



The Hon. Adrian Piccoli MP
Minister for Education

11 September 2014

Mr Stewart Smith
Director
Budget Estimates Secretariat
Parliament House
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000
budget.estimateds@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Smith

Please find attached the answers to supplementary questions and questions taken on notice from the recent budget estimates hearing.

If you have any questions regarding the above please feel free to contact Kim Withers in the Ministerial office on 8574 5318.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Piccoli MP
Minister for Education

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2014-2015
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE TAKEN DURING THE HEARING
EDUCATION

PAGES 3 & 4 OF TRANSCRIPT

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: In May this year, following the Premier's comments about it being a kick in the guts, the Premier met with State and Territory leaders to contend with the Commonwealth Government's announcement of what, in effect, is this \$80 billion cut to health and education expenditure in Australia. He declared that he and the leaders of the other States and Territories would be declaring war on what the Commonwealth Government had announced. Minister, since May this year have you attended any Council of Australian Governments [COAG] education meetings where the matter of these education cuts has been discussed?

ANSWER

No.

PAGES 3 & 4 OF TRANSCRIPT

QUESTION

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: There was a ministerial council meeting on Friday but this particular issue was not on the agenda

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Friday of last week?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Friday of last week, yes.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: That has been the only meeting at that level since the announcement of the Federal Government in May this year?

Ms LOBLE: We will have to take that question on notice as to whether the previous meeting this year fell before or after the Commonwealth budget.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: It is one, possibly two?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Certainly one last Friday.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: So at least one?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Yes.

ANSWER

There has been one meeting of the Education Council, on Friday 15 August 2014.

PAGES 5 & 6 OF TRANSCRIPT

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: How many meetings have you had with your Federal counterpart Minister Pyne since the announcement in May this year to discuss the impact of these cuts to Gonski, particularly the last two years of funding, and its impact on New South Wales? How many meetings since May this year?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I would have to take that on notice. I have spoken to Minister Pyne on the phone and I have spoken—

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: No, my question was how many meetings have you had with Minister Pyne?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I have said I will take that question on notice because I cannot recall.

ANSWER

The Minister has had numerous formal meetings, telephone conversations and meetings of the Education Council with Minister Pyne, most of which have included discussions about school funding.

PAGES 5 & 6 OF TRANSCRIPT

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Minister, how many times have you written to Minister Pyne since May this year raising your concerns about the impact of the announced cuts by the Commonwealth?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I do not recall that I have written to him at this stage about that.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Will you take that on notice?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I do not recall but I am happy to take it on notice and double check.

ANSWER

A letter from Minister Piccoli to Minister Pyne regarding years 5 & 6 of the NERA was signed by Minister Piccoli on 14 April and, according to the Department's TRIM system, was dispatched on 17 April 2014.

PAGES 5 & 6 OF TRANSCRIPT

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: How many times have members from your ministerial office met with representatives from the Federal Minister's office under instruction from you to discuss the impact of the cuts to the last two years of funding on New South Wales?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Again, I will take that on notice.

ANSWER

The Minister and his office have had numerous formal meetings, telephone conversations and meetings of the Education Council with Minister Pyne and his office, most of which have included discussions about school funding.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Minister, you have made a statement to Parliament, which I think is questionable, where you said that all \$408 million would disappear if my bill were to go through both Houses of Parliament. Can I invite you to take that on notice and reflect on that?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Yes. I am happy to take that on notice.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I think if you look carefully, as I did, at the structure and the specific agreement between yourselves and the Commonwealth, you would find that is indeed not true and it is a substantially smaller sum of money. Perhaps Ms Loble would like to comment on that?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: It is not the advice that I have, but I am happy to take it on notice.

ANSWER

Fundamentally breaching our obligations under the National Partnership Agreement puts all future funding at risk.

Not meeting the agreed reforms risks \$211.85 million in structural reforms payments over the period 2014-15 to 2016-2017.

Without reform, NSW risks not meeting its growth targets, jeopardising a further \$196.56 million in training outcomes performance target funding.

This brings the total funding at risk to \$408.41 million over the period 2014-15 to 2016-2017.

PAGES 10 & 11 OF TRANSCRIPT

Dr JOHN KAYE: Minister, you have made a statement to Parliament, which I think is questionable, where you said that all \$408 million would disappear if my bill were to go through both Houses of Parliament. Can I invite you to take that on notice and reflect on that?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Yes. I am happy to take that on notice.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I think if you look carefully, as I did, at the structure and the specific agreement between yourselves and the Commonwealth, you would find that is indeed not true and it is a substantially smaller sum of money. Perhaps Ms Loble would like to comment on that?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: It is not the advice that I have, but I am happy to take it on notice.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Thank you. Minister, have you met with any representatives of or lobbyists for the private training sector? Have you met with people from the Australian Council for Private Education and Training [ACPET] or lobbyists for ACPET or any of the other organisations, Vocation or any of the others?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Yes, I have.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Can you provide us with a list of when that happened, on notice? I would not expect you to know it off by heart.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: When that happened, who you met with, and what was discussed?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: And what was agreed at those meetings?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: In terms of the detail of those meetings, I am not sure, but I will certainly tell you the meetings that I have had with ACPET.

Dr JOHN KAYE: And other private sector training organisations and companies?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I am happy to.

Dr JOHN KAYE: And going back to your time as a Minister?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: And what was discussed at those meetings?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I am not sure that I could remember but I will provide you—

Dr JOHN KAYE: You did not keep diary notes on those meetings?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I will provide you with the names and the dates that I had those meetings.

ANSWER

The Minister has met with numerous people representing ACPET between April 2011 and June 2014.

Information regarding scheduled meetings held with stakeholders, external organisations and individuals will be published in accordance with Memorandum 2014-07 - Publication of Ministerial Diaries.

PAGES 13 & 15 OF TRANSCRIPT

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Is it a fact that up until 2013 parents were required to make a written request to the school to have their son or daughter exempted from the SRE classes, in other words, to opt out and that that policy has been changed?

Dr BRUNIGES: Yes, I understand that is correct. It was required in writing, but I think the two-stage step process on the new enrolment form covers the fact that the first question parents have to answer is: Do you wish the student to attend Special Religious Education classes? If the answer is yes, the student goes to those classes; if the answer is no, then subsequently they need to answer the next question and that indeed is optional.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Were all the relevant stakeholders, including SRE providers, consulted before the changes were made?

Dr BRUNIGES: Yes, indeed they were.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: If so, who were they and when did those discussions take place?

Dr BRUNIGES: I will need to take that on notice to find the dates and who was involved.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The advice that I have is that the change to the enrolment form has been approved by the department's SRE consultative committee, a body made up of all key stakeholders, and the consultative committee is satisfied that the new enrolment form reflects the SRE policy. I can take on notice who exactly is on that consultative committee.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: The department has a document called Religious Education Implementation Procedures. Who prepared that document and can you table a copy of that document and also that enrolment form you referred to earlier?

Dr BRUNIGES: We are certainly happy to supply a copy of both. The first document you refer to is on the department's website but we are happy to provide the document for you.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Who is responsible for and who approved the document "Religious Education Implementation Procedures"?

Dr BRUNIGES: I would need to take that on notice, to find the exact authorisation route for you.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Earlier you said that there was complication with that body. Was there actual face-to-face consultation? In other words did an official, yourself or the Secretary attend that council and outline this new policy?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Not me, but I can take that on notice and provide you more detail around how that consultation occurred. But the advice I have is that the

enrolment form had been approved by that consultative committee. But I will come back to you with more detail about how that consultation was done.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Which departmental person briefed that council?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Yes.

ANSWER

The Department of Education and Communities' Consultative Committee for Special Religious Education (SRE) was consulted on the revised *Application to enrol in a NSW Government school* form at its meetings in November 2012 and in June and November 2013.

The Department's Consultative Committee for SRE has representatives from:

- Anglican Education Commission
- Baha'i Council for NSW and the ACT
- NSW and ACT Baptist Churches
- Buddhist Council of NSW
- Catholic Church of Australia
- NSW Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations
- Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia
- Hindu Council of Australia
- Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (NSW) Inc.
- Islamic Council of NSW
- NSW Board of Jewish Education
- Presbyterian Church of Australia
- NSW Primary Principals' Association
- NSW Secondary Principals' Council
- NSW Teachers Federation
- Uniting Church of Australia

The Department's Consultative Committee for Special Education in Ethics (SEE) was consulted on the revised *Application to enrol in a NSW Government school* form at its meetings in September and December 2013.

The Department's Consultative Committee for SEE has representatives from:

- Primary Ethics Limited
- St James Ethics Centre
- The Practice
- Anglican Education Commission
- Federation of Parents and Citizens Association of NSW
- NSW Primary Principals' Association
- NSW Secondary Principals' Council

Stakeholders on the revised *Application to enrol in a NSW Government school* form reference group included:

- NSW Primary Principals' Association
- NSW Secondary Principals' Council

- NSW Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations
- NSW Teachers Federation
- Public Service Association NSW
- NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Inc.
- Internal departmental representatives

The Department of Education and Communities prepared the Religious Education Implementation Procedures in consultation with the Consultative Committee for SRE.

The Religious Education Implementation Procedures were approved by the then Deputy Director-General, Schools in April 2013.

Discussion outlining the review of the Religious Education Policy was conducted at the face to face meetings of the Department's Consultative Committee for SRE in March, May and August 2011 and in March and November 2012.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: In view of that, according to a report I have been given, is it a fact that as a result of the implementation of the policy you have just outlined, at the beginning of this term in Bateman's Bay High School attendance at SRE classes dropped from 500 to around 150 students? Are you aware that this policy decision has caused enormous disruption amongst staff and students? Are you aware that attendances are dropping further as students realise that the alternative to attending SRE is, in effect, free time? Are you aware that in a school letter to parents it was stated:

All year 10 students will attend all their regular English classes as SRE will not be offered to that group for the remainder of the year.

Why were these year 10 students not offered to opt in, even though they had been attending SRE in first and second terms? Why were these students denied the opportunity that has been given to them under the New South Wales Education Act 1990? Are you aware that this school's actions are in breach of the law?

Dr BRUNIGES: There is a lot of detail in that question. I am happy to take that question on notice and track down the detail with each one of those issues you raised for the particular school setting.

ANSWER

Batemans Bay High School was recently required to revise its delivery of Special Religious Education as a result of an external departmental evaluation which identified that the school was not meeting departmental requirements regarding Religious Education Policy and Religious Education Implementation Procedures.

Schools have always used information provided on enrolment as the basis for organising Special Religious Education classes. A student is only enrolled in a Special Religious Education class for a particular religious persuasion if they have identified as being of that religious persuasion on enrolment, or have since nominated to attend that Special Religious Education class should a class be unavailable for their own religious persuasion, or for other reasons. This policy requirement was not being implemented at Batemans Bay High School.

The local Director, Public Schools NSW, is working closely with the school and its community to ensure that Special Religious Education is implemented in accordance with the Department's current Religious Education Policy.

The Department's policy requires that the alternative to attending Special Religious Education is not 'free time', but that 'meaningful activities' be provided with appropriate care and supervision. Suitable 'meaningful activities' include reading, private study and completing homework. Where it is reasonably practicable and requested by a parent/caregiver, this may also include the option of special education in ethics.

I understand the school attempted to enter into negotiations with the Special Religious Education provider to identify a time when Special Religious Education could be provided to Year 10 students in order to meet departmental requirements. Unfortunately, the Special Religious Education provider was unable to reschedule the delivery of Special Religious Education for Year 10 students to a time outside that already designated for the delivery of curriculum. This issue will be resolved to facilitate Special Religious Education provision in Year 10 as soon as possible in the future.

It has not been the intention of the school to deny students the opportunity to participate in Special Religious Education.

PAGE 16 OF TRANSCRIPT

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Will you offer a breakdown to the Committee of those 800 positions that have been cut?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: A breakdown in which way?

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: What those positions are and from where they have been cut.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: If you are happy for me to take that on notice, yes.

ANSWER

From 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2014, there was a reduction of 625 positions. Breakdown is below, according to classification and location.

Location – Teaching and Non-Teaching TAFE Staff	
TAFE Institutes	492.5
TAFE Corporate	132.5
Total	625

PAGE 21 OF TRANSCRIPT

Dr JOHN KAYE: I want to talk briefly about an issue that was raised by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile—that is, special religious education [SRE]. Minister, are you aware that at Tomaree High School 100 per cent of students attend special religious education?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: No.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Would you be prepared to investigate why that is the case? It would be fairly unique around the State.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I am not sure that it would be the best use of my time specifically. But if you want to ask me a question about it I am happy to take it on notice. Do you want specific information?

Dr JOHN KAYE: Yes. Why is it that the department told a journalist at the Newcastle Herald, and it has been confirmed by parents, that Tomaree High School has 100 per cent of its students in years 7 and 8 attending SRE?

ANSWER

No. While the majority of Years 7 and 8 students at Tomaree High School do regularly attend special religious education lessons, there are 20 students, who on parental request, are instead supervised in the school's library.

Dr JOHN KAYE: In fact on notice you might get me those numbers going back to the beginning of the National School Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program, because they are quite hard to find now that the Federal Government website has disappeared. Minister, are you aware that these chaplains are operating without any form of regulation since the Federal Government upped stumps on its program after it lost a High Court challenge?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I do not know the answer to that.

Dr BRUNIGES: Both chaplains and student welfare workers are still required to adhere to the code of conduct and general service standards developed under the former National School Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program. All have Working with Children checks done.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I accept the latter but with respect to the former how would you find those? The Federal Government's website has disappeared entirely and it is not on your website, or if it is I cannot find it. Where would you find those, Dr Bruniges?

Dr BRUNIGES: I need to take that question on notice.

ANSWER

There has been no change to the supervision of chaplains and student welfare workers within NSW public schools where they work under the supervision of school principals or their nominee. The school principal or their nominee continues to have a lead role in coordinating and managing all aspects of chaplaincy or student welfare services within the school.

In relation to conduct, chaplains or student welfare workers are subject to the same requirements as any staff working in NSW public schools with complaints managed through the Department's Complaints Handling Policy and Guidelines or where relevant by the Department's Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Following on from that question, is it a fact that following the High Court decision the Federal Government indicated that it will continue the funding but that it will do so through grants made to State governments to fund the relevant chaplains programs in State schools? There are chaplains in State schools in New South Wales.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: That is a decision for them. There has been no approach, as far as I am aware, from the Commonwealth yet about how it will approach funding and no offer of any funding at this stage.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Can you take that on notice?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I can double-check that.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: If the Federal Government does provide you with X number of dollars so you can continue the chaplains program, would you be agreeable to continuing to implement that program if the funding comes with it?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I would have to take that question on notice. It has not been considered yet by me and I have not had the opportunity to consider what we would do in those circumstances. The Commonwealth has not advised us what it is planning to do. Essentially it has not come across my desk yet. So I have not had a chance to consider it.

ANSWER

On 28 August 2014, Senator Ryan, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Australian Government's Minister for Education wrote to NSW inviting the State to participate in the new National School Chaplaincy Programme by administering funding provided to the state by the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth is proposing that participating schools will be eligible to receive up to \$20,000 in financial assistance per annum (\$24,000 for schools in remote/very remote areas)

The NSW Government is currently considering this invitation.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Following up on one of my earlier questions regarding SRE and the change of policy, has the department done any surveys or tracking of the figures since the implementation of the new form to establish what impact it has had on SRE? I did quote an example earlier. It would be interesting to know what effect the implementation has had on the whole of New South Wales. Could any surveys that you have conducted be provided on notice?

Dr BRUNIGES: We are happy to take that question on notice.

ANSWER

No surveys have been conducted.

PAGE 23 OF TRANSCRIPT

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: In respect of children with special needs, does the Department of Education and Communities keep records of or identify students with foetal alcohol syndrome? How many students in New South Wales would have that?

Dr BRUNIGES: We are happy to take that question on notice. We do not have centralised records of students with those special needs but we are happy to look at what individual schools may have. There are also issues of privacy that come into play when we are talking about individual students. We are happy to take that question on notice.

ANSWER

The Department of Education and Communities does not keep records of or identify students with foetal alcohol syndrome.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Are you aware that the Federal Government is supposed to have allocated \$8 million to this program for State public schools?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Can you tell me what it is called again?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: The Safe Schools Coalition program. It could be similar to the Proud Schools program that was started by the Victorian education department.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I am not aware, but can I take it on notice?

ANSWER

I am advised that the Safe Schools Coalition is a national program funded by the Australian Government and is aimed at creating safe and supportive environments.

The program was launched with bipartisan support on 13 June 2014 at the National Safe Schools Symposium in Melbourne. The program builds on the Commonwealth Government's National Safe Schools Framework.

PAGES 24, 25, 26 & 38 OF TRANSCRIPT

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Are you aware of any investigation into the registered training organisation named the Australasian College Broadway?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Yes, I think I have seen media reports of it.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: This organisation has attracted and received State Government subsidies of up to \$10,000 per student.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I do not know how much it has received in subsidies. You may well be right. I do not know.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Is there anyone at the table able to assist? These are programs specifically in hairdressing and beauty therapy. They are the two that have received a particular mention. The material I am looking at says that the State Government subsidy has been up to the level of a potential maximum of \$10,000. Can anyone confirm that?

Ms LOBLE: It has been on the approved provider list. When we became aware of the issues we have been working with the police in that investigation.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Do not get ahead of the game. Perhaps you might start at the beginning. You are saying there is a matter involving the police?

Ms LOBLE: There is an investigation. It was in the media, as was indicated by the Minister.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: For the benefit of the Committee can you tell us what the investigation is about or what you know?

Ms LOBLE: That would be inappropriate, given that the investigation is underway.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: You do not know; you just know there is an investigation going on?

Ms LOBLE: It would be inappropriate for me to divulge details at this point in time. It is an investigation. It has been reported. We are working with the police on that.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Minister, are we aware that the investigation is completed?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I am not aware.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Does the respective officer know whether the investigation is completed?

Ms LOBLE: As I said, I am not able today to make any comment on that. If you would like we can take it on notice, but any investigation would obviously be quite sensitive.

ANSWER

The investigation is still underway and as such it would be inappropriate to comment.

PAGES 24, 25, 26 & 38 OF TRANSCRIPT

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: No. In regard to the organisation that runs the Australasian College Broadway, whose trading name is MHM Australasian Pty Limited, have you provided or did you provide a letter of support to the organisation—that is, to MHM Australasia Pty Limited—or to the Australasian College Broadway as part of any submission to the Australian Skills Quality Authority regarding this matter?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I do not recall. I may well have. I do not recall, but I can check.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Regarding the matter of MHM Australasia Pty Limited, trading as the Australasian College Broadway? Do you recall providing a letter or correspondence?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I may have, so I am happy to take the question on notice.

ANSWER

This question is outside of the scope of the terms of reference, which relate to items of proposed expenditure.

PAGES 24, 25, 26 & 38 OF TRANSCRIPT

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Do you recall what was in that letter?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I write a lot of letters, as you would appreciate.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Sure. Do you recall what would have been in that letter?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: No, I do not.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: You do not have any recollection at all of what was in that letter?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: No, I do not.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: But you will take that on notice and provide a copy of the letter to this hearing?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I do not know whether I can provide correspondence to— I do not know whether there are any issues with me providing copies of correspondence.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I am asking you: Will you table a copy of that correspondence, on notice, for this Committee? That is the request. Will you do that?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Well, I will take that on notice. I do not know that I can.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: So you are going to take on notice whether you can, and you are the Minister.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Yes.

ANSWER

This question is outside of the scope of the terms of reference, which relate to items of proposed expenditure.

PAGES 24, 25, 26 & 38 OF TRANSCRIPT

[MT14/1410]

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Thank you. Has anybody in your department advised you, prior to this engagement today, that the registered training organisation MHM Australasia Pty Ltd, trading as Australasia College, Broadway, was under investigation by police or the Australian Skills Quality Authority?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I am certainly aware that they were under investigation. As I said, I will take that question on notice so that I can check.

ANSWER

Allegations of fraud at the Australasian College, Broadway were raised with my office in September 2013. My office promptly advised the department and the department immediately commenced an investigation. It also notified authorities including the NSW Police Force, the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Australian Skills Quality Authority.

PAGE 29 OF TRANSCRIPT

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Can I ask you to check any diary that you might have of four years ago which may contain the detail of the date on which that event took place?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Yes, I can check my diary.

ANSWER

The Minister's Office does not hold any diary records prior to April 2011.

PAGES 31 – 32 OF TRANSCRIPT

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Has anybody raised with you—directly, privately, or in your capacity as a Minister of the Crown—the issue of this organisation that I have described having people on the book as phantom students?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Only from my recollection, from what has been in the media. I do not recall being briefed by anybody, but I can check.

ANSWER

I received a briefing from the Department about matters of administration at the College.

PAGES 31 – 32 OF TRANSCRIPT

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: You do not get to ask the questions; I am asking the questions. You are taking on notice to nominate anyone you may have spoken to regarding this matter. That is what I am actually asking you: to nominate anyone that you have spoken to regarding this matter. Do you understand that?

Ms LOBLE: I would like to consider my response carefully. I need to take legal advice to ensure that I provide information that is appropriate to be provided. I need legal advice to understand what that is and what needs to be considered if it is still part of a legal matter. So I am happy to take it on board.

ANSWER

I am advised that Ms Loble consulted with the General Manager, State Training Services and other relevant senior officers.

PAGES 31 – 32 OF TRANSCRIPT

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: No, because people are very cautious about giving accurate information to the Committee. I will take it on notice and check whether I have been briefed on this matter. There are lots of incidents at schools and all over the place—

ANSWER

I received a briefing from the Department.

PAGES 31 – 32 OF TRANSCRIPT

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: No, this is a big matter that you are aware of, because you went to a cocktail party given by the proprietor of this organisation.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I will go back and check whether I have been given any briefing or advice about this because I do not want to give inaccurate information to this Committee.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I would like you also to provide, on notice, information of the numbers of students since the commencement of the operations of Australasian College Broadway who have received payments or subsidies from the State Government that went to that organisation.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I do not know whether that is information that can be provided.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I am asking you please, on notice, to provide that.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I will get advice on whether I can provide that or not.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: So you are saying that you may not be able to provide this advice?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I do not know whether that kind of advice is a privacy issue.

The Hon. JENNIFER GARDINER: Point of order –

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: This is number of students. It is no big deal, Minister. If you want to clear this up, you can do it right now.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I will take the question on notice and provide to you what I can.

ANSWER

The NSW Government does not issue students with payments or provide them with subsidies to undertake training.

PAGE 32 OF TRANSCRIPT

Dr JOHN KAYE: To that question on notice—you might not be able to do this—could you answer in that the number of students who are receiving VET FEE-HELP? I understand the Australasian College Broadway has moved its model of operation and the matters that may be before the police relate more to VET FEE-HELP than to previous programs. If it were a matter of VET FEE-HELP, would you be able to provide that information?

Ms LOBLE: If we can, we will.

ANSWER

No. The NSW Department of Education and Communities does not collect this information.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you. Moving on to another area altogether, with regard to school cadet units, whether it is the army, navy or air force, how many cadet units are there in Government schools and independent schools in New South Wales and what role does the department have in supporting those cadet units?

Dr BRUNIGES: I do not have the information with me about cadet units in schools, but I am happy to take that on notice for public schools and see if we can find that out and get back to you.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: There was a time when the Federal Government did give support and now there seems to be a vacuum.

CHAIR: It still does.

Dr BRUNIGES: I have visited a school that had a cadet unit. Again, I am happy to take the question on notice to find out how many schools have them and what involvement they have in community activities around cadetships.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: And what support your department is giving to those units. A lot of people feel they make a valuable contribution to the students who are members of them.

Dr BRUNIGES: Yes, Mr Prior has just informed me that Sydney Boys and James Ruse are two that have cadet units. We will take that question on notice.

ANSWER

There are cadet units in the following government schools:

- Mudgee High School
- Mendooran Central School
- Glen Innes High School
- Sydney Boys High School
- Hurlstone Agricultural High School
- James Ruse Agricultural High School
- Baulkham Hills High School

Support is provided by the host schools in varying ways.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Minister, what was the original budget for the Learning Management and Business Reform Program?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The project has been going on since 2006. It began under the previous Government. It is a significant reform. I am advised that the last major upgrade to IT systems was in the early 1990s. An initial budget was set at the time but given this is an IT rollout it is very much an operational matter and I will ask the secretary to provide some more information.

Dr BRUNIGES: The original budget case, which goes back several years, had an amount in it. What I can tell you is that the capitals spend for the project is currently within the original approved estimate to complete, within the Treasury approved estimate to do that.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: What was that amount?

Dr BRUNIGES: The capital spend to date is \$404 million over that eight-year period within the contingency that we are allowed within Treasury.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Is that the total amount that has been spent on the project?

Dr BRUNIGES: That is the capital spend, yes.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Is there any additional spend on it and what category would that be?

Dr BRUNIGES: There would be training and support but not on the actual capital, the software product. But in terms of our training and support for people using it, yes, there would be some operational support.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Do you have any idea how much that would be?

Dr BRUNIGES: I am happy to take that on notice. It is across TAFE, schools, corporate and the organisation.

ANSWER

To 30 June 2014, the capital expenditure is \$404.6 million which is within the tolerance for the program. The original 2006 business case identified the need for operational expenditure to support implementation and this expenditure is on-going.

PAGES 40 & 41 OF TRANSCRIPT

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: In addition to the \$404 million you have mentioned was the consulting firm Accenture paid \$100 million to manage the program?

Dr BRUNIGES: I will have to take that on notice. I do not have that detail with me. They did the build of the program but the management I would need to take on notice.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Would the build have been included in the \$404 million?

Dr BRUNIGES: The capital spend is the \$404 million. I do not think there is anything in addition to that, but the capital spend would have been the people building the project. I will take that on notice and clarify that.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Material in the public domain — namely, an article in the Australian, dated 13 November last year, stated, "The department's unaudited figures for the LMBR was \$458.7 million according to a report by the Auditor-General." You have mentioned a figure of \$404 million. Would his figure have included the Accenture part of this or not? I am trying to establish what the total cost of the project has been. Taking 30 June 2014 as a marker, what has the total cost been? You have mentioned a figure and I assume that does not include Accenture's fee, which is reported as \$100 million in that same article. Presumably they were not paid that all up front; they have been paid in amounts. Can you take on notice what the total capital cost has been, the Accenture fee payment and any other payments associated with this pilot program?

Dr BRUNIGES: Yes, I am happy to take that question on notice.

ANSWER

The total capital cost of the LMBR program to 30 June 2014 is \$404.6 million. Payments to Accenture for the LMBR build are included in the capital expenditure.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Just to do something different, let us go to Budget Paper No. 3 for a moment at pages 2-9 and 2-10 and look particularly at the number of "students in special schools, support classes and receiving special education support in integrated settings". If you add primary and secondary students together for 2011 you get 35,484 such students. For 2013 you get 26,577. So there has been a decline of 8,907 students. I understand that because of changes in the delivery of special needs support those students are the students who are now what is referred to as low support needs. Can you describe the categories? Does that include prevalence-based funding students? Does that include students who were funded on the basis of the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy assessment [NAPLAN] results for their schools?

Mr PRIOR: Students are picked up in the low support needs category both on NAPLAN results and a factorisation that is put into that to determine the level of funding.

Dr JOHN KAYE: So that would be a yes then. That would include mental health, low-level autism, and behavioural and emotional issues?

Mr PRIOR: Yes, that is correct.

Dr JOHN KAYE: And it would include learning difficulties with respect to NAPLAN?

Mr PRIOR: Yes, that is correct.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Those students no longer appear in the budget papers. Traditionally they would have appeared in the budget papers; they no longer appear in the budget papers. Do you know how many such students there are in that category?

ANSWER

It is estimated that there are 64,000 students in regular public schools across NSW who have additional low level learning and support needs.

PAGES 43 & 44 OF TRANSCRIPT

Dr JOHN KAYE: Mr Prior has undertaken to give us the numbers for 2012 and 2013 and the forecast for 2014 for those students broken down by prevalence-based funding and NAPLAN-based funding. Minister, I turn now to the National Education Reform Agreement [NERA], the Gonski agreement, and the issues of special needs funding. Minister, am I correct in saying that for New South Wales there is about \$660 million of additional funding—for what is called adjustment funding—under the NERA? Is that correct? If the NERA is fully implemented for special needs and other learning adjustments, is there about \$660 million for New South Wales?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I do not know exactly what the figure is.

Dr BRUNIGES: Ms Loble, do we have that level of detail with us?

Ms LOBLE: Not to hand. We will have to take that question on notice.

Dr JOHN KAYE: As I understand it, Minister, a third of that would come from New South Wales and two-thirds from the Commonwealth.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Of additionality?

Dr JOHN KAYE: This is additionality with respect to adjustment, so this is the special needs and learning difficulties funding.

Ms LOBLE: For the particular disabilities loading. I think I should take that on notice in terms of the specific breakdown but, yes, there is additionality.

Dr JOHN KAYE: And that was scheduled to begin on 1 January next year, is that correct?

Ms LOBLE: The new loading is still in development. It was scheduled but States and Territories across the country, together with the Commonwealth, have said that further work needs to be done on the measurement tool identifying students with special needs.

Dr JOHN KAYE: So that is \$660 million on top of a current budget of about \$1.2 billion that we will not see next year, is that correct?

Ms LOBLE: Perhaps I misunderstood the question. There is a loading in there for students with special needs.

Dr JOHN KAYE: In there?

Ms LOBLE: In the National Education Reform Agreement [NERA] arrangements. What we will take on notice is to identify specifically how much that is. That would continue next year.

Dr JOHN KAYE: We will get that money next year regardless, is that what you are saying?

Ms LOBLE: The current loading, yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: You are saying there is a current loading?

Ms LOBLE: Yes. I might have misunderstood. I thought you were referring to the new one that is under development, which is not ready yet, but there is a current loading.

Dr JOHN KAYE: How big is that current loading?

Ms LOBLE: I do not have that number to hand, but I am happy to provide that.

Dr JOHN KAYE: You will provide me with the new number and the current number?

Ms LOBLE: I will give you the current number of the loading. The new process is a measurement process that is still being developed. What I can give you is the loading for special needs in the NERA.

ANSWER

Over 2014 to 2019, the NERA agreement contains \$5 billion in additionality for NSW Government schools.

The NERA contains a loading for students with a disability (SWD) that for SWD in regular schools constitutes 186% of base funding and for SWD in special schools, 223% of base funding.

The current loading was designed as an interim measure to reflect current spending on SWD until a nationally consistent measure is available.

This interim measure was based on rates of disability outlined in the Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services (PC ROGS).

The NERA SWD loading contributes to additionality in that it informs the calculation of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS), against which current expenditure is measured and additionality is defined. Additionality is not separately identified by loading.

The Commonwealth Government will provide approximately \$375 million in funding for the NSW students with a disability loading in the 2014 school year.