

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2018-2019
TRANSCRIPT QUESTIONS
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION,
ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS,
ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR EDUCATION**

Portfolio Committee No. 3 – Education

QUESTION – PAGE 3

ASSESSMENT - 4% NOT ASSESSED - COURTNEY HOUSSOS

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am asking you: Can you guarantee that those 4 per cent of centres in New South Wales that have not been assessed by the Department of Education in New South Wales at all are all within their first 12 months of operation?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will have to take that on notice because it is a regulatory matter.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You cannot guarantee it?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I said I will take it on notice to get clarity around that for you.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many children then are attending centres in New South Wales that have not been assessed?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, I will take that on notice because I do not have that detail.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Ms Loble, do you have that answer?

Ms LOBLE: No, I will have to take that on notice as well. But can I just explain some of the additional processes we have. It might be of interest to the Committee. Any new service would have to go through an approvals process and outside of assessment and ratings we conduct compliance visits and spot checks. We investigate any incident —

ANSWER

As at 17 September 2018, 96% of services have been assessed and rated in NSW. The remaining 4% reflect services operating for their first 12 months, with the exception of 0.4% services that are currently subject to compliance action, including show cause to cancel service approval, which inhibits the ability to conduct assessment and rating.

The department does not have access to attendance data.

QUESTION – PAGES 4 AND 5

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN ECE CENTRES THAT HAVEN'T BEEN ASSESSED - COURTNEY HOUSSOS

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: My question is very clear: How many children in New South Wales are in centres that have not been assessed in the last five years?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will have to take the specifics of that on notice because I do not have those figures.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You do not have that information before you?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, I do not.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Ms Loble, do you have that information?

Ms LOBLE: Enrolments fluctuate by year, but I am happy to provide that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, I am informed that this amounts to up to 59,700 students.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, I will take that question on notice in terms of the figure.

I do not know whether what you are saying is accurate, so I cannot—

ANSWER

Information regarding children enrolled in long day care, family day care, and outside school hours care is held by the Commonwealth Government.

New South Wales has assessed and rated 96% of services, higher than any other jurisdiction.

QUESTION - PAGE 6

EDUCATION COUNCIL MEETING

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What was the date of that Education Council meeting?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will have to take that on notice.

ANSWER

22 June, 2018.

QUESTION – PAGE 8

MS NAOMI WILLIAMS - TUMUT HOSPITAL - WALT SECORD

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I am getting to the point now. The mother said that her daughter was treated with disrespect and unprofessionally because she was a young Aboriginal woman. This case has been taken up by the National Justice Project, and there is going to be a coroner's inquest on 17 September into this.

I would like to know, will the Department of Aboriginal Affairs be sending a representative to the inquest?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will let Mr Ardler answer, but I am sure you will direct detailed questions around that process to the relevant Ministers when you have the opportunity.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I just figured that because—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Point of order: You have spent the last 10 minutes asking a question and giving an in-depth commentary. I ask that you give the Minister the opportunity to answer the question you have asked.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I was going to add that, obviously, I extend very deep sympathies to the mother. It must be a very traumatic time for her. I know that there is support available for families going through those inquests through the relevant departments. But I will ask Mr Ardler to provide any extra on that.

Mr ARDLER: We could take the specific question on notice.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: So you have not heard of this case?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: He has already answered that question.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: That is not what you said earlier. Now you say you have heard of the case.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If I can, Chair, Mr Ardler said that he did not have the specific details of that. He is answering the question. I think we should let him do that with a bit of respect, given the subject matter.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Okay, yes.

Mr ARDLER: What I would normally do would be to take advice from local staff who would know the family or would know the community and that is what I will do in this case and I will take that specific question on notice.

ANSWER

Aboriginal Affairs has not been approached by the family or the community to have a representative attend the inquest, therefore it would not be appropriate for staff to attend.

QUESTION – PAGE 9

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY – INDIGENOUS – FRED NILE

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: In the discussion about children and so on, of the children known to struggle with disabilities, how many are from Indigenous backgrounds?

Ms LOBLE: We can take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, I will take that on notice in terms of the breakdown whether we have got that data. Obviously we have figures around those children who have received support at our preschool services through Disability, but I do not have the breakdown of that with me. I will see if it is available for you.

ANSWER

Numbers of children with disability in early childhood education fluctuate.

Using information provided by community preschools, as at March 2018, approximately 13.7% of children reported to have disability and additional needs in community-based preschools were identified as also being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

QUESTION – PAGE 10

ECE CENTRES – DISABILITY - FRED NILE

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: How many early childhood education centres exist in New South Wales that specifically cater for preschool children with disabilities?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Every early childhood service has the ability to have children who have additional needs is my understanding. I have certainly visited some centres that do really pride themselves on taking a higher level of children with additional needs but whether there is a breakdown of specific ones I might take that on notice to see what information there is for you, Reverend.

ANSWER

All early childhood education services in NSW are required to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Disability Standards for Education 2005, which provides a framework to ensure that all children with disability are able to access and participate in education on the same basis as their peers.

Further, the guidelines for Start Strong funding for community-based preschools state that services are required to give priority of access to children with disability and additional needs.

The Disability and Inclusion Program commenced in January 2018, providing additional funding and support to children with a disability and additional needs in community based preschools to participate in the education program on the same basis as their peers.

QUESTION – PAGE 12

ABORIGINAL ARTISTS PEAK BODY - DAWN WALKER

Ms DAWN WALKER: It appears that unlike other States, there is no peak body for Aboriginal artists in New South Wales. Are you aware of that?

Mr ARDLER: There is a newish Aboriginal peak body around the arts and cultural institutions. It was set up, I think, under the auspices of Museums & Galleries of NSW, or something to that effect. But I can certainly get the detail on that.

Ms DAWN WALKER: If you could, I would be very interested in that.

Mr ARDLER: Yes, absolutely.

Ms DAWN WALKER: What is the department doing to ensure Aboriginal artists, particularly in regional areas, are seeing not only the creative but also the economic benefits from their art? Is the department working on that?

Mr ARDLER: Not specifically. It is a matter for Arts NSW and Destination NSW.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It is probably a question better directed to the Minister for the Arts. But I will take it on notice and see if we can find any more information. It may be that we will need to ask his agency and office for advice, but I am happy to take it on notice and find what we can for you.

ANSWER

This question should be directed to the Minister for Arts.

QUESTION – PAGE 13

COMMONWEALTH FUNDING CUT - COURTNEY HOUSSOS

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Where did it come from within the department?

Ms LOBLE: I will have to take that on notice in terms of the particular—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, if the money has been reallocated from within the department, who is missing out?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We said we would take that question on notice in terms of the specifics.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You knew that the money had been reallocated from within the department. Where had it been reallocated from?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We have said we would take that question on notice. We have answered that question.

ANSWER

The funding was allocated from within departmental resources.

QUESTION – PAGES 14 AND 15

FUNDING FOR 3 YEAR OLDS - COURTNEY HOUSSOS

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes. I am asking how many three-year-olds across New South Wales are you planning to access what you call universal funding.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am going to take the specifics of that one on notice because, as I said, I do not think I understand the premise of your question properly.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: This was the signature announcement of your budget.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, and I have said that what we will do—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You are offering—

The CHAIR: The Minister said she would take it on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many three-year-olds do you expect to use your program next year?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, the specifics of that I will take on notice. The reason why is that we have the budget announcement of the extra almost \$200 million over the next four years; that includes capital components if services would like to extend the number of places that they have available.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I was saying, there are opportunities for capital to increase the number of places, which would include three-year-olds. There will be enrolments within services, which will include three-year-olds. To give you the most accurate advice, I would like to take the specifics on notice because now that the funding has been announced, services know that there is support for all families, regardless of background and income, to access this in community preschools for their three-year-olds. The specific numbers will come into play as we collect that data, so I will take it on notice to give you the most accurate answer.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: My question, which you can also take on notice, is what proportion of three-year-olds across New South Wales will then be expected to utilise this funding?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: It is the same question.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, I will take the specifics on notice to get you the most accurate data in relation to that.

ANSWER

From 1 January 2019 the extension of Start Strong will provide funding to support all three-year-old children in community preschools in accessing 600 hours.

A demand based model means that the proportion of three-year-old children in NSW accessing the yearly funding allocated to Start Strong will correspond with child population and enrolment increases.

QUESTION – PAGE 18

ANTI-VACCINATION - WALT SECORD

The Hon. WALT SECORD: In the last budget year, how many childcare centres in New South Wales came to your attention for paperwork that was insufficient or having unvaccinated children on the premises?

Ms LOBLE: I am sorry, I will have to take that on notice.

ANSWER

Immunisation requirements fall under the *Public Health Act 2010*. The Department of Education has an agreement with NSW Health to check the immunisation register at each early childhood education and care service that it visits. If the department identifies any potential non-compliance, NSW Health is alerted to conduct further investigation.

QUESTION - PAGE 18

DROUGHT RELIEF – COURTNEY HOUSSOS

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I note that on 30 July this year the Premier and the Deputy Premier announced a drought package of \$500 million. What specific initiatives were in that package for Aboriginal people?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I would have to take that on notice, if the package has come through the Department of Primary Industries and the Premier. Obviously there is a lot of whole-of-government support for regional communities and that support goes to everyone who lives in regional communities; the package does not distinguish. I can take specifics on notice.

ANSWER

This question should be directed to the Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry.

QUESTION – PAGE 22

BUTTERFLY CAVE – DAWN WALKER

Ms DAWN WALKER: Are you able to liaise with the Minister and come back to this Committee with information on where it is at?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am happy to take that on notice. I have raised it with her and our office has certainly spoken about it but I will take it on notice to see if there is any more that I can give you or more that I can do.

Ms DAWN WALKER: You can report back.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am happy to do that.

ANSWER

Ongoing management of the Butterfly Cave at West Wallsend is a matter for Minister Upton and the Office of Environment and Heritage as the cave is an Aboriginal Place under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974.

I receive ongoing advice from Aboriginal Affairs about the status of the cave. I will continue to raise any Aboriginal community concerns I receive with Minister Upton.

QUESTION – PAGES 23 AND 24

AWABAKAL LALC AND THE BUTTERFLY CAVE – DAWN WALKER

Ms DAWN WALKER: Is that land council responsible for the area of the Butterfly Cave?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will have to take that on notice.

Ms DAWN WALKER: I suggest it may well be. Could you take that on notice and get back to me?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes. I am not sure of the specific boundaries and whether that is included but I will check.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Has the Minister liaised with the local Aboriginal land council in the vicinity of the Butterfly Cave about the issue there?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have to take that on notice about what contact has been made.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Would you see it as appropriate that you liaise with the local Aboriginal land council responsible for that development?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said earlier, because the primary responsibility for that falls to Minister Upton my ability to influence that is very limited. If I am not able to provide that assistance as the Minister not responsible, then there are certainly things that I would consider as to the benefit of that contact. I can check for you or if the department has had any correspondence with them about that matter. I will take it on notice.

ANSWER

The Butterfly Cave is within the Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Council's (LALC) boundary.

Ongoing management of the Butterfly Cave is a matter for Minister Upton and the Office of Environment and Heritage as the cave is an Aboriginal Place under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974.