

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2015-2016**  
**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE TAKEN DURING THE HEARING**  
**EDUCATION**

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**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Can you provide the Committee with the overall cost of those 486 departmental officers travelling overseas?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I am happy to take that question on notice.

**ANSWER**

The overall cost to the Department of the 486 departmental officers travelling overseas in 2014 was \$686,978.

A breakdown of costs would require an unreasonable and substantial diversion of resources to be completed within the specified time.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** In the 2014-15 Federal budget the Australian Government allocated \$243.8 million over a period of four years to fund the national school chaplaincy program across all States and Territories. Last October New South Wales and the Commonwealth signed an agreement for that program. Through that agreement the Commonwealth provides funding to the State to administer the National School Chaplaincy Programme on the Commonwealth's behalf. The agreement allows for a maximum financial contribution of \$44.45 million in New South Wales over the four-year period 2015 to 2018. That funding is for the provision of pastoral care services and strategies to support the emotional wellbeing of students and the broader school community

Following the signing of that agreement we formed a cross-sectoral committee for the National School Chaplaincy Programme. That committee includes representatives from government, Catholic and independent school sectors. The committee has determined the approach with the administration of the program in New South Wales consistent with Commonwealth requirements and has determined to provide some continuity for 2015 with all those three sectors involved in giving priority to schools previously funded by the Commonwealth. During 2015 a further application process for schools will take place for 2016 to 2018. That process is being developed jointly by that cross-sector committee.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Thank you. Can you give the Committee the approximate number of chaplains in each of those three categories?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I would need to take that on notice. I do not have that detail with me.

**ANSWER**

<b>Schooling Sector (category)</b>	<b>Number of Chaplains</b>
Government	341
Catholic	111
Independent	124

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**Ms BRUNIGES:** The Safe Schools program is a Commonwealth program, Reverend Nile. It comes from the Commonwealth.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I do not have a number.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** I know they are allocating \$9 million or something. Is that correct? Do you know the amount of money from the Federal Government?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I am not sure on that amount.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** We are happy to take it on notice.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** Yes, happy to take it on notice and find out.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** You do not deliver it?

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** There would be State costs, obviously, with schools implementing the program—producing materials?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Can we take that on notice?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** Yes, can I take that on notice? I know it is a Commonwealth program from my days at the Commonwealth, but I would have to be really clear. I know they have dedicated an amount of money, I think, in their most recent budget before it, but it is a Commonwealth administered and funded project.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** They would actually fund a local school implementing it? It does not come out of the State budget?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** No. There is no funding that I am aware of that comes from the State budget to support that.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Thank you.

## **ANSWER**

The Australian Government allocated funding to the Foundation for Young Australians to implement the national program called the National Safe Schools Coalition Australia.

The NSW Department of Education does not hold information on the amount of money allocated to the Foundation for Young Australians by the Australian Government.

The NSW Department of Education has not allocated funding to schools for their participation in the National Safe Schools Framework.

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**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** You mentioned that you are printing the enrolment form in different languages. Is that the first time you have put it in different languages, or is this an expansion?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** We are required to meet accessibility requirements in a number of languages. My understanding is that it is not the first time we have had the enrolment form in a number of languages.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Could you take on notice the languages that are being used.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** Certainly.

## ANSWER

The Application to Enrol in a NSW Government School form has been printed in languages other than English for a number of years.

In addition to English, the enrolment form is currently available in the following languages:

- |                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Arabic      | 19. Lao         |
| 2. Bengali     | 20. Macedonian  |
| 3. Bosnian     | 21. Nepali      |
| 4. Burmese     | 22. Persian     |
| 5. Chinese     | 23. Portuguese  |
| 6. Croatian    | 24. Punjabi     |
| 7. Dinka       | 25. Russian     |
| 8. Filipino    | 26. Samoan      |
| 9. French      | 27. Serbian     |
| 10. Greek      | 28. Somali      |
| 11. Hindi      | 29. Spanish     |
| 12. Indonesian | 30. Tamil       |
| 13. Italian    | 31. Thai        |
| 14. Japanese   | 32. Tongan      |
| 15. Karen      | 33. Turkish     |
| 16. Khmer      | 34. Urdu        |
| 17. Kirundi    | 35. Vietnamese. |
| 18. Korean     |                 |

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**Dr JOHN KAYE:** That is great, thank you. But still no-one has explained to me why there is not a conflict of interest between a company that is selling for profit textbooks to prepare students for NAPLAN and that same company being involved in those activities. Surely that is a conflict of interest.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** The advice I have is that Pearson was awarded the NAPLAN contract in New South Wales after a competitive tender process in 2011, and that process requires respondents to identify any conflicts of interest as a condition of the tender. That 2011 tender process was reviewed by an external probity advisor prior to awarding the contract. And it was extended—

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** So you are saying it is okay because—sorry, I thought you had finished.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** The term of the agreement was extended with Pearson to deliver NAPLAN services for 2015.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** So you are saying it is okay because Pearson said, "We don't have a conflict of interest."

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I am telling you that as part of that tender process the issue of conflict of interest is identified as a condition and that, indeed, an external probity advisor reviewed that process prior to awarding the contract. I do not award the contracts.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Can you tell us who the probity advisor was? Will you take that on notice?

**Mr ALEGOUNARIAS:** We will take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

O'Connor Marsden & Associates Pty Ltd.

## **PAGES 18 and 19**

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Let me ask you another question about Waverley College while we are looking at that particular school. In 2013 the MySchool website shows that it diverted \$2 million from its recurrent budget into its capital budget. Is there not an argument that the \$1.6 million the State gave to Waverley College did not end up supporting choice or supporting affordable schools but, instead, ended up in capital works?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I do not know the details of this. I will have to take that question on notice.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Would you be concerned that, of the 62 elite private schools—the category one, category two and category three private schools under the old system in New South Wales—30 per cent of all their recurrent funding ended up in their capital works budget?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** You are putting a proposition to me. I do not know, so I will have to take that question on notice.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Will you undertake to have a look at the MySchool website for 2013 and look at the amount of money that is diverted from those 62 schools?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** If you want to ask, you have to ask me a specific question.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** I am. I am asking whether you will undertake to look at those and look at the percentage of funds that is diverted out of their recurrent budgets and into their capital works budgets.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** You are asking me two questions. One is: Is it diverted? I do not know that that is true.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** No, the question I am asking is very straight forward. Will you have a look at it and look at the percentage—

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** If they are diverted—

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** —of money that is diverted. How much money is diverted?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** You say "if", so you are putting a proposition to me.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Were any moneys diverted?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** The question is if they are, then there would be a question. If it is, then how much? There are two questions. You are putting a direct proposition to me that funds are diverted. I do not know if that is true or if there is anything wrong with that.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** You will look and see if it is, and if it is you work out the percentage that is diverted and then we may have another conversation.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** You are entitled to put any question on notice that you like.

**ANSWER**

NSW non-government schools are funded in accordance with the *NSW Education Act 1990*. The Act does not mandate how non-government schools are to spend their funds, so long as school income and assets are not used for a purpose other than the operation of the school.

In relation to State funding, per capita funding is the largest component of State funding for non-government schools. This funding can only be spent on the following education purposes:

- teaching and ancillary staff salaries,
- professional development,
- curriculum development,
- maintenance, and
- general operations.

Schools must provide a signed and audited financial accountability certificate to the Department each year confirming the school does not operate for profit (within the meaning of Section 83C of the Act) and that State per capita funding was spent on these education purposes.

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**Dr JOHN KAYE:** You might be able to correct me on this, but is it true that TAFE delivered vocational education and training [TVET], which has traditionally been free to public schools, will no longer be free to public schools?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** The secretary will answer this question.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** Sorry, I am not aware of that.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** You are not aware of that fact.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** No, I am not.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Let me put this question. No-one has told the Minister or the secretary that the previous arrangement with TVET will no longer pertain, and the idea that a student can do a trade subject at TAFE, which will lead to both their Higher School Certificate and to a trade qualification, which in the past had always been free to a public school and for a public school student, will no longer be free. Nobody has told you that?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** No, I am not aware of that at all.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Mr Piccoli, nobody has told you that?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** No.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Ms Davy?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** No. You have to ask direct questions to me.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** I am wondering whether anyone at the table—

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** If you want to ask me a question, we will take it on notice. I am not aware and the secretary is not aware.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** You are not aware of that fact. That is fascinating.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** Do you have anything to substantiate what you are saying?

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Will you give an undertaking that if that is the case it will not be the individual student but it will come out of the department's budget?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I will get an answer to the question first. I am happy to follow this up with you separately. I do not want to make that up.

## **ANSWER**

No, this is not correct. There is no cost transferred to individual TVET students from government schools for TVET courses.

All charges associated with the delivery by TAFE of vocational education and training courses endorsed by the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW as being part of a student's pattern of study in a government school has always been and will continue to be met from the Department's budget.

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**Mr DIZDAR:** On Wednesday 19 August our Deputy Secretary, School Operations and Performance communicated with all the principals of public schools—

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** That is Mr Prior, is it?

**Mr DIZDAR:** That is correct. We informed our principals around our religious education implementation procedures, from which you have just been quoting.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Paraphrasing, to be correct, not quoting.

**Mr DIZDAR:** We indicated to our principals that in their supervision of prayer groups they must ensure the things that you have referred to—in other words, parental permission is obtained, that appropriate child protection checks and practices in relation to any volunteers coming from outside the school take place, the content of those activities are monitored and that students or members of religious persuasions do not engage in attempts to proselytise or convert non-adherents of the religion to their faith in the course of school-authorized activity.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Minister, that happened on 19 August but the changes were made in the middle of March. Why was there no notification between March and August?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I will have to ask the secretary. My understanding is that changes were made earlier this year.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** My understanding was that when the changes were made in March there was some communication, but again I would have to take that on notice. I think the reminder of 19 August that Mr Dizdar was speaking about really related to a second wave of communication, but I need to go back to March.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** A survey was done of principals in July or August. Is that correct? After the matter blew up about a particular prayer group at a particular school a survey was conducted of principals?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** That is correct.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** That survey asked a number of questions in respect of how they were implementing these procedures?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** Yes, that is correct.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Many principals said the first they heard of the new procedures was when they were surveyed as to how they were implementing them.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I need to go back, as I said, to March. I cannot answer that at this point in time but I would like to take it on notice and go back to see what communication occurred in March following those changes to see whether there was any at all. I suspect there was, but we need to follow that through.

## **ANSWER**

The Religious Education Implementation Procedures, along with other departmental policy documents, are accessible from the Policies and Procedures pages on the Department's website. The revised implementation procedures document was uploaded to this web space on 25 March 2015.

Principals were provided with advice and support regarding the changes to the Religious Education Implementation Procedures in principals' meetings from March and on a case by case basis.

The Department provided this information regarding the changes in person to Directors, Public Schools NSW, at four locations across the state at their scheduled term meetings commencing in June 2015.

The Special Religious Education and Special Education in Ethics Officer and Special Religious Education and Special Education in Ethics Principal Advisor commenced information sessions for local Secondary Principal Council groups and local Primary Principal Association groups from August 2015.

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**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Of the 200 schools, have any asked to opt out of the LMBR program?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I do not know.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Director general, do you know?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I am not aware of any, but Mr Riordan might know.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Mr Riordan, can you enlighten us?

**Mr RIORDAN:** I am aware that at one point NSW Teachers Federation members at a school carried a resolution to opt out. That school is still part of the program.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** What school is that?

**Mr RIORDAN:** I do not recall.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Can you provide that information on notice?

**Mr RIORDAN:** Yes.

#### **ANSWER**

A small number of schools expressed concerns about aspects of the LMBR pilot in the first months of the trial. The Department dedicated additional support and resourcing to assist schools to adapt to the new ways of working.

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**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Is it true that principals paid bills using their own credit cards to keep schools operating?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I am not aware of any situation like that.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Can you take that question on notice?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I certainly can. I saw the reports in the press this morning and I am happy to take the question on notice. However, I am not aware of that situation.

**ANSWER**

No.

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**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** The director general said that she was unaware of schools having electricity cut off because of the problems with the LMBR program. We have been told that it occurred on the North Coast. Are you aware of that?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** No, I am not.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Are you aware that NSW Teachers Federation representatives from Grafton High School have told us that their school had its electricity cut off? Are you aware of that?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I am not aware of what the Teachers Federation may have told you, I am sorry.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Will you take it on notice and check to see whether, in fact—

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** What school? Grafton High School?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** Grafton High—absolutely.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Maybe Mr Riordan can help us. Mr Riordan, are you aware?

**Mr RIORDAN:** No, I have not heard that.

**ANSWER**

No.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, I wish to return to another part of the budget papers on page 2-18. The department's major assets and properties include 1,617 primary schools, 67 central schools, 113 schools for specific purposes, 23 environmental education centres, 398 secondary schools, 130 TAFE colleges, 10.63 million square metres gross floor area of school and TAFE buildings which are permanent and demountable buildings, 8,517 hectares of school land and 1,220 hectares of TAFE site area. Minister, I refer you to the line item under "cash flows from investing activities", which indicates that proceeds from the sale of property, plant and equipment are expected to increase this year from roughly \$3.5 million to almost \$30 million. What are you planning on selling?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Properties are bought and sold every year by the Department of Education and have been for a long time. I do not have the specifics in front of me but I am happy to take that on notice to establish what constitutes the \$31 million.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** You would appreciate though that that is a significant increase from roughly \$3.5 million to almost \$30 million—it is a tenfold increase.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Again it is all relative to the size of the footprint of the Department of Education.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I am sorry, Minister—are you implying that that is not a significant increase? I appreciate that you have a large budget, but that is a significant increase in a line item.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I do not know what it is from year to year, going from one year to another. I do not know what it has been historically, but I am happy to take that question on notice.

## **ANSWER**

Each year the Department of Education acquires land to build new schools/expand existing schools, and disposes of land considered surplus to educational requirements. In 2014/15, some land sales were delayed and are now expected to occur in 2015/16.

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**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Minister, I turn to Telstra Secure. What is the cost or what is the contracted budget between the department and Telstra Secure?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I will ask the secretary to answer that question.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** And I will refer it to Peter Riordan.

**Mr RIORDAN:** I am sorry, I have to take that on notice. I do not have the details of the contract value.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** While I have you, 1,800 schools have alarm systems. Has the department taken an audit on the effectiveness or on how many are working that are connected to Telstra Secure?

**Mr RIORDAN:** My understanding is that all the alarms are working.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** All of them?

**Mr RIORDAN:** Yes.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** How much does the department spend on school security, alarm and fire systems a year?

**Mr RIORDAN:** I would have to take that on notice as well.

## **ANSWER**

The contract price for Telstra Secure is commercial in confidence.

The Department has a recurrent allocation of \$1 million to maintain security systems in schools throughout the state.

## **PAGES 30 and 31**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How long does it take to build a new primary school?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** That would depend on a number of things, I would imagine, not having personally built one.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I would assume you have supervised the provision of building new primary schools given that you have been the Minister for Education for 5½ years.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** The department certainly has. We make the decisions around funding and the department operationalises that. Ms Bruniges?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** We would have to take an average figure on notice.

## **ANSWER**

Construction of a new primary school is dependent on a number of factors including the location of the site, site conditions which may impact on construction such as contamination, archaeological, environmental and conservation issues, and any special conditions of consent for the development application.

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**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Given your commitment to build a new primary school in Jordan Springs by the end of this term, Minister, when will construction begin?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I do not know. I can take that question on notice.

## **ANSWER**

Construction will begin in this term of government as outlined in the Election Commitments 2015-19 booklet distributed with the 2015-16 Budget Papers.

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**Dr JOHN KAYE:** I understand that the University of Technology, Sydney, at Lindfield is vacating its site and a new high school is to be built on that site. I understand it was originally scheduled to be opened in 2017 but the start date has been moved to 2019. I have a document that suggests that in August 2014 it was proposed to be opened in 2017. In March 2015 it was pushed to 2019. Can you tell me why and what is going to happen in those two years?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I will have to ask the secretary to answer; otherwise I am happy to take it on notice.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I am happy to take that on notice. I do not have those details, Dr Kaye.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** You will take that question on notice. You would understand that there are parents who are concerned they will be without a high school for two years, given the constraints on high schools in that area. Minister, I will take you back to the document that was tabled by Mr Dizdar. I have lost the Minister's attention.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Sorry, I was looking for an answer for you.

**ANSWER**

The opening date for the new school at Lindfield was revised in early 2015, following extensive consultation with the local community and surrounding school network. To ensure the new facilities accommodate the desired modes of teaching and learning, and ancillary services, the original opening date of 2017 has been revised to an opening date of 2019.

## **PAGES 31 AND 32**

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** I will take you back to the document tabled by Mr Dizdar. When I read it, it looked like it was the first time that those changes to the religious education implementation procedures were tabled with principals. For example, it says, "I ask that you now take immediate action to ensure that these procedures are fully implemented in your school." What was happening between March 2015 and August 2015—a period of six months—in which they were not being asked to implement those procedures or they were not informed of changes to the religious education implementation procedures?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I will have to ask the secretary to answer this question.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I will have to take that question on notice. I am not clear whether or not initial advice was provided. I have said before I will take that on notice and I am happy to do so again.

## **ANSWER**

The Religious Education Implementation Procedures, along with other departmental policy documents, are accessible from the Policies and Procedures pages on the Department's website. The revised implementation procedures document was uploaded to this web space on 25 March 2015.

Principals were provided with advice and support regarding the changes to the Religious Education Implementation Procedures in principals' meetings from March and on a case by case basis.

The Department provided this information regarding the changes in person to Directors, Public Schools NSW, at four locations across the state at their scheduled term meetings commencing in June 2015.

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**Dr JOHN KAYE:** I will have one last shot at this question. I take you back to the memo that Mr Dizdar tabled. The change to the Religious Education Implementation Procedures [REIP] in March came, I think you will admit, after concerns were raised by Darrin Morgan from the Human Rights Advocacy Australia, who wrote to Dr Bruniges last year and raised concerns. You responded and acknowledged that there were concerns. As I understand it, you then changed the REIP on the basis of that. Why did you not inform principals then that his concerns were valid? Why were principals not informed at that point that there was a change?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I would like to go back and find out exactly what communications happened with principals. I am happy to take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

The Religious Education Implementation Procedures, along with other departmental policy documents, are accessible from the Policies and Procedures pages on the Department's website. The revised implementation procedures document was uploaded to this web space on 25 March 2015.

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**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** What was the activity that was causing a problem at the Epping government school?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I will ask the secretary to take the question.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** There were a number of specific questions that appeared in the media. I think, from a department's perspective, we are really not able to comment on matters which are subject to ongoing police investigation. The department did not have a comment at the time. It was some allegations relating to a particular student and his or her practice of leading a prayer group in a lunchtime period. That seems to have been resolved. As a consequence, we have done a prayer audit across all schools to have a look at the adherence with the guidelines that we have—that Dr John Kaye referred to before. Once we analyse that information—now that it is in, Reverend Nile—we will look forward to putting recommendations to Government on the most appropriate ways forward.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** What religion was that prayer group?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I do not know what religion that prayer group was, actually.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** There has been reference to the Scripture Union and so on in the discussion.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I am not aware of it, but if I can take it on notice I can check whether or not it is still a policy matter for you, Reverend Nile.

**ANSWER**

It was reported in *The Australian* newspaper that the Australian Federal Police were investigating allegations of a student spreading radical religious ideas in the playground at Epping Boys High School. It was a police matter.

I am advised that Islamic and Christian voluntary lunchtime prayer groups operate at the school.

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**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Prayer groups usually refer to a Muslim prayer group. That is a term they use for their groups. They only have prayers—no singing and no music.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** Okay. I am not sure, in practice. I have taught in primary schools myself where there have been so-called prayer groups on the timetable coming into schools that have been from non-Islamic bases that have been conducted during school time at some of the schools that I have taught at.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** They would only be of a very small number, if they were there. I would recognise that. That is where the confusion is. Large numbers, hundreds of other groups, have been caught up with this instruction. I have had principals contact me and say that they do not understand this instruction. It is causing a lot of confusion in the schools.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** Reverend Nile, they have all completed the survey now so we are in the process of analysing that data. As I said, once we analyse it we will put a report to government about any findings or recommendations we might have.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Right. I would appreciate on notice if we can get a copy or a summary of that—not the whole of the responses, but a summary.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I am happy to take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

The report of the Prayer Group Audit will be provided to the NSW Government.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** On another aspect of supporting students, has funding for students with disability changed in this budget? There is some suggestion it has changed? Have there been any changes—perhaps with the disability scheme?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** When we talk about the budget, there is no doubt that our resource allocation model has put an additional effort into targeting funding for students with disability. If a student has a particular high-level need of disability, that funding, irrespective of where that student goes, will follow the student. If the student moves school, the funding would move with that student. The way in which we allocate that funding to high-need students through our resource allocation model—I may need to take on notice the whole quantum of funding—is that we have made a deliberate decision to design our resource allocation model to support students with a disability at the high end. We also have low level disability adjustments in schools.

## **ANSWER**

The implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in New South Wales does not change the obligations of the Department of Education under the Commonwealth *Disability Standards for Education 2005*. The Department continues to provide funding and services to schools to support the provision of reasonable adjustments for students whose learning is impacted by disability.

The Department undertakes annual planning for specialist provisions for students with disability in our schools. These provisions include funding and services for students with disability and additional learning and support needs in both regular and specialist classes in all NSW public schools.

Support for students whose learning is impacted by disability has undergone significant reform in New South Wales following the introduction of the Every Student, Every School initiative in 2012. Details of the Every Student, Every School initiative can be found on the Department of Education's website.

From the start of Term 3 2012 there was an increase of over \$89 million in allocations directly to schools under the Every Student, Every School initiative.

In addition, the total 2015 annual spend in resources directly allocated to NSW Government schools for learning and support has been increased to more than \$239 million.

As part of the NSW government's Local schools, Local Decisions reform, the Resource Allocation Model (RAM) represents a ground-breaking shift in the way NSW public schools receive funding based on need and consistent with the model recommended by the Gonski review of school funding.

Since 2014, learning and support resources are allocated to schools as their 'Low Level Adjustment for Disability' equity loading under the RAM. More information about the RAM is available on the Department's website.

In 2014 the RAM included targeted (individual student), funding support for students who required high or moderate level adjustment for disability. In 2015 schools also received \$240 million in equity funding for low level adjustment for disability.

In addition to funding through the RAM, in 2015 the Department provided more than 2,750 specialist support classes and more than \$100 million for students with a confirmed disability in regular classes through Integration Funding Support.

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**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** How many graduate teachers are employed by the education department?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I do not know if we have a precise answer.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** It will vary from year to year, but we are happy to take that on notice.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Just approximately?

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** It is in the budget.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I think it is about 500, but I will take that on notice to give you an exact figure.

**ANSWER**

Information on graduate teacher employments is available on the Department of Education's website.

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**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** I understand that you have conducted a review of the program entitled "Connected Communities Narrative Research Report". Are you aware of that?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I am advised that the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group was contracted to undertake that review and that people have been engaged to do it.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Are you confident that the department has been open and transparent about that review?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** In what way? I understand that they went to communities and interviewed people.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Director general, do you know who conducted the interviews in the various communities?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** Yes, I do. The New South Wales Aboriginal Studies Association undertook the narrative research project with the aim of documenting stories in Connected Communities schools and communities.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Are you aware of who carried out the interviews? Do you have a list?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** No, but I am happy to take that question on notice.

**ANSWER**

The interviews for the Narrative Research project were conducted by Cathie Burgess and Paddy Cavanagh from the NSW Aboriginal Studies Association. They were both involved in the interviews in Toomelah, Boggabilla, Moree, Bourke, Brewarrina and Taree. Cathie Burgess conducted the interviews in Tamworth. Paddy Cavanagh conducted the interviews in Wilcannia, Menindee, Walgett and Coonamble.

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**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** The population is growing. However, the figures you outlined for Irrawang and Hunter River high schools indicate that enrolments at both are declining. Is that correct?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I do not know whether that is true of both. I have only the combined enrolment; I do not have separate figures. I am advised that that is compared to the 1996 enrolment when it was 1,900.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I have been told that they are decreasing. Has your department made any inquiries or looked into why the number is declining, given that the population in the area is increasing?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I do not know, but I will take that question on notice.

**ANSWER**

The Department of Education continually undertakes planning work to ensure school facilities properly cater for student demand. Both schools have capacity for forecasted enrolment growth.

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**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Minister, are you confident that the school security alarm system is working now?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** My advice from the department is that it is. Yes, I am.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Can you check whether the school security system is working now and will be working this evening?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I refer that question to the secretary.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I am happy to take that question on notice.

**ANSWER**

As part of planned maintenance, two database servers were reconfigured during 31 August 2015 (the day of the Estimates Committee hearing). The security system was fully operational following the completion of that maintenance task. No school assets were placed under additional risk as intruder alarm systems are not armed during school hours.

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**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** A whistleblower has indicated that the system has not been working since 5.00 a.m. Will you investigate?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Since 5.00 a.m. today?

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Yes. Will you investigate?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Yes.

**ANSWER**

As part of planned maintenance, two database servers were reconfigured during 31 August 2015 (the day of the Estimates Committee hearing). The security system was fully operational following the completion of that maintenance task. No school assets were placed under additional risk as intruder alarm systems are not armed during school hours.

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**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** How many demountables are there in New South Wales?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I have the answer to that question here.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** While you are looking, can you tell me how much you spend each year transporting them around New South Wales?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** The department owns more than 6,000 demountables, of which 4,823 are located on school sites. The remainder are undergoing repair or refurbishment or are in storage. The secretary might be able to tell the Committee how much is spent moving them each year.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I would have to take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

The cost is dependent on the number of transport moves required.

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**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** How many schools have been closed in New South Wales in the last few years, broken down to regional and suburban?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Can I take that on notice? I will be able to give you a more accurate answer.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** I am happy to have an estimate and get the detailed figures on notice.

**ANSWER**

Between July 2013 and September 2015, 20 schools have been closed in regional and suburban areas.

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**Dr JOHN KAYE:** I refer to a memorandum that was sent to school principals on 16 December 2014 headed "memorandum to schools regarding SRE policy and implementation procedures". You might be aware that part of that was a sample letter that was to be sent to parents and caregivers who had not identified a particular religious persuasion on their enrolment form or who had identified one but that particular religious persuasion was not available as special religious education at that school. My question is: Why was it necessary to instruct schools to give parents a second bite at that particular cherry?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I will ask the secretary to answer this question.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** Sorry, I do not think I have that copy of the memo in front of me, Dr Kaye. Is it possible to table it for me?

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Sure.

**CHAIR:** With your notes.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** It says, "1."

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Who wrote that note?

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** The question was put to me by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile. The note was written by Mr Prior, the deputy secretary, something or other, who is head of schools.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** No, I meant the "1".

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** The "1"? That is for me to know and you to find out. My question to you is why was that sent, why was it necessary and was it a cost-effective use of the time of principals and school administrative staff to send such a note?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I do not know the answer to either of those questions, Dr Kaye. I will have to take them on notice.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Minister, are you aware of that memo and that form?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I am not. I do not recall having seen that, but I will take the question on notice as well.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** So my questions are: Why was it sent, who was it sent by, and why did they decide that it would be a cost-effective use of the time of principals to do so? My next question is: Why was the same thing not done for special education ethics?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Again, I do not have the answer to that question.

**ANSWER**

The memorandum was sent by Gregory Prior, Deputy Secretary, School Operations and Performance.

The purpose of the memorandum was to clarify for principals the key requirements for enrolling students in Special Religious Education (SRE) classes.

Principals locally manage the implementation of SRE/Special Education in Ethics (SEE) at their school, including making information available to the school community.

It was not necessary to provide additional information regarding SEE implementation to all principals, as SEE is only available in some primary schools.

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**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Apart from the \$14 million in flexible funding, there has been no increase in ESL teaching capacity in New South Wales?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** For the first time in every school we have had those students identified in a survey. They also have an equity loading for English language proficiency to support their needs. For the first time in 2015, through the resource allocation model [RAM], they would have created a loading for those students, and all of those, Dr Kaye, are published on the website per school.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** You are saying that all students from—

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I am saying every school with EAL/D students identified in the survey receive an equity loading for English language proficiency to support their needs. So 2015 was the first time we were able to do that through the resource allocation model.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Is that in addition to the \$14 million of Gonski, or is that the \$14 million?

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I will have to take that on notice.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** I think what you are talking about is the \$14 million. My understanding is that that \$14 million went through the RAM as additional funds for schools with a certain number of EAL/D students.

**Ms BRUNIGES:** I will need to take that question on notice and double-check for you. We will certainly be able to see the visibility—

**ANSWER**

Resources including 896.2 (Full-Time Equivalent) positions plus \$14 million provided by the National Education Reform Agreement were allocated to NSW public schools in 2015 to support the needs of all students from language backgrounds other than English, identified as requiring support to learn English as an additional language or dialect.