

# PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 3 – EDUCATION

Tuesday, 2 November 2021

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio area

## EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING

**CORRECTED**

The Committee met at 9.30 a.m.

### MEMBERS

The Hon. Mark Latham (Chair)

The Hon. Anthony D'Adam

The Hon. Wes Fang (Deputy Chair)

The Hon. Courtney Houssos

The Hon. Trevor Khan

The Hon. Taylor Martin

Mr David Shoebridge

### PRESENT

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell**, *Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning*

\* Please note:

[inaudible] is used when audio words cannot be deciphered

[audio malfunction] is used when words are lost due to a technical malfunction

[disorder] is used when members or witnesses speak over one another

## **CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS**

**Corrections should be marked on a photocopy of the proof and forwarded to:**

**Budget Estimates secretariat  
Room 812  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000**



**The CHAIR:** Welcome to this public hearing for the inquiry into budget estimates 2021-2022. Before I commence, it is the custom of the Parliament to acknowledge the traditional inhabitants of this land, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and I do that with all due respect as well as acknowledge other important contributors to the history of this site—those who constructed the Parliament House building and the parliamentary staff, who over many decades have supported MPs and made our work and representative role possible. We acknowledge and thank them all.

Today we welcome Minister Sarah Mitchell and her departmental and NSW Education Standards Authority [NESA] officials to this hearing on the portfolio of Education and Early Childhood Learning. Could I just say at the beginning that, Minister, I am sure I speak on behalf of the Committee to thank you, your officials and everyone in the system for the work that has been done with online learning during the very difficult lockdown period to get most schools back up and running now and for NESA to be scheduling an HSC. We are all very appreciative of the hard work that has gone in to those particular successes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thanks, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Before we commence I would like to make some brief comments about the procedures for today's hearing. The proceedings are being broadcast live from Parliament's website and a transcript will be placed on the Committee's website once it becomes available. In accordance with the broadcasting guidelines, media representatives are reminded that they have to take responsibility for what they publish—no fake news. All witnesses in budget estimates have a right to procedural fairness as per the resolution of the Legislative Council in 2018. Witnesses quite seasoned at our Committee would know that if an answer cannot be provided they can take it on notice until other documents and information are at hand or provide the answer within 21 days. If witnesses wish to hand up documents, they can do so through the Committee staff. Minister, I remind you and the officers with you that you are free to pass notes and refer directly to your advisers seated at the table to your left just behind you.

In terms of the audibility of the hearing today, we have witnesses in person and several on videoconference. If I could ask Committee members to clearly identify who the questions are directed to and everyone appearing remotely to please state their name at the beginning when they start speaking. Could everyone also mute their microphones when they are not speaking, and if we could turn off mobile phones. All witnesses will be sworn prior to giving evidence. Minister Mitchell, you do not need to be sworn because you have taken an oath as an MP. Georgina Harrison and David Withey we saw at the tertiary education estimates last week, so they do not need to be sworn in, but the other witnesses do.

**GEORGINA HARRISSON**, Secretary, Department of Education, on former affirmation

**DAVID WITHEY**, Chief Operating Officer, Department of Education, before the Committee via videoconference, on former affirmation

**ANTHONY MANNING**, Chief Executive, School Infrastructure, Department of Education, affirmed and examined

**SIMONE WALKER**, Group Deputy Secretary, School Improvement and Education Reform, Department of Education, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

**RUTH OWEN**, Deputy Secretary, Learning Improvement, Department of Education, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**LISA ALONSO LOVE**, Deputy Secretary, Education and Skills Reform, Department of Education, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**MURAT DIZDAR**, Deputy Secretary, School Performance—South, Department of Education, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**YVETTE CACHIA**, Chief People Officer, Deputy Secretary, Department of Education, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**PAUL MARTIN**, Chief Executive Officer, NSW Education Standards Authority, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**LEANNE NIXON**, Deputy Secretary, School Performance—North, Department of Education, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Today's hearing will be conducted from 9.30 a.m. to 12.45 p.m. with the Minister and from 2.00 p.m. to 5.15 p.m. with the departmental witnesses, with questions from the Opposition and crossbench members only. If required we have got 15 minutes spare at the end for any questions from Government MPs. As there is no provision for any witnesses to make an opening statement before we commence, we will begin with questions from the Opposition in the usual fashion.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, on 29 January this year you said that concerns about teacher shortages were "a bit of a beat-up". Will you retract those comments today?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, because the comments that I made were in relation to some public commentary from the Teachers Federation in having a teaching supply crisis in New South Wales. I made the point then that with the workforce the size that we have, as the largest public education system in the Southern Hemisphere, the vacancy rates at that point were sitting at a bit less than 2 per cent. I did not classify that as a crisis, and that is why I made those comments.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, I would like to take you to a document that has been produced to the Parliament under a call for papers. It is a long PowerPoint presentation entitled *Workforce modelling and teacher supply*. It is dated 13 November and, if you read through it, it is pretty clear it is from 13 November 2019. Have you seen this document?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I may have. I do not recall.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. Perhaps, did you receive a presentation in relation to workforce modelling and teacher supply in November 2019? Can you recall that?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I receive a range of presentations in relation to teaching and workforce supply. I have weekly meetings with the department where we speak about a range of issues, so I have had multiple conversations with our department team about teacher supply and our strategy going forward, as you would expect as education Minister.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, when were you first briefed about the impending issues? Let us call them issues for now. I would probably characterise it as a crisis, but let us call it issues.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Agree to disagree.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** The significant issues with the future of workforce supply—when were you first briefed on that?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As I said, during my time as education Minister, I have had a range of briefings and meetings with the department around teacher supply and our strategy going forward. I believe in that call for papers that you are referring to I think there are 186 documents that you received which all show the development and the work that the department has done in terms of our policy on teacher supply. You would be aware, I would hope, of an investment in this year's budget of \$125 million into our Teacher Supply Strategy going forward and a range of initiatives. So there are many documents, as I said, that were part of that call for papers that talk about what was the work that was done, what were the issues that were identified but, most importantly, what is the solution that we need to work on. That, of course, culminated in our budget announcement this year for that Teacher Supply Strategy in that publicly available document.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, I am going to provide you with a copy of the presentation. I will take you to page 2 of the slides, which is entitled "Executive summary". It says at the end of the third bullet point, "Our current strategies are insufficient to address this problem." When were you first briefed that your current strategies are insufficient to address the future problem?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, if I can just refer to what I said earlier, you are talking about a document you said was from 13 November 2019. I make the point, as I did before, that there has been a range of policy work in development that has been done by the department in relation to managing these issues going forward. This is the work that has culminated in our Teacher Supply Strategy, which has recently been released publicly. It is proven to be the catalyst for our \$125 million investment in terms of teacher supply. It would not surprise anybody in the Committee that, of course, we look at what we need to do for teacher supply both now and into the future. That is the role of the department and the role of government.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But, Minister, when were you first briefed about the problem? You have given two very long answers now. I would like you to cast your mind back. You became the Minister after the election. When were you first briefed to say we will run out of teachers?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, I do not agree with the premise of your question in terms of running out of teachers. As I said before, as education Minister I meet weekly with my department to talk through a range of issues. On many occasions that has, of course, included teacher supply and strategies going forward. That is to be expected.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, I will stop you there and take you two pages further into the document, which says, "Current best analysis shows an aggregate supply gap in the next three years." It goes on to say that by 2024 the gap will be 748 teachers, and in 2025 the gap in supply in New South Wales will be 2,425 teachers. When were you first briefed? When were you first told about this impending crisis?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If I can again reiterate, with respect, Ms Houssos, what I said before: I receive regular briefings in relation to these matters. There are a range of documents that you got through that call for papers, dated later on, which then go through the policy development process. There are documents from June 2020, from November—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, we will get to those.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** Point of order—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, you cannot pick a point in time and use that.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** My point of order is that the witness, the Minister, is answering the question, and the Hon. Courtney Houssos is starting to interrupt halfway through the answer. The Minister is entitled to complete her answer before Ms Houssos jumps down her throat.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** To the point of order: I have asked a series of questions along this line. I have given the Minister ample time to answer. I am now asking very specific questions, trying to drill down on a specific piece of information. The Minister is now talking about what will happen in the future. I am asking when she was first advised about this problem. We will get to the other documents later on. We have them here; we will get to those. We have a long day ahead, but we would like to know when she was first advised. I am merely drawing her back to my actual question.

**The CHAIR:** I will rule to say that witnesses need to be relevant to the question that is asked, but they also have some latitude. I am pretty firm here as Chair in terms of irrelevant answers or filibusters or whatever it might be. I think the Minister should have an opportunity to answer that question, please.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Like I said, I am briefed regularly by the department about a range of issues, including teacher supply.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, that is not answering the question.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It is answering the question.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** When were you first told that we will run out of teachers in 2024 and that there will be huge supply issues in 2025?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will address that again, Chair. In terms of advice around our Teacher Supply Strategy, as the Opposition well knows, there are a range of documents in that call for papers that very clearly outline that. It is quite a dated document that you are referring to. There are subsequent documents that talk about further modelling work that has been done which indicates adequate supply of teachers going forward and the work that we are doing. You need to put these things in context rather than cherry-picking one document.

**The CHAIR:** Order! The purpose of your answer is not to reflect on whether you like the question or not. It is to give an answer about when you first found out about this document, which appears to be dated 13 November. It is true it is almost a year old. Maybe you should take it on notice to get an exact answer.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Two years old, yes, and there has been a lot of work done since.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, but maybe take on notice when you were first briefed about this 13 November 2019 document.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I am happy to take on notice when that document was presented to me. That is fine.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, thank you.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Minister, can I just jump in there? The 2019 document talks about a sort of two-pronged strategy, one with a rapid teacher supply strategy and then a longer term teacher supply strategy. We have seen the longer term Teacher Supply Strategy released this year. What happened to the rapid teacher supply strategy, and why has that not been—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will ask the secretary to make some comments in relation to this issue, as well. But in terms of the Teacher Supply Strategy that has been released, you are right; it really is looking at issues and opportunities for us across a range of time frames. Some of the work in that, particularly around international recruitment, will begin next year. That is in line with the Productivity Commission's recommendation, as well. It is important to make the point that there are some elements of that strategy which will begin implementation from next year, including some of the pilot programs for scholarships, for retraining opportunities and for retraining school learning support officers [SLSOs]. It is not correct to say that everything in that strategy is long term. There will be some immediate initiatives as part of that.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Will those immediate measures, Minister, be sufficient to meet the gap that is identified in the document from November 2019?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Sure, I will get the secretary to make a comment in relation to that.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Sorry, I—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, do you have an opinion on whether this will actually address—

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** Point of order—

**The CHAIR:** Yes, there has been a referral. We will hear from the secretary, and then the Opposition can ask another question. Ms Harrisson.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Would you mind repeating the question, please, Mr D'Adam?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The question is whether the more immediate measures in the Teacher Supply Strategy will be adequate to meet the gap that has been identified in this 2019 document, which is 748 teachers in 2024 and 2,425 teachers in 2025.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Thank you. Firstly, as the Minister has indicated, we have continued with a policy development process since those documents were drafted. We have validated the modelling around our teacher supply. We have asked Deloitte Access Economics to do that for us in 2020 to ensure that we were very clear on what issues we might have. The reviewed modelling, with much clearer assumptions, has demonstrated to us that we will not be short of teachers at an aggregate level at that time. If you move forward in that policy development cycle to where we now are, I know in the papers that were released to you that we have documents that are clear that we currently have and will maintain to 2025 a minimum supply of teachers required to operate the system. We do not see that as a crisis; we have capacity. We have more teachers in the system than we have ever had before; we have one teacher for every 15 students. That is partly why we would not categorise this as a crisis.

We have had a number of strategies running over a number of years. There was an initial election commitment at the last election, which we have been delivering on and are on track to deliver, to bring additional teachers into the system above and beyond the general level of recruitment we would expect each year. We have been at work on this. We have released initiatives before the Teacher Supply Strategy was published. We have undertaken the FASTstream program, which is about making the profession attractive to new graduates as something that they can see a career progression within. That was hugely successful in its pilot phase. We have both new teachers entering that program and existing teachers entering to have that career path. We do see that we are making progress on this issue, that we have strategies in place that are delivering. I would point you to the later documents in that 180 documents that you were provided, that show where we ended up in terms of that analysis of the teacher supply requirements.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Minister, are you confident that we will not have a teacher supply crisis as identified in that 2019 document?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As I think the secretary has outlined, that policy development work has shown that we have got the adequate supply of teachers that we need through to 2025.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** You are prepared to guarantee that, Minister?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, you are cherrypicking documents. The important point was around that. It was: If we did nothing, there would have been challenges. We have done quite a lot. We have invested, as I said, \$125 million into that Teacher Supply Strategy. We have got a range of initiatives to attract and retain teachers. Of course, that is on top of our election commitment for 4,600 additional teachers over four years, which we are well on track to be delivering. We have always been committed to boosting teacher numbers; that is not a surprise.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** This almost sounds like a dixer.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can I ask about the Teacher Supply Strategy document that was released? It talks about implementation and evaluation.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** But there are no measures in the document. It does not actually have any specific benchmarks that you will achieve by specific dates. Why is that?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Do you want to speak to that?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I would be happy to ask Ms Cachia to provide some further information on this. Obviously, the key measure is the supply of teachers. As the Minister has indicated in terms of the election commitment and adding additional teachers, in 2019 we had 340 new full-time equivalent teachers. In 2020 we had 2,534 new full-time equivalent teachers. We are delivering on those increases as we see the need in the system. Ms Cachia might be able to provide you with some further information on the key data that we will be tracking.

**Ms CACHIA:** Thank you, Secretary. Thank you for the question. I think the answer is that what you would be looking at in that bundle of documents is a strategy. Then flowing from that strategy are the more tactical programming implementation plans that flow from that. By way of illustration, which would help the Committee I think, if we take one of the initiatives, being something like recruitment beyond New South Wales—and we were already recruiting qualified teachers from beyond New South Wales in the system—that is one of the few readily available sources right now. You mentioned rapid supply and this is important, given the time it takes to grow a local undergraduate. Then it would flow through that program—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Ms Cachia, can I just bring you back to the question, which is: Why were the measures not included in the document? It is a strategy. How are we to assess the success or otherwise of this strategy if there are no clear benchmarks and no clear time frames for when those benchmarks should be achieved?

**Ms CACHIA:** They may not be in the documents you are looking at, I suppose, is what I am—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** But this is a public document. How are we supposed to assess?

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Point of order: The witness was asked a question and was attempting to answer and was no more than five seconds into her answer when she was cut off by the Hon. Anthony D'Adam. There is no way that he could have actually—

**The CHAIR:** I understand. We will let the witness answer. Please, Ms Cachia.

**Ms CACHIA:** Thank you, Chair. Each part of the strategy obviously has a program implementation plan and a set of key milestones.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Ms Cachia, can I ask you then for those documents to be provided to the—

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Point of order—

**The CHAIR:** The same point of order has been taken. I think you need to give the witness another 45 seconds or so to provide an answer.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** No, she answered. She provided an answer. She said the plans are available.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Cachia, I think, was still going. I make the point that witnesses deserve the respect of providing an answer. I will cut them off if it is obviously going on too long and taking up too much time. Ms Cachia, had you finished your answer?

**Ms CACHIA:** I can finish it. I was simply saying that there are a range of modelling documents that I think the Committee has been referring to and talking to this morning. Modelling is the first part of the process. Doing the testing of the modelling is the next part. Formulating a strategy is the next part, based on the modelling of numbers of teachers that you require. As the Minister stated, the modelling allows you to refine and hone in on the teaching specialisations and regional locations you need teachers in. I was attempting in my answer—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Ms Cachia, can I ask you about that? Are you suggesting that there is modelling still underway—that these proposals are half-baked and not complete?

**Ms CACHIA:** Not at all. What I am stating is the truth, which is that in any workforce a range of top-down and bottom-up factors are going to drive workforce supply and demand and that any good workforce modelling will always be continuously updating and updated depending on the various inputs and [inaudible].

**Ms HARRISSON:** Mr D'Adam, if I may, just in relation to your initial question—the strategy is clear in terms of the measure and requirement to add an additional 3,700 teachers on top of our annual recruitment.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Over 10 years.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Additional on top of our current annual recruitment. There are measures in the document that are clear in terms of how we will—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** There is one measure. You reached that benchmark after 10 years. That is how we are to judge the success of this strategy?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Just to be clear, that is in addition to our annual recruitment. As I indicated in a previous answer in 2020, we already had an additional 2,534 teachers. We are seeing other increases in our recruitment as a result of our recruitment efforts. Those measures are there. That is the ultimate measure of teachers supply—how many teachers we have. We have—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** "In the right place", I think, is the wording. There is no way for us to assess whether the teachers are in the right place based on this document, is there? How do we know you are getting the teachers in the right place?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Mr D'Adam, we will know that based on where we see vacancies and we have other internal measures that we monitor closely around the time taken to fill vacancies. We have a number of elements underway as a result of that strategy. We have the rural and regional incentives review to ensure that we are attracting teachers into the places we need them. We have the FASTstream program that includes a significant investment in our teachers and in their experience in a number of different settings. We are very focused on making sure we have the teachers where we need them.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Ms Harrisson, are you happy to provide to the Committee the implementation plans for the programs that are outlined in the NSW Teacher Supply Strategy?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am happy to take that on notice and see what we can provide, yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Have those documents been completed?

**Ms HARRISSON:** As I said, I am happy to take that on notice and come back to you with the plans that we are able to provide.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you tell us on notice if you have internal working documents of the department or whether they are publicly available?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Just to that point, the secretary has already said we will take that on notice and provide what we can. Obviously there are internal working documents that government agencies would be doing as they implement this work, but we will take that on notice and provide what we are able to give. It is a very general question.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** We are specifically interested to know whether you have an implementation plan in order to put this into practice. I think that has been pretty clear.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Yes. I think, as Ms Cachia indicated in her evidence, that is exactly what we have. I am very happy to take that away and see what we can provide on notice.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can I ask about the countries of origin? Have you done modelling on where you are going to recruit teachers outside of New South Wales?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Certainly we have looked at where we would want to target that recruitment activity in terms of bringing in international—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can you elaborate on where you intend to target?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Ms Cachia will be able to provide some further details. Obviously the factors we will be taking into account are similarity and context, and proficiency in the kind of teaching and expectations we would have here in New South Wales. Of course, anyone that we recruited would need to meet the New South Wales standards.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** High quality.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Cachia, can you finish off the answer please? Which are the countries of origin?

**Ms CACHIA:** Yes, Chair. At this stage, given all the factors that the secretary has outlined there, we were looking at New Zealand initially and the UK and Canada which, as the secretary pointed out, [audio malfunction] distance. Obviously we need people to be able to be accredited when they join and we need to obviously consider as well any current travel restrictions, et cetera. They are predominantly the countries we are looking at.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Minister, when your department says it is going to be looking for teachers in the UK, Canada and New Zealand, have you had a look at the fact that England itself is going through a teacher shortage, for example?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I think in relation to that part of the supply strategy, I know it is in line with recommendations that came from the Productivity Commissioner that were looking at what we can do for both interstate and international recruitment. As Ms Cachia just outlined, yes, the countries that we are looking at internationally include New Zealand, Canada and the UK. We are looking to other State jurisdictions as well.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** My question was actually quite specific. Are you aware that one of the key sources that you have identified for overseas teachers is itself suffering a critical teacher shortage?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As I said—and I am happy to ask Ms Cachia or the secretary to provide more comment—one of the key drivers behind this is also looking at expat teachers; Australians who might be living and working overseas. They are certainly a target of our marketing campaign. I think, if anything, COVID has made people realise that it is nice to be at home and it might be an opportunity to recapture some of our staff who are overseas and encourage them—with two people from the UK sitting on either side of me, Mr Shoebridge. The amazing opportunities and lifestyle of living in New South Wales are pretty great selling points. Of course we are going to try to use that as part of our campaign. I do not know whether you want to add anything, Secretary.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Perhaps, Minister, I will try to express my question more directly, because I have not heard an answer yet. Are you aware of the fact that one of the major jurisdictions you are looking to get teachers from, the United Kingdom, is itself suffering a critical teacher storage, not least of which because one in six of their teachers leave within one year of starting?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Mr Shoebridge, we are aware of those factors overseas. But I think, as the Minister has indicated, we are also confident that working in the New South Wales public education system is an attractive proposition. As the Minister has indicated, for those overseas in particular, the lifestyle benefits that can come from making that move—as someone who has made that move myself, I am pretty confident in our capacity to market that appropriately. We do not apologise for trying to attract the best teachers we can to New South Wales.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Minister, are you aware that New Zealand is suffering a critical teacher storage and that, as recently as February this year, principals in Auckland were warning that the city's ongoing

shortage of secondary teachers is causing schools to make compromises and abandon subjects? Are you aware that there is a critical teacher shortage in New Zealand?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, with respect, Mr Shoebridge, I will refer to what I said earlier. We do not apologise for having an active recruitment campaign marketing the benefits of living in New South Wales in line with the Productivity Commission's suggestion or recommendation that that is something that we explore.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Are you aware, Minister, that Victoria is suffering a critical teacher shortage and that, as recently as July of this year, people such as experts from the Victorian Academy of Teaching were saying that Victoria is suffering a critical teacher shortage? Are you aware of that?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, I will repeat what I said. We do not apologise for marketing teaching in New South Wales and trying to attract teachers here. I will also make the point that this is one element of our Teacher Supply Strategy, Mr Shoebridge. It is not the entirety of that document. There are plenty of initiatives around growing our own and retraining our own teachers—education scholarships, more opportunities for rural experience programs, more opportunities to retrain SLSOs and have them qualified as teachers. So there are a lot of elements to our Teacher Supply Strategy. But, as I said, I do not apologise for putting it out there that New South Wales is a great place to live and to teach and we should be actively trying to get teachers in here. That is my job.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** You see, Minister, what I am suggesting to you is that to the extent that your strategy is looking at these other similar jurisdictions as an opportunity to attract teachers to New South Wales it is actually quite the opposite. There is going to be a Hunger Games out there for teachers over the next four or five years, and New South Wales is likely to see a bunch of its highly skilled teachers being poached by Victoria, by Queensland, by New Zealand, by the United Kingdom. Are you aware that it is going to be literally that, over the next four or five years—a global Hunger Games, fighting to get over this critical global shortage of teachers?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Can I reiterate what I said earlier—and I think you probably do make the point, Mr Shoebridge, that managing staffing supply is not an issue that is unique to New South Wales, but our job is to make sure that we have the funding and the strategy and the incentives to have our teachers here. I am confident of the work that we have done in relation to these matters going forward. I think there is a range of initiatives, as I said, under the Teacher Supply Strategy to address these issues. New South Wales is a great place to live and work. Our public schools are amongst some of the best. We are proud of that and we want to promote that to attract high-quality teachers to New South Wales.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Does your modelling estimate how many teachers will be poached from New South Wales over the next four to five years, or is it all just on the positive upside about how many you can recruit?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Obviously, we are focused on how many we can recruit. We do not, for a second, underestimate some of the challenges you have indicated. I think we have consistently, at this Committee, shared that this is not just a New South Wales issue in terms of teacher supply. It is a national issue and, indeed, as you described—

**The CHAIR:** Ms Harrisson, you need to answer the question, which was very specific: Does the modelling include the estimate for New South Wales teachers being poached?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I would need to go away and check the specifics of the model and come back to you with that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, take it on notice. It is much better if people take a question on notice than answer a question that was not asked. Mr Shoebridge?

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Thanks, Chair. Minister, this morning you were quoted on radio talking about mid-career entry from other professions into science, technology, engineering and mathematics [STEM] teaching. Do you remember that?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, it was only this morning; I do remember that.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** You may have given the quote last night—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, it was this morning—early this morning. I get up early, David.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** —but it was politely being run as though it was this morning that you were speaking.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It was this morning.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Minister, you said, "Let's see what we can do to get those people in classrooms within six months rather than two years." Do you remember saying that?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Does that mean you are cutting standards, you are cutting corners? Because how on earth can you get somebody qualified to be a teacher within six months?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, I am happy to speak to that. The answer to your question—are we cutting standards—is, no. What we have announced earlier this year is that we want to look at ways that we can have STEM professionals in the classroom more quickly, particularly those who already have experience. I think I was referencing this morning university tutors and academics. At the moment, for instance, if somebody is a university tutor in mathematics but they have not had an education degree they still have to do a two-year masters before they can be in a classroom. I think that there is work, and we are doing that work with the university sector now, to see what we can do to get somebody in within six months who has got the subject speciality and knowledge. They are the kind of people we are targeting within that sort of six-month period of time.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** So you think you can train somebody to be a high school teacher within six months. Is that—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I think—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** No, let me finish the question, Minister. You think you can train somebody to be a high school teacher within six months. Do you not think that is discounting the professionalism and the detailed study that is required to be a professional teacher in a high school or a primary school?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As I said, Mr Shoebridge, we are looking at opportunities for mid-career transition. The specific example that I gave was that if somebody is a university tutor, or professor, or lecturer, teaching first year or second year university students mathematics or science, I believe that there is a capacity to get them into a public education system in a classroom within six months. Okay? So there are different bodies of work as part of that mid-career transition. I am not talking about someone who has no experience in the education sector or no content knowledge. Of course, in that circumstance you need to look at the appropriate qualifications. But I find it hard to justify somebody who might be already qualified, like I said, teaching first or second year university students science or maths, that we cannot find a way to get them into a classroom before two years.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** But there is no teaching qualification to be a tutor. There is no teaching qualification to be doing that at a university level. I might note that your comments did not have those qualifications this morning.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** They did.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Are you saying that you so undervalue the profession of teaching—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Not at all.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** —that you think that somebody can pick up the skills of being a teacher with a short, sharp six-month course? Is that your position as Minister?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What I am saying—and, again, I will repeat what I said—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** No, do not repeat.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I am allowed to answer the question how I choose. My point was, at the moment the two-year masters degree can often be an impediment for people who are looking to make that career change. I have heard directly from principals and teachers who talk about what are the opportunities to get people in the system, to get them experienced in the classroom much more quickly, to get them in paid roles earlier on to help address this—particularly for people who are mid-career, who have financial pressures, who often have families, who might want to come into the teaching career but it is too difficult to take two years' time out unpaid to do a masters.

My point is, if you have people who are—particularly in the university sector at the moment, which we know has been hit quite hard by COVID, if there are people who have experience who are, as I said, academics, professors, who have that skill set, why would we not be looking at what we can do to get them in the classroom? Again, I do not apologise for finding innovative ways—not at all reducing quality. We have very high standards

for our teachers in New South Wales. That will continue. But it is about making sure that we have got the supply and pipeline that we need going forward.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Coming to my round of questions, I will table a document—and if the Minister could be shown a copy of it. It is the Ashcroft High School Strategic Improvement Plan 2021-24. Minister, you have spoken extensively of the importance and your high hopes for strategic improvement plans as part of the School Success Model for lifting student growth and attainment around the State. Were you expecting that these plans would be somewhat standardised so that each school could be compared to other schools?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** In terms of the School Success Model, sorry, Chair?

**The CHAIR:** No, the strategic improvement plans, like the one you have got in front of you there from Ashcroft?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Obviously, as part of the School Success Model, we have worked with all our schools to set those targets, as you are well aware. We have spoken about that before. In terms of the specific work that school communities have done for their strategic improvement plans, I know that Mr Dizdar is quite familiar with this particular school, so I might get him to answer that question.

**The CHAIR:** I am asking you, generally, were you expecting these to be in a standardised format so we could compare school plan against school plan around New South Wales?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Like I said, the School Success Model is what gives us that opportunity to compare schools and outcomes, and that has certainly been my focus.

**The CHAIR:** You were expecting something standardised.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But I will see if Mr—

**The CHAIR:** No, we will come to Ashcroft and the details in a moment. Were you expecting that every school would have to be accountable for their results in 2022, that the targets would all be for next year?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes. There is a range of targets, obviously, Mr Chair, that have been set through the School Success Model. Some we have had to baseline, obviously. The phonics check, for instance, has only been brought in from this year. So there is some datasets that we need to capture going forward. But all the schools have had their targets set. We will continue to track and monitor how they are performing against those targets.

**The CHAIR:** Were you expecting that all schools would have targets for 2022 that they were expected to meet?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, it depends on the particular target. Some we have had to baseline this year, as I said at the outset.

**The CHAIR:** I am not talking about the baseline. I am talking about for when the target would be judged as successful or unsuccessful for next year.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, I am happy to let the secretary, Mr Dizdar, speak to this too, because they have done a lot of work with the school communities in terms of the implementation of the School Success Model. Like I said, we already are tracking our schools in terms of who is working towards and meeting those targets, who are exceeding. We have already identified our ambassador schools. That work continues and is ongoing in our school communities in terms of those targets that have been set and the trajectory that schools are on.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, were you expecting the strategic improvement plans could be understood by parents so they would know what the targets were and what the hopes were for the academic growth of their children?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I do think it is important that parents understand the priorities of the school and the areas that that school community is working to achieve. As a parent, that is what I would like.

**The CHAIR:** As a parent and the Minister, can I take you to this document on page 3, the third column, target 2. Do you expect that parents in Harrison Street, Wilberforce Street, Maxwells Avenue, Ashcroft, can understand that material there:

Specific: Trial matrix, including 1. QT + Whole person; 2. QT + FoR + Faculty Identified skills ...

The gobbledegook just goes on and on. Minister, can you give an explanation to those parents in Ashcroft as to what that means?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No. I think you make a very relevant point, Chair. The secretary has just reminded me, of course, that a lot of school communities also do more parent-friendly versions and communications in terms of the areas that the school is focusing on. Like I said, Mr Dizdar might be able to provide a bit more specific information in relation to Ashcroft.

**The CHAIR:** I will come to Mr Dizdar probably this afternoon. But I raised this in the Council Chamber in the matter of public importance debate with you, Minister. What have you done to try and give parents in Ashcroft, a heavily disadvantaged area, an understanding of what these targets are supposed to mean and how the school might be implementing practical means to help their children learn to read, write, get good leaving results and get a job?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, I would ask if Mr Dizdar could address this with respect, Chair, because, as I said, I know it is a school community that he is very familiar with.

**Mr DIZDAR:** Chair, what I can say is we have invested a lot of expertise into making sure we have every school across New South Wales with a 2021-2024 strategic improvement plan. We, since the last Committee hearings, mandated the first strategic direction for every single school in the State. That is around student growth and attainment. We made that clear to all school communities, all leadership teams, that that was to be the driving impetus of every strategic improvement plan. Chair, I know it is a school you have visited. I have visited a number of times in my career. On pages 3 and 4 they have outlined [disorder] negotiated targets at a school level. I have previously indicated to the Committee how we have led the nation in standardising those target-setting [disorder]. You will see the Premier's Priorities there in their plan around the top two bands for numeracy and for reading. You will see expected growth measures, targets that have been set in relation to similar contexts of disadvantage that Ashcroft—

**The CHAIR:** I am asking about Ashcroft. Minister, do you concede that this is incomprehensible to parents at Ashcroft?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Like I said, Mr Chair, I think you made a valid point in terms of—it is quite technical, the way that it is listed in this document. What I would like to better understand—perhaps I might take that on notice for this particular school—is what other communication might have gone out to parents and families in terms of the school's direction and what they are working on.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. If you can take that on notice. Why hasn't the school got any targets for next year? They start here at 2023.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, Mr Chair, my understanding is that all schools do have targets around literacy and numeracy for next year. But again I might ask Mr Dizdar to comment in relation to that.

**The CHAIR:** You will see in points 10 and 11 and onwards that they start at 2023. How many schools have been allowed in this negotiation process, which seems like it is a capitulation to schools, not to have targets for next year?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As I said, under the School Success Model, all of our schools—it is the first time we have ever had every single school in the State—has targets in relation to a range of measures under this program. We have already identified, as I said, schools that are on the trajectory to meet or exceed those. We have also identified schools that need assistance to do that, Mr Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, my question was how many schools out of the 2,200 government schools that you run have been allowed to have no targets for next year? They are pushed out to 2023 or, in some cases, 2024.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Sorry, Mr Chair. I might ask Mr Dizdar to come in and see if he has the specifics on that question. What I will say about the negotiation is that we provided people with a band for their improvement—I think "stretch targets" is the language we used at the time—to ensure that there was an increase for every school and the opportunity for schools to look to set higher, more ambitious goals in order to achieve the overall objectives.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Dizdar, have you got an answer? How many schools have not got targets for next year?

**Mr DIZDAR:** I am happy to help with this question, Chair. Firstly, if I take you back to Ashcroft—

**The CHAIR:** No. You need to help by giving me an answer to my question. How many schools have not got targets for next year? I know Ashcroft does not. The document is in front of us. What about the other 2,200?

**Mr DIZDAR:** I do not support that summation, because Ashcroft does have 2022 targets for the top two bands, for reading and numeracy, Chair. The 2023 targets refer to expected growth targets. There are different maturation years for different targets that we have set across the system. The expected growth targets that we have set across the system mature in 2023. The top two band targets mature in 2022. My advice is that Ashcroft has met those requirements in articulating it in their school plans. You asked, Chair, about the number of schools that do not have targets. We negotiated these system targets at a school level, bringing into account school context compared to similar advantage and disadvantage, with every single school in New South Wales. The Chair and the Committee would be mindful that there are some school communities that have very small student populations. We serve communities where we have two students. Setting targets where there may be no students undertaking NAPLAN in a particular year is very difficult. So we have gone at a student level. Their school plan will not be able to report at a system level. They are—

**The CHAIR:** Mr Dizdar, could you have a look at Maitland High School, which has 20 targets, none of them for next year or the year after. They are all for 2024. That is a school with 1,100 students. On notice could I get an answer as to how many schools have got no targets for next year and also for 2023, that they go out to 2024, please?

**Mr DIZDAR:** Chair, I am happy to take your question on notice, but I do want to stress for the Committee that every school—its strategic direction 1 is around student growth and attainment. Outside of very small school populations, you will not see a report [disorder]—

**The CHAIR:** Maitland has 1,100 students. It is a high school in a major population centre. So you could have a look at that and take that on notice and find out the answer to the question that I just framed. Also, Kirrawee Public School does not have a strategic improvement plan on its website. How many schools have just failed to publicly declare and publish what their strategic plan might be?

**Mr DIZDAR:** I am happy to follow up on Kirrawee, Chair, while we are in committee and come back. Every school is obliged to publish their—

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I looked at their website yesterday. Maybe it is tucked away outside of school plans, but it does not appear to be there. There is certainly no link to it when they mention it.

**Mr DIZDAR:** Let me follow up.

**The CHAIR:** They make mention of it, but there is no link where any parent could actually access the plan. Minister, just looking at this Ashcroft plan, at point 10 in the third column on page 3 it reads:

Increase the proportion of students meeting or exceeding expected growth for NAPLAN Numeracy in 2023 by at least 8.2% from the 2016-2018 baseline.

Why is the baseline so dated? From 2016 to 2023 it is seven years of judging what the progress might be. That is just about 1 per cent per annum. Why does the baseline go back to 2016 instead of 2019?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will ask the secretary to respond that, Chair.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Mr Dizdar can provide details of the analytical process that went to determining the baseline. It was based on statistical advice from the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation [CESE] in terms of where we could sensibly draw a baseline from for the future measurement of those targets. Mr Dizdar can provide you with some more information on that.

**Mr DIZDAR:** Sorry, I did not capture it all. Is this around the targets and how we—

**The CHAIR:** No, the baseline is listed as 2016-18, and then it has different baselines—2017-18. I am asking why are not all the baselines up-to-date for a relevant comparison. For instance, like the Lindfield report that was released on Friday where the baseline quite sensibly is to judge student growth 2019-21. Why are these Ashcroft numbers going back to 2016?

**Mr DIZDAR:** Very good question, Chair. For expected growth we use the baseline for all schools. Expected growth is a measure of student growth in reading and numeracy. We use the baseline of 2016-18. What we did is look at each school's expected growth result across that period and our CESE colleagues indicated that that was the most statistically relevant measure. The Committee would remember that we moved to a mixture of NAPLAN, online and paper-based testing in 2019 and we did not have a 2020 NAPLAN. For top two bands, Chair, we used a baseline of two years—2017-18. My colleagues in CESE say that an expected growth baseline across three years—2016-18—is a much more solid measure to remove the volatility of cohort impacts when you have expected growth that can fluctuate across a school. Whereas top two bands, which is raw performance, you only need a baseline of two years so we took 2017-18. The Committee will remember the complexity we had with

the rollout in 2019 so we wanted to avoid that in setting the targets. That is why there is a variance in baseline and we respected the professional expertise and advice of our CESE colleagues on this.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, the position of the Government and of the department would be that teachers trained to teach a specific subject should be teaching in that particular subject. Is that correct?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Obviously, that is you want to see—teachers teaching in the subject discipline that they have been trained to teach in.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And that they should not be teaching outside the specific area that they have been trained in?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I think it is an interesting issue that we certainly work through and indeed it is in our strategy supply document that is publicly available. Quoting particularly some of the statistics around teachers teaching out of field in maths, I think it is one in four is what that document talks about nationally. For us in New South Wales, I think we are one in five, so we are actually a bit ahead of the national statistics. But it certainly highlights why you need to make sure you are investing not just in teachers where you need them but also in the subject disciplines where there is demand and that is part of our strategy going forward.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Do you have a percentage of teachers that you are aiming for, for them to be teaching within their trained area or outside of it? For example, do you say, "More than 5 per cent—that it is a deal-breaker. More than 10 per cent—that is a problem"? What is your percentage that you are working towards, Minister?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I think, as the Minister has indicated—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sorry—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I am happy for the secretary to answer that question.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** You do not have a—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Like I said, I am happy for the secretary to answer that question.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But I am asking you, Minister. Do you have a specific—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But, as Minister, I am allowed to refer a question to the secretary.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Point of order: While I accept the Hon. Courtney Houssos has asked the question of the Minister, the Minister is more than entitled to ask one of the departmental staff to provide an answer and that is what she has done. I ask that that member be allowed to provide the answer.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, that is fair enough.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Thank you for the question. We do not have a specific target, as the Minister has indicated. We want to ensure that wherever it is possible we have an infield teacher. I would draw the Committee's attention to the fact that there are some subject disciplines where it would be reasonable to teach across two subject areas with the expertise that our teachers have and the support of the syllabus documents provided by NESA to support that action and with the support of their head teacher in that discipline. We also in the department provide significant support to teachers teaching out of field and, in particular, our best in class team and our growth maths team work in support of those teachers to ensure that they are able to successfully deliver the curriculum and we are confident that that is occurring.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Ms Harrison, when you talk about teaching outside of your area, is it sort of like English and history or a comparison like that, would you say?

**Ms HARRISSON:** They would be the first places a school would look if they needed a teacher across subject areas. If they needed to look more broadly, then of course they would request system support from the department and we would provide it.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Is there anything other than science and maths that should be grouped together? For example, is there any kind of internal checking that says that we have this percentage of art teachers teaching maths, we have this percentage of PE teachers teaching science and that is a problem?

**Ms HARRISSON:** The data is not readily available on that to draw out of the system at this time. We do survey schools regularly, particularly around those that are teaching the HSC, to ensure that we can provide the support that is required for those teachers in classrooms.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Sorry, did you say the data is not available? So you do not actually know how many people are teaching out of—

**Ms HARRISSON:** I said it was not readily available directly from a system and that we survey schools and ask them to provide us with that data regularly.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** How can you have a strategy that is directed to filling these gaps without actually knowing the baseline?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Because we have done the work to establish the baseline by collecting that data directly from our schools.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** But it is not regularly updated so you do not actually know your progress.

**Ms HARRISSON:** We regularly undertake that work on a cycle to meet our needs and we will continue to do that through the implementation of the strategy.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How many times are you going to be surveying your schools each year?

**Ms HARRISSON:** We would not do it multiple times in a year. We are conscious that teachers and staffing tends to be set for a year in a school so we would look to do that as we need to in the cycle and Ms Cachia might be able to provide you with some further information on our approaches there. I think, as the Minister indicated earlier, we have been leading the nation in our understanding of this data at a system level and have been working cross jurisdictionally based on the analysis we have been able to do to support other jurisdictions. Ms Cachia will be able to provide you with some further information.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How often are you surveying schools, Ms Cachia?

**Ms CACHIA:** We survey them on an annual basis and, in reference to what the secretary just referred to there, at the department level New South Wales education is leading the country by using timetabling data to understand teacher supply and demand at that subject level.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Thanks very much for that, Ms Cachia. We might come back to that this afternoon as we got limited time with the Minister. Minister, do you have a percentage, after listening to all that, that you think is acceptable or not acceptable?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As the secretary indicated, there is no set percentage. I think what is important for me as education Minister are the range of initiatives and the funding that we have to deliver those initiatives to get more teachers in areas not only where we need them geographically but also in the subject areas where we are seeing higher demand and that absolutely includes subject areas like STEM. Again, this should not be a surprise to any of the Committee. It is something we have spoken about publicly before. I have spoken about it in the House many times. A lot of our initiatives through the Teacher Supply Strategy look at addressing some of these issues, particularly around retraining opportunities for our staff. Again, that is something that stakeholders have raised directly with me. We are looking at what we can do to make sure that support is available. And, again, as the secretary outlined, things like our Best in Class program, some of the maths work that is being led by Eddie Woo and others—there is a lot of support for teachers who are out there working for us.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes, but fundamentally they are teaching in areas that are outside of what they have been trained in. We have one in five in our country schools who are teaching outside of—when it comes to maths—a fundamental skill. That is an issue. You would acknowledge that that is an issue?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Which is why we are addressing it, as I said, through the Teacher Supply Strategy and a range of initiatives to help address this problem. Can I also just—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** When will you—

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Point of order—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Can I just finish my answer?

**The CHAIR:** Can the Minister finish the answer.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You have particularly called out rural and regional schools. As members of the Committee very well know, as someone who lives in a regional community and as somebody whose eldest child goes to a regional public school, these are issues that are very close to my heart. I think it is incredibly important that we see investments in our regional workforce and make sure that we have the teachers we need where we need them. That is why we have, as I said, the strategy. That is why we have the \$125 million

investment in this year's budget—to address these exact issues. That is why we have done the work to inform the strategy so that we can address these issues.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, I accept your personal passion for the area but what then is the level that you will consider acceptable? What is the level when you will have seen that you have achieved what you are seeking to address with the strategy? When will you say, "Yes, we have actually achieved success"?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As the secretary mentioned in an earlier answer, the strategy very clearly talks about those extra 3,700 teaching positions in areas where we need them and in subject disciplines where we need them—on top of our annual recruitment, on top of our election commitment for additional teachers as well. That is the clear benchmark that we are aiming to hit through this strategy, and it is all publicly available. It is all on the website; we are very open about this.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, I want to return to the PowerPoint presentation that I provided you with earlier.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Will you turn to the appendix, which is four pages from the back. This is a very long presentation about workforce modelling and teacher supply.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But it is not until the appendix that it actually mentions what some might say is the elephant in the room, where it says, "However the right financial incentives can be effective at attracting applicants." Minister, have you considered paying teachers more?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Can I say in relation to financial incentives—and this is specifically referring to our teach.Rural scholarships as part of the Teacher Supply Strategy and also our rural and remote incentives, which have also been released this year and are very much linked to the supply strategy—what that talks about is increasing the financial incentives that are available for teachers to go to regional communities. It talks about making those incentives available to temporary teachers as well. It also talks about increasing the number of rural scholarships that are available and increasing what we call our Rural Experience Program, which is when a teacher from a city school comes and has a term or up to a year above establishment and experiences living in a regional community. That has been very successful.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, I accept you are talking about regional issues.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, you referred to a page that talks about teach.Rural scholarships and rural incentives, so that is what I am talking about.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Exactly, but I am asking you the broader question—

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Point of order—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Come on, Wes. Just let me ask a question.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Let the Minister answer the question and we might not have this problem.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay, but I have limited time and you are running interference now.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I am not running interference. The Minister was halfway through her answer.

**The CHAIR:** Order! Sometimes you can have an exchange, but let me chair the meeting, please.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** But in this case, Chair, the Minister was talking over Courtney as much as it was happening the other way around.

**The CHAIR:** That can happen as well. Courtney Houssos, ask a question, please.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, I am drawing you to the broader point that the heading makes, which is: Have you considered paying all teachers more? The issue of teacher shortages is one that is now much bigger than just across regional areas. It is now across our cities, across regional parts of the State and even in the inner city. There are vacancies at the Inner Sydney High School. Minister, have you considered paying teachers more?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, you are referring to a document here, like I said, that speaks specifically about rural. I have addressed a lot of the initiatives that we are doing. In terms of teacher rates

of pay, members of the Opposition—and, indeed, members of the Committee—would be very aware that we are currently undergoing an award negotiation with the Teachers Federation in relation to these matters. It is not appropriate to—nor am I going to—provide a commentary in relation to that in this setting. They are matters that will be dealt with through that award process. We also clearly have a wages policy in New South Wales that is in effect; those negotiations continue between the department and the teachers union.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Minister, have you approached the Treasurer about seeking an exemption from the cap in the wages policy?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As I said, I am not going to provide a running commentary to the Committee about any negotiations or deliberations. But I am happy to share with the Committee that the Government wages policy exists and the negotiations will be done in line with the Government wages policy.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** So the Treasurer does not give you whatever you want.

**The CHAIR:** Order! It is Opposition questions.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Minister, the Teacher Supply Strategy is a \$125 million strategy.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I take you to some of the details in relation to each of the programs in the strategy. How much of that \$125 million is dedicated to the program relating to retraining teachers?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will ask Ms Cachia if she has got the breakdown of that; I do not have that document with me.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** You do not know how much—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As I said and as you have pointed out, there are a number of initiatives under that. There is a breakdown; I just do not have those figures with me. I will see if Ms Cachia has got that, or we can take it on notice—unless the secretary wants to comment?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Ms Cachia would have those numbers. I might just see if she is there.

**Ms CACHIA:** Thank you, Ms Harrisson. Thanks, Minister. I will come back to the Committee today on that. I will have the number, but I do not have it to hand right at this minute.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** If that is the case, Ms Cachia, can I get you to take on notice the costing breakdown for each of the programs in the Teacher Supply Strategy? Can I also get figures in terms of the numbers? How many teachers will be retrained under the Teacher Supply Strategy? How many per year across the scope of the strategy?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I am happy to take that on notice. I think it is also useful for the Committee to understand and appreciate that \$125 million allocation is over a four-year period. There are obviously some elements of that, which the document very clearly calls out, that we want to pilot in the numbers that we want to do—how we want to start that from next year and then look to grow in what we see is most successful. I think the retraining element is really important.

I am also particularly excited about two other areas: The opportunity to retrain our SLSOs, our student learning support officers who already have experience in the classroom, and to give them the opportunity to upskill and do their teaching degree—I think that is a really great initiative—and also our Grow Your Own, where we want to target final-year high school students in regional communities, to give them support in the year out of school to work as an SLSO and again provide them with opportunities for scholarships to do their teaching degrees as well. There is some really good stuff that we are trialling from next year that gives us that chance to establish what is most effective and how we can make those programs work—and then look at the opportunities to expand, as well, as I am sure you would appreciate.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Minister, do you know how much you are allocating to the Grow Your Own?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I am happy to provide that in the breakdown that we will allocate for you.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The strategy obviously looks at recruiting externally and deals with some measures in relation to developing your workforce, but I wanted to ask about exits and why the strategy does not address the question of teachers exiting the profession. Why is that, Minister?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I might ask the secretary to provide some comment, but what I will say initially—again, this is the strategy about growing the supply. We obviously are aware of the number of teachers that for whatever reason might leave the profession. The other point of that is the work that we want to do around making sure people understand that teaching is a really rewarding career—it can give you pathways into a lot of opportunities—and really reframing the setting of how teaching is perceived, the opportunities and the professional development opportunities that come as part of that. You will be well aware, of course, that we have got fewer students electing to study initial teacher education [ITE] degrees, and we really need to get to the bottom of why people are not seeing teaching as an attractive career. We want to reverse that and address that issue as well.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** It is the pay, is it not, Minister?

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Point of order—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But that is a very simplistic approach. I am telling you, from the experiences and conversations that I have with multiple teachers and principals, that professional development and support for career pathways is incredibly important. Referencing our FASTstream, which we announced this year, for 50 of our best and brightest to go on a leadership pathway to be a principal within 10 years—we had more than 200 applicants for those 50 positions. That tells me very clearly that if you give opportunities and incentives beyond financial—opportunities for career progression, advancement, school leadership, mentoring—that is what teachers want. They want to be treated like the professionals that they are and have that career opportunity. I think that is what needs to be called out. There is a real disconnect, at times, between the public narrative that comes from some and the reality on the ground, and the passion and the opportunity that comes with being a teacher in our public system. That is the message that I want to get out there, because it is important.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Minister, can I ask you about the casual supply? The Government's COVID tutoring program compounded the problem with casuals.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It is interesting that with that particular program Can I say that we have had overwhelming support from our principals and teachers. Indeed, during the learning-from-home period the number of principals and teachers that I met with—without doubt, the number one question was: Will we continue it?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Minister, I was not asking about the merits of the program.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The answer, obviously, is yes. Of the 7,500 positions that have been available through that program this year and that will continue next year, yes, casual workforce are used as part of that. We have also tapped into retired teachers, final-year university students and using our school learning support officers as well. Our teachers and principals have been able to operationalise this in their schools. They see the benefits of the program, and they have been able to manage staffing accordingly.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Minister, is the high degree of contingent employment, casualisation and temporary contracts a factor that is contributing to teacher exits, which is compounding the problem of teacher supply?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will ask Ms Cachia to comment in relation to that, because my understanding is that we are seeing more permanent roles. I will ask her to go through some of that data.

**Ms CACHIA:** Thank you, Minister. Thanks for the question. I start the answer by articulating that it is important to have a range of workforce supply, so that includes casual and temporary workforce. We welcome the fact that we do have casual supply. They provide a very important service in our schools when teachers are undertaking professional development and when they are absent for some reason. So casuals are very important.

In terms of the key statistics, there has been a decrease of nearly 8 per cent in casuals between 2011 and now. That is, as the Minister referenced, in large part because they have been placed in roles and obviously there is an increasing demand because of things like COVID, tutoring, et cetera. We will always have a demand for casual workforce. The department at the moment is doing a number of things to ensure that we have an adequate supply of casuals. One of the strategies there is that we have 80 per cent of our schools registered for what we call ClassCover so that they can tap into the casual pool as required. We have a casual supplementation program underway, which is being piloted in rural and remote areas in 2021. That aims to provide additional supply in terms of sourcing casual teachers in a hub-and-spoke model and also allowing schools to have opportunities to bring casuals in a more permanent basis so that they can be used almost like a surge or contingent workforce. But they have them there ready to go as required.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Minister, what university have you got an agreement with to fast-track teacher qualification with six months?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I might ask the secretary to provide some more comment. We have begun conversations with a range of universities is my understanding in relation to our mid-career programs. But I will ask the secretary to add more to that.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Remember I was asking for a name or names. That was what my question was directed at.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Thank you and thank you for the clarification. We are in the phase of co-designing the mid-career program with the profession and with profession representatives and are in discussions with a number of universities. When that is finalised we will be very happy to share those details with you.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Do you have a pathway at the moment to live up to your statement on radio this morning that you will be getting STEM teachers with a six-month turnaround?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, as I think the secretary—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Or, Minister, was that hot air this morning?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No. I have spoken about this many times in the past, Mr Shoebridge, and particularly when we made the announcements around mid-career transition. We wanted to work, as the secretary outlined, with the profession but also with the university sector to see what we can do. Because we know that it is important to attract people to the teaching workforce. Like I said earlier, it is not about diminishing quality. There will still be standards that need to be met. But it is about looking at new ways to address these issues and I think that is important.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Mr Shoebridge, if I can add, we are in the co-design phase and we are currently out to grant application tender with all IT providers in New South Wales to support the delivery of that mid-career program.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Who are you designing a six-month teaching qualification degree with? Who are you designing it with? It is a simple question. You should be able to tell me.

**Ms HARRISSON:** I think I have answered that question, Mr Shoebridge. We are in a co-design phase with the representatives of—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Who?

**Ms HARRISSON:** —the teaching profession, so with the Teachers Federation, with the Primary Principals' Association, with the Secondary Principals' Council and within our own organisation to design what that program will look like. Ms Cachia can provide some further information on that as she has been leading the work.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Before we go to Ms Cachia, Minister, are you telling me that the Teachers Federation and the two principals organisations have signed off on a six-month qualification process for STEM teachers?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, Mr Chair—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Is that the evidence you are giving?

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Point of order—

**The CHAIR:** No, there is no point of order. The Minister should answer the question. The question seems reasonable enough.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Happy to answer. As the secretary has just outlined, we are working on that co-design with the profession and with the universities in relation to our mid-career transition program. For me as Minister in terms of policy settings, it is well within my right to make commentary and talk about the objectives that I would like to see. As I outlined in response to your earlier question, depending on the context and the experience of the individual—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Point of order—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, Chair, I want to answer the question.

**The CHAIR:** What is your point of order, Mr Shoebridge?

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** My question was whether or not the Teachers Federation and the two principals organisations had signed off on a six-month qualification and the answer is just not even approaching that.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, it can be answered yes or no. Has the Teachers Federation signed off?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Like I said, we are still in that co-design process with the sectors.

**The CHAIR:** So the answer is no and you need to provide—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That work is still underway, Mr Shoebridge. But I do not apologise for a policy intention to get trained STEM experts in the classroom more quickly. I think that is what good government should do.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** You do not apologise for pretending that you can train somebody—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That is not what I said.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** —in the profession of teaching within six months.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With all due respect to your question, Mr Shoebridge, I made it very clear in your earlier line of questioning that what this is about is making sure that we want to have the teachers that we need in the subject areas where we need them. Again, in conversations that I have had directly with principals and teachers—particularly a roundtable we had in south-western Sydney earlier this year prior to the COVID pandemic—there were active conversations with a group of principals about what are the opportunities to give people experience rather than being two years in between studying and being in the classroom. Again, I do not think that it is a bad thing for us as a government to be looking at different initiatives for mid-career attraction. We might agree to disagree on that policy setting and that is fine.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Have you considered paying people a decent bursary or other payment so that they can get a comprehensive two-year master's degree? Have you considered helping people do that and paying them for the two-year master's degree?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, Mr Shoebridge, that is exactly my point. As we co-develop this program going forward—there are already scholarship initiatives that do exist in STEM recruitment. But can I say more broadly that the intention behind this policy is about having qualified, highly trained staff in our classrooms who are accredited by NESA who meet all the necessary requirements. My point around having people who are already experienced in subject areas and have experience in education settings—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Minister, we have a short amount of time.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** —is we should be looking innovatively at how we address this. As I said, we can agree to disagree.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** You are repeating itself.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But it is still relevant.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Minister, how much have you paid in scholarships this year to attract STEM teachers and how much was paid last year to attract STEM teachers?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I do not know if the secretary has that—or we can take that on notice.

**Ms HARRISSON:** We can provide the details of that on notice. We have a number of scholarships around—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** It was a question about a figure, not a chat.

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am very happy to provide it on notice.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Minister, the vacancy rate for teachers over much of this year was about 2 per cent, is that right?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That is my recollection, yes. Just under, I think.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** What is the current vacancy rate?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will ask the secretary to provide that but also put the context around the addition—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** No, I just want the vacancy rate.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, but there is a context that is important, David. I am allowed to answer the question.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Yes, but the question is: What is the vacancy rate.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Ms Cachia will have the specific number on hand. It is between three—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Ms Cachia, the vacancy rate?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, Chair, if the secretary could finish her sentence before she is interrupted—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** If it is telling me the vacancy rate.

**The CHAIR:** I think we are just after one number here, which is the vacancy rate. The secretary has referred it to Ms Cachia. Ms Cachia, can you provide us with that number please?

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Point of order: What the Minister and the secretary have both indicated is that the figure has a provision on it. They were seeking to provide not only the figure but also the provision. I think that is appropriate, given that the answer does have a provision. That is all they are asking to do.

**The CHAIR:** Let us see what Ms Cachia says, please.

**Ms CACHIA:** Thank you for the question. I have currently got a range of new roles in curriculum and instruction which have been added to that list. Generally it is just under 2 per cent and that is fairly consistent. We have introduced recently a range of around 1,400 new roles in curriculum and instruction so that takes us down to just under 4 per cent.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Sorry. Four per cent, did you say?

**Ms CACHIA:** Just under 4 per cent.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Almost double what it has been over the past 12 months. Is that right, Ms Cachia?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I am happy to answer that, Chair.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I cannot hear you, Ms Cachia, sorry.

**Ms CACHIA:** Mr Shoebridge, we have introduced a range of new roles, as any system would. It is a range of new roles so it is not to say that demand has changed markedly. It is simply that there are a range of new roles which we are adding to the system and, yes, they need to be filled.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** As at 23 September there were 3,233 vacant teacher positions, according to the information supplied to the Public Accountability Committee. Can you tell me how many vacant positions there are now—or as close to now as you have the numbers for, Ms Cachia?

**Ms CACHIA:** I will take the specific vacancy rate on notice and come back to the Committee today. But I would add, for the Committee's benefit, that we have placed somewhere in the approximate order of 5,000 teachers [audio malfunction] to date.

**Ms HARRISSON:** If I could assist the Committee with the answer, I—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The context is important.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I might just go back to the Minister, because I know the Minister wanted to add something.

**Ms HARRISSON:** I can provide the number you—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** But, Minister, almost one in 25 teaching positions is vacant at the moment. Far from narrowing the gap, the gap is getting bigger.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** This was the point I tried to make earlier, with respect, Mr Shoebridge, to your question. As Ms Cachia has indicated, we are recruiting for additional positions in all of our schools that have primary school students. They are assistant principals in curriculum. They are new positions that we have added to the system to make sure that we have got that evidence-based reform being driven across all of our schools. So, as she indicated, that rise in figures from less than 2 per cent to less than 4 per cent is actually attributed to the fact that we are recruiting for these new roles as assistant principals in all of our primary school settings, for curriculum expertise. That is the difference between the 2 per cent and the 4 per cent. I think that context is important in terms of the work of the Committee.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** The answer we had to the Public Accountability Committee was that there were 1,589 new and additional assistant principal curriculum and instruction roles. That is adding to the critical teacher shortage, is it not, Minister?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But, Mr Shoebridge, as I said, they are new—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** You are just trying to ignore the reality of the shortage.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No. These are new positions that we are currently recruiting for— leadership positions in our schools with a focus on curriculum. They are being filled and advertised. Like I said, you need to keep those numbers in context. It is important that you do so, because they are new positions that are now part of the active recruitment that we are seeing across the State. I think it is a very positive thing that every single school that has a primary school student at it will have an assistant principal whose role is curriculum delivery and reform. It is in line with our commitments as a Government.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Maybe, if you can recruit them.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Minister, I take you back to the Ashcroft High School Strategic Improvement Plan. Looking at it and I am sure empathising with parents who have got no chance of understanding what it actually means, will you now order a review of these plans to ensure that every school has documents and material available that parents can actually comprehend as to what is happening to the future education of their children?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you, Chair. As I said earlier—and it was also on advice from the secretary, who might want to comment—there are other mechanisms by which parents are given information from their school. I will be interested, as I said and I think I took on notice, to look at the specifics of what they have done at Ashcroft, seeing as that is one that you have called out through their plan, to see what other communications are available to families. So, as I said, I am happy to look at that in this example and also get some general advice about what other measures are in place to keep parents engaged in their children's education.

**The CHAIR:** But if you go to the Ashcroft High School website this is what you find. It is an insult to parents, is it not, that it has been presented this way?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As I said, I do want to understand better for this particular school what other communications they have out to their parents as well. I do not have that information with me. Again, whether the secretary or Mr Dizdar can add anything since we last had questions from you, Chair—

**Ms HARRISSON:** The thing I would add, first off, is that we do require schools to publish this document. But that is by no means meant to be a measure of the only way they would communicate that document or its intent to their communities. Across the system we have seen some fantastic examples of the way schools have communicated their plans. We have seen large infographics put along the side of the school gate to make sure that parents can see and engage with that information each day and can talk to their schools about it, and regular engagement with the P&Cs in relation to those school plans and the way they have been developed. So we have seen a range of engagement with parents and a range of ways that they would have communicated the outcome of that plan back to the school community.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, these targets are meaningless, are they not, because you have got no intention of publishing the baseline data?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, I do not agree with the premise of your question that they are meaningless. These targets, as I said earlier, are in place for each and every school across the State. We are actively tracking how our schools will meet these outcomes and providing support to schools that do not meet those required targets. It is a system-wide reform that we have never had in public education in New South Wales. It is about that shared responsibility and accountability and making sure that the single goal for everybody in education is to improve student outcomes, no matter what school they are at.

**The CHAIR:** Given that the credibility of every target is directly linked to the baseline data, why are you not going to publish the baseline data so that you can see whether, say, for Ashcroft, here in point 10, the 8.2 per cent numeracy growth is a valid target, or it is too strong or too soft? Parents can then make a judgement because they will know the baseline. Why will you not give that information to parents and communities?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Chair, I am very happy to take on notice what information around the baseline we are able to publish.

**The CHAIR:** Secretary, with all due respect, from our last estimates, in an answer to a supplementary question, you said you were not publishing any and you were hiding behind 18A, that provision that went back to Mount DrUITT High School. It is a ridiculous assumption, is it not, that some media outlet is going to grab 2,200 sets of baseline data and produce a ranking in New South Wales. Why will you not publish the baseline data?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I think as you have indicated, Chair, in relation to our supplementary answer from the last hearing, our current position and advice that we have received is that we are unable to do so because it will enable school performance to be compared in a way that is not in line with the Education Act.

**The CHAIR:** But you are not publishing, school by school, a ranking system. You are just publishing, say for Ashcroft High School, the baseline data. Why are you assuming that that publication will end up in some ranking system that contravenes 18A. The proposition is ridiculous, is it not?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Chair, that is the advice we have had and the advice we have followed.

**The CHAIR:** Advice from who?

**Ms HARRISSON:** That is the legal advice we have had in relation to the section that you have indicated in the Act, that we are unable to provide that and publish it in that way. I am happy to take on notice further consideration to see what may be feasible in relation to publication back to communities. But I think our focus, and our very clear focus for the leadership team of the organisation, is to ensure that we are focused on achieving those targets.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, do you think that advice is credible, given that no media outlet is going to take 2,200 schools and sets of baseline data and publish a ranking system as per section 18A? Most of these media outlets now can barely get enough stories out. They have got one journalist working on five stories a day. This is a nonsense proposition, is it not?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, Chair, I think that legal advice is credible. There is certainly an opportunity for media outlets to do that. This is something that is part of the Act for a range of reasons. But as the secretary said, we are happy to take on notice the specifics around that advice and come back to the Committee.

**The CHAIR:** But do you acknowledge, at this stage at least, that these targets have no meaningful statistical basis and understanding by parents unless the baseline data is known?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No. I think it is important that school communities and parents understand what we want to see in terms of student growth and expectations of that achievement. As I said in response to your earlier question, I am happy to take on notice what other information has gone out to school communities in terms of those outcomes. I think, as a parent—and I suspect other parents would have this same view—it is about growth. You want to know that your child is improving each and every year that they are at school and I think that is the important part of these data sets.

**The CHAIR:** Well, put yourself in the shoes of an Ashcroft parent here, in point 10, what do you think they would understand by an 8.2 per cent targeted growth rate if they do not know what the baseline is?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, in specific reference to Ashcroft but also more broadly, as I said, I am happy to provide more advice to the Committee on notice in terms of information that goes out to parents in terms of student outcomes and growth.

**The CHAIR:** At a disadvantaged high school in a disadvantaged area, would you not consider the 8.2 per cent over a seven-year period to be paltry? No matter what the baseline is—and I suppose we can make our own guess about that—8.2 per cent is just 1 per cent improvement per annum. And if you are doing a baseline from 2016 and the target is not assessed until 2023, over seven years, there are actually some students who are outside the NAPLAN cohort, are they not? The NAPLAN starts in year three and it finishes in year nine. That is a six-year period. So there are some of them, in the seven years, who drop out of the statistical calculation?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Thank you for the question, Chair. One of the things I think Mr Dizdar was indicating earlier is that we have set the targets relative to the performance of other schools of a similar demographic and cohort to Ashcroft. If Ashcroft is performing well, or is close to the higher end of the performance in that cohort, it will have a smaller target because it is already performing well in relation to the students it serves. That is the context in which we have set those targets. So you will see schools that have large increases as a result of that and you will see schools that are seeking to develop that continuous improvement and drive performance improvement every year, but they will not necessarily have such a large step change required in their performance for a particular indicator.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Can I also make the point, Chair, that the point of the School Success Model is that there are a range of targets. You have mentioned the NAPLAN ones, which is true, but we are also looking at things like HSC attainment. We have got pathways that we want to track, so not just how students finish school but where they go in the five years after and what education success looks like: who has gone on to work, who has gone on to further study, who is employed. That is data that we have never captured before, but we are

going to be working to make sure that we can do that as well. So I think context again in the whole range of targets is important in what is a successful education and what are the student outcomes that we see.

**The CHAIR:** Given that the targets and student growth are critically important in disadvantaged high schools—the ones where you are doing the targeted support program, by and large—why is their baseline not published, at a minimum? Why do we not just publish a subset of the 2,200, therefore not breaching 18A of the Act?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Chair, I refer you to my previous answer. We are very happy to take on notice what is possible in relation to that.

**The CHAIR:** Just moving to a different subject, Minister, are you familiar with the Sydney Distance Education High School?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Not intimately familiar with it, no.

**The CHAIR:** Did it play an enhanced role during the online learning, as you would expect, given that it is a distance education high school based at Woolloomooloo?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I know that the distance education team, particularly out of Dubbo, were very much involved and, I think, also had done a bit of work around some of the support that was provided to schools, given their experience. I am not sure about the Sydney; I do not know if the secretary wants to comment on that quickly.

**The CHAIR:** We will get some information in the morning tea break. I have a complaint from a parent on the Central Coast that I will run past you in my next round of questions. We are at 11.00 a.m. So we will break for 15 minutes for morning tea and COVID safety and whatever. Thank you very much.

**(Short adjournment)**

**The CHAIR:** Questions from the Opposition.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Minister, I bring you back to the question of those curriculum assistant principals. These are all permanent positions. Is that right?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Will those positions be on class or off class?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will ask the secretary to respond to that.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Thank you for the question. The assistant principal roles are there to build the capability and capacity of teachers in the delivery of evidence-based instruction around literacy and numeracy. Ms Owen can provide you with the specific details. They will at times, I am sure, go on class to work in collaboration with other teachers, but they are there, by and large, to support other teachers with their practice. Ms Owen can give you some further information on that.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** That is okay. I just wanted to get that answer. Will these positions replace a range of deputy principal positions, the deputy principal instructional leader? Is that correct?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Ms Owen can give you the details of the program. Yes, we have sought to ensure that every school can benefit from instructional leadership in their setting. We have reviewed the current program and determined that the assistant principal role is the appropriate one for the system. Ms Owen can provide you with further details on that.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Ms Harrison, that is a downgrade, is it not?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Not every school had one before.

**Ms HARRISSON:** In terms of your question, we have looked to ensure we can get the maximum benefit for the whole system for instructional leadership across all of our primary schools. Ms Owen can provide you with some further information in relation to the shift from deputy principal to assistant principal.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Ms Harrison, I just want to clarify. You are abolishing a range of deputy principal positions and replacing them with a lower graded assistant principal position.

**Ms HARRISSON:** We are providing every school with the entitlement for an assistant principal, literacy and numeracy. Some schools will make decisions about how they implement that position in their school. But, yes, we are requiring it to be an assistant principal so that we can provide the benefit to more schools.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** How many of those higher graded deputy principal positions are going to be abolished as a consequence of this decision?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Ms Owen might be able to answer that question.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** You do not know, Ms Harrisson?

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Point of order: The secretary has provided an answer. She has passed it to one of the other departmental staff for a more detailed answer. That is appropriate.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. We should get that answer.

**Ms OWEN:** Just to explain, the assistant principal for curriculum and instruction is a new role that we have developed to embed evidence-based approaches to literacy and numeracy and to support the rollout of the new curriculum, which the Committee well understands begins from next year. As the secretary has said, we are aiming to have an assistant principal role to fulfil that function in every primary school, because that is where the curriculum rollout starts. We are replacing some roles in some primary schools that were part of that earlier [disorder]—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Ms Owen, my question was about how many.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** She is answering.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Owen, how many?

**Ms OWEN:** Firstly I am trying to explain that they are slightly different roles. This one is about the rollout of curriculum and embedding evidence-based literacy and numeracy. The deputy principal roles I think you are referring to were in, I think—I will confirm on notice. About 400 schools had Early Action for Success instructional leader roles at a deputy principal. But they were a different role—just to stress.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** There is 400 positions that are being abolished and 1,500 created, lower graded positions. Am I correct in that understanding?

**Ms OWEN:** I would stress they are different roles. But the Early Action for Success roles have come to an end. That program has been overtaken by our new investment in curriculum and literacy and numeracy. Our commitment is to make sure that every primary school has an assistant principal for curriculum [disorder]—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I understand that. What is the expectation in relation to how you will manage the current occupants of those 400 positions? Are you expecting that many of them will transition to the lower graded assistant principal position?

**Ms OWEN:** That offer has been made to those individuals.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So they will take a pay cut.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Just to be clear, Mr D'Adam, those deputy principal roles were temporary in the system. These are permanent roles. We will be supporting those individuals to make either a transition into the assistant principal new role, if they have the suitable skills and expertise in the way that Ms Owen described the new role, or they will return to their substantive position in the system.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Minister, do you think that is an appropriate way to treat our teaching workforce, by saying, "If you want permanency, you can take a pay cut"?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If I could answer the question. I think the key part of this initiative, as Ms Owen and the secretary have indicated, is that Early Action for Success program was due to finish. I think, Ms Owen, you said that was in about 400 schools. These new positions will be in every single primary school and in our central schools—those who have primary school students attending. This is about making sure every school has the benefit of having someone in the school leadership position that is responsible for that delivery. Can I also say that—again, I do not know whether Mr Dizdar or Ms Nixon want to provide any commentary—in conversations with the schools that did have deputy principals in those roles, working with them to see what that transition might look like in those local school contexts and how they want to make that work in their staffing allocations. Mr Dizdar or Ms Nixon, did you want to provide anything further on that?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I might move on to another topic if that is okay. We can deal with this—

**Mr DIZDAR:** Thanks, Minister. It is Murat Dizdar here. [disorder]

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Mr Dizdar, I am going to move on.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, Mr Dizdar. The Committee member wants to move on to a separate topic.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I am going to tender a document. Minister, this is a briefing that was prepared for you by the department in relation to the Murwillumbah Education Campus. You saw this briefing, did you not?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It has not got my signature on it but I will assume that I did.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Was this the briefing that preceded the decision around the announcement? Mr Manning, you might be able to answer.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will let Mr Manning have a look. As I think I have outlined when I have had questions about this new campus in the House before, we had a range of considerations and discussions around the way forward for the Murwillumbah community.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** That is your signature on it, is it not, Mr Manning?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes, Chair.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Am I correct in assuming that you signed off on 17 June 2020?

**Mr MANNING:** That is what it says digitally, yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The announcement was made some time, I think, in November last year. Is that right?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will accept that premise. I think that is right; I actually cannot remember. If you say it was later that year, so be it.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can I draw your attention, Minister, to the highlighted paragraph in the document where it says that the determination to abandon the upgrades was made in February 2020?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, I see that.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Why did it take you so long to initiate consultation with the community when the decision was made at the beginning of that year?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I am happy to ask Mr Manning to provide some context about some of the decisions relating to Murwillumbah when it comes to an infrastructure perspective. Can I say that there was a lot of work that had been done in regard to what was the best opportunity, particularly for the students at Murwillumbah. That has always been the driving force behind this project and the investment that we needed to make. In terms of some of the strategic review of the schools package and the work that was done on it, I will pass to Mr Manning to see if he can provide some comments on that.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can I just draw you back, Minister. The decision was made in February 2020. That is a decision that you made, is that right?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It says the determination was approved in February 2020.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Approved by whom? By you?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I would have to take that on notice, to be honest, because I need to check what that is actually referring to.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** It is clear that a determination was approved to amalgamate Murwillumbah Public School, Murwillumbah East Public School and Murwillumbah High School.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** She said she is going to take it on notice.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, I want to take that on notice to check what it is that that is referring to.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Okay. Mr Manning, can I ask you about the commentary in the preceding paragraph? It says:

The upgrades were originally forecast to start in mid-2019 and be completed by late 2020 and late 2021, respectively. The SINSW website has since been updated to indicate a start date of mid-2021 and completion date of late 2022 and early 2023 respectively.

You signed off on this memo, did you not?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes, I did.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** When you signed off on this memo, that was wrong, was it not?

**Mr MANNING:** What was wrong?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** That the completion dates were going to be in 2022 and 2023.

**Mr MANNING:** No, the briefing relates to the original strategy around the delivery of those four projects—what we were able to do and how we were able to deliver them. If you remember there were a great many projects committed in a very short period of time and the organisation was working its way through scoping of all of those, understanding those in greater detail and working out how we would program them through into construction. With this one, as part of that analysis we looked at, in conjunction with school performance, the opportunities around amalgamation as an alternative strategy to run with. So there was work done to assess the individual projects and we reprogrammed and re-profiled around if that was going to be the case that was how those things would roll out. But subsequently we looked at other options as part of what we do around infrastructure.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Mr Manning, it is clear that this was signed off in June 2020 but the determination had been made to amalgamate, so those upgrades were not going ahead, were they?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If I could just provide a bit of extra context, as well, Mr Chair—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** My question was—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, but—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** My question was to Mr Manning.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Point of order—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I am allowed to answer the question.

**The CHAIR:** Order! If the Minister chooses she can provide the information to the Committee but it must be directly relevant to the question.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The advice I have is that the funding decision for that particular project followed in October 2020. So this was a brief that was obviously a bit earlier. I think you are taking one document, again, out of context at a point in time when there was significant work that was done in the funding decision, which did not come until October 2020.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can you just clarify which project the funding was for?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The Murwillumbah Education Campus that we have announced.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The funding for the amalgamation?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, as I said, the advice I have—that document indicates that decisions had been made and that was the pathway we wanted to go down.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Then of course we need to go through that process in terms of funding. The advice I have is that that funding decision was made in October 2020. Again, as you would expect with all infrastructure programs, there is a time line in relation to it and taking one document out of context I do not think is particularly helpful.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, can you now remember when you made the decision to close the schools?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, I do not agree with the premise of your question. We have made the decision to build more than \$100 million worth of investment in public education in Murwillumbah by building that new campus and bringing the schools together on one site.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. When did you make the decision?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Like I said, the advice that I have is that that was a decision that was made in July—is the advice that I am getting from my office. Again, going through that funding and approval process, I am told that that decision was made in October 2020—that we had the funding available to deliver that campus.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I still do not quite understand. You had made a determination to amalgamate. It is quite clear:

... a determination was approved in February 2020 to amalgamate Murwillumbah Public School, Murwillumbah East Public School, Murwillumbah High School and Wollumbin High School ...

That was made in February 2020. It is quite plain, is it not, Minister?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As I said in response to your earlier question, I wanted to take on notice that highlighted part that you talked about with the determination. That is one document—one very simple brief—about a project that is obviously quite extensive, so I want to take on notice the specific area that you have highlighted and what that is referring to. I am doing my best to give you the dates and the data that I have about when decisions were made but, again, this is ultimately about what is best for the students in Murwillumbah. It is about investing properly in public education infrastructure on the North Coast and it is a commitment that we are proud of.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I do not understand, Mr Manning, how you could possibly say that the completion date for the upgrades—at 17 June 2020 you advised the community that those upgrades were going to be completed in 2022 and 2023. That was a lie, was it not?

**Mr MANNING:** No.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** How could it not be a lie?

**Mr MANNING:** As part of the work we did around these projects, we had scoped the projects. The original commitment was around the four individual projects and the work had been done to scope those projects to understand them, which means that we could roll them through in 2022 and 2023. As part of that work, we identified that there was an opportunity around amalgamation. To the Minister's point, the work we did with school performance showed that there would be some significant advantages to the students and so we were working on an alternative strategy. That was still subject—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** This document suggests—

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** Let him finish.

**The CHAIR:** Let the witness finish.

**Mr MANNING:** —to approval. Until a change is approved, we would be working on the original strategy as well. To the Minister's point, we need to go back and understand exactly the details around this context. But, no, from a perspective of project delivery, you quite often have a plan A and a plan B. We were very clearly directed around the original strategy and the original project. As part of doing that work we had discovered the amalgamation. We were still working on the fact that if the amalgamation was not something that was going to go ahead we would roll through the original commitment, and 2022 and 2023 were the dates we were comfortable that we could deliver those on.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** But you had made a decision to proceed with the amalgamation.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, no, as I said, I want to take that on notice in terms of that context. My recollection—but I do want to check this, which is why I have taken it on notice—was that, as Mr Manning said, this was about looking at possible options for those school communities. Obviously more work needed to be done around the scoping of the projects and the business case development. July was the time frame that I am advised that that approach was taken and then October was when that funding approval was secured. As I said, it is quite an extensive body of work—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, I am going to move to a different topic now.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Okay, sure.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** The Federal education Minister has been—I think everyone would agree—campaigning against the draft national curriculum. He said that he does not want students to leave school with a hatred of their country. What is your view on the draft national curriculum?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That is work that is underway at the moment. I think it is important that the national curriculum particularly focuses on the areas that are important to us in New South Wales and that it aligns with the work that is underway for our curriculum review, particularly that evidence base and that focus, as I said, on literacy, numeracy and phonics. There is a range of opportunities for jurisdictions to have input into that curriculum review at a national level. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA] who run that, I believe, are bringing an update to the meeting of education Ministers which is due in a few weeks and we will continue to have input in terms of that proposal.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Have you seen the revised version of the draft curriculum yet?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We have certainly seen iterations of it. As I said, there is more information that is due to come to the education Ministers' meeting in—I think it might even be next week—within the next couple of weeks.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Are you looking at implementing large parts of the national curriculum or are you looking at going our own way, given that we have just completed our own curriculum review?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What we have in New South Wales in relation to the national curriculum is an adopt and adapt approach, so we are able to, of course, make things fit in our context in New South Wales. I think certainly for us going forward, as I said, those really key parts of our curriculum review that we have already implemented around the decluttering, around that focus in the early years on literacy and numeracy—I am happy to say, and I think I made some public comments about it, earlier drafts from ACARA did indicate that some of what I would call key fundamental skills appear to have been pushed back to later years, which I did not agree with.

I have met with ACARA a couple of times to talk through New South Wales' position. My recollection too is that there was a submission from all three school sectors in New South Wales as part of that review and those discussions are ongoing. We will make sure that what is adapted fits to our context and is aligned with that evidence-based approach that we are taking to our curriculum review in New South Wales.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Do you believe that the draft curriculum as it is currently drafted does teach a hatred of Australia?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Like I said, final documents have not been presented to Ministers as yet. My personal view is that I think it is really important that our students have a proud understanding of Australian history, they are proud of the country that they live in and they are proud of who they are. I think that is in line with what everybody in this country would want to see.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Mr Manning, just coming back to this briefing note. If it is not incorrect, isn't it misleading of the community to suggest that those projects are proceeding as commenced?

**Mr MANNING:** No, not at all. The briefing is around a final business case that had yet to be approved. It was seeking additional funds in order to deliver that. Until that business case is signed off and approved and funds are available, we stay on track with the original project. The fact that we saw value in doing a different project that would give the population of Murwillumbah a significant lift as part of the spend was entirely reasonable. So this briefing, as you see, refers to a business case which is yet to be submitted that sought additional funds, and so we would continue to be on the original track for the original project until such time as we got that approval and it changed.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** You have effectively decided to go in a different direction. Shouldn't the advice to the community be something—

**Mr MANNING:** It was entirely subject to a final business case that had to be approved and endorsed. We were simply looking at alternative options that were, we thought, worth driving for, that would give a better outcome for the students of Murwillumbah and something that ourselves and School Performance had worked on extensively to get to that point but until we had approval the original project stood.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Minister, you would be aware of the Teach Us Consent Roundtable that was held only a couple of months ago?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** That has prompted ACARA to make further proposed revisions to the curriculum regarding the teaching of consent and respectful relationships?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, that is my understanding.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Where are we up to in getting those changes accepted and embedded in the curriculum?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As I just outlined earlier—I think you might have been out of the room—at the beginning of the questions from Ms Houssos, not about this specifically but about the Australian Curriculum review more broadly, education Ministers are due to meet in a couple of weeks. My understanding is that we will receive further advice from ACARA in relation to their work on the curriculum. Certainly, I met with ACARA—I believe it was last week, is my memory—and they indicated to me that they had been in consultation with people like Ms Chanel Contos around the opportunities to include more explicit teaching of consent in the

national curriculum. It is something that I raised directly with other colleagues at a previous meeting of education Ministers. We certainly have it in the New South Wales curriculum. It was not as explicit in the national curriculum. I think that opportunity is there and the advice I had from ACARA is that it is part of what they will bring forward. But, again, I need to have that conversation with colleagues in that context, as you would appreciate.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Minister, I want to acknowledge that you have been a positive influence in this space and also Chanel Contos, obviously, and the extraordinary work she and those around her have been doing, but I am a little bit concerned that your answer is suggesting that simply what we have got in New South Wales will now become the national curriculum rather than embedding more detailed, specific consent-related material in the New South Wales curriculum. Am I wrong in that?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I do not think that is what I said.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Which is why I am giving you the chance.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, happy to. There are different processes. Clearly, the Australian Curriculum previously did not have many, or potentially even any, references to consent in the curriculum. As members would know, we did quite an extensive overhaul, particularly of our PDHPE curriculum, a couple of years ago, where we did embed much more content in relation to these matters in an age-appropriate way. I think that the work that Chanel has done, and I think the way that she has highlighted issues related to consent education, has been very informative. I know that we have had round tables and signed statements of intent between all three school sectors in New South Wales to look at what we need to do. I think curriculum delivery is part of it—if I could just finish my sentence, Mr Shoebridge—but we also need to look at how we are working with parents and families and also the broader community around these issues.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I am going to have to be careful of my hand signals. I am obviously indicating something with my hand but I was waiting.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I thought you were trying to stop me, that is all.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I was waiting to hear the end of your thing.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I did not know.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** It is still not clear to me whether or not you accept that the New South Wales curriculum needs more explicit, age-appropriate content on consent or not. What is your position on that?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As I said, I think that, when you compare curriculum and syllabus documents from around the country, New South Wales is leading the way. Does that mean that it is not something we continually need to look at and look at what we can do to improve? Yes, we need to do that. What will come through that Australian Curriculum review will be important in terms of what we adopt and adapt. There is also the opportunity with our own curriculum review that is underway, when we look at the PDHPE syllabuses, if there is more that we can add in this space. So this is work that is ongoing and, like I said, the next focus is really on what that advice is around the Australian Curriculum as that work gets finalised.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Do you accept that, for all of those activists and others trying to change and improve the teaching on consent in New South Wales, it would be a very Pyrrhic victory if all we got out of ACARA was that the rest of the States should raise their level of teaching to the New South Wales level. Do you accept that that would be a Pyrrhic victory at best?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, because I actually think that our curriculum is quite strong on these issues. It is very explicit from kindergarten right through to year 10. We have Life Ready in our public schools for years 11 and 12 that also addresses these issues around consent. It is embedded throughout the curriculum starting at a young age around appropriate measures and then it grows beyond that. I think the secretary might want to comment. Mr Martin might also want to make a comment in relation to this given his expertise in the curriculum space.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I am happy to go to Mr Martin next but I am now troubled by your answers and I am going to give you the opportunity to clarify. It seems to me that you are saying that New South Wales curriculum has got it right and that you are not going to make efforts through the ACARA to be more explicit about consent on an age-appropriate basis. That seems right, but I am giving you the chance to correct me if I am wrong on that.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, that is not what I said. What I said was that we have done extensive work in this space already in New South Wales, in many ways leading other jurisdictions. We are actively interested and engaged in the process with ACARA for the national curriculum and, again, that is a

process that has not been finalised. Those final documents have not been presented to Ministers yet. That is a process that we will be going through over the coming weeks. Of course, if there are opportunities to look at how we better educate young people about consent, of course we are open to doing that, so I do not want there to be any misinterpretation of what I have said. But I think it is important to make the note that there is a lot of explicit teaching of these issues in New South Wales schools already. We are not starting from zero but we are working collaboratively across jurisdictions and also at a national level to make sure that we have really explicit teaching of consent building on what already happens in New South Wales. And, again, the secretary and Mr Martin might want to comment as well.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** If Mr Martin has got something briefly to add about what, if anything, is happening for additional content on consent in the New South Wales curriculum.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The secretary also can comment on the work that is being done.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** If you have some specific content to add, Ms Harrison?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I can provide you with assurance that, in terms of the preparation for public school teachers in relation to delivering that curriculum, we have provided additional support and resources to teachers that were finalised at the end of last term to support the implementation of the syllabus as it stands. We have also—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Ms Harrison, if you could provide some of those details on notice, that would be helpful.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Yes, very happy to.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Our submission also—I do not know if you have seen it, Mr Shoebridge—very explicitly called for more consent education that New South Wales put into ACARA, as well, so that is publicly available.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Minister, I started this by saying I acknowledge that you have been doing some positive work in this space.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Martin.

**Mr MARTIN:** As the Minister indicated, we were probably the high jump bar after 2018-19. The ACARA has developed more material. You will see that shortly, imminently. If there is material there that needs to be added to or improves the New South Wales syllabuses, we will add those as we go through the PDHPE syllabus.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Martin, you sound quite faint. Can you get closer to your microphone, for the purposes of Hansard and Committee members.

**Mr MARTIN:** My apologies, Committee. I will speak a little bit louder.

**The CHAIR:** That is it.

**Mr MARTIN:** As the Minister indicated, we were the high-water mark in relation to consent in the syllabuses from 2018. We have now been engaged in fruitful discussion across the sectors and with Ms Contos. The ACARA syllabuses will come out. If they improve on where we are with New South Wales, we will be able to add that material as part of our process in 2022-23 as we do the PDHPE syllabuses.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Mr Martin, that again sounds like the outcome for New South Wales students will be status quo as one of the ACARA outcomes. That is not consistent with what I have been hearing from Ms Contos and others about what is needed in New South Wales, but you can correct me if I am wrong.

**Mr MARTIN:** I think that what we will be doing is not pre-empting the already-foreshadowed syllabus. Speak again more loudly; is that right?

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** No, I get the answer; we do not want to pre-empt. We will come back to it at some point. Minister, do you have any updated data on the number of expulsions over the past year? If you have the data, do you have some commentary on how that relates to lockdowns?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, I will see if the secretary can pull that up.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Thank you for the question. We do have additional specific data. Ms Owen might have it more readily to hand, but we do have additional data on the expulsions since we last met.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** How many?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I will just ask Ms Owen to bring that data up.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Ms Owen, while you are pulling it up, I will ask if you have a breakdown of the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the number of young people in out-of-home care and the number of kids with disability.

**Ms OWEN:** Yes, Mr Shoebridge. Did you want the data for the last financial year or for this current year?

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Maybe you could give us both. If we have whole-year data for the financial year then that would be useful, and then also if you have the current numbers to date.

**Ms OWEN:** This year is, to state the obvious, halfway through. The 2020 data for suspensions across the New South Wales system is 63,604 students for this year. Up to the end of term two, it was 40,648 students. If you would like me to give the same information on the breakdown of students with a disability, I think you asked for—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Yes, please.

**Ms OWEN:** —the 2020 data is 32,608 students across all year groups across the State. The half-year figures up to the end of semester one in 2021 is 21,645. If you would like me to go on to Aboriginal students who have been suspended, the data for 2020 is 18,465. Up to the end of semester one of 2021 it is 11,707. Finally, a breakdown of students who were suspended who have English as an additional linguistic diversity, the 2020 data is 6,957 students who were suspended. To the end of semester one 2021 it is 4,264.

**Ms HARRISSON:** If I could just add, suspensions across the system were down 14 per cent on 2019 data in 2020. I think your original question, Mr Shoebridge, went to expulsions. Only 275 students were expelled in 2020 and 270 students in 2019.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Could I just try to work out what that second number was? You said initially at the end of term two and then you said to the end of term one.

**The Hon. Courtney HOUSSOS:** No, semester one.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Was it semester one?

**Ms OWEN:** That was semester one, apologies.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Okay, so it is halfway through the year.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, just to seek some elaboration on Mr Shoebridge's points about consent education, how do we know the existing programs Love Bites and Respectful Relationships are achieving positive outcomes?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you for that question, Chair. There is some work that is underway from the department. I might ask the secretary to comment about evaluation of providers and who is coming in, particularly in some of those wellbeing programs. I will ask the secretary to comment on that.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Thank you, Chair. When we last met we talked about wanting to create a panel of approved providers in this space to support schools. We have been through that process for our wellbeing providers, who provide external services into schools, and have created a panel of approved providers to support schools. That was a rigorous process that required those applying to demonstrate how they were going to meet—how they demonstrated the evidence and impact of their work. Ms Owen can provide some further information.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Owen, do you have it specifically about Respectful Relationships and Love Bites?

**Ms OWEN:** Specifically, I was going to advise the panel about the new quality assurance framework between—

**The CHAIR:** No, that is a separate, broader issue. Minister, when I raised this issue in response to very positive comments about consent education by the Attorney General at budget estimates in March, I asked what evaluation base is being used. He referred me to a study at the University of Wollongong by Michael Flood and Vicki Kendrick, who both fashion themselves as progressive academics. They concluded that these two programs, Respectful Relationships and Love Bites, had a negative or unfavourable impact on student attitudes towards bullying. Specifically, the year 7 students that had been through Respectful Relationships were more likely by the end of the course to agree with the statement, "If people do something to make me really mad, they deserve to be beaten up." That kind of makes you think it is really disrespectful relationships that they are teaching.

In this space of moving into a new module of consent education, would the department actually do some testing of these courses? These evaluation findings I was referred to by the Attorney General are very disturbing. Before the disruption of rolling it out across the system, would there be some attempt to work out if well-intentioned programs actually get a result in practice or are counterproductive, like this research seems to indicate?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I am not familiar with that research you have referred to, but I am happy to have a look at it. Going to the point that the secretary made, that is why we want to have that pre-approved panel, so schools know when they are using any external providers, should they wish to do so in this space. A lot of schools and school communities do it within their existing workforce as well. It is about having that quality assurance mechanism so that if schools are using external providers to assist them with curriculum delivery—and as the secretary has said, we started in the wellbeing space—they have got some quality assurance in knowing that they are using programs that have that evidence base. I think that is fair to say.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I have been asking for that for quite some time. It is one thing to have a well-intentioned program; it is a different thing to actually get the desired result.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I am happy to provide on notice a bit more detail about that work, if you would like.

**The CHAIR:** I appreciate that. I go back to the issue I raised before morning tea about the Sydney Distance Education High School. Minister, this issue has been brought to my attention by a parent at a Central Coast high school. Their child's year 8 science work sheet had the subject Globalise Me, which you might think is more political economy, but let us say it was science. One of the extension activities online links took the student to a site called socialistrevolution.org, which states that capitalism puts the planet under threat:

... we are actively building a national organization of trained Marxist cadres to fight in the broader movement for a revolutionary socialist program.

I can see Mr Shoebridge getting excited.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You have piqued his interest, Chair. I think he is googling as we speak.

**The CHAIR:** Restrain yourself, David.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I had never seen it before. I am glad you have brought it to my attention, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** And Mr D'Adam is excited as well, of course.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I am glad you are trawling the internet for socialist revolution websites.

**The CHAIR:** No, this comes from a parent whose year 8 student came across this.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I never knew you signed onto it, and I am glad you have pointed me towards it.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Point of order—

**The CHAIR:** No, unlike you, I respond to people I represent in the Parliament. Finally it states, "We fight for the overthrow of capitalism." Minister, at the Sydney Distance Education High School, what has that got to do with science?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will have to take that specific question on notice, Mr Chair, unless the secretary can comment. It is quite a specific example that you have referenced.

**The CHAIR:** It was not the David Shoebridge school of socialist instruction. It was the Sydney Distance Education High School, year 8 science.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, he is looking at a career change, but I do not think it is into teaching.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** It was the Pauline Hanson One Nation trawling through socialist revolutionary websites. Fascinating! That what you get paid to do, is it?

**The CHAIR:** These are parents who brought the matter to me and it is going to be checked.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** The Cuban Chair, we have up there.

**The CHAIR:** Order! The socialist cadre on my right will pipe down and we will move on to the next—

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Point of order: Hansard will have had absolutely no chance in recording that debacle.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** They didn't miss anything.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I ask members to not talk over each other and not talk over the Chair when the Chair is asking a question.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Wes, on my behalf.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We will take that on notice, Mr Chair, and come back to you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you; I appreciate that. Minister, recently the department called for volunteers to be classroom teachers. How many volunteers have come forward?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes. I am happy to ask the secretary to comment in relation to that. I think it is important to make the point, Chair, that our staffing has gone incredibly well with the return to school, which is exciting. It is great the kids are back in the classroom. But, as you would appreciate, it is important that we have contingencies in place should any particular school community find themselves, due to COVID, with impacts or outbreaks. We have got to make sure we have got the staffing that we need. Again, I will get the secretary—it is not even a plan B. I think it is a plan C or D, should we need to do it. But if the pandemic has taught us anything, it is to prepare for any eventuality and that is the intention.

**The CHAIR:** Whatever the plan is, how many volunteers have answered the call?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Chair, I am happy to take the specifics of that on notice. We have over 1,200 currently accredited teachers working in the department, largely in roles that support other frontline teachers. I note that recent media reports refer to them as "boffins". That is not how those individuals would see themselves. They are teachers and they are teachers largely working in the support of other teachers in our system. We, of course, as part of our sensible contingencies have asked if any of those would be willing to go back into classroom. I can provide you with a specific number on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Secretary, how many teachers under the vaccination mandate are you planning to stand down from service next Monday?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Ms Cachia can provide you with a detailed breakdown of where we are up to in relation to that process. Can I firstly say, we are incredibly pleased to report that the vast majority of teachers have come forward and got vaccinated, because we know that is the best protection we can provide to them, their families and the students they teach. We have asked staff to attest to that and are running a process from the department to ensure that people are aware of what they need to do by when. Ms Cachia can provide you with details.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Cachia, teachers and then other school staff or departmental staff that you are planning to stand down?

**Ms CACHIA:** As the secretary said, it is probably good to preface the answer to this by saying that today is 1 November. As we know under the public health order we have an—

**The CHAIR:** I think it is 2 November, is it not, today?

**Ms CACHIA:** —sorry, 2 November. In external jurisdictions such as New York, which has also mandated vaccinations for teachers, it has been the experience that a lot of teachers will go and get vaccinated very late towards the date for compliance if they are reluctant. Prefacing that and noting that this is very much a moving piece—in terms of staffing I will also pass in a moment to Mr Dizdar because he and Ms Nixon have been working on contingency planning in conjunction with the school workforce directorate, which is in the people group, to make sure that our schools are staffed appropriately. I will now turn to the numbers. We have 97 per cent compliance for full vaccination as at 1 November. About 4,900 have unattested as yet, but again I do not think that is surprising. Many will likely do so in the coming days.

**The CHAIR:** That is 4,900 teachers, is that right?

**Ms CACHIA:** They are the ones who have unattested as yet. It does not necessarily mean—

**The CHAIR:** Four thousand and nine hundred teachers. What about non-teaching staff?

**Ms CACHIA:** There is a range of different cohorts of non-teaching staff. They would be corporate and public service senior executive [PSSE] staff. Some 95.7 per cent of those are fully vaccinated, as attested to date. In terms of short-term temporary school administrative support [SAS], 96.6 per cent of those that have attested

are fully vaccinated. In terms of school admin and sport, excluding short-term temporary SAS, 96 per cent of those attested are fully vaccinated.

**The CHAIR:** What does that mean in terms of numbers? You said 4,900 for teachers. What is the comparable number for non-teaching staff?

**Ms CACHIA:** Nearly 74,000 teachers have attested that they are fully vaccinated. Nearly 26,000 school administration staff have attested that they are fully vaccinated. Nearly 2½ thousand short-term temporary staff have attested that they are fully vaccinated. And 95.7 per cent of corporate staff, which equates to about 5½ thousand, have attested that they are fully vaccinated.

**The CHAIR:** What about those that have not? I am asking for the third time now for non-teaching staff. What is the aggregate number?

**Ms CACHIA:** It is difficult to give it in an aggregate because, as I said, the numbers are moving and they are likely to be different—

**The CHAIR:** Okay. You can take that on notice please. But it is 4,900 teachers and—

**Ms CACHIA:** I can provide you with the date, Chair—as at 1 November, if that assists you.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, there is a new report today—this time from the Federal Parliament—recommending that there should be one full-time equivalent school counsellor for every 500 students. In New South Wales the ratio is currently 1 to 709. Given what we have been through in the last couple of years—between COVID and bushfires and drought—will you now commit to increasing the number of school counsellors to one to 500 students?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I am only aware of media reports of that particular—I think it is a parliamentary committee in the Federal Parliament that has produced the report. I am happy to read it and have a look at it. As you rightly outline, it has been released today. Can I say, in relation to our commitment to school counsellors, obviously we have our election commitment to deliver a full-time counsellor to every single public high school. In addition to that, there is a full-time student support officer as well. That rollout is well underway and is progressing well. I think it is also important to make the point that there are a range of measures that we need to have in place to support our young people. During the COVID pandemic we had, I think, more than 3,000 of our department staff who are non-teaching—our psychologists, our support officers, our counsellors—were able to provide that support to our students in terms of wellbeing during learning from home.

We also have a range of other initiatives in the community. Again, I think that is incredibly important. Certainly what we hear back from our school communities and our parents is that we have got to have a multi-levelled approach to mental health and young people. I do want to commend the work that my colleague the Hon. Bronnie Taylor as mental health Minister is doing in this space—some of her announcements around community initiatives, opportunities for further training. We have made mental health professional development mandatory for all of our staff as well. I do think it is a bit simplistic to look purely at student ratios. We are actively increasing the number of school counsellors in our school counselling workforce in line with our election commitments, but there are also a range of other initiatives in place to support student wellbeing. I think that context is also important when we are talking about a very serious issue.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I accept that it is a very serious issue. Things have moved on significantly since the election commitment that you announced. There seems to be consistent report after consistent report. There is an ongoing campaign from the *Sunday Telegraph* saying that there should be one counsellor for every 500 students. I am just going to give you one more opportunity to actually commit to that today.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** One of the other elements of the *Sunday Telegraph's* campaign was mandatory professional development in mental health for teachers and we have delivered that. I think it is important that we look at the full range of support that is available to a student. We look at what is available. There are certainly more counsellors being trained and put in schools under our Government than ever before. I think that is also important. We are investing in that workforce by providing opportunities for people to retrain as counsellors as well. We are actively working in this space alongside our colleagues in mental health and in the community to look at what we can do to support students. Again, many students will feel comfortable and want to approach their school counsellors. Others might want to have that conversation with a trusted sports coach or someone outside of their school context. I know the work Minister Taylor has done around some of that mental health first aid training peer support. It is very simplistic to look at this in only one lens. We have got to look at the whole supports that are available to young people in our community, including in our school settings.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But, Minister, do you think that one school counsellor can effectively serve 709 students? Do you think that that is a fair assessment of the support that a counsellor can provide?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If I can just put this in context, in 2015 we had 790 school counsellors in the New South Wales system. As at 5 October 2021, we are up to 1,154, so we are seeing an increased investment in school counsellors. Again, it is also a simplistic view that the only person who provides mental health and wellbeing support in a school context is a counsellor. As I said, our student support officers also play an important role, our wellbeing nurses, our teachers, our principals—there are a lot of people who provide that emotional support to our students. Indeed, a lot of our students also get support from some fantastic organisations in the community, who we partner with. We have done great work with many nation-leading mental health support services for young people that we provide through our school context as well. So, again, it is a bit simplistic, I think, to make it just about counsellors.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, can you tell us how many high schools do not have a full-time counsellor? In September last year it was 129 high schools. How many today do not have a full-time counsellor?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will just check if I have got that number, otherwise I am happy to take it on notice. But, like I said, we are on track with that commitment to make sure every public high school has one. I do not know whether the secretary has got the number.

**Ms HARRISSON:** As you have indicated, Minister, we have grown from 790 positions to 1,154 positions, as of 5 October 2021. As the Minister has indicated, we are making progress in all of those and we currently have a small number of vacancies across our high schools. I am very happy to provide the specific number on notice to you.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Do you track that data by school, Ms Harrison?

**Ms HARRISSON:** We would be able to get that data by school, yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** The ratio of students to counsellors?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I think, as the Minister has indicated, our commitment is to ensure every high school has a counsellor and so that is the measure that we would be tracking.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you provide us with the number of counsellors per school on notice, and can you tell us the number of students at each school?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Certainly. I think, as you indicated in one of your questions, Ms Houssos, we are currently at a student to staff ratio of one to 709. I would just like to draw the Committee's attention to the fact that that has reduced since March, when we last met, when it was one to 725. So, as the Minister indicated, we continue to make progress as we increase the capacity in the system. I also think it is important to note that this is a whole community issue. Schools play a very important part in supporting the wellbeing and mental health of young people but it is a community issue.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Ms Harrison, just in the interests of time, I think the Minister has made that point very clearly. It is a whole of community issue, but we are concerned today about what the support is in schools. Minister, when was the audit of classrooms for ventilation completed?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will get Mr Manning to answer that question.

**Mr MANNING:** I do not have the exact date as to when the audit was actually commissioned but—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Completed?

**Mr MANNING:** Completed? No, sorry, I do not have an exact date as to when the audit was actually completed.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you tell us if it was before students returned to school?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes, it was before students returned to school.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Definitely before that?

**Mr MANNING:** Definitely.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. If you can provide us with that date on notice, that would be helpful.

**Mr MANNING:** Sure.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, we hear that we have completed the audit. So now we know whether there is air conditioning or unflued gas heaters in every single classroom across the State?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Sorry, no, the audit was for ventilation purposes in terms of checking each and every learning space for windows, doors and things that needed to be fixed in terms of that natural ventilation approach to COVID, based on the health advice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But part of this audit was collating information—is that not correct—on whether there was air conditioning and whether there were unflued gas heaters in each individual classroom?

**Mr MANNING:** As the Minister said, the actual audit was around windows and fans and extracts. That was what the audit was about. As part of the ongoing process, we have been in a position to collect a whole range of information about exactly what exists in classrooms. But the audit was around the functioning of windows, ceiling and wall fans and extracts.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I accept your characterisation, Mr Manning, but you do now have a list of whether each classroom across the State has air conditioning or has an unflued gas heater. Is that correct, as part of that audit?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** To refer to my earlier answer, it was about maximising natural ventilation. That was what we were going to look at—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes, and we have canvassed that in extensive detail in the House and also in previous hearings—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I remember.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** —in the COVID inquiry. I am interested to know, Mr Manning, whether you now have a list, by classroom, of whether there is air conditioning in each classroom and whether there are unflued gas heaters in each classroom?

**Mr MANNING:** As a consequence of the work that we have done, which is more than just the audit, yes, we are in a position now, we think, to have a comprehensive view about exactly what exists in each classroom. There may still be gaps in some of that information, but we believe it is pretty comprehensive.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Why would there be gaps?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Because, as I said, the focus was about the opportunities for natural ventilation and my understanding is it within the database that we have as well, so not a list per se.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. But for the first time you went into every single classroom across the State and surveyed what facilities were in there for ventilation, for heating and cooling purposes. Is that not correct?

**Mr MANNING:** As I think the Minister has already said, the audit that we undertook and that we went into every single classroom for was to look at the functioning of windows and to look at ceiling fans, wall fans and things like extracts, across the 160,000—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I understand. Mr Manning, we have limited time. I am sure that you are aware we have asked many, many questions about this in the COVID inquiry and also in the House. I am interested now in the information that you have collated. Did you collate whether there was air conditioning or unflued gas heaters in classrooms whilst you were conducting this audit?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You are conflating two issues. The purpose of the audit, as I said, was about looking at the natural ventilation.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I am not asking about the purpose of the audit.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** Point of order.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, you want to know what was collected.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I am asking about—

**The CHAIR:** Order! The Minister should be able to—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** —the information that was collated.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** I will take a point of order.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** They are obfuscating.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I will take a point of order.

**The CHAIR:** No point of order. The Minister can finish her answer, please.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As I said, that was not the purpose of the audit, Mr Chair. The member might not like the answer, but that is the answer. The whole point was going in and looking at opportunities for natural ventilation in line with the health advice in terms of a safe return to school for COVID. It was not about a check of heaters.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, I am not asking about the purpose of the audit.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But it is relevant.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I am well across the purpose of the audit. Can you tell us whether you now know if there is air conditioning or unflued gas heaters in classrooms across the State?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes, we can.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. So can you tell me how many classrooms do not have air conditioning?

**Mr MANNING:** That is information that we will take on notice. I am happy to provide you that information on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How many classrooms have unflued gas heaters in them across the State?

**Mr MANNING:** Again, happy to take that on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** You do not have that information with you today?

**Mr MANNING:** I do not have that information to hand, no.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** How many classrooms did we go in—160,000?

**Mr MANNING:** Well, 160,000 spaces, but more than 70,000 learning spaces that we went into as part of that process. So, no, I do not have all that data to hand. I am happy to take that on notice.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Mr Manning, you should be able to get a number for us for this afternoon though, surely?

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** No, you have got 21 days.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, with respect, Mr Chair, that has been taken on notice. There is quite an extensive, large number of classrooms and learning spaces in New South Wales when you have got the number of public schools and infrastructure that we do. We have taken that on notice and will respond in due course.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Mr Manning, perhaps you can also take on notice, we would like to know how many classrooms do not have air conditioning, how many classrooms have unflued gas heaters, and across how many schools for each of those, please.

**Mr MANNING:** Sure.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I will pass to my colleague.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Minister, on the weekend the Premier made comments distancing himself from the previous Premier's comments about pork-barrelling. Do you endorse those comments made by the Premier on the weekend?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I think that the Premier made appropriate comments in relation to those matters, yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** You do not support pork-barrelling? You do not think it is legitimate, do you?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I do think it is—it is not something that I espouse to, no.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Mr Manning, is it the case that some infrastructure projects proceed without a business case?

**Mr MANNING:** No. No projects proceed without a business case.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** No projects proceed without a business case? I tender a document. Mr Manning, can I ask you about the Engadine High School hall project? Is it correct that that project was approved without a business case?

**Mr MANNING:** The process we run through for all projects before we move into construction—before Treasury will allow us to move into the construction phase—is the completion of a business case.

**The CHAIR:** But, Mr Manning, you have been asked the specific question of what appears to be Cook School in the electorate of Heathcote—Mr Lee Evans. Can you provide a yes-or-no answer? Has this project had a business case?

**Mr MANNING:** I would need to take on notice the size of this project. There is a formal requirement from a Treasury perspective. I think it is around—a capital business case is 10 million or more. If it is less than 10 million, it does not necessarily need a specific business case. I would need to take the details of this project on notice to understand.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is it correct the advice that was provided by your department, that the existing Engadine school hall actually met the standards that were required for school facilities? That is correct, is it not, the advice that was provided to—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Sorry. Are you referring specifically to something written in this document?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Sorry. I am referring to the document that was being tendered. On the second page, you can see where it deals with Engadine High School, expansion of hall facilities. It says:

... This is above the department's Educational Facility Standards & Guidelines.

There are currently no plans to upgrade the hall facilities at Engadine High School.

You can see that? That was advice provided by your agency.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes. Can I say in relation to this particular project, Mr D'Adam, as you would note from what you have tabled here, this is correspondence in August 2018, which obviously predates my time in the Education portfolio. But my understanding is that there was an election commitment to upgrade that hall.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** That commitment was clearly made without the advice—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I was not the Minister at the time. I cannot comment in relation to that.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** But the project has proceeded under your watch, Minister.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, because we deliver election commitments, Mr D'Adam.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Even if they cannot be justified?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, I do not agree with the premise of your question. Mr Manning has said that he wants to get some specific advice and take on notice in relation to business cases and such for this project. But election commitments were made, and they are delivered.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is this pork-barrelling?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I think it is entirely appropriate for governments to make election commitments and then deliver them, Mr D'Adam.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Even against the advice of the agency that it is unnecessary?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, I do not agree with the premise of your question. I was not the Minister at the time of this memo that you have here. So, as I said, I am taking some of your questions on notice and coming back with further advice. But, as I said, it is not uncommon for governments to make election commitments and then, when they are re-elected, to deliver them. I think there is an expectation that that happens.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** As the Murwillumbah education centre or—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Education precinct?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** —precinct—indicates, you can make commitments and you can change your mind, can you not, Minister.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, I do not agree with the premise of your question. You are now bringing two different projects together. The reality is, if there was an election commitment, as is my understanding—again, predates my time in this portfolio—to deliver that upgrade, then it is not inappropriate for a government to deliver an election commitment.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Why, Minister, in this instance did you decide to honour an election commitment, when clearly it could not be justified on the evidence, and you made another election commitment, about Murwillumbah—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, I do not agree with the premise of your question. You are making assumptions based on a single document that you have pulled out.

**The CHAIR:** Order! I think what we need to do is get the material from Mr Manning to decide whether or not it was justified, whether there is a business case, what did it show, because at the moment that is not clear before the Committee.

**Mr MANNING:** Yes. There are a number of cases—halls, in particular—where it might be sized to suit the latest guidelines, but if the school moves down a performance road, the structure of the hall does not support lighting systems and sound systems and the floor does not support the sort of seating arrangements, it would require the hall to be rebuilt in order to provide those things. The fact that—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is that not a justification after the fact, Mr Manning?

**Mr MANNING:** The fact that the size might be the right size? No, not at all. Part of the business case is to work through those sorts of issues. But it may well be that is exactly the issue this school has.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** But there was not a business case when the decision was made, was there, Mr Manning, as you have said.

**Mr MANNING:** We have asked to take this on notice. We will work our way through it.

**The CHAIR:** That is on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, I wanted to ask you about Gregory Hills Public School. That is a non-negotiable delivery date for 2023?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Let me just pull out up my notes. Sorry. "Gregory Hills", you have said?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Let me see. Sorry. There is quite a lot of school projects listed here, as you would appreciate, Chair. Let me just get the one that I am after in relation to that particular project. "Procurement of project manager and cost manager to support planning and delivery is underway. The procurement of the architect, civil and structural engineer and building services engineer to support planning and delivery is targeted for later this year. The building contractor procurement is to take place next year" is the update I have on that school.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Will the school open in 2023? Do you commit to that?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What I commit to is going through the process to build and deliver these new schools, as we are seeing right across the State. That is the latest information in terms of time frames, when we are anticipating the next stages of that project. We will continue to work with school communities. The advice that I have is, I think, we are aiming—again, Mr Manning might want to comment on that—to start work on that school by the end of next year. Of course, with some of the new and innovative ways that we are able to deliver school infrastructure, we can often see that construction happen quite quickly. But Mr Manning can speak in a bit more detail.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But, Minister, there are parents who are watching this today. There are parents who have moved into Gregory Hills expecting a primary school that has been promised, and promised by your Government. Will you commit that they will actually be able to open the gates by 2023, as you have promised?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will commit that it will be our Government that delivers that school to the communities of Gregory Hills. It has been a commitment from us, I think, since 2018. I know previously members of the Opposition have floated about a 2012 date. The reality is we are going through the processes now.

We will continue to keep that community updated. We are forecast for work to begin, as I said, in the latter stage of next year. Mr Manning might want to provide some more information around that project.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** We will come back to that this afternoon. My time is about to run out. I just wanted to ask you a final question, about the selective high school in south-western Sydney. Has a site been purchased?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will get Mr Manning to talk about where we are up to with that in terms of identification of that site.

**Mr MANNING:** Happy to. I think at the last estimates we talked about this school. We identified that, due to the selective nature of it, the transport infrastructure is really important to us. So Leppington Town Centre has been identified as the preferred location for this school. We are currently working with a range of other agencies, like Greater Sydney Commission and Landcom, around that Town Centre master plan. We expect that to be concluded towards the end of this year so we can confirm a site, beginning of next year. All the sites that are in consideration are in government ownership already. So we are confident that we can move pretty quickly once that master plan has been put in place.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** But, just to be clear, you do not currently have a site.

**Mr MANNING:** We know it will be—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** You have identified some places that you would like to do it, but you do not actually have one physical site that you have purchased or that you have acquired yet.

**Mr MANNING:** Government owns all of the land under consideration for the master plan. Government already owns the site. Yes, we are working through the best location for the school within that master plan, within that town centre. There are a whole range of other benefits that could flow out of that process. We expect to be at the end of that process at the end of this year and be able to move very quickly then to resolve exactly where the school will go and how it looks. But all of the land under consideration is already in government ownership, yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How many potential sites are you currently looking at?

**Mr MANNING:** There are really only a couple of opportunities for us within that master plan as it sits at the moment. They are all within cooee of each other.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** A couple? Two? Three?

**Mr MANNING:** The proximity to the railway station is key.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. We can come back in the staffing session. Mr Shoebridge, please.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Thanks, Chair. Minister, at the end of the last year public schools were sitting on about \$1.3 billion of unspent money. Do you know how much they have got in the accounts at the moment?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will ask Mr Withey to provide that update for you, Mr Shoebridge.

**Mr WITHEY:** Thank you, Minister. Thank you for the question, Mr Shoebridge. We calculate the amount of accumulated funds that are held within schools on an annual basis. We do so at the end of every school year. As a result, the number [disorder]—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Mr Withey, is that a long way of saying you do not know at the moment?

**Mr WITHEY:** No. I do know, as I was just about to say and I just have said. The number has not changed from the conversation we had in March. The total accumulated funds across all New South Wales government schools has not been recalculated since March. It remains, at 31 December 2020, at 1.49 billion. We will recalculate that at the end of this year.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** At the end of the year.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I said that they had \$1.3 billion at the end of last year. I asked you how much they have now. You have told me that they had \$1.3 billion at the end of last year. Is that right, Mr Withey?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, because we calculate the data on an annual basis.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I asked you how much they had now. The answer is you do not know.

**Ms HARRISSON:** If I may, Mr Shoebridge. We will know following the completion of this year.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Sorry, Mr Withey. You are being very quiet. I cannot hear you.

**Mr WITHEY:** That is not what I said, Mr Shoebridge. I do not recognise the 1.3 billion figure. At the end of last year, at 31 December 2020, accumulated funds across New South Wales government schools was 1.49 billion. We will recalculate that at the end of 2021 [inaudible]. That is in line with how we have managed this, throughout time.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** We were getting some figures just before in the last round of questions about suspensions and I just wanted to clarify what the two sets of figures were. One was a total set of suspensions of 63,000 and then a breakdown on that. Was that for the last calendar year? The other one was a total of 40,000 suspensions and then a breakdown on that. Was that for the first half of this year? Can we just get a clarification on that?

**Ms OWEN:** Mr Shoebridge, I can clarify that because I gave you that data. The 63,604 data is for the 2020 calendar year, or school year. The 40,648 was semester one, so terms one and two in the current school year to the end of June. For each of those breakdowns that you asked me to give you, that is how I gave you two different numbers.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I appreciate that clarification, Ms Owen. On the face of it, that is showing a very substantial increase in suspensions because if we track a full year at 40,000 it is going to end up at something like 80,000, not 63,000. Have I misread those figures, Ms Owen?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Mr Shoebridge, if I may, Mr Dizdar would be able to give you some good indication of the patterns of suspension across the school year. It is not in a linear trajectory through the year. Often schools, in trying to establish a good start to the year, will set very high behaviour standards initially.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** If Ms Owen, who gave me the data, can give me her position first of all and then if something has been missed, Mr Dizdar can do that.

**Ms OWEN:** I think if you are extrapolating the data from the beginning of the year to the latter part of this year and comparing it to last year, mathematically that is correct. But I refer you to the fact that last year was not a normal year in terms of attendance, so suspensions would have been impacted both this year and last year due to learning from home due to the COVID pandemic.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** But the secretary was telling me earlier that it was a good thing that suspensions were down last year. Are you now saying that that was actually just due to the nature of last year rather than actual any significant change, Ms Owen?

**Ms HARRISSON:** If I could just clarify what I said in my answer, Mr Shoebridge, I said that suspensions were down 19 per cent from 2019. The COVID interruption to the school year was shorter than that and so it was not 19 per cent of the school year. We are focused on behaviour and the use of suspensions in our system. We have been doing so and we hope we are making good progress. As I indicated previously, to extrapolate, yes, as Ms Owen says, if you took a linear extrapolation, you would get higher suspension numbers. But, as I indicated—and I would be happy to come back to you with the profile of that data to test that assumption—we would not expect the suspension data to be linear throughout the year.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I am more than happy to get some more further information on notice, so I appreciate that, Ms Harrisson. Minister, you must look at those numbers, though, and wonder what is going wrong when more than half of the suspensions in New South Wales public schools are for students with disability. You must look at that and think that something is wrong.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, Mr Shoebridge, I do, and that is why we are doing the work, as you know, on the Student Behaviour Strategy to really look at what we can do to minimise the number of students who are suspended, but also the overrepresentation that we see of students who have disability, students from Aboriginal backgrounds and students from rural and remote schools. They are disproportionately represented in those suspension statistics, which is why we are doing the work to improve the behaviour strategy and have better supports in our schools.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** More than one-quarter of suspensions are for First Nations kids and more than half the suspensions are for kids with a disability, and there would actually be a fair number of suspensions where both of those categories are done.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That is right.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** You were meant to have the new behaviour policy in place at the beginning of this year. When can we expect it?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We have released the draft of that and then the policies and procedures will be implemented and we will start that work with school communities. We had originally planned

to do that work during term four of this year and, again, Ms Owen can speak about that because her team have been working in this space. Obviously with the disruption of the school year with COVID, our focus at the moment is on getting our students back into the classroom and supported, so there are a few initiatives that we have pushed to the beginning of next year, purely to be able to have time to implement these and get them in correctly. I can say, though, that we have started the engagement of our behaviour specialists to help support our school communities and there is already support and advice out there in relation to the behaviour strategy, again, which will be built on from next year going forward as well.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Minister, despite all the talk last year and despite the draft policy being distributed, the numbers are telling us that the system is failing kids who have a disability and First Nations kids. That is what the numbers are telling us, are they not, in terms of suspensions?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, which is why, with respect, Mr Shoebridge, we have developed this new strategy going forward. It is about making sure that we reverse some of those numbers and that we provide better support for these kids. Again, I know I do not need to tell you and certainly not other members of the Committee that starting down a trajectory of suspension—very clearly there is a lot of international evidence and other evidence and research in our own context about what that means for life outcomes and a range of measures. You would be well aware of that, Mr Shoebridge, which is why we want to have this new strategy in place to better support our students and staff.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** But you had committed to having that strategy in place at the beginning of this year. We now see that has been slipping again. It is not even going to be implemented this term. That is not showing the kind of commitment to the kids who most need to be at school. Kids who have a disability are going to face other difficulties in their life and we know how systemically First Nations kids are discriminated against. Under your watch they are getting suspended from school and not getting that chance to even get a start.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Can I say that under my watch we are developing and are going to be implementing this strategy to exactly address that issue that you raise. We have had extensive consultation, we have had public consultation opportunities throughout this year and we have met with a range of stakeholders in relation to these issues. We need to get this right. We owe it to these kids to get it right and I remain as committed as ever to this strategy because I think it is incredibly important. We will continue to work with the sectors, with families and with advocacy groups as we implement it.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** But this strategy was meant to be in place for this year and this is another year of kids with disability and First Nations kids who have been failed because the strategy and policies implemented just have not been prioritised this year, have they, Minister?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, that is not right.

**Ms HARRISSON:** If I could add, the implementation of the strategy has started this year. We have 36 new behavioural specialists providing advice and complex case support across the system. They are in addition to a broader team of over 2,000 staff who are in schools supporting students, which includes our counsellors, psychologists and wellbeing and health in-reach [WHIN] nurses. We have delivered new professional development courses in behaviour support and management; we are improving access to specialist allied health behaviour support; we have new and enhanced resources, guidance and tools available for teachers, leaders and school staff; and we are looking at further co-commissioning of services to support schools with other government agencies. So the strategy is being implemented. The depth and detailed analysis and development of the new behaviour policy has been an ongoing piece of work, and it has been engaging our key stakeholders in that particular element of the policy.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, I am working on the assumption you did your rapid antigen test coming into the building today as we all do every day.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I did. I have my armband to prove it, Mr Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Fantastic. Instead of standing down up to 4,900 teachers next Monday, why can they also not do a rapid antigen test to ensure there is a COVID-free environment in their school?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I think it has been fairly well documented that vaccination is one of the most important tools that we have when it comes to minimising the spread of COVID in all our settings, particularly in our school context. There is very clear advice that we have received in multiple conversations with Dr Chant and her team about vaccinating, particularly in school settings and in a primary school setting where a lot of schoolchildren are unable to be vaccinated because there is not one available to anyone under the age of 12 at this point in time. It is the best way we can protect our students and staff. I note that we have rapid antigen testing here, but also in the guidelines when we had our return to Parliament, there were also recommendations

that we are all fully vaccinated as well, Mr Chair. The rapid antigen testing certainly plays a role. At the moment we are trialling it down in Albury with our students and staff, but it is not a replacement for vaccination.

**The CHAIR:** Alright. Does the trial in Albury include unvaccinated staff?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As I said, that started this week. I do not know whether Ms Harrison wants to provide some comments.

**Ms HARRISSON:** The first thing I would say is the mandatory requirement for vaccination is to ensure our staff are able to go about their duties in a safe way. Even if a staff member undertook a rapid antigen test and was not positive for COVID, they would be in a classroom where there could potentially be a child that would put them at risk, which is why we have mandatory vaccinations in place. The COVID rapid antigen testing in Albury is being used in two ways. The first, which is underway now, is around surveillance in the community of the virus to ensure that we are able to contain the outbreak in Albury and to ensure that there is not transmission in schools. We are also looking at how we use rapid antigen testing to limit the amount of time anyone needs to self-isolate as a result of being a close contact of a positive COVID case so that we can get students and staff—

**The CHAIR:** Right, so there are no unvaccinated teachers in Albury who are being rapid antigen tested and, if negative, going about their teaching.

**Ms HARRISSON:** As of Monday, they will be required to be fully vaccinated.

**The CHAIR:** But this week?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Ms Owen might have further information on that in terms of the position in Albury this week.

**Ms OWEN:** I am not aware that we have any unvaccinated teachers on site in our schools in Albury, but as part of the surveillance—surveillance is available to both students and staff across all school sectors in Albury, so I would expect unvaccinated students to be using rapid antigen testing.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Harrison, is there a problem with the compliance verification for vaccination among teachers and other staff?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am sorry, Chair; I am not sure I understand the question.

**The CHAIR:** Is there a problem the department has identified in verifying that teachers are, in fact, double vaccinated to be allowed in the classroom?

**Ms HARRISSON:** We have a system that was developed in order to enable our staff to put in their vaccination status. That vaccine status is then confirmed by their line manager in the system on sight of their vaccination certificate.

**The CHAIR:** Is the department using Hays Recruitment to hire so-called investigators to check non-compliance with vaccination requirements?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I might ask Ms Cachia to comment. That is not something I am, at this point in time, aware of.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Cachia?

**Ms CACHIA:** Thank you, Chair, for the question. We are engaging with an external recruiter in order to provide a small surge capacity, pre-empting that we may have—as you can imagine, in any good workforce planning we need to be prepared for the eventuality—a number of non-compliance episodes or incidents to investigate. And so, therefore, yes, that is one of the things we are doing. We are looking at the capacity we are going to need in our professional and ethical standards [PES] directorate in order to conduct those investigations in a timely way. It is really important, Chair, to do that because, obviously, a lot of these times we can work things out and that teacher will then be able to, if possible, go back to the classroom, so we do not want delays on that process. We want to be able to give certainty to our school principals in terms of staffing. We want to make sure that we can get staff back into schools, where appropriate, quickly. And the professional ethics and standards directorate works very closely with our health and safety directorate on the issues involving medical contraindication. So there is a number of reasons for non-compliance and there are some small, sharp surge capacity in staffing required to make sure those investigations happen in a very timely manner.

**The CHAIR:** How many investigator positions are you recruiting through Hays, please?

**Ms CACHIA:** That will depend, Chair, on what our numbers show us as we get closer to the date.

**The CHAIR:** What are you expecting?

**Ms CACHIA:** I will take on notice the number today. As you can imagine, with a week to go, as I indicated earlier, Chair, the numbers are moving, so we will take that on notice and come back to you.

**The CHAIR:** I am looking at a Hays Recruitment ad for grade 7/8 staff—about \$115,000 a year equivalent—where it reads:

I am currently recruiting for several temporary investigator positions with—  
what turns out to be the Department of Education.

These will assist the COVID-19 task force. They will specifically oversee COVID vaccination non-compliance with the public health order. The department is looking for individuals to start in November for an initial period of four months. These positions will be full-time likely working from home due to existing limitations in the office.

Ms Cachia, can you actually explain what these investigators are going to do working from home that cannot be done by your other staff and what exactly is the problem with COVID vaccination non-compliance that you are trying to fix?

**Ms CACHIA:** Certainly, Chair. I will answer that question in turn. We are using Contractor Central. They may be using Hays. As I said, I will take that on notice and come back to you. There are 30, as I understand it, at present. I think that is a very small number given the nature of the investigations that they would need to conduct. As you can imagine, when we start to unpack the reasons why a teacher or, indeed, SAS may be unvaccinated there may be a variety of reasons for that, and we would need to go back and ensure that that person is able to remedy that. Sometimes they are required to go back and get further information from their healthcare professional and we do not want to compromise our existing investigations.

As you can imagine, in a system of our size, we have a very large number of investigations that are conducted each year. We do not want those to be compromised in terms of timing, particularly given the recommendations of the Tedeschi review which, as the Committee would understand, was one of the recommendations made as part of that review. We acknowledge that there is a time and a place for short-term surge capacity. There is a process that needs to be followed. I am happy to take the Committee through that process. And we will make sure that those investigations occur in a timely way so, as I said, we can make staffing decisions that best suit the outcomes that we require in our schools to meet our student needs.

**The CHAIR:** What are these investigators going to do working from home? They ring a teacher up and the teacher is recorded as unvaccinated and they ask them why? You say they try to remedy that. What does that actually mean? For the status of teachers, it seems a bit rude to be investigating people who would be in charge, quite sensibly, of their own medical circumstances and provide, one assumes, reliable information to their school and the department. So why do you need 30 staff to be investigating teachers?

**Ms CACHIA:** Certainly, Chair. I understand the question and, in fact, the comments there around privacy. These investigators will be looking at vax system compliance. That is a large system. We have a very large workforce so we need people to check the accuracy of that. They will be following up on responses and submissions. Obviously, we are very mindful [audio malfunction]. We have been very careful in our vax system to make sure that staff are not uploading vaccination certificates. They are just attesting as to their status and those things are being checked by principals. But in a system of this size, as you can imagine, there is a lot of work to do and we need to make sure that the work is getting done in a very timely manner.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Harrison, is there any evidence of teachers falsely uploading vaccination certificates that are not valid?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Chair, as Ms Cachia has outlined, what we are trying to do is in to ensure that, before any decisions around employment are taken in relation to the public health order, we have fair and due process for our staff. That is why we are increasing our capacity to do so and we want to make sure that every case will be individual and that we are hearing every individual case appropriately and putting appropriate steps in place.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, do you think it is incongruous to be employing 30 people in an environment where there is an existing staffing shortfall and perhaps up to 4,900 teachers being stood down next Monday? Why do we not put the 30 staffing position finances into actually getting more teachers into the classrooms?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As Ms Cachia has outlined, it is really about effectively providing that surge capacity in the PES team to make sure that we do investigate where we need to. I have been quite open about this. Mandatory vaccination for our teachers is the right thing to do. I 100 per cent stand behind that position. It is about keeping our school community safe. We are still some days away from 8 November, and I think anyone who is yet to be vaccinated who is a teacher should go out and do so. That would be my strong advice.

**The CHAIR:** Just quickly, Ms Cachia, what is your budget for the 30 staff being recruited, please?

**Ms CACHIA:** Chair, I will have to take that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Take that on notice, thank you.

**Ms CACHIA:** It is not a large—

**The CHAIR:** Sorry?

**Ms CACHIA:** It is a short, sharp surge capacity.

**The CHAIR:** It looks short and sharp but it is bound to cost something, so if you can take that on notice, that would be appreciated. Thank you.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, 432 schools have been waiting almost three years to find out that they have been unsuccessful in round two of the Cooler Classrooms Program. We can now see that schools with median average temperatures of 26 to 27 degrees are actually going to be completed under the program while schools with higher temperatures of 28 to 29 degrees have missed out. Why is that? Why have you forced these schools to wait and why are you doing it in schools with lower median temperatures?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, I am happy to talk to this, Mr Chair. Obviously, you are referring to our \$500 million commitment for Cooler Classrooms, of which more than 900 schools—I think it is 922—so far have been approved. Of those, 600-odd are in areas where the mean maximum January temperature is 30 degrees or above, who were automatically eligible. Obviously, other schools have subsequently been funded for that rollout in rounds one and two. There has been extensive work done by Mr Manning and his team in relation to the rollout of that.

The other point to make, too, is that what we are talking about is more than 900 schools out of 2,200 through Cooler Classrooms. It does not mean that other schools do not have existing air conditioning. Our new and upgraded schools have air conditioning installed as part of that work. Also, a number of those schools who have put in applications—we have certainly looked at the scope of what classrooms already have air conditioning and what additional air conditioning is needed. I will also say we have not told those schools that they are unsuccessful. What we have done is indicate in round two which schools have been approved so far, and then we will continue to communicate with the other schools going forward. Do you want to add anything, Mr Manning?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** We will come back to Mr Manning this afternoon. My colleague has a question.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Minister, in February this year you were quoted as saying:

I expect all bureaucrats at the department to back the secretary and the executive team, and focus on doing their jobs. They must stop hiding behind ideology as a reason to oppose change, and recognise that these policy reforms are about students and student outcomes. Get on board - or get out of the way.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Hear, hear.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Did you make that statement?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, I did.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Given that you had a restructure of the senior executive in 2020 that cost \$6 million, how many people in the senior executive are not currently on board?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Mr D'Adam, can I say I was quite clear in my comments that I have an expectation that we deliver on outcomes and priorities of the Government. Can I also say I have an excellent working relationship with the executive team. Some of them, particularly over the past few months, I think I have spoken to more frequently than my husband as we have dealt with the COVID response and the way forward. I think it is important as Minister that you show leadership and indicate what the priorities are and that you work closely with your department executive. That is certainly what I do, and we have a very great professional working relationship.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Would you say that there are members of the executive that are still obstructing your agenda?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I am very confident in the ability, the work ethic and the support of the executive team.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Minister, I just wanted to come back to your question about those schools. You have told the ones that are successful. Are you now placing those 432 schools that have not been successful in further limbo.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, that is not right.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Are you saying that there are potentially more schools that can access funding under the Cooler Classrooms Program?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will get Mr Manning to speak to that.

**Mr MANNING:** The focus of the Cooler Classrooms Program has been on delivering round one. As money becomes available through round one, we are able to allocate that to round-two schools. We have done a first round of contingency, and we have been able to announce some of the round-two schools being successful. As we continue to roll through to the tail end of the program, there will be other money that is available for other schools to be considered as part of that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How much has been spent under the program so far?

**Mr MANNING:** I would have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sure.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Minister, I am told that the Secondary Principals' Council [SPC] does not agree with the six-month fast-track proposal that you have put forward for teachers, that they are not co-designing any kind of arrangement with you and that they have had some discussions but have said clearly that they do not think that is the solution for the teacher shortage. What do you say to that?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I am happy for the secretary to talk about engagement specifically with the SPC, but more broadly, I speak to them on a regular basis. The president, Craig Petersen, rang me within the past couple of weeks. My door is always open. They often call and contact, and we will continue working with them as we implement this.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Are you not concerned to have misrepresented their position on your proposal for the six-month fast-track for teachers?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, not at all. Again, I think the secretary can comment about that co-design work and the involvement of the SPC.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Just to be clear, is it the mid-career entry program? We also have the FASTstream program underway. For the mid-career entry, as I indicated in my previous answer, we are in the co-design phase and we are working with those stakeholders during that co-design phase. The idea that those stakeholders may sign off on our final proposals—we will see where that gets to in terms of the outcomes, but we definitely are committed to getting people into our classrooms. Can I add that there are a number of ways we can achieve that. At the minute, because we are in a co-design phase, all of those options are on the table and under discussion.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, thank you. We will adjourn for lunch now. I thank the Minister for her participation. In particular, thank you and your officials for the reasonably direct and frank way in which the questions have been answered. We do not always find that at this Committee, without going into details elsewhere.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Happy to help, Chair. It is upper House Ministers.

**The CHAIR:** We appreciate that very much. We will see you next time, Minister, and we will see all the officials after lunch.

**The Minister withdrew.**

**(Luncheon adjournment)**

**The CHAIR:** Our first round of questioning to the officials starts with the Labor Opposition, please.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I might start with the secretary. Just to further explore that issue around exits and the data that is available in relation to teachers exiting from the sector, what work is being done around how we might reduce the number of people leaving the profession?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Thank you for the question, Mr D'Adam. The median tenure for teachers in New South Wales is around 12 years, which is a measure we look at to give a sense of whether or not we are seeing more teachers leaving the profession over time. We are, of course, looking at a number of initiatives that go to supporting our teachers in classrooms, both through the School Success Model and also through our program to reduce the administrative burden, to ensure that we are creating an environment in which our teachers can thrive.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sorry, did you say the median tenure is 12 years? That is the average time that someone stays in the New South Wales education system?

**Ms HARRISSON:** That is the median time for a teacher, and Ms Cachia can provide some more information on that measure.

**Ms CACHIA:** Thank you, Mr D'Adam. It might be useful to talk about the retention rate overall, which is 98.9 per cent for 2020 and 92.1 per cent in the first five years. Those are the current rates.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can I just ask about that figure? When you talk about the retention rate, you are assessing the retention of teachers who are in permanent positions. Is that how you arrive at that statistic?

**Ms CACHIA:** That is the retention rate for the full-time equivalent [FTE] staff; that is correct. It is very difficult to tap into the retention of casuals because as you can imagine, Mr D'Adam, some casuals work three days a week and then they opt out for six months and then they opt in again. Yes, that is the full-time.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Mr Martin, you might be able to shed some light on this issue. Obviously, another means of examining exits is the number of teachers who retain accreditation, new accreditations and those who allow their accreditations to lapse. What does that tell us about how many people are leaving the sector?

**Mr MARTIN:** I would have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Do you collect that data?

**Mr MARTIN:** We can identify the teachers who go on various types of leave of absence or allow their accreditation to lapse. We can do that over time and yearly, but we do not have that data in front of us.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is that data that you draw on, Ms Cachia, in your analysis around retention?

**Ms CACHIA:** Yes. As Mr Martin said, I think they are two different issues. Accreditation is a separate issue to deciding to leave the profession—as Mr Martin would agree, no doubt. You asked in your question, Mr D'Adam, about what we are doing to retain teachers. I am happy to answer that if that is of assistance.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Sure.

**Ms CACHIA:** You might understand that on the weekend the National Excellence in Teaching Awards [NEiTA], which is an independent body, released a teachers report card for 2021. In that, a significant number of teachers who were surveyed as part of that report indicated that learning and development opportunities were very important to them. We obviously have the School Leadership Institute. A significant number of people go through the programs in that institute. The other piece that we are looking at in particular is attraction to teaching—so what are the things that really promote teachers, give them a sense of accomplishment and purpose in their career progression? Other programs like fast track and mid-career are also opportunities to do those things. I am happy to go through a number of the course offerings in the School Leadership Institute if that is of assistance, as well.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** At this point, no. I would like to ask about the analysis that is done. Do you conduct exit surveys for permanent teachers who leave?

**Ms CACHIA:** I do not personally conduct them—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I mean the department, obviously.

**Ms CACHIA:** Yes. The department obviously—I will probably refer more to my colleagues Murat Dizdar and Leanne Nixon on this because a lot of that collection of information in terms of the reasoning behind

a teacher's decision-making process to exit—be it for personal, family reasons or to go to another job et cetera—is collected as well at the local level.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Mr D'Adam, this issue was raised in this Committee's report into outcomes-based budgeting in education. I think in our response to that we indicated that we supported that recommendation in principle. As you would appreciate, collating that type of information at a system of our scale does present a number of challenges to us, but we are interested in understanding that information more and are looking actively at ways that we might be able to obtain more information directly. As Ms Cachia indicated, some of that data would be captured locally to a line manager, to a principal, or to a director educational leadership. Maybe Mr Dizdar could provide some insight for that.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** It seems to be to me that it is a significant omission from the Teacher Supply Strategy. There is actually nothing that is aimed at addressing stemming the flow of exits.

**Ms HARRISSON:** I think Ms Cachia has identified—and I also spoke to some of the things that we are doing across the system to ensure that our teachers are well supported and want to stay with the profession.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Why were exits not dealt with in the Teacher Supply Strategy though?

**Ms HARRISSON:** As you have indicated, in the title it is about increasing the supply of teachers into the system. That is not to say there is not further work underway in the department to ensure that we can maintain teachers. Our evidence, as Ms Cachia has indicated, is that retention rates in the system are exceptionally high, that tenure is at a median of 12 years. I know that there is a lot of speculation and different figures out there, but our data certainly suggests that we have a good retention rate of teachers in the system.

**Ms CACHIA:** Mr D'Adam, it is also really important to collect the data as you go, not just at the point at which a person decides to opt out of a system. We have our People Matter Employee Survey [PMES] data on an annual basis as well. We are actively collecting data from our workforce as to how they feel about working and their working experience.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can I ask about the data that you have on casuals? I note in this 2019 document that the 5,000 casuals in the workforce at 2019 was just an estimate. You do not actually know how many casuals you use in a year?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Chair, could I request that if we are being asked to refer to a document that we are provided with a copy?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** It was tabled—

**Ms HARRISSON:** I think it was with the Minister earlier. We were only given one copy between the three of us so I do not have one to hand.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Is this the workforce modelling?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** It is the workforce modelling and teacher supply, yes.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** You can have mine.

**Ms CACHIA:** While I am waiting for a copy, I can talk to that, Mr D'Adam. Some of our casuals will take on a role where they may work three days in a school, so we will collect that data. Others are working one day or they may be working sporadically. So you can imagine that that number is moving around quite frequently and is a very fluid number, so to speak.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Of course. In terms of overall assessment, it is not very clear that you know how many casuals you might use in a year. That seems to be a significant gap in the knowledge of the department if it is not collecting that data. I suppose my question is why.

**Ms CACHIA:** I do not agree with that, Mr D'Adam. With respect, as I said my colleagues Mr Dizdar and Ms Nixon are very much in touch with what is happening on the ground, which is really where the data of casuals comes into play because they form such an important part of a school's daily needs. I have got the number specifically, Mr D'Adam. It is 4,577 casuals at 30 June 2021.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I want to go back to Ms Owen and ask for—she seems to have dropped off at the moment.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Sorry. Ms Owen is currently having some technical difficulties. Her computer crashed and she is endeavouring to get back into the hearing.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Then I will come back to Ms Owen a little bit later. Let us return to the issue of the new selective high school in south-western Sydney. Mr Manning, you outlined that you have got a couple of sites. Can you be clear: is that two, is that three?

**Mr MANNING:** I can update. We have five sites under consideration within the town centre.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Five. To be clear, you do not currently have a specific site? I just want to be really clear on that.

**Mr MANNING:** There are five sites, all of which are owned by government.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Excellent. There was a document that was put out, the School Infrastructure NSW 2021-22 Delivery Strategy, which had an accompanying media release that stated:

More than 50 tender opportunities for architects, engineers, project managers and builders are available as the NSW Government begins the next stage of its historic school building program.

The selective high school for south-western Sydney was on that list of tender opportunities, was it not?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes, it was.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** What are the tender opportunities available for architects, engineers, project managers and builders for the south-western Sydney high school?

**Mr MANNING:** They are involved in helping us make the assessment on the preferred site and doing the background work in readiness for a selection of that site before the end of this year so we can launch into the design phase of that. They will be actively involved in helping us select which is the best site and doing analysis around how the school might be formed on each of those sites. They will be effectively putting concepts and a whole range of other bits and pieces together so, once we have chosen the site, we can get straight on with it.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you give me any specifics on what kinds of work—is that all being done external to the department or is any of that work being done internally by School Infrastructure NSW?

**Mr MANNING:** We will have a project director leading the project. Then we will hire project managers and engineers and architects to actually do the analysis, do the work and then develop up the concept designs which form the basis of the project going forward.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** So you are doing concept designs for all five sites?

**Mr MANNING:** We will do some very early schematic concepts, absolutely, on all five in order to assess which is the best site to go for.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Could you take on notice how much money has been spent on that so far?

**Mr MANNING:** Sure; happy to take that on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Particularly by the external consultants. That would be helpful. Have we got Ms Owen back? No.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** Gone entirely.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Gone entirely.

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am assured she is trying to get back into the hearing.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** We can collectively sympathise with IT issues.

**The CHAIR:** Where is she located to have this problem?

**Ms HARRISSON:** She is located at George Street. I believe she is doing the hearing from our George Street School Infrastructure offices.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** You have got better connectivity if you go to Broken Hill, it would seem, than in the city.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Mr Manning, can I ask about Box Hill? We have asked about this in the past. Does the department have any land that it has acquired in Box Hill for the purposes of a school? Has that position changed?

**Mr MANNING:** I would like to take that on notice. I believe we are progressing the acquisition of land—if we do not already own it—but I would like to take that on notice so that I could be precise.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can I ask specifically about a block of land on Terry Road and whether there is a block of land on Fontana Drive?

**Mr MANNING:** Sure; happy to take those on notice so we can make sure we get the right answer.

**The CHAIR:** Can I just say, does Ms Owen want to walk up here and sit at the white table? It is not going to cause any outbreak of problems. It is better than someone who has just disappeared.

**Ms HARRISSON:** I agree, Chair. If the Committee is happy, we are happy to have Ms Owen come and join.

**The CHAIR:** Is everyone happy with that? There are questions that need to be asked.

**Ms HARRISSON:** I would note she will—

**The CHAIR:** If it is convenient to her. It does not sound far away.

**Ms HARRISSON:** It is not. It is about a 10 minute walk plus a rapid antigen test [RAT] away.

**The CHAIR:** So at least she can participate in some format. Thank you.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** She might avoid the RAT if she takes more than 15 minutes because I think they close off at 2.30 p.m., don't they?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Either way, let us try—

**The CHAIR:** Whatever.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** It is good to have the test, so leaving now would be good.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I want to ask about the audit of classrooms. I think that is you, Mr Manning. So we are really clear after this morning, the purpose of the audit was for ventilation purposes. They have been completed for every classroom in New South Wales now?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How many air-conditioning systems were installed during the period when students were learning at home?

**Mr MANNING:** Again, I would have to take that on notice in terms of the number of air-conditioning systems that were installed.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sure.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Could I also just note for the Committee that obviously our own construction and installation of things like air conditioning would have been disrupted during the COVID period as well for the period that construction and similar works were not permitted under the health orders.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I understand that. The air purifier systems that the tender went out for, I think there were 19,000? Is that right, Mr Manning?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes, that was the number that we ended up procuring.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Have they been purchased yet?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes, they have all been purchased.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Have any arrived yet?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How many have been installed?

**Mr MANNING:** Just under 2,000 have been installed so far.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. Can you provide us with a list of the schools where they have been installed?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes. I think that there may actually already be public information on the website. Each of the school audit reports should identify that, but I can double check and confirm those to you.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Just to be clear, for Hansard, you are taking that one on notice?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Thanks. And that is the extent of what you are going to purchase? You are just going to purchase the 19,000, there are not going to be any additional ones?

**Mr MANNING:** At this moment, yes. We do not have any plans to purchase anymore, but if we need to we can do.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I am sorry?

**Mr MANNING:** If we need some more we will be able to procure some more.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Excellent. I understand that there were 80,000 windows that required rectification works?

**Mr MANNING:** Just under 80,000, yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Have they all been repaired now?

**Mr MANNING:** They have all been attended to. Some of them, it was an interim fix and a more permanent—it was likely that the actual window systems would need to be replaced, and so the teams are working on making that happen as well. We made sure that the windows were functional for the ventilation purposes, but there are some that will need a permanent repair. It will happen over the next [disorder].

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Perhaps you can take on notice the number that require a permanent repair? What about the 17,000 broken ceiling fans?

**Mr MANNING:** Again, they are all under repair at the moment. The windows were our key priority, but we are working through the fans and we can give you information on notice on that as well.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Excellent. I assume then you will say the same for the 2,000 extractor fans?

**Mr MANNING:** Absolutely.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Chair, Ruth Owen has been able to rejoin us online.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Excellent. Ms Owen, Mr Shoebridge asked you a question earlier around the exclusions or the suspensions from schools and we got the total figures. Are you able to provide us with a breakdown for each of 2020 and 2021—I understand it is for semester one—by stages, including early stage one, stage one, stage two, stage three, stage four, stage five and stage six?

**Ms OWEN:** Hello, again and apologies everybody for the technical error there. I can provide that information, Ms Houssos, by year group and it is probably best to do it on notice. There is quite a lot of information to give you there.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. Can you just provide us now with a figure for how many kindergarten kids in early stage one were suspended so far this year and then what the figure was for 2020?

**Ms OWEN:** Yes. So far this year, in the first semester, there were 424 and in 2020, 961.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Nine hundred and sixty one for last year and 424 for this year so far. How many of those children have disabilities?

**Ms OWEN:** Students with a disability, this year, 343 and last year, 697.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. I think my time—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Could you ask about First Nations?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sorry, yes, I should ask for the similar breakdown that Mr Shoebridge asked for. Of those kindergarten kids—and I accept that you are going to take the balance on notice—for last year, how many were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

**Ms OWEN:** Last year, in 2020, 272. This year so far, up to the end of semester one, 122.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** What about from our culturally and linguistically diverse [CALD] communities?

**Ms OWEN:** Last year, in 2020, 131. This year so far, to the end of semester one, 82.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How much longer have I got? I have got more time. Okay, I will pass back to my colleague.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Secretary, what is the Teacher Success Profile [TSP]?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Certainly. Ms Cachia can provide you with further information in relation to the Teacher Success Profile.

**Ms CACHIA:** Sorry, my documents are playing up. I will defer as well to my colleagues Mr Dizdar and Ms Nixon in terms of, again, what happens within a school. But Teacher Success is part of a performance development framework [PDF] profile process—a performance management process, et cetera—that is run through both our School Leadership Institute but also our Professional and Ethical Standards [PES] directorate. They run a process where teachers and Directors, Educational Leadership [DELs] sit shoulder to shoulder on the management of any sort of classroom-related performance management issues.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So it is not related to identifying candidates for positions? It does not relate to a selection process, the Teacher Success Profile?

**Ms HARRISSON:** In its current iteration, the Teacher Success Profile sets out the skills and capabilities in relation to teaching in our system that we wish to see. The Performance Development Framework supports that in developing and supporting our teachers and continuing to develop those skills.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Does it relate at all to the use of psychometric testing in terms of teacher selection?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I might need to take that one on notice in terms of we have had some significant reforms to the way we recruit teachers. We have had the raise the bar reforms that we have canvassed in this Committee previously. That has sought to ensure that as part of our recruitment of teachers we are selecting the very best candidates for our public schools and that has included increasing the standards of entry to the profession as well, which is something we are very keen to maintain. Because, as I think the Minister commented earlier, we do not want to sacrifice quality in the push for quantity.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Shoebridge?

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Ms Harrisson, ICAC found that between August 2014 and December 2018, Mr Hasan Mamun received corrupt payments totalling a quarter of a million dollars when he was working at TAFE. When did he get a job working in the finance department of the Department of Education?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Mr Shoebridge, thank you for the question. Mr Withey may have the specifics of when he was employed. What I can say on this matter is that we were not aware of any of the ICAC investigations—as we would not be, due to the way ICAC operates—into any individual. As soon as we were made aware of the findings in relation to this individual, the individual was stood down without pay and his position with the department is currently under investigation.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** What was the position he had with the department?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Mr Withey will have the specifics of the role description.

**Mr WITHEY:** Thanks for the question, Mr Shoebridge. Mr Mamun was employed via a contract with the department in September 2019, before that appointment was made permanent in December 2019. He was operating in the role of a finance manager within the finance team.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** So from September 2019 until the release of the ICAC report on 19 October this year he was working in the finance team at the Department of Education. Is that right?

**Mr WITHEY:** I think it was a day or two after 19 October 2021, when the ICAC finding was published, that he was stood down without pay, as the Secretary has mentioned.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** He came in as a contractor in September 2019 and then was put on permanent staff in December 2019. Is that right?

**Mr WITHEY:** That is correct, yes.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** How on earth did you employ somebody who was terminated from TAFE? TAFE had actually referred the corruption allegations to ICAC in May 2017. How on earth did you employ somebody in the finance department at the Department of Education given that?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Mr Shoebridge, if I may. As I have indicated, the individual and this matter is under investigation by our Performance and Ethical Standards directorate. As is appropriate, we stood him down without pay as soon as we were made aware of the issues relating to the ICAC inquiry. You will also be aware that as part of those investigations they are not made public during the investigation itself and so we were not informed and were not aware of the investigation underway at the point he was appointed to the department. He certainly did not declare that to us or we would not have recruited him. So, in this instance, as we have said, we have stood the

individual down without pay as soon as was practical following the publication of the report. Further matters are under ongoing investigation, so I am not sure we can comment much further on them than that in this hearing.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** What I would like to focus on is what went wrong in the recruitment processes, where nobody picked up the phone and asked TAFE, "Can you please tell me about this gentleman? Tell me the circumstances in which he left TAFE." Because TAFE would have told you. They may not have told you that they referred it to ICAC, but TAFE would have told you, "We have very real concerns a quarter of a million dollars of corrupt payments were made." This man was not just a bit player in it. This was the man who had organised it and orchestrated it. Did nobody call TAFE?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Mr Shoebridge, as would be normal in recruitment processes, an individual will provide us with referees. Those referees will have been checked. If any of that information had been brought to light in the recruitment process, I can assure you we would not have appointed him to the role. However, as soon as we were made aware, we have taken every appropriate action.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Did you call TAFE? Did anybody do the most basic due diligence and call the former employer, who this man had been working with for years, and ask about him?

**The CHAIR:** That is directed to Mr Withey?

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Mr Withey may know.

**Mr WITHEY:** I think they are very reasonable questions. They are part of the ongoing investigation that we are now undertaking. It is very difficult for us to say more while that investigation [disorder]—

**The CHAIR:** Mr Withey, it is not difficult. It is a direct question. I think it is legitimate for Mr Shoebridge to get an answer. Did anyone call TAFE?

**Mr WITHEY:** I do not have that answer at the moment. That is subject to the ongoing investigation that we are now undertaking.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Ms Harrison, surely you would want to know this, would you not? If you have got a recruitment process that lets somebody who had been, for four years, obtaining corrupt payments in their former employment—their immediate predecessor employment—with another public agency, if you do not even get the slightest concern raised in your recruitment process, you got a problem, have you not?

**Ms HARRISSON:** The first thing I would say in response to that, Mr Shoebridge, is it would be expected, and is required in our recruitment processes, that an individual would declare such issues to us as part of it. We would also follow our own internal processes in relation to our recruitment, which requires an individual to provide us with referees. We will have followed up on those referee checks. It is not currently within our process—we hope the investigation will lead to us reviewing those processes—that we would go outside those referee checks and seek individual opinion on an individual as a result of that.

I think the individual will have been required to declare to us, as in part of their employment, whether there were any reasons they should not be considered for employment by us. That obviously did not occur. Their referees did not raise any concerns with us. As Mr Withey has said, subject to the investigations that are ongoing in the department, as soon as we were made aware, we have taken every appropriate action to us, including standing him down without pay while that investigation is underway.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Are you telling me that your recruitment processes at the moment, including putting somebody in charge of finances, does not involve checking with the former employer unless the person seeking the job nominates their former employer? That is the current process. Is that really what you are telling me, Ms Harrison?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am very happy to provide you with details of our recruitment processes and those that are consistent across the sector in relation to fair and due process as part of those in the recruitment process. The custom and practice is that individuals nominate their referees and we check those referees and that the individual also has a responsibility to declare issues to us. Clearly, that has not occurred in this case. As I have indicated, I cannot really add to these answers at this point, while that investigation continues internally.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** So your expectation is that somebody who had filched a quarter of a million dollars in corrupt payments and was the subject of an investigation by ICAC, your integrity measures are that they should tell you. That is the checks and balances you have at the moment—that they should proactively tell you. "I just want to let you know I took a quarter of a million dollars in sly, backhand payments, and I'm currently before ICAC, but I'd still like the job." That is your integrity checks.

**Ms HARRISSON:** I guess the first part—I will return to the start of my first answer here. There are certain provisions in place around any ICAC investigation. That means that we would not be aware and the individual would be assumed innocent and proven otherwise as part of that process. We were not aware of the ICAC investigation at the point that he applied for a role with us. We were not made aware of it during the recruitment process. As I have indicated, I am happy to provide you with details of those recruitment processes and probity checks on notice. But, until such time that there was either a criminal investigation with something that needed to be declared, we were unaware and would not currently be able to be made aware of that ICAC investigation in order to take appropriate action.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** One way of finding out this would have been to have picked up the phone and asked somebody in TAFE, because TAFE referred this gentleman and the corrupt conduct to ICAC in May of 2017—2½ years before you employed him without even doing basic due diligence. Did you accept that that might actually have been a sensible thing to do here?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I accept that as part of our current process we would like to look at that and understand the outcomes of this investigation before we give further comment on what did or did not occur in this case.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Are you going to do an audit of files and activities in relation to this employee, given the concerns or given the serious corruption findings against him from ICAC and given that he was employed in your finance department?

**Ms HARRISSON:** That is exactly the investigation that is underway now, Mr Shoebridge.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Will you provide us with what the expected time frames are for that investigation?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I will provide you with any further details I am able to on notice, yes.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Ms Harrisson, all schools should have a teacher librarian. Do you accept that?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I accept that, yes. Under our entitlement model for staffing in schools, teacher librarians form a part of that.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Through questions on notice in another process, the department advised us that 926 of the 2,200 New South Wales public schools have a permanent qualified teacher librarian to fill their entitlement. Do you have any update on that number?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Happy to take that on notice. I would bring to the Committee's attention that a number of our schools are very small schools. We have between 400 and 450 small schools who probably would not have an entitlement to a teacher librarian. So the denominator in that instance is not 2,200. That figure—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** It is probably about 1,800.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Yes. Also, then there would be some environment education centres and others included in that figure. I am very happy to come back on notice with the number of teacher librarian positions in relation to appropriate schools.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** It would appear, using that basic maths, only about half of the schools that are entitled to a permanent qualified teacher librarian actually have one. How is that the case? Is this part of the 4 per cent vacancy numbers or is this additional to the 4 per cent vacancy numbers that we have?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I might ask Mr Dizdar to talk about how these positions may be managed locally in a way that means they are deployed, potentially, slightly differently from the teacher librarian entitlement. We obviously, as part of the entitlement, enable our schools to have a teacher librarian. For some of them it would be full-time, depending on size. For some of them it may not be a full-time position. Mr Dizdar can provide some further information on how that is managed locally.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Will you first of all answer my question. Are the let's say 800 or so non-filled teacher librarian positions part of the 3,300-odd vacant positions that equates to just under 4 per cent of the teaching staff or is that in addition to the 4 per cent vacancy?

**Ms HARRISSON:** As I indicated, I would like to take the specifics of that on notice. I do not have the details of the entitlement in front of me. If the 970 are full-time equivalents, then it could be that they are multiple part-time posts across schools. So I just want to make sure that we are clear on the denominator and numerator at play in that. We will get the answers back to you on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Secretary, have you approved the 30 investigators being hired to check teacher COVID vaccination noncompliance over the coming holiday period?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I think the approval for that would fit within Ms Cachia's delegation.

**The CHAIR:** Not yours.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Obviously, in running each of the areas of a business in the scale of which we have, each deputy secretary has appropriate delegations to fulfil that role. Employing additional surge capacity to deliver the investigations that are required would sit within Ms Cachia's delegation.

**The CHAIR:** Did you hear about this for the first time today?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am aware from conversations that we were looking at providing additional capacity into the performance and ethical standards directorate to support this process. I was not aware that it was Hays until earlier today. But as I think Ms Cachia indicated, we have gone via Contractor Central, which is a whole-of-government solution to provide surge capacity temporary staff into the government sector.

**The CHAIR:** As secretary, do you take this as a vote of no confidence in the honesty of the teaching profession that their vaccination compliance is having to be checked over the holiday period with desktop searches of the certificates that they have lodged?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Firstly, Chair, I would indicate that these investigations are going to be to support the process from 8 November for those that have not attested to whether or not they are vaccinated or not and may be required to look into some of the medical contraindications that staff have provided in relation to that, because there is a very tight definition from the Federal Government around appropriate medical contraindications that can be used. What I do want to make sure for our staff is, if they are unable to be vaccinated or have chosen not to be vaccinated—if they are in the numbers on 8 November who have not attested to being double vaccinated at that time—that they are provided with fair and due process in a timely fashion that ensures that we can either secure their vaccination status or take appropriate action as a result if they have not followed the legal requirement under the public health order.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Cachia, you indicated earlier on before lunch that there was also going to be checking of the validity of the vaccination certificates. Is that right?

**Ms CACHIA:** That is correct.

**The CHAIR:** So that is part of the role. How do they do that from home on a computer?

**Ms CACHIA:** The same way we have all been working at home, Chair, for quite some time. There will be certain things to be followed up from an administrative perspective that can easily be done using a computer. I do not know whether they will all be working from home. I will have to take the exact arrangements of where they will be working and how they will be working on notice, but clearly they are providing at that lower level that administrative support for PES so that those officers, as we have said, can conduct those investigations in a timely way.

**The CHAIR:** The job advertisement says that it is full-time working from home due to existing limitations in the office but how do these new investigators, the 30 positions—is there some software program they get to see whether a vaccination certificate is valid?

**Ms CACHIA:** My understanding—again, these are specific questions obviously drilling down—is that they will not be looking at people's certificates per se. They will be following up from an administrative purpose the direction letters that people get and compliance issues. Obviously, you can imagine, we are fielding a range of emails from people who are asking for extra time or they have particular circumstances that impact them that they want consideration for. It is as individual as our fingerprints, I guess, is what we are trying to say in terms of the nuances around it. In order to do what the secretary has indicated there about giving people due process, we need to have the correct surge capacity in order to be able to do that work.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Chair, if I could just clarify, for the vast majority of our staff who have attested that they are double vaccinated and have shown their principal the evidence that they are double vaccinated in terms of a valid certificate, they will not be being investigated. Where that has been sighted by their line manager that there is a certificate and that is accepted in the system as being confirmed, those will not be investigated. This is about how we follow up on those staff who have not provided evidence or attested to being vaccinated, or where a principal has not been able to confirm the attestation by a staff member.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Harrisson, you are saying that, but twice Ms Cachia has said that they will be looking at the validity of the vaccination certificates.

**Ms CACHIA:** If I did say that, Chair, I apologise. I am not sure that that is what I said. They will not be checking the validity of the certificate. They will be checking all of the things that are required when there is noncompliance by 8 November.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, and what expertise will they have to check on medical contraindications?

**Ms CACHIA:** The medical contraindications are being handled and managed by our health and safety directorate.

**The CHAIR:** So that is where the 30 investigators will be located?

**Ms CACHIA:** The 30 investigators—if it ends up being 30, Chair, because, as I said, these numbers are moving. This morning we talked about compliance of teachers and noncompliance. It has come down 800 in terms of 800 teachers have attested overnight as opposed to yesterday. So within 24 hours 800 teachers have gotten on and attested their vaccination. So these numbers are moving all the time and no doubt the surge capacity we will require will change as well. So I appreciate that that is what the advertisement said but it may or may not be the case on the day. We will be happy to take those details on notice. As I said, the issues of medical contraindication are handled by our health and safety directorate. These people are administrative staff that will help to support the investigation officers that we have in PES to follow that process that we have articulated.

**The CHAIR:** Just on staffing matters elsewhere, Ms Harrison, last time we gathered I had a supplementary question pointing out the employment data in the department's 2020 annual report—the period June 2017 to June 2020—where the staffing of State and regional offices had increased by 51 per cent compared to 5.5 per cent for teacher numbers, and the explanation that was given was that corporate services staff were required to support continuing growth in student enrolments, growth in the number of school-based staff. Isn't it the frontline role of teachers to support the continuing growth in student enrolments, and wouldn't it be a good discipline inside the department, to avoid becoming top heavy, that any increase in the State and regional office staffing is pegged to the level of increase for the number of teachers that are going out there to teach the enrolment growth that we have got in New South Wales?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Thank you for the question, Chair. Yes, I think during that time in particular it was indicated in that answer that School Infrastructure NSW was established to deliver the levels of investment in both upgrades and new builds and maintenance across the State and so it is in some respects skewed by that growth in that area of the department, which was necessary to ensure the delivery of the infrastructure program we have at hand. I hear your commentary, Chair, that we should absolutely keep an eye on the size of the organisation at a central level relative to its support to schools. I would also just note for the Committee that one of the things that our workforce and their representatives have raised with us is the need for greater support from the organisation and from the department and, in particular, for professional development, support around curriculum delivery and for wellbeing and that those areas are also counted in that headcount. So those regional offices include people who provide direct support to students and staff in schools in relation to student wellbeing. The behaviour specialists would be included in that total. So they are corporate by the headcount; the nature of their work is very much in direct support of the front line.

**The CHAIR:** But it is quite an imbalance, is it not, over a three-year period—51 per cent increase in State and regional office staffing, 5½ per cent teacher numbers?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am very happy to provide the specific details on notice. My understanding, Chair, is the vast majority of that increase is in relation to School Infrastructure to support the capital expenditure.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, I look forward to that on notice, thank you. As secretary, Ms Harrison, are you happy with the operation of section 83C of the Education Act—the provision that no non-government school should be operating for profit?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Yes, that was the legislation. We provide the regulation of that.

**The CHAIR:** In the past three or four years, for example, how many schools have been totally defunded because they fell foul of section 83C?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I will need to take the specifics of that on notice, Chair. I do not have that information here with me today but very happy to provide it on further notice.

**The CHAIR:** And could you also take: How many have been partly defunded—they have had a funding reduction because of a problem? How many schools have actually been identified as a problem in section 83C? Are you familiar at all with the process that the Pacific Hills group of schools has had to go through with regard to section 83C?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am aware there has been a process underway. I do not have the specifics with me here today.

**The CHAIR:** Are you aware that O'Connor Marsden was appointed as the auditing team and the head of that team, Deborah Goodyer, said to the school that she had no prior knowledge of the education industry.

**Ms HARRISSON:** As I indicated, Chair, I am aware there has been work in that but I do not have the specifics with me. I am very happy to come back to you on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Why O'Connor Marsden?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Again, I am very happy to come back to you on notice with the specifics of that. I am aware of that firm and of the work that they do in relation to a wide range of assurance activities but very happy to come back with the specifics in relation to that case.

**The CHAIR:** They seem to do a lot of work out of their Parramatta office for this Government. I have seen them in the Equestrian NSW grant controversy and unsolicited proposal for the Celestino mob at the Sydney Science Park.

**Ms HARRISSON:** I cannot make comment on the other parts of government but I am very happy to come back to you on those specifics.

**The CHAIR:** I will come back to that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Ms Owen, can I just come back to you on this question of suspensions. Can you give me the figure for 2019 for the kindy kids?

**Ms OWEN:** Just to clarify, the question was the number of children in kindergarten who were suspended in 2019. Was that your question?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** That is right.

**Ms OWEN:** The answer to that question is 1,143.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Just to be clear, we are talking about children here, not suspensions.

**Ms OWEN:** No.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I would say it is suspensions.

**Ms OWEN:** It is the number of suspensions.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Are you able to provide me with the figures for 2021, 2020 and 2019 for the actual number of students who were suspended? I will talk about children first, because we are talking about kindy kids.

**Ms OWEN:** Sure. I would have to provide that on notice; the numbers I have in front of me are the numbers of actual suspensions.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Ms Harrison, has there been any mapping done? This is a really significant increase. In 2014 there was 398 suspensions of kindy kids. It has more than doubled. Have you done any mapping about why?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Firstly, can I say this is partly why we have had the behaviour strategy and continue to implement that strategy and try and secure the changes to the behaviour policy that we have been consulting with our stakeholders on. This sits very uncomfortably with the department, and we are hard at work to try and address this issue. I know that the Committee have raised it as an area of concern. I know that the Minister has shared in that concern. Kindy children being suspended is not something we want to see through our system, and so we need to get under the hood of why that is occurring in our classrooms and ensure that we are providing the support our teachers need to maintain those students in their class. We have that work underway. That is the work that some of the behaviour specialists are doing; it is the work that the more than 2,000 staff that are in support of them are working to do. But we are needing to make a change in our system in relation to the way we view suspension. That is a change that we are leading from the department and that we will continue to drive towards.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes, the Government's policy was pretty widely criticised. The principals, the Teachers Federation and the P&C, from the top of my head, all came out against it.

**Ms HARRISSON:** I would say a couple of things in response to that. I think change is difficult, and we are asking to make a specific and difficult change. Some of our teachers have used suspension, and we are asking

them to look at it in a different way. That is a change we need to manage and implement well through the system. I believe a number of those concerns were raised and led by the Teachers Federation, and I would just acknowledge that has been part of an ongoing piece of work with us and with the Teachers Federation to try and land on an agreed position here. But, when it comes to it, we want to put the interests of our students first. I think the Minister has been very clear in relation to this policy that our focus is on the needs of our students first, and that is what we are trying to protect for here.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** So it still stands that you are going to reduce the maximum amount of time. Is that right?

**Ms HARRISSON:** We are still in the final stages of confirming the policy. We have been out for consultation and working with stakeholders on those issues, and once those are confirmed and the policy is published, then we will be able to confirm what the final status is.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** In terms of the increase last year, I accept it was perhaps slightly down on the year before but it is still a very dramatic increase since 2014. Was that in relation to the learning-at-home period? Did that disruption create any more exclusions from school?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am very happy to take that on notice. As we indicated in this morning's evidence, we would not expect suspensions to necessarily be linear through the year. With a break in learning in a classroom, establishing the routines and expectations in the classroom would have to re-occur on the re-entry into school following a learning-at-home period. It is a reasonable assumption to make, but I do not have evidence to support that here with me. I would like to take that away and see if we can provide that on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes, fair enough. I will come back to Gregory Hills for a moment, because I do have a little bit more time. This is perhaps for you, Mr Manning. The Gregory Hills project was not fast-tracked as one of the COVID recovery projects. Why was that?

**Mr MANNING:** I cannot confirm why. I would have to take that on notice and look back at the information in terms of the projects that were part of that process. From memory, we were prioritising projects that were already cleared to go by Planning so that we could respond. I would need to go and have a look at that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** If you could provide us with any additional information about what the criteria were for fast-tracking those projects, that would be helpful.

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** At Gregory Hills, they already have the site. The south-western Sydney selective school does not have the site, but there is a significant difference in progress.

**Mr MANNING:** There would have been analysis done at the time as to that, but I could not tell you what it was off the top of my head.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sure. This question is probably for you, Mr Manning, about school sizes. What is the standard size of a new school? Do you have a standard size for a new school?

**Mr MANNING:** No, we do not. We have a whole series of standard sizes depending on the enrolments that are projected at any point in time. There is a range of different sizes that we work to.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** You do not have a standard capacity size when you are designing?

**Mr MANNING:** There is a conceptual core structure that lends itself to that. There are six or seven different versions, but that does not necessarily mean that we deliver strictly to a core 19 or a core 21 or any of those. We actually begin to look at what we think are the requirements going forward and then what we deliver as part of that process, so they can be flexible.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How do you assess what are the requirements going forward?

**Mr MANNING:** The service planning team will look at enrolment growth over a period of time. They will look to 2031 and then 2036. We begin to get a sense of where we think that enrolment is going, what are the other schools around that and where are there enrolments at. We begin to get a sense of what we think the future of that school looks like to decide on the scale of the initial intervention that we might need to make.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Where do you get that figure from, the 2031 and the 2036 information? Do you gather that from schools?

**Mr MANNING:** We work closely with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment [DPIE] around that population projection, and then we begin to look at enrolment growth around schools. There is a whole range of other data that we begin to look at, as well, as part of that process.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Perhaps on notice you could provide us with a bit more information about where you collect that data from.

**Mr MANNING:** Sure.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Is there a standard school size? I asked you in terms of the capacity—the actual enrolment. Is there a standard school site size?

**Mr MANNING:** We try to look at, again, what is the largest capacity we think we are going to deliver in order to give us a sense of what is the size of the site that we have available to us. But, again, it depends on the profile in the area. There are some areas which are greenfield, and a single- or two-storey school makes sense. There are other areas which are more urban, and a three- or four-level school is likely to be the right outcome. The size of the site depends on how we think that configuration will work.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** For a greenfield site, do you have a standard size and enrolment capacity?

**Mr MANNING:** If we were to decide that we needed a 1,000-place school, which is often the largest primary schools we like to build, we would have a standard around the size of the site that we would want as part of that process.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** What size would that be?

**Mr MANNING:** I would have to take on notice exactly the size of the site. It depends on the nature of the area that it is in as to whether we would necessarily need a site of that size, or we might build multi-levels and actually would not need a site as big, if that makes sense.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** What are the similar requirements for a high school?

**Mr MANNING:** A high school would be the same. We would look to build—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sorry, the enrolment? It is only 1,000?

**Mr MANNING:** It would be up to 2,000 for a high school, and we would scale it up from anywhere up to that point.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Is that the same for rural or regional areas?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** When was the decision made to put those targets for the larger schools at 1,000 students and 2,000 students?

**Mr MANNING:** I would have to have a look, but I think they were in existence when I started at School Infrastructure.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** If you can tell me what were the previous levels and when those levels changed, that would be helpful.

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** We will adjourn until 3.10 p.m.

**(Short adjournment)**

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Mr Manning, what is involved in the planning stage for a school build? What are the elements of the planning stage?

**Mr MANNING:** Essentially assessment of the need, identification of the options as to how that need can be delivered, and on the basis that we find—we then work through a number of options. We begin to formulate details around that option so that we can confidently put a budget around it and get a sense of its deliverability. In some instances we need to identify land. In other instances we need to look at the network that the school is sitting in and get a sense of whether there is capacity in a whole range of other schools around it, and then understanding how we might fit and how it could be delivered.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** It sounds very uncertain. How does that work when the Government has made an announcement about a school? How does that work if you are still considering whether there is actually a need for the thing that has already been announced?

**Mr MANNING:** We tend to do planning in two parts. The first part is the assessment of the need. Often it only becomes a planning project because we have established that we think we have population growth and we

think we have a need to deal with it, so the service planning team will develop that up. The infrastructure planning team will then work their way through wrapping an infrastructure solution around it, assuming that an infrastructure solution is what needs to happen. We tend to produce strategic business cases, which is where we kind of go through the consideration of infrastructure or not infrastructure. Then it rolls into a detailed business case, where it is an infrastructure option that needs to be delivered around that process.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** What do you do if the Government has announced that the need is not demonstrated?

**Mr MANNING:** I am struggling to think of a time when that has been the case.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** That has not been the case? What is the best case in how fast the planning process can be completed? What is the best you have done? How fast have you done the planning stage?

**Mr MANNING:** We would need to take that on notice.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Ballpark?

**Mr MANNING:** It can be up to a year, the planning process, but I think we could probably find examples where some background work has already been done and it is a greenfield option that does not leave us much in the way of consideration. Therefore it is a pretty quick process, so sort of five or six months to get through to a business case.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** If you have got a site that is relatively clear and there are not that many complications, you can build?

**Mr MANNING:** And we are working really hard to speed that process up. We have begun to standardise our master planning and a whole range of other bits and pieces. In some instances, particularly with volumetric modular schools—take Jordan Springs, for example. Effectively we can repeat that school in other locations, so that makes that a lot faster.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** That all said, what is happening with the Rydalmere Education Campus? It was announced in October 2018. It is still in the planning stage. You own the land. Why is that process so slow?

**Mr MANNING:** We have been looking at options around the land. If you are talking about Rydalmere, the initial option is to look at developing where the old school used to be, but there are some really significant traffic issues that go with that, and there are some significant costs that would need to be wrapped into that process. We have been looking at alternative site options as to how that might work, including land that is owned by other parties—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Adjacent to the site?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes. Just to get a sense of effectively, is it worth moving across the road from a traffic perspective? Does that solve a lot of those issues? I think also, although there was a school, there is a riparian corridor through the middle of that site as well, which means it is not the easiest site to develop. We have also been working with the Department of Communities and Justice [DCJ], who own the rest of that site as a conjoined block, as to how we might approach it on a collective basis.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** They all seem reasonable. Still, four years seems a long time for you to actually make a decision about whether it is going to proceed.

**Mr MANNING:** I think we are very comfortable that the school is needed and warranted. It is just actually making sure that we get best value for the taxpayer and how that goes. Also, if we are not careful and we do trigger a fairly extensive traffic impact issue, that could also take a lot of time to work its way through because it is quite a complicated traffic network around there as well.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** There was a school there.

**Mr MANNING:** Yes, I know.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Obviously that issue has been grappled by the agency before.

**Mr MANNING:** I have had similar conversations, but a new application requires us to look at the latest standard and models and the traffic modelling around it would be quite problematic for us.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** You sound like you are pretty on top of the brief on this one. When is the school actually going to be built then?

**Mr MANNING:** Once we have finalised where it is going to be and how it is going to work, which we are making some good progress on despite the time frame it has taken us to get to this point, we will be able to announce when it will open and how that will work.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** When will that be?

**Mr MANNING:** I am hoping it will be quite soon.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** This year?

**Mr MANNING:** For that announcement?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Yes.

**Mr MANNING:** If it is not this year, it will be very early next year.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Do you expect that the school will be built within what kind of time—once you have completed the planning stage, you have still got three other stages to go.

**Mr MANNING:** Yes. We then have to roll through this—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is that another three or four years that we are talking about?

**Mr MANNING:** Hopefully not. We were offered the statutory planning process and, again, the less traffic impacts we have, the smoother that process is for us and the quicker we can get onto the construction phase. I would hope—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** What is the latest, do you think, it would take to get the school built then?

**Mr MANNING:** I would conservatively allow 18 months for the build phase. It is just the statutory planning phase to get us through to that point. Planning have got faster and faster in those spaces. They can take anywhere from six months to 12 months, depending on the complexity. It will be the traffic and transport issues around that area that are key.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Are we talking about another three years, beyond 2022, for completion of the planning?

**Mr MANNING:** That would be a very conservative estimate. I would hope that we could improve substantially on that as part of working it through.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can I ask about Medowie? There has been a long push for a high school at Medowie. There is a site that the department has. Has there been any active consideration about building a high school in Medowie?

**Mr MANNING:** I would have to take that on notice. It is not a name that jumps to mind.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** It is in the Port Stephens electorate. Currently there are thousands of students travelling from Medowie to Roman Terrace, I am told.

**Mr MANNING:** I would have to take that on notice, but I know that we are working on Hunter River and Irrawang high schools and it may well be that—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** As alternatives? So what happens to the site at Medowie? You just sit on it?

**Mr MANNING:** We would continue to own it, absolutely.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can I ask about the Newcastle Education Precinct? What is happening with that site?

**Mr MANNING:** That is still progressing. We are into the next phase of that planning.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Has the business case been approved?

**Mr MANNING:** The business case is in and we are working with Treasury on the business case.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Will the Newcastle Education Precinct include a new primary school?

**Mr MANNING:** I think we have previously committed that we would certainly be master planning for the new primary school.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So a decision has not been made about that?

**Mr MANNING:** At this stage it is master planning for the primary school, so we make sure it fits. As the demographics indicate—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Sorry, I want to understand exactly what that means. When you say you are "master planning" for the school, it means you still have not made a final decision about whether you will have a primary school on the site? There is still some wriggle room there for you?

**Mr MANNING:** No. Again, I think from a demographic perspective we are confident that there will be a need for a primary school, but we do not think we need that primary school immediately. So as part of the redevelopment of the high school, we make sure that we will quarantine and produce a design for a primary school, so—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So it will be a staged process?

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** Just let him finish.

**Mr MANNING:** As and when that need crystallises from a demographic perspective, we can progress quite quickly with a primary school delivery.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I see. Does the business case include a multistaged process for this Newcastle Education Precinct?

**Mr MANNING:** Most of our projects are multistaged. This will be the next stage of that process. As part of developing the project, we will have a series of master plans that talk about how both the high school and the primary school will continue to develop over time.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I understand that \$5.4 million is committed to the project in this year's budget. How much of that has been spent?

**Mr MANNING:** I would have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Are you able to provide details on what works have been completed in relation to that?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Are we at that stage yet where you have some idea of when a contract will be let for the works?

**Mr MANNING:** Is that not in the delivery strategy document?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I am not aware. I do not have that information.

**Mr MANNING:** There is a publicly released delivery strategy document which identifies all of the 44—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I do not believe so, but—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I have got it.

**Mr MANNING:** For Newcastle Education Campus, it says a contractor will be appointed "Mid 2022."

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Right. Okay.

**The CHAIR:** I will take a round of questioning—Mr Shoebridge must be over at Transport. Just coming back, Ms Harrison, to the 83C provisions. Would you be able to review what happened to the Pacific Group of Schools on this? Because, in letters to the Minister and elsewhere, including Dr Geoff Newcombe, they have said that they had \$450,000 worth of costs in this audit by O'Connor Marsden and provided 6,500 pages of material over an 18-month period, and there seems to be no adverse finding against them. This is quite an extraordinary compliance cost for a school under this arrangement, is it not?

**Ms HARRISSON:** As I indicated earlier, Chair, I am very happy to take those matters on notice and come back with further information on that specific example.

**The CHAIR:** Would you acknowledge that a Christian school employing pastors is not a for-profit activity?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am not aware of the specifics of the case or the nature of any employment of any individual, so I would like to go and make sure I have the full facts before I provide a view on—

**The CHAIR:** Well, 83C, quite sensibly, says that no non-government school should be using government funds, or I suppose other funds, to make a profit. I think we all agree with the intent of 83C. But in the policing of it, there has been an attempt by O'Connor Marsden, I am told, to define the overseas mission of the school. Some teachers take the students on a humanitarian mission to the Pacific Islands as part of their Christian faith—a legitimate part of educational activities for many, many schools in New South Wales—and that was examined for for-profit possibilities. Also, it is a group of seven schools which, quite logically, like any group of schools, has collective professional development for teachers and that was taken as a profit centre to help other schools. So as you take these things on notice, can what seems like a regular activity for a Christian group of schools—collective professional development, overseas humanitarian missions and education, and payment of pastors—in the future no longer be included in these audits that seem incredibly onerous on a school just wanting to educate?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Chair, I am very happy to take the specifics of that on notice and I note the concerns you have raised around the employment arrangements for people you would expect to be employed in a school of that type. We will certainly look into that further for you also.

**The CHAIR:** I appreciate that. Can I ask, just from first principles, why the Department of Education undertakes this function rather than NESAs, given that NESAs do all the other accreditation and supervisory work with non-government schools?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Certainly. This has been a joint and established process with the other sectors and with representatives from the other sectors involved. In terms of how this was established, I would need to go back and take a look at why it was set up this way. It has been set up that way for an extended period of time. Mr Martin may have further information on that distinction.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Martin, please?

**Mr MARTIN:** The historical process of setting up the not-for-profit committee under Minister Piccoli, I understand, had the secretariat situated within the department and has a NESAs representative on the committee. I am currently the NESAs representative on that committee.

**The CHAIR:** Is NESAs aware of any non-government schools that are operating as profit centres?

**Mr MARTIN:** NESAs does not look after the for-profit legislation. That is looked after by that committee under the direction of the department. We look after, of course, the regulation of non-government schools, which does not go to the specifics of the for-profit legislation.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Chair, I am advised Ms Alonso Love online is able to give some detail on things we are doing to manage the issues you have raised, if that would be helpful?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, it would, thank you.

**Ms ALONSO LOVE:** [Inaudible]

**Ms HARRISSON:** Ms Alonso Love, we cannot hear you. I am not sure if you have come off mute.

**Ms ALONSO LOVE:** [Inaudible]

**Ms HARRISSON:** Okay, so they can hear her online but we cannot hear her in the room, unfortunately, Chair. So we are very happy to take that on notice. We seem to be having some challenges with the system today.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, we spent all our money on bollards, so our internet in this building is not fantastic. I appreciate you taking it on notice and if I can get as much information on that as possible, please. When we were gathered here for tertiary education, Ms Harrison, you said you were coming back with some information about Connected Communities? I raised that issue about Airs High School.

**Ms HARRISSON:** You did, and Mr Dizdar is with us and can provide specific details. Can I first say that being a Connected Communities school does not make you an Aboriginal school, which I think was one of the comments and questions you asked. It does affect your staffing. It certainly engages the Aboriginal community around that school in a specific way and Airs High School does have one of the highest proportions of Aboriginal students in the metro area, which is why it met the criteria under that program. Certainly, as I remember back to the questions you asked, Chair, it does not preclude a school from participating in any other programs. For example, we have had Connected Communities schools that have also been Early Action for Success [EAFS] schools and in the Airs example the Education Pilot Pathways Program [EPPP] program does run there. But Mr Dizdar can—

**The CHAIR:** No, I appreciate that. But just to clarify, it does mandate an Indigenous principal, does it not?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Not an Indigenous principal, no, an executive principal. So what it enables us to do is to provide for an exceptional leader to go into those schools. They are not required to be Aboriginal in order to lead the school. Mr Dizdar can provide some further information.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Dizdar?

**Mr DIZDAR:** Thanks, Secretary. Thank you, Chair, for the line of questioning. I can tell the Committee that all Connected Communities sites are chosen on a range of educational and socio-determinant data. We look at the level of education and disadvantage in the area. We look at the home stress in terms of income, environmental health, early-life continuity indicators, social inclusion data, transport, health, work and employment. It is the combination of education and socio-economic data that identified Airds as a site that would benefit from stronger interagency collaboration and service provision.

I will just let the Committee know—they would be aware—that the Connected Communities Strategy is designed to bring greater intergovernment cooperation for depressed and disadvantaged areas of the State, so we can improve the education outcomes for all students, as well as our Aboriginal students that are large in number and a large percentage of students in these sites. The secretary is spot on. The Education Pilot Pathways Program, in speaking with Stephen McGuire, the principal there, is a very successful program that is producing great outcomes in terms of transition paths for our young people. That pilot is extending across the State. I am pleased to report to the Committee that that program will continue at Airds High School. I can tell you that we are in the middle of the recruitment process for the new executive principal position at that school.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, I saw that. Who is in charge of the school then—the executive principal or the old principal?

**Mr DIZDAR:** Currently, it is the substantive principal, Stephen McGuire. Chair, the Connected Communities sites have the highest level of classification of principalship in New South Wales public education. It is called the executive principal. We go to merit selection with a merit selection panel, because it is a different role compared to the principalship of a mainstream site. We are in the middle of that process and we will be able to communicate to the school community on the outcome of that soon.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, but when the executive principal is appointed who then is in charge of the school? Who is the senior principal?

**Mr DIZDAR:** Good question, Chair. The executive principal is responsible for the line management of the school, reporting to a director of education.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, so he comes in over the top. You mentioned a high proportion of Indigenous students. We noted the other day at Airds it is 23 per cent. At Narooma High School it is 14 per cent—one in seven students is Indigenous. How does it qualify as a Connected Communities school?

**Mr DIZDAR:** Good question, Chair. We have 75 Aboriginal students at Narooma High School—you are spot-on—14 per cent of the student population being of Aboriginal background, of a population of 495 students. I just reaffirm what the Secretary said. This is not an Aboriginal strategy. It is not to turn the school into an Aboriginal school. It is to ensure that there is greater intergovernmental connection, to ensure there are stronger pathways for these students. We know that we have got to lift our game and improve the outcomes for Aboriginal students in these contexts but also for all students. The strategy really drives to try to get better, not only educational support but socio-determinant support for our young people and their families. We are talking about some of the most challenging and depressed parts of the State, where unemployment rates, health, wellbeing outcomes, transport, incarceration rates are really, really poor. It is a whole-of-government response to improve those so that we are giving these young people the best opportunities to have a rich and fulfilling education passport.

**The CHAIR:** The Labor Opposition.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Sorry. I thought that there was crossbench time.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, but you have missed your turn. You were not here. But if the Labor Opposition want to—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** But there is 20 minutes for crossbench time. I am sorry, Chair. You do not get to allocate away 10 minutes of crossbench time. There is 20 minutes of crossbench time. We are in the second half of it.

**The CHAIR:** We rotate around. You missed your turn.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** The resolution of the Committee is it be divided equally between crossbench and Opposition. You as Chair cannot unilaterally redetermine that, unless you want a resolution of the whole Committee.

**The CHAIR:** I am not unilaterally doing anything. I am just saying that, if someone is not here, they miss their turn. But Labor seems to be saying—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Sorry, Chair. You are not able to unilaterally change a resolution of the Committee. It goes in 20-minute cycles. You cannot unilaterally as Chair do that.

**The CHAIR:** How did you go at Transport? Good?

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I beg your pardon.

**The CHAIR:** How did you go at Transport?

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** What are you talking about?

**The CHAIR:** You been over at the Transport committee.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Have you been watching the Transport committee?

**The CHAIR:** No, I have not, but I am assuming that is where you have been. If you wanted to get your turn, you had to be here.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** You know what they say. If you assume, you make an arse out of you and me. You are currently making an arse out of yourself.

**The CHAIR:** If you are absent from the Committee, it is hard to give you the call. But Labor seems to be thinking you should have the call now. So away you go.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I think it is the resolution of the Committee. So I am glad we are sticking to the rules.

**The CHAIR:** The resolution of the Chair is that you should turn up for your call.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** You do not get to make unilateral resolutions to that effect.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** David, just start your questions.

**The CHAIR:** We have been through this so many times. People turn up. You know?

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Yes. Ms Harrison—

**The CHAIR:** You will need to turn up in the Senate.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Have you quite finished?

**The CHAIR:** I have now. They will sort you out.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Sorry. You have? You have not?

**The CHAIR:** They will be nastier than me, I tell you. Wait till you get there. You will find tougher rules there.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** You are behaving disgracefully as Chair. There you go.

**The CHAIR:** You will look back and think I am a nice person.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I doubt that.

**The CHAIR:** We will see how you go.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Ms Harrison, ignore the Chair for the moment. I was asking you questions about the engagement of the gentleman who has been found to have been seriously corrupt at ICAC. He was first engaged as a contractor. Were there different checks, lesser checks, for the engagement of a contractor, in terms of background checks, than there are for an employee? Is that how it happened?

**Ms HARRISSON:** As I indicated in my previous answer, those matters are under investigation. One thing I did want to just make sure I was clear on, Mr Shoebridge, is—I think you mentioned in your previous question that he had been terminated by TAFE. He actually resigned, which would also be a reason why we would not have had a notification from TAFE of that issue. But Ms Cachia can provide you some details of the checks that are in place around our contractors. They would also include reference checks, as I indicated earlier.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Are you now saying you checked with TAFE and they found that he had resigned? Or you still have not checked with TAFE.

**Ms HARRISSON:** As I have indicated, given he resigned, we would have had no reason to assume we needed to check with TAFE in that case. It would not be part of normal process to contact a former employer as part of a recruitment process, because it is up to an individual to declare which information they would have alerted an employer to.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** We are back to that problem. Are there lesser checks for a contractor than there are for employees? I think it would be hard to be lesser, but are there lesser checks for a contractor than there are with employees?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Just to be clear—there are a number of checks that we have in place across the organisation. They include police checks, which would not raise anything in this instance—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Are there lesser checks for a contractor than for an employee?

**Ms CACHIA:** Mr Shoebridge, the checks are the same for contractors or employees.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Again, on the engagement as a contractor—nobody thought to ask TAFE. Is that right?

**Ms HARRISSON:** To be clear, our process, as I have already indicated and is as quite standard practice, is to check references, to do a police check, to require a Working With Children check. We have a set of mitigations in place. I accept they did not catch this individual, who, at the time of employment, was under an investigation—innocent until proven guilty—we were not made aware of and were unable to be made aware of. As soon as we were made aware and were able to take action, we did so.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Ms Harrisson, the problem with this is that it is all based upon self-disclosure. It is referees chosen by the person seeking a job as a finance manager in New South Wales, the referees and the experience chosen by the person. It strikes me as plain odd and reckless not to independently check on the former employer. I cannot understand how you are defending a process that is based upon people who have been engaged in fraud putting their hand up and blowing the whistles on themselves.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Mr Shoebridge, I think there is a series of assumptions that you are making in your line of questioning that I cannot answer to because we are under an investigation to determine the facts of the case—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** As a process point. I am asking you as a general process point, not the facts in this case, Ms Harrisson.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** Point of order: We seem to be getting to the point of the witness half-answering a question before Mr Shoebridge jumps into her again—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I accept the point. I will let Ms Harrisson finish.

**The CHAIR:** That is accepted. Thank you.

**Ms HARRISSON:** As I indicated in my previous evidence, I cannot provide much more information. In fact, I do not think I can provide any more information than I have already provided in relation to this case while it is under investigation. That investigation will establish the facts. What I can tell you is the individual resigned from TAFE and was not fired, as you indicated in your question. Had I called TAFE in that circumstance, I am not quite sure what they would have been able to tell me, other than an employee had resigned, because they also are unable to declare ongoing ICAC investigations into an individual. Without that information, I struggle to see how we could have made a different difficult decision. But I accept your—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Can I give you a suggestion of what you might have got? You may not have got TAFE telling them that they had referred to ICAC, but there would have been no prohibition in TAFE telling you, your department, the substantive concerns that they have, but you never know if you never ask. Again, I am saying to you as a general proposition the idea that you would only be calling the people nominated by the person seeking a job with you is plain reckless, and as a general principle do you not accept that is a problem, Ms Harrisson?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I will just note there are a number of hypotheticals in your question that I cannot respond to. It is standard recruitment practice for an individual to recommend their referees. It is standard recruitment practice in the public sector and the private sector. It is a part of ensuring a fair process to the candidate. People can leave employment for a number of reasons. People may be applying for jobs where they have not told their current employer that they are looking for new work. It would not be our role to tell a current

employer that someone was seeking a new position. I do want to make sure we establish the facts of this case. At this moment in time, I cannot tell you what he declared or did not declare, while that investigation is underway. I would like the opportunity. I have been as open as I can be in this forum. I appreciate the questions. I agree that they are important, which is why we have taken every action available to us as soon as we were made aware of the issue.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** You do not see a problem with engaging somebody without checking from the prior employer, where they had worked for three years. You think that is okay? You are defending that because it might be embarrassing if you make the call or it might be awkward to make the call. You do not think that there is a duty-of-care issue here, particularly when you are talking about a finance position and public money?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am telling you about standard recruitment practice, Mr Shoebridge. It is not our role in a recruitment process to highlight to a current employer whether someone or not is applying for a job with us. I understand that we have a particular case at hand. I am very committed to investigating and finding out the facts underneath this. I can tell you, as soon as we were made aware of this situation, we took appropriate action. We have stood the individual down without pay and are investigating fully.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** You tell me on one hand there was a prior employer. Then you tell me on another hand that there was a resignation. I do not think those two statements sit well together, Ms Harrison.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Well—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** But we will just have to agree to disagree on whether or not it is sensible to ask for some sort of proof from a long-term prior employee before you engage someone to be a finance manager. We will just have to agree to disagree on that, Ms Harrison, it seems.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Before agreeing to disagree on that, Mr Shoebridge, I would also want to suggest that some further advice around the privacy concerns around an individual are taken into account in relation to that employment and I would want to take further advice on that.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Sure. I can read to you from the ICAC report, if that helps?

**Ms HARRISSON:** As I have indicated, as soon as we were made aware of the issues in the ICAC report, we took appropriate action. We have stood the individual down without pay while we conduct a full and thorough investigation.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Last I checked with the department and the Minister, I was told that the reducing administrative burden program, which I think has an even less interesting name than that, had saved principals about 10 minutes a day but had saved teachers a grand total of four minutes a week. Where are we up to now? Are we up to five minutes yet, Ms Harrison?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I think the name you are looking for, Mr Shoebridge, is the Quality Time Action Plan. I will leave the assessment of the title to you. Mr Withey can provide you with a further update on that work.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** If we could start with a number, Mr Withey. It was four minutes a week last time we checked for teachers. What is it now?

**Mr WITHEY:** I do not recognise the four minutes a week. It is a number you have previously quoted. We have to date delivered 50 improvements, which equates to an average of 500 hours of additional quality time at every school for investment into the things that we believe, and our colleagues in schools believe, really matter. As you indicated in your questioning, a large number of the improvements to date have focused on principals but [inaudible] makes a bigger investment of time into school improvements, and that includes 50 million in additional administrative support, principals, new automation of 60 per cent of the annual school report process and a professional learning dashboard to help manage staff learning.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Mr Withey, my question was not directed to a long list of programs. My question was directed to outcomes. The goal was a 20 per cent reduction in administrative burden for teachers by 2022—you have a couple of months to do this—which would equate to 40 hours of admin reductions a year for teachers. Last time I checked it was four minutes a week. If you do not think it is four minutes a week, why do you not tell me how much of that 40 hours a year reduction in admin per teacher—not per school—has been achieved?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Just to be clear, Mr Shoebridge, in terms of our target, it is to the end of 2022. I think it is important that we have the specifics of the target on record.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Okay, fine, the end of 2022. You were at four minutes last time I checked. Where are you now in terms of 40 hours a year per teacher?

**Mr WITHEY:** The four minutes is not a number that I recognise. In terms of our focus on teachers, we have delivered a number of improvements. [Audio malfunction] and the publication of our Quality Time Action Plan, which sets out the actions that we will be taking to deliver on that 20 per cent reduction by the end of 2022. That sets out six areas of further focus for us and we recognise that we have more to do for teachers by the end of 2022—

**The CHAIR:** Time has expired.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Was there a number? I missed it. You maybe broke up. Was there a number? How many hours have you reduced the burden by for teachers, Mr Withey?

**Mr WITHEY:** To date, for teachers we have reduced the burden by 10 hours. But the Quality Time Action Plan sets out how we are going to continue to deliver that number by the end of 2022 in line with the commitment made by the Government.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Ten hours a year per teacher?

**The CHAIR:** Time has expired.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Ms Harrison, there was announcement from the Government published on 5 June about access for students who live in catchment areas with only a single-sex high school. The example that was provided was talking about the access for Penshurst girls and Hurstville boys to also have access to Peakhurst. How is that progressing around the rest of the State for other schools that are zoned in single-sex high schools?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Thank you for the question. Mr Dizdar may be able to provide you with an update on that issue.

**Mr DIZDAR:** The Georges River secondary college that you are referring to and some of the campuses there, we were keen with the update and revision of the enrolment policy in 2019 to look at how that may work. We are taking a lot of learnings out of the Georges River secondary college. Myself, executive director Martin Graham and our director, educational leadership, Joanna French, have been meeting with the principals of the college. Our last meeting was last week to see how it is tracking and to see what it is looking like in the lead-up to next year's enrolments where these boundary adjustments and opportunities for families to either take the single-sex provision or the co-ed provision is available. The numbers in general I am happy to provide on notice, but I can report to you, Ms Houssos, that the principals were reporting that the numbers of what they take into year 7 each year are broadly the same going into next year.

We will continue to look at this example and give advice to our Minister and government about how that may be broadened out in other localities. Of course, Ms Houssos, you would appreciate and respect that at the moment under the revised enrolment policy any family can still make an out-of-area application if they want to go to a single-sex school or a co-ed school if it is not their local school. That is one of the factors that is considered in the possibility of enrolment in that school—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sorry, Mr Dizdar, my question was quite specific: Has it been expanded to elsewhere across the State or is it still just this example in Georges River?

**Mr DIZDAR:** That was what I was trying to unpack in its fullest for you, Ms Houssos, because the revision of the policy is still relatively new and we need to take learnings as a system from Georges River College and provide that advice to the Minister and the Government in time about whether our advice would be to broaden this right across the board. We remain committed to making sure that every public school is a strong public school and enforcing enrolment policy is important there. So we are still in the learning stages for Georges River College because that possibility of families either taking the single-sex option or the co-ed option does not come into fruition until day one, term one, 2022, so we will have to see who actually turns up at the school gates. All we have so far are the indications from families, Ms Houssos, and in my operational experience sometimes indications do not also match what comes to fruition—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Mr Dizdar, sorry, I have limited time. When you are talking about the indications for term one, 2022, that is just for Georges River.

**Mr DIZDAR:** Yes, that is—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay, no that is fine. Can I just ask you one final quick question? Mr Dizdar, are you preparing a formal report on that or is it just sort of general advice that you will provide?

**Mr DIZDAR:** At the moment, we have just been meeting with the principals. We have had three sessions, like I indicated, in the lead-up to day one, term one next year because we are in week five, term four. In

time we will need to give our Minister and government a full and formal briefing but we are way away from that. That is likely to be in the latter half of 2022.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay, thank you very much, Mr Dizdar. Mr Manning, I wanted to come back to the question of new schools. You would be aware that we have asked a lot about Gregory Hills Public School this morning, as well as at previous estimates sessions and in the House. Gregory Hills is just over from Gledswood Hills Public School, which is a brand-new school that has 18 demountables in its second year of operation. Is that correct?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes, I believe so.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you explain how that happens when you have these enrolment projections? You talked about 2031 and 2036 projections. How do we end up with a school in its second year of operation requiring 18 demountables?

**Mr MANNING:** Gledswood Hills was a project that was defined some time ago. We have begun to perfect our modelling around how we look at potential school enrolment growth. As we are finding in a number of locations, the actual sale of land and the construction of dwellings in some locations is far outstripping the projections produced by DPIE.

So we have had a couple of schools where we have had exactly the same issue, where we have been working to a time frame and a development cycle and we found that actually the developer is probably five years or more ahead of that cycle. And sometimes that is not just additional land that has been bought beyond—so plots that have sold and developed out; it is actually a difference in the density that is being used as well. So we found on a few occasions that, yes, developers are about five years ahead of where the projection is from DPIE. And so we are doing a lot more work to look at—so one of the data fields we are beginning to take in is there is a Federal government body that actually records as every address is generated. We are beginning to overlay some of that data so we can begin to see that much, much earlier than just looking at the data.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** What is that Federal government agency?

**Mr MANNING:** I will take that on notice as to what it is called. But it is a Federal agency. It is then information we can get in a geographic information system [GIS] form so we can actually include it in our planning systems and get a much better sense of how that is working. But there have been a few places, and Gledswood Hills would be one of those, and so we are looking to try to short-circuit that so we get a much clearer sense. In some instances, as we are seeing at the moment, plots are being sold out in the greenfield areas at a much higher rate and for a much more significant sum of money than we were expecting to see through the DPIE numbers, so there is a bit of catch-up in that space.

**Ms HARRISSON:** If I could add just particularly in relation to primary school enrolments in greenfield areas, we tend to see, and our experience is, that we get a peak of enrolments following a new development area coming online and it flows through the primary school and then on to the secondary school. The long-term requirement in an area might be somewhat skewed by a new development bringing in young and new families that then passes through and normalises over time. That is one of the other experiences we have had in relation to new school builds alongside new development areas. That is something we factor in, but that would therefore be a very appropriate use of temporary accommodation to manage that peak through the school system as those enrolments then pass through.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Are you able to provide us, on notice, with a list of the schools where you think that demographic bulge is at play?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am certainly happy to have a look and see what we can provide on that, Mr D'Adam.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Great question. I take your point, Ms Harrison, but one in three primary schools and one in five high schools are over their permanent capacity. Are you looking at anything across the board to review the way that you are projecting your enrolment growth?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I think that is some of the issues that Mr Manning was raising in his answer. He and his team work very hard to make sure we have the most accurate projections possible. We are, of course, aware of demographic changes and population growth, which is why we have such a substantial capital program on foot at this time.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes, but it is not projected to keep up with—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Further on that, if you are anticipating the bulge then presumably you must have a plan in terms of when you expect that those demountables will be able to be removed from the

school. Is it part of your planning process that you anticipate a bulge, you plan for so many demountables to go into the school and then you have a plan for those to be removed 15 years or 20 years down the track? How long?

**Mr MANNING:** It is work that the service planning team are doing to give us a sense of the projections of that. It is hard to predict, to some extent, with any massive level of accuracy. So there are a whole bunch of spaces, as we have seen in the past, where people will age in place. We will see an initial peak and a number of people moving into an area, and then the families like it. The kids will leave home, and they will stay and that is where we see that fall working its way through. We are beginning to look at is there enough longitudinal data to kind of say—as we have seen in some areas, at a point of time they then sell up and there are subdivisions that occur and then we end up with another peak coming through. So there is work going on from a service planning team to give us a sense of where we think that is at, to begin to inform exactly that phenomenon.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Is that your view of Gledswood Hills?

**Mr MANNING:** I would need to sit down with the team and look at the data. It is a greenfield area. It is one that is very popular with families and you can see, certainly, an intent for a whole range of people to age in place, and kids to come when the development is very new and for us to see those peaks, and then see those fall away within 10 to 15 years. We need to watch and see how that works. It can be very different in different areas and hard to predict some of that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Perhaps you can take on notice whether you consider that is what is happening at Oran Park Public School, Schofields Public School, The Ponds School, Wentworth Point Public School, Ballina Coast High School or Jordan Springs Public School. All of those schools, some of which have been in operation for over a decade, have really high numbers of demountables despite being recently constructed.

**Mr MANNING:** We can have a look at that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Great. Let me add Northbourne Public School.

**Mr MANNING:** Northbourne is exactly one of those where the developers are easily five years ahead of where they are expected to be from a demographic planning perspective.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I might jump in there. I want to come to this question about psychometric testing that I raised earlier, Ms Harrison. Can I ask you about the circumstances when psychometric testing is used in recruitment and some details, perhaps, about why and what you are looking for in a psychometric test?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Certainly. As part of our "raising the bar" initiative we introduced a number of new requirements as part of the entry standards into the profession in public education. Our assessment of eligibility for approval to teach is now based on the key knowledge areas: critical experience, skills, capabilities, motivations and attributes of a teacher as aligned to the teacher success profile. There is a multi-staged assessment and selection process to identify high-quality teachers. This includes assessment of professional experience; practicum reports to identify readiness for success in the classroom, for our graduates in particular; online teacher suitability assessments measuring cognitive skills and emotional intelligence; and a video-based interview, which is completed remotely, meaning candidates do not need to attend a face-to-face interview but can complete that interview at a time that best suits them.

The cognitive assessment requires the applicant to answer questions to assess their literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills. The emotional intelligence assessment will require the applicant to answer questions related to resilience, conscientiousness and proactivity to help identify how they engage, relate and communicate with others. The new online assessment and teacher suitability process commenced on 20 July 2020 and to date more than 10,311 applicants for approval to teach have successfully completed those assessments.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is this for accreditation, not actually for recruitment for the department?

**Ms HARRISSON:** It is for appointment to be—we have an approval to teach within the public school system and it is to achieve that approval to teach, which allows you to then be deployed into public schools. That is a separate process from accreditation.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Of the over 10,000 people who have gone through that process, how many have failed to meet the requirements under the psychometric testing?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Apologies if I was not clear in my answer, Mr D'Adam. The 10,311 applicants have successfully completed all of the assessments and have been given approval to teach.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** How many failed in that process?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I would need to take that on notice. I would say that this is part of our ongoing commitment to ensure quality of teachers into the classroom. There is a large bank of evidence in relation to the value of these assessments in recruitment activity and that is what we have drawn on in the design, development and delivery of those assessments.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Are those assessments undertaken under contract or are they directly undertaken by the department?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I will take the specifics of the delivery of the assessments on notice and come back to you.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can you also provide details of the intellectual property arrangements? What are the data protection provisions? Candidates undertake the assessment; what are the protections around their personal data that is collected through that, if it is being administered under contract with a private contractor?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am very happy to provide that information. We take that very seriously.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Coming back to the question around the Deputy Principal Instructional Leaders, what is the average tenure for those positions? When were they instituted? What is the average for the occupants in terms of those positions that are being deleted?

**Ms HARRISSON:** The deputy principal [DP] instructional leader positions were part of the former Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and were part of the Early Action for Success program. They have had a couple of years of extension of one year at a time in addition to the length of the program, so I will need to go back and provide you with the details of the tenure on notice. What I would say for those individuals in those roles is they have provided—one, they have developed the expertise and will be very good candidates for the assistant principal [AP] roles. They will also be very good candidates for other deputy principal roles across the system, given the nature of the work they have undertaken. It was always a temporary role and those individuals will have gained the experience and the capacity to support them in securing a permanent promotion role, if that is indeed what they wish to pursue.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I am not sure about the arrangements within Education. There used to be an arrangement for salary maintenance when someone was downgraded. Are there salary maintenance arrangements in place for these affected employees?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I think it is important to note that these were temporary positions and that individuals took them knowing that they were temporary positions, and therefore they return to their substantive position on their substantive salary.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** This is the reason why I ask about the tenure. If someone has been in a position for five years or so and suddenly you delete the position, are you saying that they should just cop the salary cut?

**Ms HARRISSON:** So I would say in response to that a number of things, Mr D'Adam. The DP instructional leaders are just 500 out of very many deputy principal positions across our system those individuals would be eligible to apply for. It has not been a sudden change in relation to those roles. The strategy always had an end date in it and so we have provided short-term extensions while we finalise the plans to ensure every school could benefit. I am sure you would appreciate, Mr D'Adam, that we are leading an education system in the best interests of students here and that means ensuring we get the best value for money for every position across the system. I absolutely appreciate for those individuals there is a transition that needs to be made but I am very confident that we have made the appropriate decision to ensure all students in New South Wales primary schools can benefit from an instructional leader in their school.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I understand that. How many DP positions can be absorbed at that current grade, do you expect? Have you done any kind of analysis about how many of those people displaced you anticipate will be absorbed through redeployment into DP positions?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Firstly, while respecting this is a transition and could present some challenges at an individual level for those affected, this will partly depend on the success or otherwise of people at the AP position, should they seek to go for it. I do not accept the premise of your question that they are displaced. Each of those individuals holds a permanent or a substantive position in the system, and they will return to their substantive position, as is common practice across public education where we have people on higher duties for a period of time and they return to their substantive position. I understand the challenges for an individual but I do not think it is right to say they have been displaced. They are returning to their substantive position.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** How did you arrive at the decision to grade these new positions as APs rather than DPs?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Ms Owen might be able to provide some further detail on the specifics of that. What we will have done and what we have done is go through a process to look at the needs of our students, the needs of our schools, the particular role design that we have wanted to put in place and graded it appropriately. That has come out as an assistant principal for all schools, with significant support from the system that will be provided to those roles to ensure that they can be effective in schools. Ms Owen might be able to provide some further detail.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I have very limited time. I just want to ask one further question on this. If Ms Owen can provide her answer on notice, that would be appreciated. I want to ask about the Early Action for Success program. That was a program that was targeted at predominantly disadvantaged schools, isn't it?

**Ms HARRISSON:** That is correct, yes. It was targeted at some of our schools who needed to improve the minimum standard, particularly—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Now you are providing that across the board, so disadvantaged schools are now back at the same level as everyone else, what measures are you going to take to assist disadvantaged schools to replace the lost resources, or advantage, I suppose, of additional resources that are no longer there?

**Ms HARRISSON:** So, Mr D'Adam, you will be familiar with our resource allocation model that provides additional funding to schools based on need. We have a needs-based funding system. Those resources remain available for our schools. The central funding on an ongoing basis of a position in those schools will provide certainty and clarity for every school in the State around that provision. I think that is something that has by and large been entirely welcomed by our system as a valid and welcome investment in the expertise in literacy, numeracy and curriculum support in our schools. In terms of your specific question, the resource allocation model comes into effect. That is indeed needs based and that will continue. Each of those schools maintains a position, although at AP level, for curriculum support and for literacy and numeracy. We have been through the School Success Model implementing the appropriate support for our schools so that those who need additional support will get strategic support from the department in the form of experts coming in to support the delivery in that school, to provide the professional development to the staff. And so the School Success Model then provides the additional support from a system level into the schools that need it most.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Thank you. Could I ask whether Ms Alonso Love is back online to answer that earlier point about 83C where we were frustrated by the technology, or has she dropped out again?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Let us see if the sound is working, Chair. She is visible on screen but whether or not her audio is coming through—

**The CHAIR:** Ms Alonso Love, have you got any 83C information particularly concerning the Pacific Hills, please?

**Ms ALONSO LOVE:** Hello, Chair. Can you hear me now?

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms ALONSO LOVE:** Excellent. Thank you for the question. I am aware of the concerns that you have raised and that the Pacific Hills group has raised, and they have written to us and to the independent committee who makes the decisions around these regulatory issues. The committee has written back to them to inform them that we will have an independent review of the concerns that they have raised.

**The CHAIR:** When do you expect that to be completed, please?

**Ms ALONSO LOVE:** We are just in the process of engaging someone to undertake the review, so I would imagine that is a couple of months to complete that.

**The CHAIR:** More generally, have we had a recent history of any school defunded for being a profit centre under 83C?

**Ms ALONSO LOVE:** I think some of the terms that you use are not the terms that we would necessarily use under that part of the legislation, but there have been, and continue to be, some schools that have been under investigations or investigation has been completed. I am unable to comment on those that are underway at the moment but we have not defunded any schools.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. When was the last time the department identified a non-government school that was being run as a profit centre?

**Ms ALONSO LOVE:** Again, Chair, I would just challenge the term "profit centre". What we do is look at whether any funds that the school are provided with to give educational services are used for other things or whether they consist of profit for the organisation. So we undertake those as they arise and, as I said, there are some schools that we are conducting those investigations presently and I am unable to comment.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Chair, very happy to provide you on notice with the details of any of the schools.

**The CHAIR:** Well, you used a phrased there. I summarised it in two words, "profit centre", which I thought was a pretty good summary of your longer phrase.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Chair, I think the distinction—

**The CHAIR:** Can you take on notice the basic—I mean, if 83C is not a practical problem in the system then you would have to wonder why it is being policed to the point where here is one group of schools spending nearly half a million dollars on trying to comply. So I am just trying to get to—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Point of order: If that is trying to summarise the evidence to date, that is not the evidence to date. The evidence to date is that there are multiple investigations on foot and there have been multiple investigations in the past under 83C. No-one has said that it is not an issue.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. I do not know what the point of order is about. My question is to find out: Have any of those investigations identified a problem such that a school lost funding under 83C provisions, or are we just going through these investigations for the sake of it with no tangible problem being identified in non-government schools, just a lot of compliance costs?

**Ms ALONSO LOVE:** I am happy to answer, Chair, that they have in fact uncovered issues that we have raised and that we are considering. But I will take that on notice. I am unable to—

**The CHAIR:** With ongoing investigations, not a finalised investigation, that has identified the problem.

**Ms HARRISSON:** If I may just make the distinction I think Ms Alonso Love was trying to make between the profit centre and working for profit. In terms of the funding requirements and the regulation of the use of those government funds by independent schools, they are prescribed for a very specific purpose in relation to the delivery of education. The work of this Committee goes to whether or not the funds provided for educational purposes were, indeed, used for educational purposes or whether they were used for other purposes that therefore could be seen as subsidising other activity in the school. So when we talk about profit, it is in a very broad term. I just wanted to make sure that we had that shared understanding of that requirement under that section of the Act.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Dizdar, in relation to Connected Communities schools, what was the reason for Narooma being designated as a Connected Communities school with 14 per cent Indigenous population? As I said last week, I can understand a majority Indigenous population school being part of this system but when you are down to one in seven students being Indigenous, what is the rationale? How low can it go? Are we going to have schools 10 per cent, 8 per cent Indigenous coming into this scheme or is it now sealed off with the selected schools that are on the list?

**Mr DIZDAR:** Good question, Chair. Having visited the school, like I indicated, 75 Aboriginal students. It is not a small number out of 495 students. Overall, having spoken to the executive team and having looked at the data, there are a number of challenging data points for the school, not the least our educational attainment data which the leadership acknowledges needs to improve. We need to get stronger outcomes by way of retention to year 12 because we know how important that is for life outcomes. We need to get better pathways into employment, technical and further education—not my words—over leadership of the school embracing the educational data.

But you will find that our health data, unemployment data, Department of Communities and Justice data also is in need of improvement. So it goes back to my earlier answer that this is a whole-of-government approach, looking at whole-of-government data to identify locations that can benefit from a concerted effort to bring better and stronger interagency collaboration service provision, recognising that a school is the hub of a community and recognising that the pathway of change is to change the trajectories for young people. That is why Narooma was short-listed, identified, presented to government, endorsed and is part of our expansion of Connected Communities into 33 schools across the State in total.

**The CHAIR:** What is the expectation for how many schools could be part of that program beyond 33?

**Mr DIZDAR:** That is our full complement. When the strategy started in 2012 we started with an original 16 schools. And in 2021, in the lead-up to 2022, we have been working on the expansion of 17 sites. You have referenced one of those in Airds and another one in Narooma. Starting day one, term 1 next year we will have 33 schools under the strategy.

**The CHAIR:** We have expanded Connected Communities to 33. Has there been any identification of vocational education training [VET] needs in other schools, what might become TAFE high schools, other than the two that are currently in Coalition marginal seats? My question is directed to the secretary or to Mr Dizdar.

**Mr DIZDAR:** Sorry, my colleagues will also be able to provide further information on the EPPP program that I referenced at Airds, which is the education—

**The CHAIR:** Yes, I have been to Airds and I have seen that in practice. I am now asking about TAFE high schools. Two have been designated in New South Wales. Has the department done any other work on what other schools might benefit from becoming TAFE high schools, other than the one in Tweed Heads and the one in Seven Hills?

**Mr DIZDAR:** That pathways pilot program which is creating stronger pathways and connections with industry, TAFE and employers—I hope I am getting the figure right—is going into 139 schools from about 2024, from recollection. So it is a big expansion of that program under Minister Mitchell and Minister Lee. Of course, it is building on the work on some of our sites. You have all visited some of our sites that were trade training centres, like Colyton trade training centre, to have stronger vocational pathways as well. So it is a sizable investment to go from 24 to 139 secondary contexts to have much stronger pathways for each and every one of those young people, recognising that that does not always have to be a tertiary pathway; that that can be into employment, traineeships, apprenticeships and expats while they are at school. We have learnt a lot from the 24 who are all wanting to stay on board. None of those 24 sites have said, "Take me off this program" because they have seen the benefits.

**The CHAIR:** At the moment has there been an evaluation of the two TAFE high schools and their successes or failures? From that evaluation is there any plan to expand that number beyond two?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I think Mr Dizdar may have had some challenges with the audio there which is why he continued with the EPPP at schools. VET high schools are underway, we will evaluate them and obviously further expansion of that will be subject to the normal government decision-making processes. I do not have any further information on it at this time.

**The CHAIR:** When are you expecting an evaluation of those two schools, Tweed Heads and Seven Hills?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I will come back to you on the specifics of those on notice, if I may.

**The CHAIR:** Take that on notice.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Ms Harrison, for clarity will you provide the Committee with a list of the schools over the last five calendar years, including partial this year, that have been found to be in breach of section 83C of the Education Act?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I very happy to provide that on notice.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Will you provide details about the nature of the breaches, if you can, as it will be useful?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Yes, very happy to do so.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Does the department keep track of the legal actions that have been brought against the department, or staff in their capacity as staff, in regard to allegations of mistreatment of children with a disability in public schools?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Yes. Mr Withey might be able to provide you with further information on that. We do obviously keep track of legal cases that involve the department. You would expect us to do that and we check in on those regularly.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Mr Withey, do you have those numbers, if possible, over the past four years?

**Mr WITHEY:** Mr Shoebridge, I do have some numbers but they are aggregate numbers rather than specific numbers you are looking for. I may have to take the specifics on notice.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** If you can give me what you have got now and then take the rest on notice?

**Mr WITHEY:** We currently have 462 open civil liability claims which are made up of various groups of claims, putting in claims for slips and falls, dust disease claims, civil liability claims, child sexual abuse claims

brought by former or current students. For 2021, 233 of those related to allegations of child sexual abuse, but I do not have the specific numbers you are looking for in relation to disability.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Just for clarity those figures that Mr Withey has provided would include historical claims.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Mr Withey, if you could break down the data on that. In child sexual abuse matters could you break down those that relate to historical matters? When you do that can you provide what your definition of "historical matters" is and those that have been more current? Would you provide if you could the number of cases involving allegations of other mistreatment of students?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am very happy to take those on notice, Mr Shoebridge, and provide that back to you.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** If you recall my opening question was about students with a disability as a subset?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Yes, I noted that and we will make sure we provide you with that on notice as well.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** If you have any indication about trends in relation to that over the past few years so we can track what is happening.

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am very happy to provide you what we have on notice.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Mr Withey, I am sorry but you broke up on the last occasion when I was trying to get the details about the reduction of the administrative burden on teachers. The Teachers Federation's analysis in April this year was that it was four minutes a week for teachers. You disagree with that analysis as at April. If it was not four minutes a week, what was it as at April?

**Mr WITHEY:** So apologies, Mr Shoebridge. I think I am having some internet connectivity issues, which are affecting my sound. As I said earlier, the four minutes is not a number that I recognise other than from the Teachers Federation, as you suggest. As at the end of last year, we had estimated hours saved for teachers as being 10 hours over the year. During 2021 we have put our focus on the teacher group because we recognise absolutely that we have more to do for that group and we have a very clear target of a 20 per cent reduction by the end of 2022. We have in the course of 2021 delivered a number of improvements, which will see that number increase. The rollout of the reading and numeracy resources hub, the development of new check-in assessments, as well as the implementation of the Rural Access Gap equipment in a number of our rural and regional schools will increase that number.

We are still going through the process of validating the time saved with the more recent initiatives that we have rolled out. We have always known that our target is going to be delivered by a combination of smaller initiatives. There unfortunately is not a silver bullet here. The validation of those individual initiatives is taking some time. We are keen to make sure we are getting an accurate number and it is not just a best-guess exercise.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Do we agree that the goal was 40 hours per teacher by the end of 2022?

**Mr WITHEY:** The way that we have calculated in terms of per cent reduction is based on an OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey [TALIS] report, which suggested that teachers in general—and it is difficult to be general here because the picture will differ between individual teachers and individual schools—but, in general, spend 4.1 hours a week on general admin. We have taken that based on a 40-week school year. That equates to about 33 hours and we have rounded that out to 40 hours to deliver a more ambitious and aggressive target.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** So the answer is yes, the target is 40 hours over the year?

**Mr WITHEY:** Yes.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** And that is by the end of next year?

**Mr WITHEY:** Yes.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** In about 15 months time?

**Mr WITHEY:** Yes.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** So far, in a program that began in 2018 you can validate 10 hours a year?

**Mr WITHEY:** Sorry. It is worth being clear that the 40 hours is on top of the existing 10 hours that we have already delivered. So we want to deliver another 40 hours.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Okay. How much have you delivered? You cannot identify any savings this year in terms of a number. Is that right, Mr Withey?

**Mr WITHEY:** I can absolutely identify savings. We just have not validated the amount of time saved from those individual initiatives.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Given there are only 15 months to get 40 hours saved, when will you have any kind of interim report? If you are not measuring it, you are not going to get there, are you?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Chair, I think Mr Withey has indicated that we are measuring this target, that we are validating the data to make sure that it is accurate, and he has identified a number of programs that have been delivered this year with an express objective of reducing time. So I just want to make sure that—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** Ms Harrisson, I must have missed it. I did not hear a number. Did you hear a number?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I heard him say that we have a number of initiatives that have had the objective of delivering a saving through this year—

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I heard that too.

**Ms HARRISSON:** —and that we are validating with teachers in classrooms that that has saved them the time that we have aimed at saving.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** You are getting a bit snippy this afternoon, David.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I have got to go and get a kitten.

**The CHAIR:** The Labor Opposition, please.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Thank you very much. I might just start by going back to the Cooler Classrooms Program. Mr Manning, are you able to provide me with the most recent update on the figures of the different stages, where they are at? Let's start with the applications. How many successful applications—how many schools are now in the program?

**Mr MANNING:** We have 922 schools.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes, and so that includes 15 in round two—

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** —and the balance in round one. Is that correct?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you give me a breakdown? How do you classify the different stages? I am interested in, essentially, planning, underway and then completed. But if you have different titles, then use your titles.

**Mr MANNING:** I do not have details of that in my note here.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay.

**Mr MANNING:** So we will take that on notice. Bear with me one minute while I just have a quick look.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sorry, why don't I refer back? I have some information here that you provided to the COVID inquiry that says that 53 are in the design and tender stages.

**Mr MANNING:** Fifty-three schools?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes. Would that be accurate?

**Mr MANNING:** If that is what we said at that point in time.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Oh, okay.

**Mr MANNING:** I would imagine that we have moved on from that point.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Well, why don't I ask you then for the design and tender stage, how many are in those, how many are in the delivery with construction works taking place on site and how many have been delivered with all completed?

**Mr MANNING:** We will have to take that on notice at this point. I do not have that data in front of me but, given that we are three years into the program, my understanding is quite a lot has already been delivered to the tune of, I think, 4,408 learning spaces and 309 libraries have been fitted with the cooler classrooms system.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you say those numbers for me again?

**Mr MANNING:** Four thousand four hundred and eight learning spaces and 309 libraries as of the end of August.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Sorry. Can you say that date to me again—August?

**Mr MANNING:** End of August.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** In the Cooler Classrooms Program we obviously have those that automatically qualify. So there were about 600 schools, is that right, that automatically qualified because they had a mean average January temperature of above 30 degrees?

**Mr MANNING:** The way the policy used to work—so there was a policy that existed before which basically said that if you are above 32½ degrees, you kind of qualify for they called it air cooling rather than air conditioning, and below that you could apply for a fund. As part of the commitment that was made around the cooler classrooms, we moved that line from 32½ to 30 degrees. So any school that had I think it was a 20-year average rolling temperature of more than 30 degrees—and that was Bureau of Meteorology data—automatically qualified for the cooler classrooms model. So when round one went out there were a number of schools that applied that were in the 30 degrees and they automatically got included and there were a number that were below 30 degrees and they got included as well at that point in time.

With the round two applications that have come through, it is worth noting that none of the schools in round two are in the over 30 degrees category. There are some that are close, but they are not in the over 30 degrees category. So the work has been done around understanding how many of those spaces are air-conditioned and not air-conditioned, and about half of them—just over half of the spaces—are already air-conditioned at those schools. So we will roll through those schools in a prioritised fashion as and when funding becomes available to us. That is why we kind of kicked off the first 15 and, as I said before, as we roll through the program and a contingency of things become available to us, we will include more and more of those schools in our program.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** For those 432 schools that missed out—sorry, they have not missed out; they are still in round two. They are still assessing.

**Mr MANNING:** They did not apply in round one but they did apply under round two.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** There are 432. Is that right?

**Mr MANNING:** I think it is about that sort of number. I think it started off at 447—that rings a bell—and I think 15 of them have been ticked off already and we will continue to roll through with the rest of the program and more schools will be included in that process.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** For those 432 schools, you have the median average temperature or what you call the 20-year rolling average?

**Mr MANNING:** It is the 20-year rolling average from the Bureau of Meteorology, yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you provide those for those 432 schools?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Actually, can you provide it for the 15 that got it as well? Is that all right?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Beautiful—on notice, of course.

**Mr MANNING:** Sure.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I do not expect you to recite that one too this afternoon.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Are you sure?

**Mr MANNING:** I can have a crack.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Then when we talk about 288 schools in round one of the Cooler Classrooms Program—and this is referring to answers that were given to the COVID inquiry—can you tell me

why you would say there are 288? We are just trying to get some clarity on this. Is it 900? What is the 288? Where does that figure come from?

**Mr MANNING:** The number I have is that 228 schools, of what I believe to be the round one applications, were in the "above 30 degree" category—

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** So 221 were above the 30 degree?

**Mr MANNING:** The number I have here is 228 schools with a mean maximum January temperature of 30 degrees and above. Let me clarify. I think what this note tells me is that 228 have already been completed. I will need to take on notice how many in round one were above 30 degrees. Two hundred and twenty-eight schools have been completed as part of the round one works already.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** So 228 have been completed—

**Mr MANNING:** Fully completed. And you are taking the rest of the stuff on notice about the design, the construction and the like?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Ms Harrison, I want to come back to something that we asked a lot of questions about in the TAFE budget estimates the other day. It was about a briefing note that was provided to the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education that stated that TAFE NSW had been advised by the Department of Education that the Education cluster will contribute \$90 million towards the target that is a land and property sales target. The amount for the financial year 2020 was \$1.31 million, the amount for the financial year 2021 was \$2.4 million. Does that then mean that the balance of the \$90 million is then being borne by schools?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Thank you for the question. I do not have a copy of that document but I am aware of the issues you are raising. As part of any sensible management of an asset portfolio of the size of Education, there are obviously times when we will divest land and times when we will invest in land to meet the demands of the portfolio. That is standard practice in the management of a portfolio of our size. Mr Withey can provide specifics around the targets. Mr Manning will be able to provide further specifics of the way we go about delivering that in education.

Certainly it would be common and normal practice for us to be selling land, selling no longer used or required assets. The Bridge Street offices of the corporate Department of Education would be an example of that and certainly would have helped us meet our divestment requirements. Those targets are set by Treasury and we manage our asset portfolio in a way that will deliver those targets and deliver benefit to the students of New South Wales. Mr Withey can provide details on that target in its specifics.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Just before Mr Withey answers, can you provide on notice the list of sites that were sold in the last 12 months, then in the 12 months prior to that and then in the 12 months prior to that? If you want to do per financial year, that is probably the easiest. Can you do financial year 2020-21, 2019-20, 2018-19?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Certainly happy to see what we can provide for that on notice, but we would have those records, that would be fine.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Excellent.

**Mr WITHEY:** As the secretary outlined, the 2019-20 budget invested, I think, \$7.3 billion into education infrastructure over the four years. One of the ways the Government sought to fund that was with our other asset sales targets. The asset sales required by the Education cluster represented about 1 per cent of the total amount being invested into the capital projects in that period. As has been made clear from those documents released under Standing Order 52, the cluster target was \$90 million over the four-year period to 2022-23. We then allocated that between the department and our cluster agencies on the basis of the size of the asset portfolio. We communicated that to our cluster agencies.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Will you provide on notice, Mr Withey—I have got the allocation for TAFE—the breakdown of where the \$90 million over the four years is allocated to?

**Mr WITHEY:** When you have the TAFE numbers, the balance of that is all with the Department of Education.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** So that means that current land used for schools is required to meet that \$90 million target over four years. Is that accurate?

**Ms HARRISSON:** As indicated in my answer, for example, the sale of the Bridge Street corporate offices would also be part of what was used in relation to meeting those types of targets. So to say that it is schools is not quite an accurate position. We have landholdings as well as land with schools currently on. When we build a new school, sometimes we are able to dispose of an old site. There are a number of ways in which we would be delivering that divestment and investment strategy to ensure the best value for money for the New South Wales taxpayer. Mr Manning might have some specific examples, if that is helpful.

**Mr MANNING:** Yes, I am happy to. Any sale of surplus land—as the secretary said, is not necessarily where there is an existing school—is carefully considered from a future educational requirement, a future need requirement, be it a corporate location, be it land that might have been acquired historically for growth that has not and is not going to occur, or an opportunity around that, is carefully considered as part of that process. And then we will have a look at it from a School Infrastructure perspective and understand, kind of, what the process may be from the next step, what the value of that land might be and how best to attract the value of that land and then we will work our way through the process for divestment. We work closely with the finance team in terms of how that feeds back into the program because all the money that is generated is fed back into the program as part of that process.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Mr Manning, I want to ask about the Regional Renewal Program and the Metro Renewal Program. The expectation is that the funding will be partially met by the school between 20 and 50 per cent of the costs. Is that correct?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes, that is correct.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** From where does that funding come? Is it contributions from—

**Ms HARRISSON:** In terms of the school's funding?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Yes, the school component.

**Ms HARRISSON:** That could come from a number of sources but, I think we discussed earlier, the current levels of funding available in schools that have yet to be spent. It could come from that proportion which is made up both of departmental funding and P&C-raised funds.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So it is P&C funds that could be taken into account?

**Ms HARRISSON:** It can include P&C funds if the P&C supports the expenditure of those funds on that project.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** How do you work out what the percentage is?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I will ask Mr Manning to provide some details but at local school level, if the school wants to invest and use P&C funds they would need to consult with their P&C on the appropriate use for those funds. The P&C would need to support it and be clear of the level at which it would support it. The total amount of money the school needs to provide is 50 per cent but where they draw those funds from in terms of their budget is their local decision.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So it is not between 20 and 50 per cent? Schools have to provide half?

**Mr MANNING:** No, the school contribution can be anywhere from 20 per cent to 50 per cent.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Okay. My question is: How do you decide what the percentage contribution of the school is?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Sorry, I misunderstood the question, Mr D'Adam.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** No, that is fine.

**Mr MANNING:** There is an application process the schools go through in terms of nominating projects that they are putting forward. We do an analysis of the projects and understand the need and how that fits and then we work our way through the funding for that project. It depends on what the school can afford and it depends on what the project is about.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** On notice, can you provide the details of the application process and the time frames for this program?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Seven hundred and ninety schools have been announced. Are you able to provide a breakdown of the percentage contribution for each of those schools?

**Mr MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** In the media release there is a little bit of confusion because I think for the metro announcement it talks about 1,000 projects that have been identified but in an answer to a question on notice the number was 600, so there is an inconsistency there.

**Mr MANNING:** The application is done in rounds. The ultimate target is to try and get as many as 1,200 schools for the use of this funding, potentially up to 2,000 projects. That is certainly the target that we have given ourselves. And so there are tranches or rounds of projects. Obviously some projects schools have ready to go now and others they need to do a little bit more due diligence on to justify, so we have done it in rounds.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can there be more than one project for a school?

**Mr MANNING:** There could well be, absolutely, depending on how worthy the project is and the funding that they have available to them. So we have done it in rounds to allow—otherwise there are some schools that would miss out simply because they have not necessarily raised all the money or they have not done all the thinking about it to be able to populate the project into the system. So we will continue to work through tranches until the funds are exhausted so that we can deliver as much as we can with the money.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is the amount that the school can contribute a factor in terms of preference for those projects? If a school can contribute more towards—say a school can contribute 50 per cent as opposed to 20 per cent, does that give them a better claim to be included in the project?

**Mr MANNING:** Not necessarily. It depends on what the project is. As part of the process, we are trying to be as equitable as we can.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Yes. I was going to get to that.

**Mr MANNING:** Just because you have got 50 per cent of the money does not necessarily mean—so one project that springs to mind is in the Far West. I think there is a \$280,000 project and the school is able to contribute \$100,000 to that but the fund is providing the rest of that because we see that as a worth—I think it is a play space and a significant covered outdoor learning area, so that is a good project and so now it has been selected as part of that process. So it is kind of within that range, but we recognise that some schools have a greater ability to raise money than others.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Yes. That is an obvious equity consideration. That is included in the guidelines, is it, in terms of how you ultimately decide about the disbursement of the projects? There will be some equity consideration to ensure that schools from disadvantaged areas that perhaps do not have the capacity to raise funds through their P & C to the same extent as more affluent areas—

**Mr MANNING:** Part of the consideration as well is that there is a requirement for the project to already be lodged in the system. The schools are able to lodge projects as requests, projects for us to consider over the long term. So part of it was to make sure that the project has not just been thought up; it has been something that they have wanted for a while and they might have been raising funds for it for a while. So there seemed a good opportunity as part of this from a stimulus perspective to recognise that schools had not raised all the money but did need—the projects were worthy and this is a good way to get those projects over the line sooner rather than later and allow those things to happen.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I might move on to another topic. Perhaps Ms Owen can answer this question. There was an announcement about post-school tracking of students' success. I wonder if I could get some details about how that is going to work.

**Ms HARRISSON:** So I might ask—

**Ms OWEN:** Do you want me to give some more details, sorry?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Sorry. I might ask Ms Alonso Love to answer this question. We have committed, and it is part of the School Success Model, to monitor and provide targets for secondary schools once we have a baseline for the success of students after they leave school, particularly, to ensure that as many as possible of our students remain in further education, training or employment following their 13 years of schooling. We have been developing a measure for that which will be baselined in future years and Ms Alonso Love might be able to provide some further detail on where that work is up to.

**LISA ALONSO LOVE:** Thank you, Secretary. We are working to develop that baseline. We are also working with our schools to ensure that we have clarity around how they engage with students, as they have the relationship with them and understand what is happening, but also the ways that we can track that information over time. One of those things that we are looking at is how we can have an identifier that would track that

information. We are working strongly with the Commonwealth in that space as well to ensure that we can do that over time and have much better information so that we can look at what those outcomes are.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** What does the actual benchmark look like? What do you think it is going to be? What is the expectation?

**Ms HARRISSON:** So we won't have that. I think that would be for us to make hypotheses on information we have not yet collected, Mr D'Adam. I am very happy to share with you on notice where that benchmarking and data provision is up to. One of the reasons we have been working through this is there is a number of ways that schools already collect some of this data. Some of our high schools already provide surveys, for example, and there are a number of different data collection methods in place. We are trying to evaluate which of those provides the most effective measure of success here but, as we have said, under the School Success Model ensuring effective pathways for students as they leave school has to be one of the measures of success of the school system. That is the commitment we have made and that we are committed to delivering, so it will involve a measure that assesses how many and the proportion of students that are going on to further education, further study, or are in employment.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Thank you. When will that be available, sorry?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am happy to provide details of where we are up to on notice, Mr D'Adam. I am conscious of time.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Harrisson, haven't you already got a measure in this field on page 32 of the annual report where it notes a sharp drop, a noticeable drop, in the proportion of 15- to 19-year-olds, so school leavers, staying in employment or study? It has dropped from nearly 90 per cent to 86 per cent in the past two years.

**Ms HARRISSON:** We do have system level measures. What we are looking for, Chair, is something that we can apply down at a school level, that next level of granularity, because, as I know you have been particularly interested in, this is part of the School Success Model and the accountability that goes with that for our schools and through our system.

**The CHAIR:** Are we getting any closer to addressing the problem that I have raised several times now of 13- or 14-year-olds, more typically boys, disengaging from the learning process in high school and wanting to pursue vocational opportunities that just are not available to them in the school system at the moment?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Certainly I think the success of the EPPP we referenced earlier is a great demonstration of the work we are doing in this area to ensure those opportunities are there. Certainly on my visits to schools that have the EPPP, meeting with a careers adviser who is a long-serving member of our teaching profession and has been a careers adviser for a long time, she commented particularly how that program has engaged students in a way she had not seen before and was very excited to see the expansion both in her own school but also to other schools.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Well, hopefully it will turn that data around on page 32 of the annual report in the aggregate. How many New South Wales schools are receiving the tailored support program at the moment?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I might ask Ms Walker to provide some detailed information around that. We have been working with our schools most in need of that support and have been rolling through the tailored support and the evidence for it. I would also just flag we have improved the guidance to all schools that is available—I think it was referenced by Mr Withey earlier—through the reading and numeracy hub, in particular, that provides a very curated set of resources very much based in evidence for our schools to draw on. It is the first place we expect our schools to go for that support in reading and numeracy. But Ms Walker may be able to provide specific details on the strategic support being provided to those schools.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** Is this Ms Walker's first question?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Yes, it is her first question. We wanted to make sure everyone had a turn.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Come in, Ms Walker. How many schools are in the tailored support program, please?

**Ms WALKER:** We have the universal support program, the guided support and then the strategic support, which is the most intensive and customised. There are 56 schools who are receiving that strategic level support, remembering that that is really a customised and hand-on assistance for those schools. Then we have another 397 schools who are engaged in the guided support where they really are looking for targeted guidance and utilising the universal resources but usually in a focused area. We also have 122 schools who are receiving that guidance support to improve attendance at their schools. But we do expect with the return to school and the greater focus on reaching our targets in 2022 that we will be looking to increase those numbers.

**Ms HARRISSON:** And so to deliver—

**The CHAIR:** And has it always been broken into those three categories—strategic support, guidance support and guidance for attendance?

**Ms HARRISSON:** In terms of the School Success Model, the thing that we are seeking to do is provide the most support to the schools with the most challenging targets to achieve. That is the appropriate way for us to deploy our resources. And so as part of the implementation of that model we are applying that categorisation across the broad range of support we provide to schools; so, for attendance, for literacy and numeracy. In terms of things like behaviour, the behavioural specialist will be providing the most support in a kind of intensive way to those schools that need it most. So it is a way of us trying to make clear for our schools where they go for the evidence, where they get the best support they need if they have got significant improvements to make and provides our directors' educational leadership with a suite of resources and tools to engage with their schools on to ensure they can deliver those targets.

**The CHAIR:** Is there any data or evaluation to see how it is going in terms of results, that it is actually turning these schools around? Or what do we know about the successes and failures of the three streams so far?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Chair, the strategic support is built off the tailored support model we initially spoke to this Committee about a few years ago. The indications around those schools are that we did see a lift and have some good case studies that we can share in relation to how that intensive support paid dividends. That is why we have moved that into a systemic approach and into an approach where if we identify that you have the need we will provide that support. The tailored support, I think you will recall, was a voluntary engagement with us and a negotiated requirement. The strategic support, if you are identified as having a large gap to target, is now part of what the department comes to provide in support of achieving those targets. So there is a shift in the way we have delivered that. We have evaluative models built into the delivery of that program from the design up. So it is being evaluated as we go. I am very happy to share with you what we have so far and to share with you the evaluative approach on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, thank you for that on notice. In the 56 strategic support schools, in how many instances has the school leadership been changed?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Our first focus throughout the organisation is trying to improve performance. That is our focus at this stage in those schools and we are confident with the quality and the evidence base of the support that we are providing, that we will be able to do that. In terms of the specific relations to those individuals' performance, it will be something that we will return to if we are unable to see the lift that we are envisaging.

**The CHAIR:** At this stage, none?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Not in relation directly to those receiving strategic support. You will recall, Chair, that one of the things that we have been clear about in this reform is the shared accountability across the whole system, delivering that strategic support and ensuring that our schools can access the evidence-based practice and support to implement that in their schools as part of the system's responsibility under that model and something that we take our accountability for very seriously. Our first step is to ensure we are delivering that support to the school. The Directors, Educational Leadership [DELs] are involved in ongoing conversations with leaders throughout the system about their own development needs and performance to ensure that we are an organisation that continues to learn and continues to improve.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Cachia, earlier on notice you said you were going come back to the Committee today about the number of non-teaching staff who might be stood down next Monday. Have you got that please?

**Ms CACHIA:** I have even more updated figures. Just to point out as well and clarify, there is a difference between staff who have not attested and the number of staff who will be stood down. At the moment what we do know, in terms of people who are unvaccinated, are the people who have actually attested that they are unvaccinated in the system. There is a bit of nuance around that. I will give you some updated numbers here: teaching staff, 97.3 per cent are vaccinated, 0.7 per cent, or 514, have attested that they are not vaccinated; casuals, 30, 0.7 per cent have attested they are not vaccinated; school administration and support staff—that is, short-term and temporary SASS—261 have attested that they are vaccinated yet, 0.1 per cent; short-term temporary SASS, 14 people, 0.5 per cent; and corporate 62, 1.1 per cent. Those are the up-to-date figures, which are likely to move, as I said, again today.

**The CHAIR:** Sixty-two in corporate?

**Ms CACHIA:** Sixty-two have said that they are not vaccinated at the moment, bearing in mind that they have another week. Corporate, in fact, is a little bit different obviously to the public health order.

**The CHAIR:** Because that mandate has just started?

**Ms CACHIA:** That is correct, Chair. Anybody going on to a school site has to be vaccinated.

**The CHAIR:** Secretary, just while we have been here today my office has received three correspondences from concerned parents about arrangements for year 12 graduations and leaving events. They are students who have left the school. Will it be a requirement for students attending those events to be double vaccinated?

**Ms HARRISSON:** In terms of those events, it will be a requirement that they are held in a COVID-safe way in line with existing health orders. Given the current health orders only allow vaccinated members of the community to participate in those gatherings, that will apply to the year 12 gatherings, as is required under the public health order. We do not have any exception under the health order for year 12 gatherings under those requirements.

**The CHAIR:** Right, so that catches students aged 17 and 18 hoping to go to their school leaving event?

**Ms HARRISSON:** That is my current understanding. Ms Owen who has been leading this work for us and might be able to provide any further information on that.

**The CHAIR:** It seems a bit harsh, does it not? How long have these 17-year-olds been eligible in the program? This is a culmination of their 13 years of schooling.

**Ms HARRISSON:** I would like to have Ms Owen provide the latest guidance. We have been working with Health day in, day out, to make sure we have appropriate measures in place. So the guidance has moved quite regularly.

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms OWEN:** I will provide a detailed response on notice, Chair. But as you say, we are doing our best to enable every student to have some form of rite of passage—a graduation or formal. It will depend on the site of the event, whether that is on-school site, off-school site, indoors or outdoors, but there are means if schools follow our COVID-safe rules that unvaccinated students can attend their graduation or formal.

**The CHAIR:** When do you hope to finalise that advice because naturally these families are quite distressed about it?

**Ms OWEN:** No, sorry, Chair, the guidance is out. I am just saying it is a quite complex guidance to read out to you today.

**The CHAIR:** So they have a better chance of attending if it is an on-school grounds event than, say, at the local licensed club?

**Ms HARRISSON:** And if it is outdoors.

**The CHAIR:** And if it is outdoors.

**Ms OWEN:** And there are no unvaccinated adults.

**Ms HARRISSON:** In terms of if schools are seeking to use off-site venues for those events, they will need to abide by the rules of that venue in terms of its COVID-safe plan.

**The CHAIR:** The Labor Opposition. While I have a short break the Deputy Chair will officiate.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I want to ask about the delivery of before and after school care hubs. How many schools now do not have a before and after school care service?

**Ms HARRISSON:** While Mr Manning locates the data, I think one of the things I would like to share with the Committee is obviously the before and after school sector has been impacted by changes in work, hybrid working arrangements, working-from-home arrangements and so we have seen changes in demand for before and after school care. Despite that, we have still seen an increase in the number of services and an increase in the number of places which, I think, is testament to the work the team has been doing to ensure we can provide that service to the families of New South Wales. I will let Mr Manning give you the details on the sites.

**Mr MANNING:** Yes, there are 1,796 schools as part of the plan. So 807 schools have a service on site, 733 schools have one close by—so two kilometres if you are in a major city or 20 kilometre if you are not. There are only 256 schools that do not have a service nearby.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Can you provide a list of those schools on notice?

**Mr MANNING:** Sure.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** How long is this section?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** We finish at 5.15 p.m.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** Right. Are you going through to the end? I have not got a problem with that.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Yes, we are going through.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** Sorry, 5.15 pm was very large in my thoughts.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** We are almost there, Trevor. It is okay.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How many schools have now got transport in place to get students to and from off-site providers, or other school providers?

**Mr MANNING:** I would need to take that on notice.

**Ms HARRISSON:** I just add, particularly in our metro schools—and my daughter's own public school comes to mind—they are walking distance from the school site and are provided in a local facility that is more suitable from the provider or the school's perspective to deliver that service.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Councils provide spaces for these services to be run close by to where I live as well. I understand that. How much of the \$50 million fund for public schools to upgrade or expand their facility has been allocated?

**Ms HARRISSON:** We might need to take that specific question on notice.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Yes, sure. And if you can then just provide a breakdown of which schools have received it and how much they have received?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Yes, certainly.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** And you have taken on notice the 256 schools with no before and after school care. I turn to the tutoring program. An amount of \$337 million was announced for 2020-21 and that is going to be \$383 million in 2021-22. Is that correct?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I believe that is correct. Ms Owen? Yes.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Will the rollout of the program just be done in exactly the same way, or are you doing an evaluation of the 2021 program?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I will ask Ms Owen to comment in a moment. We are obviously looking at the variation in need. Following this year's lockdown period, different schools have had a very different experience. Our south-west Sydney schools have been under a very specific and tougher lockdown. Our metropolitan schools have been in lockdown for an extended period and other schools have found themselves in and out of learning from home for shorter periods so we are looking at the need requirements. But Ms Owen can provide further details on where that work is up to.

**Ms OWEN:** Yes. Thank you, Secretary. Ms Houssos, we are in the middle of designing the program for 2022 right now. We are hoping to finalise that in the next couple of weeks, both building on the evaluation that we have been able to do so far of this year's tutoring program—what has worked well with our students and with our teachers but also, as the secretary has just said, to recognise this year's COVID experience across New South Wales which has been different from last year. We just want to design maximum value for that investment before we allocate it to schools later this term.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Ms Owen, at this stage are you looking at doing it differently or are you looking at doing it in the same way that it was done this year?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Ms Houssos, we are evaluating all of the options at this stage and it will be obviously subject to further decision-making on our recommendations by Government about the approach that is taken.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Okay. Can I ask you specifically—and I am happy for you to take this on notice—about whether you are looking at a different way? For example, I know that a number of schools have provided short periods for large numbers of students. Were you looking at instead providing more intensive support for longer periods but for fewer numbers of students?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Very happy to take that on notice. I would only comment today that schools have approached their implementation locally of the COVID intensive learning support program based on the need of

their student cohort. In terms of whether a school would again choose to invest in a short sharp intervention for a large cohort of students, that would be based on an assessment of need in that cohort of students by that school. So what Ms Owen and we are looking at is the system distribution of those funds and then schools would work with their director of educational leadership, but would largely be looking at the progress and impact of COVID on their student cohort and ensuring that the design of the program in their school with the resources allocated met the needs of their students.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Thanks, Ms Harrison. My colleague has something from a couple of minutes ago.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I have a few more questions.

**The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN:** You don't have to if you don't want to.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Oh no, I definitely want to ask. In 2021 how many hours of learning have been lost in New South Wales because classes did not have a teacher to stand in front of them?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am happy to ask Ms Cachia to provide some further details on that. In terms of lost learning, I do not know that we would fully accept the premise of that question, Mr D'Adam, because in whatever form is required classes are formed and children are taught. I just want to make sure that if, for example, due to a school being unable to find a casual on a particular day for a particular class, we would not assume that is a day of lost learning if those students are, for example, split between different classes and receive instruction in a different way. But I will see if Ms Cachia can provide you with some details on that.

**Ms CACHIA:** Mr D'Adam, I will take the numbers that you are seeking on notice.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Okay.

**Ms CACHIA:** But can I just say as well that when you are talking about schools with permanent vacancies and, for instance, action that has been taken in relation to what we were discussing this morning—the staffing as it was categorised as a staffing crisis—most of those schools have only one vacancy, if any, and so—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I have limited time, Ms Cachia, and I have a couple of other questions. That was not an answer to the question I was after. Do you have a general sense of the number of merged classes that have occurred across primary schools and high schools? Do you measure that, the number of merged classes?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I am very happy to take it on notice and come back to you with any information that we have on that. I think the view that Ms Cachia was trying to provide for you in her previous answer was that where we have seen action in relation to the staffing issues that I think you are referring to, when we have looked into those the data that has been presented by the school or by representatives of teachers in those schools it has not aligned with our own records.

**Ms CACHIA:** I would just supplement what the secretary has just said there by referring you, Mr D'Adam, to our colleagues Mr Dizdar and Ms Nixon for a local perspective and also noting that, clearly—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I suppose the question really is, if you do not have the data, that is fine—

**Ms CACHIA:** We do but it is obviously—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** —or it is not consistent or accurate.

**Ms CACHIA:** We have got 2,200 schools so clearly the situation changes on the ground on a daily basis. So I think the question is probably best put to my colleagues.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is it fair to say that there is not a consistent dataset on this question of merged classes?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I would like to ask Ms Nixon to comment on this and how it works in practice in a school, but the decision made on any given day by a school on how they are going to address an unexpected absence, for example, will be made by that school based on their circumstances and the needs of the day and Ms Nixon can provide—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The question is about whether you collect that data centrally. The answer is no?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Given that each school would choose to do different things at different times, it is not an easy thing to gather on a standardised dataset, but Ms Nixon can provide some examples of how this works in practice.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Actually, I have got another further question. I have very limited time. I just want to ask about the Teacher Supply Strategy. Was that strategy prepared through a contract with a private consultancy?

**Ms HARRISSON:** No. The strategy was developed by staff in the department. Certainly, we may have sought and used some external provision for advice in relation to components of it. I think we talked earlier about the use of Deloitte Access Economics on our workforce modelling as an organisation with deep expertise in workforce modelling. We have sought appropriate external expertise where it has been required to support the development of particular elements of our work.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** On notice, could you provide the details for any contractors that were involved in the preparation of this strategy and the value of the contracts?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Certainly.

**Ms CACHIA:** They are disclosed in the annual report, Mr D'Adam.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Yep, and so I think that anything that was used in 2020 would be public in our annual report currently and any further would be published proactively in our annual report at the end of this year.

**The CHAIR:** We have six minutes left. Mr Shoebridge has notified he will not be coming back. I have just got a couple of questions.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** Did you frighten him off?

**The CHAIR:** No. He notified me. I would never write him off. He is just said that he is not coming back. I hope it is not because of me.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** No. I do not think so.

**The CHAIR:** No. I think I have been very considerate. Minister, how does the department—I am sorry, Minister. Secretary—I cannot promote you too much at this stage—how does the department devise its policy for requirements on parental consent at the school?

**Ms HARRISSON:** I might ask Ms Owen to provide some details specifically, but the requirements for a school to engage with their parent body are set out in the Education Act.

**The CHAIR:** No, I mean for things like sporting carnivals, school excursions.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Normal practice of events would be a permission form was sent home, either electronically or physically, to collect that consent from a parent for a particular activity. Some schools might do that in bulk at the beginning of the year and list all of the activities that are planned for the year and ask a parent to declare up-front which activities they wanted their child to take part in.

**The CHAIR:** Is there actually a department policy that guides that practice?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Yes, there is, and Mr Dizdar will be able to talk to the detail of that.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Dizdar?

**Mr DIZDAR:** Thank you, Chair. Yes, there are various policies that come into play here. There is the excursion policy and the voluntary contribution policy, so it is a variety of things. The secretary describes it really well. Either schools will issue a permission note for each of those activities and respect what comes back from parents, whether they want their child to participate in that activity or not. They are either held at school, which we call an incursion, or they are held outside of the school as an excursion.

**The CHAIR:** Oh yes.

**Mr DIZDAR:** We ask that our schools and leadership teams indicate to our families how it ties and fits in with the curriculum so that families can understand the learning intentions and objectives of that activity and then it is up to parents to decide. But what would also be of interest to the Chair and Committee is, if parents decide that their child will not partake in that activity, the school has to ensure that they provide the opportunity for that student or students at school to meet those learning outcomes through another activity that they provide because they are tied to syllabus, they are tied to learning objectives, scope and sequences. The final comment I make to the Committee is if a family is financially constrained or experiencing difficulty financially, student assistance exists so they are not precluded from being able to take part in that activity.

**The CHAIR:** Does the policy cover the growing number of gender and sexuality alliances inside schools? I asked the Minister about this at Merewether High School in Newcastle where parents need to give consent for their children to go to sports carnivals or an excursion to the zoo. But there was no requirement, according to the Minister, for parental consent for students to participate in the Gender and Sexualities Alliance [GSA] event for LGBTQUIAP. So 12-year-olds potentially at Merewether in year 7 learning transgender and pansexuality. Why does the policy not cover that?

**Mr DIZDAR:** We expect all our schools, all our teachers, all our leaders to execute the New South Wales syllabus in all of the core curriculum learning areas.

**The CHAIR:** This is a lunchtime support group; it is not in the syllabus. I am just saying why would the parent of a 12-year-old not have to give consent for the 12-year-old to participate in this activity, given that consent is needed to go to the zoo or to a swimming carnival?

**Mr DIZDAR:** I am not across the specifics but even with lunch and recess—

**The CHAIR:** I am just saying that the policy you have does not cover this sort of activity.

**Ms HARRISSON:** I think Mr Dizdar is referring to the excursion policy in particular. There are other policies that come into play that Mr Dizdar would be able to talk about in terms of notification—

**The CHAIR:** Will you take that on notice for me, please?

**Ms HARRISSON:** Yes, I am very happy to.

**The CHAIR:** I do not want to cut into the remaining Labor minutes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** More time, great. I want to ask Mr Martin about the progress of the curriculum review. Will you advise the Committee about where we are up to in the timeline for implementation?

**Mr MARTIN:** Thank you very much for the question, Mr D'Adam. As members of the Committee may be aware, we have had two pieces of consultation on the K-2 English and mathematics syllabuses. Those consultation processes have concluded. At the moment we are finalising the syllabuses for delivery imminently for schools to implement in 2022 for both full-scale implementation if a school so chooses or piloting and trialling various aspects of the K-2 syllabuses.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Mr Martin, where do we sit on the question of untimed syllabuses?

**Mr MARTIN:** The untimed syllabus issue was largely, I would suggest, laid to rest for the foreseeable future in the middle of last year. I think the NESA board advised the Minister not to pursue the untimed syllabus option. There was a suggestion, and I think we are still interested in seeing what untimed syllabuses may look like as a trial but work is still underway and has been probably held back a little by COVID and also by the focus on delivering K-2 syllabuses that are required at schools at the beginning of next year.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, it has been trialled at Lindfield and was mentioned in that report on Friday.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I now ask about the budget for implementation of the curriculum review. How much money has been allocated to that?

**Mr MARTIN:** To NESA, \$196 million has been allocated over the four years of the review implementation process. Most of that money has been assigned to the writing [inaudible] syllabuses. Quite a bit of it, I think 50—I will have to provide on notice all the specifics of the breakdown. This curriculum will be digital. There is an IT stream, there is a writing component and then there is a series of other consultation processes involved. There are over 100 syllabuses to produce.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Ms Harrisson, I refer to the budget for the implementation of the curriculum review for government schools.

**Ms HARRISSON:** Certainly, and I will ask Ms Owen to provide you with some specifics. We have been working hard with our stakeholders and representatives of the profession to ensure that we can provide the support our teachers need in the implementation of the curriculum review. We welcome the changes to the K-2 curriculum and, in particular, the focus on the evidence-based practice that is embedded within them and have been developing professional development to support effective implementation of those new documents when they reach schools in 2022. Ms Owen can provide you with some specifics around the budget.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** Briefly.

**Ms OWEN:** I will have to take on notice the actual budget.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Okay, that is fine, Ms Owen. I might move back to Mr Martin if you are going to take the figures on notice. Mr Martin what is the state of the Masters' curriculum review recommendations? Was Masters just a waste of time?

**Mr MARTIN:** Professor Masters' report and review was accepted by the NESA board. We provided advice to the Government and the response to the Masters' review came out from the Government last year. The Masters' review to some degree has been superseded by the Government's response. But Professor Masters provided New South Wales with significant advice in relation to particularly decluttering services to get the sequencing right to make sure that the basics were delivered in early years and that we understood 6 into 7 and senior secondary syllabuses could be best redeveloped for a maximum effect for students. There was a range of other recommendations in the Masters' review and work is currently underway at the moment. Over time, over the next few years significant numbers of the Masters' recommendations will be delivered.

**The CHAIR:** We will have to conclude. I thank all the officials. Other questions can be supplementary questions. I thank the officials from the Department of Education and NESA. I thank our secretariat and also Hansard for what has been a substantial and hopefully productive day. I thank everyone for their cooperation. We will see you next time, unless there are questions from the Government?

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** No, I think you can safely assume there are none. Were any documents tabled?

**The CHAIR:** Oh yes.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**The Committee proceeded to deliberate.**