are required to appropriately manage risks to NSW Government information on government-issued devices, or personal devices that are used for government business.

Signal

(266) Are you on Signal?

(a) If yes, do you access Signal from a NSW Government device?

(b) If yes, does Signal comply with the State Records Act?

I am advised:

Like the former Coalition Government, the NSW Government uses a range of digital systems and communications that have been approved for use and may be utilised where there is a valid business requirement. This has been established practice under successive governments.

State records are a vital public asset, and access to Government information is essential to maintaining public trust in government. I comply with my obligations under the *State Records Act 1998*.

Training

(267) Since 28 March 2023, have you had training from an external stakeholder that included an invoice and payment paid for using your ministerial budget?

(a) If yes, what is the description of training?

(b) If yes, how much?

I am advised:

Ministers have undertaken a program of Ministerial induction training.

Ministers have undertaken training on the Respectful Workplace Policy.

Members of Parliament are provided with a Skills Development Allowance that may be used in a manner consistent with the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal Annual Determination.

Ministerial Office Budgets are managed in accordance with the Ministers' Office Handbook.

Parliamentary Secretary & Ministerial Vehicle

(268) Has your Parliamentary Secretary ever used a Ministerial driver from the pool?

(a) If yes, why?

I am advised:

The Ministers' Office Handbook provides that the Premier's Department transport services may be used by Parliamentary Secretaries for official business trips in connection with their duties as Parliamentary Secretaries, with costs paid from the Ministers' office budget.

Media releases and statements

(269) Are all the ministerial media releases and statements issued by you publicly available at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/ministerial-releases>?

(a) If no, why?

I am advised:

The Department of Customer Service is responsible for managing www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases and the publication of media releases.

Overseas Travel

(270) As Minister, do you approve overseas travel for public servants from your portfolio department(s)/agency(s)?

I am advised:

The NSW Government Travel and Transport Policy provides a framework for NSW Government travelling employees and covers official air and land travel by public officials using public money. Section 2.1 of that Policy sets out approvals required in relation to overseas travel. Further information in relation to the Policy can be found here: <https://www.info.buy.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/travel-andtransport-policy>

Treasury Policy and Guidelines – Framework for Financial and Annual Reporting (TPG25-10) requires agencies to include information on overseas visits by officers and employees in agency annual reports.

Data Breaches

(271) Does your portfolio department(s)/agency(s) keep a register of data breaches in accordance with the Privacy and Personal Information Protection (PPIP) Act?

(a) If yes, what is the website?

I am advised:

The Cabinet Office and Premier's Department each keep an internal register of eligible data

breaches as required by section 59ZE, Part 6A of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (PPIP Act)*.

Agencies are required by section 59ZD to prepare, publish and make publicly available a data breach policy. The PPIP Act does not provide for the internal register to be made public.

Under clause 17, of Schedule 1 to the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*, it is conclusively presumed that there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of information contained in a document prepared for the assessment of an eligible data breach under the PPIP Act, Part 6A, if the information could worsen a public sector agency's cyber security or lead to further data breaches.

Discretionary Fund

(272) As Minister, so you have a discretionary fund?

(a) If yes, what department(s) / agency(s) administer it?

(b) If yes, what is the website URL detailing expenditure?

I am advised:

Information about NSW Government grants can be found online. <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding>

Airline Lounges

(273) Are you a member of the Qantas Chairmans Lounge?

I am advised:

The *Constitution (Disclosures by Members) Regulation 1983 (Regulation)* sets out Members' obligations to disclose relevant pecuniary and other interests in periodic returns to Parliament.

The Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics Report on Review of the Code of Conduct, Aspects of Disclosure of Interests, and Related Issues (December 2010) notes that:

"Advice has been received from the Crown Solicitor that use of the Chairman's Lounge by invitation is not a "gift" for the purposes of clause 10 of the Regulation, as it does not involve disposition of property. However, when the membership leads to an upgrade valued at more than \$250, it becomes disclosable as a contribution to travel, and should be reported under clause 11 of the Regulation."

Clause 16 of the Regulation allows a Member to, at their discretion, disclose any direct or indirect benefit, advantage or liability, whether pecuniary or not.

Relevant disclosures have been made to The Cabinet Office and to the NSW Parliament.

(274) Are you a member of the Virgin Beyond Lounge?

I am advised:

The *Constitution (Disclosures by Members) Regulation 1983 (Regulation)* sets out Members' obligations to disclose relevant pecuniary and other interests in periodic returns to Parliament.

The Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics Report on Review of the Code of Conduct, Aspects of Disclosure of Interests, and Related Issues (December 2010) notes that:

"Advice has been received from the Crown Solicitor that use of the Chairman's Lounge by

invitation is not a "gift" for the purposes of clause 10 of the Regulation, as it does not involve disposition of property. However, when the membership leads to an upgrade valued at more than \$250, it becomes disclosable as a contribution to travel, and should be reported under clause 11 of the Regulation."

Clause 16 of the Regulation allows a Member to, at their discretion, disclose any direct or indirect benefit, advantage or liability, whether pecuniary or not.

Relevant disclosures have been made to The Cabinet Office and to the NSW Parliament.

Ministerial Overseas Travel

(275) Since 28 March 2023, have you formally applied to the Premier to travel overseas?

(a) If yes, was this application accepted?

I am advised:

Ministerial overseas travel information is published online. <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/premiersdepartment/access-to-information/ministerial-overseas-travel-information>

Private Jet Charter

(276) Have you travelled on a private jet charter in your Ministerial capacity?

(a) If yes, was this value for money for taxpayers?

I am advised:

Premier and Ministers' domestic travel information is published on the Premier's Department's website at: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/premiers-department/access-to-information/premier-and-ministersdomestic-travel>.

Ministerial Office renovations

(277) Since 28 March 2023, has your Ministerial Office at 52 Martin Place been renovated?

(a) If yes, how much was the expenditure?

I am advised:

Leasehold improvements for Ministerial Offices are reported within the Premier's Department annual reports.

Conflict of Interest

(278) Since 28 March 2023, have you formally written to the Premier with a conflict of interest?

(a) If yes, why?

I am advised:

All Ministers are expected to comply with their obligations under the NSW Ministerial Code of Conduct (Ministerial Code) at all times. The Ministerial Code sets the ethical standards of behaviour required of Ministers and establishes practices and procedures to assist with compliance.

Among other matters, the Ministerial Code requires Ministers to:

- disclose their pecuniary interests and those of their immediate family members to the Premier
- seek rulings from the Premier if they wish to hold shares, directorships, other business interests or engage in secondary employment (known as 'prohibited interests')

- identify, avoid, disclose and manage conflicts of interest
- disclose gifts and hospitality with a market value over \$500.

A substantial breach of the Ministerial Code (including a knowing breach of any provision of the Schedule) may constitute corrupt conduct for the purposes of the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988*.