

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2018
MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE DURING THE HEARING

QUESTION – PAGE 2 – THE HON. LYNDA VOLTZ

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Minister, what is the utilisation rate at Birrong Boys High School?

Mr ROB STOKES: Birrong Boys is one of the schools that we have announced planning for an expansion, which I am very pleased about. In terms of the utilisation rate at present, I will refer to the secretary.

Mr SCOTT: We will take that on notice.

ANSWER

I'm advised that the utilisation rate for Birrong Boys High School is 52% as has been publicly released.

QUESTION – PAGE 4 – THE HON. LYNDA VOLTZ

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: How many staff are there at Toongabbie East Public School?

Mr DIZDAR: —our support strong to that school and to keep building community confidence in the school. In terms of the number of staff, I would have to take that on notice. I do not have the exact figure in front of me. I am happy to provide that to the Committee. Toongabbie East is not unique. We are a large system of 2,200 schools. We work with all our schools to support their growth in students numbers, community confidence and execution as we best provide outcomes for the young learners we provide for each day.

ANSWER

I'm advised that there are 9.485 full time equivalent (FTE) positions at Toongabbie East Public School.

QUESTION – PAGE 4 – THE HON. JOHN GRAHAM

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, are you happy to table that new enrolment policy that you referred to earlier in your answer?

Mr ROB STOKES: Sure, I am happy to table documents relating to our enrolment policy.

ANSWER

The Department of Education's Enrolment policy is located on the department's website at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/enrolment-of-students-in-nsw-government-schools-a-summary-and-consolidation-of-policy>

QUESTION – PAGES 4-5 – THE HON. JOHN GRAHAM

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: The question is, how many consultants does more than \$5 million buy the Department of Education?

Mr SCOTT: Of course it varies—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Just give us a ballpark figure.

Mr SCOTT: Let me explain to you why it is a complex issue. Take that Deloitte report, for example—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: It is a very specific question, Mr Scott. If you want to take it on notice—

Mr SCOTT: I am trying to draw the distinction between consultancies—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I understand what you are trying to do.

Mr SCOTT: No, I am trying to draw the distinction between consultancies and consultants. You asked me about consultants; consultants come under consultancies. Take that Deloitte report, for example. That Deloitte report—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am happy for you to take your answer on notice.

Mr SCOTT: No, I have to have an answer for you.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I understand that. I will take that on notice.

ANSWER

I'm advised that while the whole of government commercial framework determines capped rates for the engagement of consultancy and related services, the cost of any single engagement will depend on the nature of that engagement, its duration and the particular expertise required to deliver the expected outcomes.

QUESTION – PAGE 5 – THE HON. JOHN GRAHAM

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I understand that. I will take that on notice. Minister, I understand that there are about 90 people employed by the Department of Education Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. Do you believe that figure is about right?

Mr ROB STOKES: I will refer to the secretary for the precise number. I am not sure of that off the top of my head.

Mr SCOTT: Yes, that sounds about right. I can get the precise number to you on notice, but it is over 90.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: The specifics on notice would be helpful.

Mr SCOTT: Yes.

ANSWER

I'm advised that the number of employees in the Department of Education's Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) is 126 FTE.

QUESTION – PAGE 7 – THE HON. JOHN GRAHAM

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: How many schools have hired a business manager?

Mr ROB STOKES: I would take that on notice, and the reason, so I can provide context, is that of course it will depend on the size of the school as to whether they felt that they required a complete business manager or whether across a few campuses, it—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Give us a ballpark, though, Minister. How many schools?

Mr ROB STOKES: I will continue to provide this context. Some schools will employ a business manager across a single campus. Smaller schools may join their funding together because they do not require a business manager just for their single school. I will provide the exact number—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: To that point, how many business managers have been employed, then?

Mr ROB STOKES: I will provide the exact answer on notice.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Mr Scott, in this conversation did the number of business managers who have been employed come up? How many business managers?

Mr SCOTT: I discussed, yes, because in the conversation—I am happy to give you detail—it was the great diversity of responses that schools had made that I think was noteworthy. You have case studies of a number of smaller schools that have banded together to get a business manager or a large school that has one.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: If you cannot tell us the number, we might move on, Mr Scott.

Mr SCOTT: But also there were other very significant—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I welcome you providing the number, but if you cannot provide the number today—

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: It was a very specific question.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am happy for you to take it on notice.

Mr SCOTT: Yes, but I want to present the views of our principals because this money was for them.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Take it on notice.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: No, we want you to answer the questions that we are actually asking you, and the question was how many?

Mr SCOTT: We have taken that one on notice

ANSWER

I'm advised that 190 schools have engaged a Business Manager as at 6 September 2018. A total of 171 Business Managers are working across the 190 schools.

QUESTION – PAGES 8 TO 9 – REV THE HON. FRED NILE

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Leaving aside that particular person I quoted, Dr Elizabeth Riley, because of this situation have you sought any advice within your department from Western Sydney University Professor of Paediatrics Dr John Whitehall, who said, quoted in this article, "... there has been little research into the effects of transitioning on young children", and that the age people were allowed to start should be raised to 18. "What happens", he says, "when these vulnerable young people in the cold and lonely years of adulthood have left the arms of gender dysphoria experts when they felt that they had changed their sex?"

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Will you or the Minister have a meeting with Dr Whitehall and let him share his concerns with you so that you have it firsthand?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, I am happy to take that on notice. I will take advice from the department whether they have already met with him.

ANSWER

I'm advised that the Department of Education is available to meet with Dr John Whitehall. To facilitate a meeting, contact can be made with Ms Lisa Alonso Love, Executive Director, Learning and Wellbeing.

QUESTION – PAGE 11 – REV THE HON. FRED NILE

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Can you update the Committee on the progress of the Department of Education's digital upgrade?

Mr ROB STOKES: I will refer that question to the secretary.

Mr SCOTT: As far as Special Religious Education [SRE] is concerned?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Yes.

Mr SCOTT: I may have to take that question on notice.

ANSWER

I'm advised that there is no digital upgrade for Special Religious Education.

QUESTION – PAGE 11, 12 and 13 – THE HON. LYNDA VOLTZ

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: I will continue with the line of questioning I was pursuing about when the ethics forms will be changed.

Ms HARRISSON: As the Minister has already said, we are in consultation with stakeholders to review the enrolment process for Special Religious Education and Special Education in Ethics. The options for student participation in SRE and SEE vary from school to school. Specific advice about these options is always available to parents from their local school.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: But, Minister, you said in June that you support changing the enrolment form. It is now September. When will it be changed? Enrolments are happening now, or the process is being undertaken.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Is this a question of how long is a piece of string? There must be a cut-off date—that is, the time by which schools need to start getting their enrolment forms ready and by which your consultations must end. What is that date?

Mr ROB STOKES: We will make sure it is done before that time.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: That is nice, but I would like to know when it is.

Mr ROB STOKES: I will take that question on notice.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: You have no idea?

Mr ROB STOKES: In terms of the final cut-off date for enrolment, I will provide that on notice.

ANSWER

I'm advised that:

The Department of Education is currently consulting with stakeholders to review the enrolment process for Special Religious Education and Special Education in Ethics. Schools will be advised of any changes.

Enrolments are open for students throughout the year, there is no cut-off date.

QUESTION – PAGE 13 – THE HON. JOHN GRAHAM

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: In mid-2017 there were 24,391 enrolments in support classes and schools for specific purposes. In your view, how many more schools for specific purposes are needed in New South Wales?

Mr ROB STOKES: Your colleague just referred to how long is a piece of string. It depends on the number of enrolments. My vision is to make public education as inclusive as possible, while recognising that that needs to be balanced against parental choice and respecting that choice. It must also recognise that there are some schools for specific purpose that have particular infrastructure that cannot feasibly be rolled out in every comprehensive school across the State, and hydrotherapy pools are a good example.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I understand. The department provides two training modules on disability standards that cover legislation on discrimination and teacher responsibilities. How many teachers have completed both modules?

Mr ROB STOKES: I will have to provide the precise number on notice.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: No worries. It was a very low number, but we would be interested to know how many have completed it.

Mr ROB STOKES: I agree with the premise of your question. This is an issue that was raised in the upper House inquiry into education for children with a disability. I have also spoken to the teacher education providers about their courses.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: If you can update us on that number. Is it compulsory for principals now to receive disability training? They are encouraged to do it; is it compulsory?

Mr ROB STOKES: Again, I will refer to the secretary.

Mr SCOTT: We will take that on notice.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: All right—as surely it should be. If you could take that on notice as well.

Mr ROB STOKES: In principle, I agree. My only caution in saying that is principals have a lot of administrative tasks and duties. I would be very wary about adding to that burden.

ANSWER

I'm advised that:

Training on the Disability Standards for Education is available to all staff in NSW public schools through two modules. More than 22,610 school staff have completed both modules, including 18,422 teachers.

Since Semester 2, 2017, all aspiring principals are required to complete the NSW Public School Leadership and Management credential, in order to apply for the role, or under certain circumstances complete it concurrently in their induction period. One of the credential modules requires demonstrated knowledge of the Disability Standards for Education. The Department of Education is continuing to explore how training for principals around disability can best be addressed.

QUESTION – PAGE 13 – THE HON. JOHN GRAHAM

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: When will the assisted transport review be completed?

Mr ROB STOKES: I will defer to the secretary.

Ms HARRISSON: Could you clarify which review you are referring to, please?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am asking about the assisted transport review. Do you want to take that on notice if you are uncertain which review?

Ms HARRISSON: Yes. I would welcome clarity on the review you are seeking if there is a specific review you are seeking.

ANSWER

I'm advised that there is no review of the Assisted School Travel Program currently being undertaken by the Department of Education.

QUESTION – PAGE 14-15 – THE HON. JOHN GRAHAM

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I accept some of those complexities. I would simply say there is plenty of money around in the system at the moment so let us set that aside for the moment. But are you satisfied at the moment that this is legal under the department's responsibilities under disability discrimination? Some kids are getting these services; some kids are not. Arguably, the kids who need careers advice, PE and counselling the most are the ones who are not getting it. How is that legal? Have you satisfied yourself of the department's legal obligations in the twenty-first century to give these kids an equal chance?

Mr ROB STOKES: In terms of legal opinion, I had best take that on notice.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Thank you for that, Mr Scott. We are going to have to move on in light of the time. Minister, my question to you is: Would you be prepared to go away and reassure yourself that under the disability obligations of schools we are not massively exposed in the State of New South Wales for failing to deliver these services to these kids? Will you give us that assurance that you will seek that clarification from your department?

Mr ROB STOKES: I will obviously seek to provide answers to all the questions you ask. The secretary has already touched quite heavily on these issues but I am happy to provide further details on those.

ANSWER

I'm advised that:

The *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (s.49L(2)) and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (s.22(2)) make it unlawful to discriminate against a student by denying him or her access, or limiting his or her access, to any benefit provided by a school.

The lawful requirement is to not treat students with disability to their detriment as a result of their disability. For example, it would be directly discriminatory to not give career counselling to a disabled student when others receive it.

It may be that for certain students with disability, reasonable adjustments may be required. For example, a child with an intellectual disability may require different career counselling having regard to their different abilities and career pathways.

I am not in the position to respond to the suggestion that some children are not getting the appropriate educational services, without being provided with any specific details. Disability discrimination law requires an institution to recognise admitted differences and take positive steps to assist persons with disability in achieving substantive equality by facilitating participation in the institution or access to benefits. As you may appreciate, children with different needs require different adjustments so that they are treated no less favourably than others when accessing any educational services provided by the department.

QUESTION – PAGE 15 – THE HON. LYNDA VOLTZ

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Minister, in your capacity as Minister for Education you have promised to open 12 to 15 new schools each year. How many are expected to be completed in 2018?

Mr ROB STOKES: It is 15 now, is it? Okay.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: You promised 12 to 15.

Mr ROB STOKES: I will provide precise numbers on notice, but since January last year I think we have had 13 new schools and major upgrades already. Work is to commence on 40 schools, major projects, this financial year out of a total portfolio of about 170-odd projects underfoot.

ANSWER

I'm advised that:

As at 17 September 2018 there are 12 major upgrades or new school projects completed or expected to be completed in 2018.

Cherrybrook Technology High School
Cleveland Street Intensive English High School
Coolah Central School
Homebush West Public School
Killara Public School
Marie Bashir Public School
NSW School of Languages
O'Connell Street Primary School
Richmond High School
Russell Lea Public School
St Clair High School
Wentworth Point Public School

The Department of Education publishes information about new and upgraded schools on its website at <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au>.

QUESTION – PAGE 16 – THE HON. LYNDA VOLTZ

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Is the average cost of a demountable classroom \$131,000—a non-specialist demountable classroom?

Mr SCOTT: We will take that on notice.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: If that is correct then it is \$682 million for those 520 demountables. Would you confirm that is correct?

Mr SCOTT: No. We will check the mathematics on that and come back to you on notice.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: What is the cost of demountables in the 2018-19 budget?

Mr SCOTT: We will take that on notice.

ANSWER

I'm advised that:

The cost of a standard demountable classroom is \$131,000.

The cost to procure 520 new demountables is commercial-in-confidence.

QUESTION – PAGE 17 – THE HON. LYNDA VOLTZ

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: How many demountables have been newly placed on school sites since day one, term one of 2018?

Mr ROB STOKES: I will provide that on notice, but I will give you some examples. Rainbow Street Public School, Russell Lea Public School, Ultimo Public School, which the secretary has referred to—these are schools where there are considerable numbers of demountables, far in excess of what there were historically, because we are rebuilding those schools and we need to temporarily house the student body while the construction is under way.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: How many will be placed on schools by the end of term four 2018?

Mr ROB STOKES: Again, I can take that on notice, but—

ANSWER

I'm advised that:

Between Day 1, Term 1 of 2018 and 14 September 2018 a total of 248 demountable teaching spaces were placed on school sites.

The department uses demountable buildings to manage changing enrolment patterns and provide accommodation to meet emergency needs. As demountables are installed based on demand, the department is unable to anticipate the number of demountables that will be required by the end of Term 4, 2018.

QUESTION – PAGE 18 – REVEREND THE HON. FRED NILE

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: ...Is any parental consent required for Christian groups in relation to voluntary student associations that meet in the lunchtime—for example, Inter-School Christian Fellowship [ISCF]?

Mr ROB STOKES: I will take that on notice.

ANSWER

I'm advised that parental permission is required for all voluntary student activities of a religious nature in schools, which includes Inter-School Christian Fellowship.

QUESTION – PAGE 19 – REVEREND THE HON. FRED NILE

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Good. Thank you. Under the controversial issues policy of the department, what is the definition of the word "proselytising" that is actually used in that document? It is a word that the department is using. What does it mean?

Mr ROB STOKES: I have a clear view but I think it is appropriate that I refer to the secretary. It may be a requirement that we seek some specific advice and get some technical advice for it.

Mr SCOTT: Yes. We will resort to the dictionary and come back to you on notice with that.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: It is mainly what you—the department—think it is, not the Oxford dictionary?

Mr SCOTT: No, no, we will come back on notice for you, Reverend Nile.

ANSWER

Proselytising is defined in section 1.1 of the Department of Education's Controversial Issues in Schools – Procedures which states that "*Schools are not places to proselytise, that is, to convert students who are not already members of a particular belief system to become members of that belief system.*"

QUESTION – PAGE 19-20 – THE HON. MARK PEARSON

The Hon. MARK PEARSON: Thank you for coming, Minister, and departmental officers. I am just going to take you to a bit of an unexpected horizon. As you know, Mahatma Gandhi said that the measure of the civilisation of a society is how it treats its animals. I am ask: Considering that two-thirds of most children's meals have an animal product in it and with the growing concern for animal welfare and animal wellbeing—particularly farm animals—that we have seen in our society over time, have you, the secretary or your department turned your mind to a more robust or more ethical education of children about the source of animal products right from the rearing and housing through to transport, lairage and slaughter but a more honest and open understanding and education of that process for children because the industry, whether we agree or not, certainly goes to a lot of effort to keep it hidden—for example, a cow running along the beach and dancing as a dairy advertisement. That is what is being communicated as opposed to bobby calves that are born and killed within 24 to 48 hours of birth. That whole reality—the story behind what children are consuming in the main—has your department turned its mind in terms of ethics or critical thinking to educating our children as to the truth of the story behind the carton of milk in the supermarket, et cetera?

Mr ROB STOKES: Firstly, I thank you for your question and for your reference to Mahatma Gandhi. I also note that when he was asked about what he thought of Western civilisation he said he thought it was a good idea. In relation to specific policy, the way I best answer that is that in the Australian curriculum it talks of sustainability as a cross-curricula area, and obviously intrinsic to the concept of sustainability are issues of resource use, where food comes, food waste and also wider ethical issues about treatment of living beings. Those ideas are consistent with the curriculum and, in terms of wise resource use, we also have a canteen policy in relation to healthy eating. There are several programs running in schools that I can get specifics on, either on notice or right now.

The Hon. MARK PEARSON: Do any of them deal particularly with the child understanding and learning what is the experience for the animal that is born to die for us to consume its products?

Mr ROB STOKES: We are all born to die. I did not say that frivolously.

The Hon. MARK PEARSON: It is a fact.

Mr ROB STOKES: It is a fact. I will either refer to the secretary or we might be able to provide some further details on notice. I think what you are asking is a reasonable thing for students to look at and it is certainly an interesting area of understanding the nature of the natural processes we rely on and rights of living beings more generally.

ANSWER

I'm advised that teachers in NSW public schools deliver the curriculum determined by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA). Within this curriculum there are several syllabuses that provide opportunities for students to apply ethics or critical thinking in relation to animal production.

QUESTION – PAGES 21 TO 23 – THE HON. JOHN GRAHAM

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Thank you, Chair. Minister, I am going to return to the subject of new schools and I am going to ask for your help. We covered this ground last year at estimates and it got slightly out of control. It was unedifying for everyone so I would like to ask for your help in dealing with this.

Mr ROB STOKES: I am now a little bit concerned.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You knew how many new schools had been opened last year but you were determined not to say it on the record. You had started down that path again this estimates, talking about "new and upgraded schools". That is not the question. I want to focus on new schools that have been opened this year and that you have attended as a Minister. I am about to ask you that. I will just say this: opening a new school is a big deal and turning up as the education Minister to open a new school is a big deal and is not the sort of thing you forget. Since we saw you a year ago, how many new schools have you attended and opened as the Minister for Education?

Mr ROB STOKES: I am going to do two things-

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: That was exactly my concern.

Mr ROB STOKES: I take it that this is what you do and I will do what I do. You are trying to pull context away from a particular issue to ask a specific question. I want to put the context back around my answer.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I will give you a brief chance to give some context, provided you answer the question.

Mr ROB STOKES: With respect, I will answer the question the way I see fit. I will have to get the precise answer on notice; I do know that there have been 13 new schools and major upgrades during my tenure as Minister so far.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You have put a lot of that on the public record and I would be happy for you to provide as much more of that on notice as you would like. But I would like to ask a simple question that I think the public has a right to know the answer to. How many new schools have you attended as Minister for Education and opened since we last saw you last year?

Mr ROB STOKES: As I have answered- and I will stick by my answer- I will provide that answer on notice. Off the top of my head, there are 13 either brand new schools or significant upgrades.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: That is not the question. I have asked you to separate those two out.

Mr ROB STOKES: I will do that on notice. I cannot recall off the top of my head.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Do you recall attending any school openings since we saw you a year ago?

Mr ROB STOKES: Of course.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: New school openings?

Mr ROB STOKES: Of course.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Take us to those. Which do you remember?

Mr ROB STOKES: Again, I have answered your question.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Which do you remember?

Mr ROB STOKES: I will provide further details on notice.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Have you attended a single school opening during the past 12 months?

Mr ROB STOKES: Yes, I have, and I will provide details on those.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Have you attended two of those? Did you attend the Wentworth Point Public School opening?

Mr ROB STOKES: Yes, I did.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: So you remember that one?

Mr ROB STOKES: Yes, and, as I have said, I will provide the details on notice.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Did you attend the O'Connell Street Public School opening?

Mr ROB STOKES: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You recall attending that?

Mr ROB STOKES: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Did you attend the Fernhill School opening?

Mr ROB STOKES: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You recall attending those three?

Mr ROB STOKES: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Do you recall attending any other school opening?

Mr ROB STOKES: Yes, I do. Again, I have said I would take this on notice, but there was the Ultimo one I attended and there will be others. I will provide the list on notice.

ANSWER

I'm advised that since 2017 the following new schools, relocated schools or major upgrades have been delivered:

1. Rowland Hassall School , Bankstown
2. Wentworth Point Public School, Auburn
3. O'Connell Street, Parramatta
4. NSW School of Languages (Open Distance Education School), Newtown
5. Cairnsfoot SSP, Rockdale
6. Fernhill School, Mulgoa
7. Coolah Central School, Barwon
8. Lucas Gardens SSP, Drummoyne
9. Point Clare Public School, Gosford
10. Bourke Street Primary School, Newtown
11. Harbord Primary School, Manly
12. Bellevue Hill Public School, Vaucluse
13. Killara Public School, Ku-ring-gai

QUESTION – PAGE 24 – JOHN GRAHAM

The HON. JOHN GRAHAM: Understood. You talk about the record spend of the Government. I invite you to put your view to the Committee on the record that this year's capital spend is the highest capital spend that the Department of Education has had in the budget papers. Is that your view?

Mr ROB STOKES: I think this year-I will take that on notice but I can tell you over the current four-year period-

The HON. JOHN GRAHAM: That is very wise, Minister.

Mr ROB STOKES: -the forward estimates period, we are spending \$6 billion. That is a huge amount of money. As I have already articulated, that is going towards more than 170 projects across the State. Not every school will be completed in the same calendar year. That stands to reason. We have a pipeline-

The HON. JOHN GRAHAM: Since we saw you last year-

Mr ROB STOKES: -and the new schools that you are referring to refer to the new schools for which planning-

The HON. JOHN GRAHAM: Thank you, you have taken that on notice.

Mr ROB STOKES: No, I have not taken this on notice. I am providing you with an answer-

The HON. JOHN GRAHAM: You have taken my question on notice.

Mr ROB STOKES: -and that relates to schools for which planning is commencing in this year because we have a pipeline of projects.

The HON. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, how many properties have you sold since we last saw you one year ago? What is the number of Education properties?

Mr ROB STOKES: I think I will take it on notice. It is something in the vicinity of eight, I think.

ANSWER

I'm advised that:

The NSW Government is investing \$6 billion over the next four years to deliver more than 170 new and upgraded schools to support communities throughout NSW. This is the largest investment into public school infrastructure by any state government in Australian history.

The Department of Education disposed of 8 properties in the 2017-18 financial year. When land is sold the proceeds of the sale are reinvested in the provision of education infrastructure.

QUESTION – PAGES 25-26 – THE HON. JOHN GRAHAM

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, how much is allocated on average per student by the Department of Education to schools for information and communications technology [ICT] equipment? The view has been put that it is an average of \$23 per student. Do you think that sounds about right?

Mr ROB STOKES: I do not, but I am happy to take-you can appreciate I would not have that off the top of my head-

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: No, understood.

Mr ROB STOKES: But what I will say-

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: If you can take that on notice, that would be good.

Mr ROB STOKES: There are some difficulties with providing the answer on notice because a lot of the funding that we provide to schools through the resource allocation methodology provides the flexibility for schools to apply that funding where it is required. So, for example-

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: And when they apply-

Mr ROB STOKES: Can I please finish?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes.

Mr ROB STOKES: So, for example, rather than applying particular hardware that might not be required-like rolling out, for example, a particular product that might be obsolete in a couple of years-

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I want to get to a particular question, so I would be happy for you to provide the context on notice.

Mr ROB STOKES: The reason I am answering this question is because you have asked me to accept the premise of a particular dollar amount per student. I am explaining that it will be difficult to provide that answer on notice because we provide a flexible funding where principals and school communities have the autonomy to determine where that spend might best be made. So it is not as if we mandate a particular rollout of equipment in every school-and nor should we necessarily-because different schools will have different needs.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: When was the rate of that funding that is provided last reviewed? The view was put to me that 2004 was the last time that was reviewed or increased. Surely that cannot be right. Surely that is wrong.

Mr ROB STOKES: Again, I will provide what details I can on notice.

ANSWER

I'm advised that:

The Department of Education's annual Technology for Learning (T4L) program provides NSW public schools with access to a choice of new, supported equipment.

The allocation model is based on school enrolments and occurs yearly or two yearly depending on the school size. This ensures all T4L devices are upgraded within four year warranty periods.

In addition to centrally supplied computers, schools have the option to purchase additional devices using discretionary funding allocations, so an exact amount per student is not currently available.

The T4L program has an annual budget of \$35.3 million, which funds the ongoing device refresh and supporting technology infrastructure provided to over 2200 of the department's schools. This level of funding provides a students to device ration of ratio of 4:1. The actual ratio in schools is significantly higher with students allowed to bring their own devices.

QUESTION – PAGE 28 – THE HON. MARK PEARSON

The Hon. MARK PEARSON: You are saying the same amount of resources are put into that group of children as are the talented and gifted that we know about, as opposed to the others we do not?

Mr ROB STOKES: If anything, there would be more resources provided to support those children.

The Hon. MARK PEARSON: And that could be demonstrated?

Mr ROB STOKES: We can clearly illustrate that.

The Hon. MARK PEARSON: Could you provide documentation and analysis to demonstrate that on notice?

Mr ROB STOKES: Yes.

ANSWER

I'm advised that:

The Resource Allocation Model (RAM) has been developed to ensure every school receives a fair, efficient and transparent allocation of the State's public education budget. This needs-based funding model adjusts annually to recognise student and school need.

Through the RAM, additional resources are provided to schools, with more resources allocated to schools with the greatest need. Principals are able to strategically target resources to the needs of every student.

Principals are able to combine and use their school's total resources flexibly to respond to the additional learning needs of all students in the school.

QUESTION – PAGES 28-29 – MR JUSTIN FIELD

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: To go back to where I was before, talking about application fees or some voluntary fees, I think there has been some reporting of \$1.4 million or more in annual voluntary fees at selective schools. Is there a policy, are there any guidelines, are there any restrictions on fees that can be charged at selective schools?

Mr ROB STOKES: I will refer that question to the secretary for specifics. Obviously, one of the fundamental tenets of our public education system is that it is free. However, of course, parents are free to make contributions towards particular activities at schools.

Mr SCOTT: There are voluntary fees and fees set taking into account the context of the local school community in mind and also with a view to providing opportunities to ensure that any student who is disadvantaged is not held back from participating. Mr Dizdar might like to add to that.

Mr DIZDAR: I emphasise the fact the voluntary fees are exactly that—voluntary.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Application fees, not so much. I am happy for you to take on notice any guidelines about fees at selective schools.

Mr SCOTT: We will do that.

ANSWER

I'm advised that:

There is no application fee for students entering Year 7 NSW selective and partially selective high schools.

Some NSW selective and partially selective high schools may charge an application fee for the year 8-11 selective entry application. This is a decision made under the Local Schools, Local Decisions policy and is set by the principal of the school.

Boarding agricultural high schools require boarding fees. Special financial assistance may be available for rural and remote students applying for boarder placement.

QUESTION – PAGE 29 – MR JUSTIN FIELD

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: What is the status of the review of the Confucius Institute programs in New South Wales schools?

Mr ROB STOKES: I will refer that question to the secretary.

Mr SCOTT: It is underway at the moment. We are not looking specifically or only at the Confucius Institute but also at the governance processes in other similar programs in consultation with other governments or organisations that seek to provide support and resources to teaching and learning in this State. As I said, that review is underway and we expect it to be completed in the balance of this year.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: How much money has been received from the Chinese Government through the institute by New South Wales public schools?

Mr SCOTT: I will take that question on notice.

ANSWER

I'm advised that money received from Confucius Institute Headquarters (Hanban) by the 13 New South Wales public schools involved in the program over the five years from 2013 to 2017 has been a total of AUD \$586,000.

QUESTION – PAGES 30, 31 & 32 – MR JUSTIN FIELD

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Will you provide on notice to the Committee the estimated total costs for all the schools listed in the budget papers that are due to be completed this year and next year? I assume those estimated total costs are available to you.

Mr ROB STOKES: I will take that question on notice and provide what details we can. Obviously, I am subject to the Treasury guidelines about the publication of this sort of data. In relation to the new schools that have just been announced, obviously they are only in the planning stage. I take your point about the schools that are nearing completion.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I just want to thank you firstly, Minister, for your answer on that budget question. Just to underline the concerns of my colleague, there are schools here well in process that just have significant expenditures last year that just disappear in the budget. The department is publishing this information elsewhere. So whether it is Treasury or the Department of Education, you are the first education Minister I can recall who has ever had to turn up with this lack of detail in the budget papers. So I appreciate the answer you have given to say you are happy to go back and investigate that issue further.

Mr ROB STOKES: Again, obviously the budget papers are published by Treasury. We provide data. As to what data is published is obviously in accordance with their internal guidelines. But I am happy to provide whatever details we can reasonably provide.

ANSWER

Questions relating to the information provided in the Budget Papers should be directed to the Treasurer.

QUESTION – PAGES 30–31 – MR JUSTIN FIELD

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Is any advice given to those who are teaching special religious education [SRE] in schools about how to engage with students who are not participating in SRE?

Mr ROB STOKES: My understanding is that is the case. For some of those questions I can seek further details from the providers.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I appreciate that, Minister. We did hear answers from you earlier in the hearing about some of the programs that are or are not being run. As I understand it, respectful relationship programs are being delivered in some New South Wales schools by community and health workers on an ad hoc basis. Correct me if I am wrong about that.

Mr ROB STOKES: I will seek some advice.

ANSWER

I'm advised that:

In the times set aside for Special Religious Education (SRE), students not attending are located in a separate physical space from SRE classes. SRE teachers do not engage with these students.

Schools are to provide meaningful activities for students whose parents have withdrawn them from SRE. Where it is reasonably practicable and requested by a parent/caregiver, this may include the option of Special Education in Ethics. Decisions about activities for students whose parents have chosen for them not to attend SRE are made locally by the school.

QUESTION – PAGE 32 – THE HON. JOHN GRAHAM

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, the Treasurer in the budget increased the efficiency dividend which will apply across government. What is the size of the efficiency dividend that will apply to the Department of Education going forward in dollar amounts? What does the decision of the Government and the Treasurer mean for the Department of Education?

Mr ROB STOKES: The vast majority of the Department of Education is quarantined because it delivers frontline services. I can provide the exact dollar figure but I can say as a proportion of the budget it is minimal.

ANSWER

Savings from the NSW Government's efficiency dividend are outlined in the Budget Papers. The efficiency dividend continues to target back office savings.

QUESTION – PAGES 32–33 – THE HON. LYNDA VOLTZ

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Minister, under the Connected Communities program, how many executive principals have remained in their schools for three or more years?

Mr ROB STOKES: The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation is currently undertaking a review in relation to the Connected Communities program. I will provide the details in relation to the executive principals, many of whom I know. They work in sometimes challenging situations. I understand where you are going. There is a reasonably high turnover in those principal positions, and that is something that we are reviewing.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Who coordinates the Connected Communities and where are they based?

Mr ROB STOKES: It is within the department.

Mr SCOTT: It is in the Educational Services Division. We have a Director of Connected Communities. We have an Executive Director of Aboriginal Education, and they both report through to Ms Harrisson.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Where are they based?

Ms HARRISSON: They are currently based in Oxford Street. The executive director works often out of a school. As part of an [inaudible] arrangement, they work regularly out of Rosemeadow Public School.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Are there only the two staff members or are there more?

Ms HARRISSON: There is a team that supports them both. I can give you the specific data on those.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: If you could give me the FTEs, thank you. At somewhere like Wilcannia Central School, what post-school options are being provided to the students who are part of the program?

Ms HARRISSON: I do not have the specific details of information provided to individual students about their personal options. What I am able to inform the Committee is that in those Connected Community schools we work very closely with industry and community to ensure that the students are provided with a full range of opportunities.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: And you will provide some more detail on notice, will you?

Ms HARRISSON: I am happy to do so if that would be of use to the Committee.

ANSWER

I'm advised that:

Twelve Executive Principals remained in Connected Communities schools for three or more years from the implementation of the Connected Communities Strategy in 2013.

The Connected Communities Strategy is coordinated by the Director, Connected Communities, under the leadership of the Executive Director, Aboriginal Education and Communities.

Designated positions that support the Connected Communities Strategy are:

- Clerk 11/12
- Clerk 9/10
- Clerk 3/4

Wilcannia Central School is working hard to support students leaving school in Wilcannia, through establishing work experience opportunities with the local hospital, post office etc to identify potential opportunities for traineeships for students.

The school also works with the Murdi Paaki Aboriginal Regional Assembly to assist older students to seek employment and work experience with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and other government organisations in Wilcannia.

Country Universities Centre Far West opened a campus in Broken Hill in 2018, and Wilcannia Central School is exploring opportunities to develop innovative joint approaches to supporting students' study and employment pathways.

QUESTION – PAGE 33 – THE HON. LYNDA VOLTZ

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: How many employees from the Department of Education identify as Indigenous?

Mr ROB STOKES: I will provide that on notice. I think it is already provided in the annual report.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Could you identify how many of those are in senior leadership positions.

Mr ROB STOKES: Yes.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: And also what constitutes a senior leadership position, whether it is a head teacher or district officials.

ANSWER

I'm advised that this information is available in the Department's annual report.

A senior leadership position is defined as a position with base annual remuneration that meets the threshold of the Senior Officer Grade 1 Year 1 remuneration published in the *Crown Employees (Senior Officers Salaries) Award 2012*.

QUESTION – PAGES 33-34 – THE HON. LYNDA VOLTZ

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: How much funding was provided for Clontarf? Was it Department of Education funding for the Clontarf Academy?

Mr ROB STOKES: Yes. There are a range of programs like Clontarf-the Girls Academy and Smith Family provides services as well. The specifics in relation to Clontarf I can provide on notice.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: And also the Girls Academy?

Mr ROB STOKES: Yes, we can provide that on notice too.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: When you made the decision on Clontarf, did you read the evaluation by the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation [CESE] before that allocation was made?

Mr ROB STOKES: Yes, I am aware of the great work of CESE in relation to the evaluation of Clontarf which found that it was strongly supported and produced some great benefits, as some of these other programs are doing as well.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: You are saying that that is what the evaluation said?

Mr ROB STOKES: I can get up some further information on that.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: They said that there was not impact on attendance in years 10, 11 and 12, no impact in NAPLAN, no significant difference and that the social profit was 0.01 cents for every dollar invested. Is that the evaluation?

Mr ROB STOKES: I am just getting up some further information. I will get some more information for you on notice, but I am certainly aware that I have had the opportunity to visit many Clontarf academies and, indeed, the work of the Girls Academy across New South Wales schools. I can see firsthand the benefits that that is providing to communities.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: How many schools is the Girls Academy in?

Mr ROB STOKES: I do not know off the top of my head. I think it is about a dozen.

Ms HARRISSON: I can provide the specific details on notice.

ANSWER

I'm advised that:

Additional funding of \$3.75 million has been made available to the Clontarf Foundation in the 2018-19 NSW Budget.

Up to \$6 million in NSW Department of Education funding has been allocated between 2017 and 2019 to Role Models and Leaders Australia Ltd which operates the Girls Academy program.

The Role Models and Leaders Australia Ltd initiative is currently operating in 13 NSW secondary school sites.

QUESTION – PAGE 34 – THE HON. JOHN GRAHAM

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, how many full-time permanent positions have you cut from the Department of Education for this Government since 2011? How many have been lost?

Mr ROB STOKES: I will have to take details on staff numbers on notice. I can say that we have employed an additional 5,129 teachers, I think.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am asking about full-time permanent Department of Education staff.

Mr ROB STOKES: Not frontline?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Correct.

Mr ROB STOKES: You mean back office people.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Correct.

Mr ROB STOKES: I will have to get that answer on notice.

ANSWER

I'm advised that in 2013 it was confirmed that the department's structure would be reduced by around 600 positions by June 2016. Since that time, the department's structure has been more stable with five redundancies resulting in a reduction in roles occurring between 1 July 2016 to date.

QUESTION – PAGE 34 – THE HON. LYNDA VOLTZ

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: How many vacancies are there for teaching positions in rural and remote areas?

Mr ROB STOKES: Again, I will find the precise number on notice. We have a number of programs directed toward encouraging experienced teachers and new graduates into rural and remote schools.

ANSWER

I'm advised that there are a total of 57.346 FTE unfilled positions at rural and remote schools. Remote schools have been defined using the Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEEDYA) remoteness index. Unfilled positions are defined as positions which are not filled in a permanent capacity, but are filled with a temporary or casual engaged under a local arrangement at the school level.

QUESTION – PAGE 35 – THE HON. LYNDA VOLTZ

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: How many people have applied for the rural scholarship?

Mr ROB STOKES: They have just been recently overhauled, so obviously those numbers will be low at this stage because it is new, but I will provide details on notice.

ANSWER

I'm advised that since 2014, when the program commenced, a total of 1,075 applications have been received for teach.Rural Scholarships. Applications for the 2019 teach.Rural Scholarships program opened on 25 June 2018 and will close on 21 September 2018.

QUESTION – PAGE 35 – THE HON. LYNDA VOLTZ

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Yes. How many reviews is the Department of Education undertaking at the moment?

Mr ROB STOKES: Across individual schools and across the department as a whole, I think it would be very difficult—

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: The department as a whole would be a good place to start.

Mr ROB STOKES: You do not want to know individual school—

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: If you could give me individual schools I would like the names, but I prefer the department across the board.

Mr ROB STOKES: In terms of department-initiated reviews as opposed to reviews that might be happening school by school—which obviously would be hard to find data on—I can get that detail on notice.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Are consultations such as you are doing for the enrolment forms for special religious education constitute a review, or would that be classified simply as a consultation?

Mr ROB STOKES: Again, the challenge of providing a specific answer is as the secretary has indicated. All of our programs remain under constant review. It is an organisation that seeks to constantly improve. But in terms of announced reviews, I am sure we can provide that detail on notice.

ANSWER

I'm advised that the Department of Education encourages the constant review of its programs to ensure quality and provide opportunities for improvement.

QUESTION – PAGE 37 – MR JUSTIN FIELD

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Thank you, Mr Graham and Chair. Minister, as I understand it, students who are under supervision and who have difficulty writing with a pen are not allowed to use computers during Higher School Certificate [HSC] exams, is that correct?

Mr ROB STOKES: I am sorry?

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Students who have difficulty using a pen are still not allowed to use computers during HSC exams, even if they are supervised; is that correct?

Mr ROB STOKES: I will take the specifics on notice but those matters are a matter for the disability provisions as determined by the Education Standards Authority and it will depend upon the particular requests of the student as to what decision is made.

ANSWER

I'm advised that where students have a disability that prevents them from hand writing, NESAs will offer an appropriate combination of support including a writer, extra time to write and rest breaks. Where there is medical evidence that the student has a disability that would prevent them from accessing a writer, then NESAs will approve a computer.

QUESTION – PAGES 37-38 – MR JUSTIN FIELD

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: What does the department do to provide educational support to students who are on suspension while they are not at school?

Mr ROB STOKES: I will refer for specifics to the secretary.

Mr SCOTT: Mr Dizdar will take us through that.

Mr DIZDAR: We provide work to a student and their family, often depending on the nature of the suspension because there are different types of suspensions that are available according to the policy and the length and duration. There is follow-up support around that work and often the provision of further work. There is the provision of counselling support that is available to the young person and often the family alongside that. They are the main mechanisms of support that we provide. It is important for the Committee to note that for most of our young people, pleasingly, suspension is a one-off occurrence. For those students who maybe a part of more than one suspension, then the wellbeing and welfare support becomes very, very critical for that young child.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: How many children in New South Wales fit into that category?

Mr DIZDAR: For repeat suspensions? I would have to take it on notice. We have got that data. We would be happy to provide it to the Committee.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: If you could provide as well the percentage of those students who are Aboriginal students?

Mr DIZDAR: Sure.

ANSWER

I'm advised that:

In 2016, there were 14,351 students (29.6% of which are Aboriginal) suspended more than once.

In 2017, there were 15,181 students (29.8% of which are Aboriginal) suspended more than once.

QUESTION – PAGES 38-39 – MR JUSTIN FIELD

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: To go to that point, there will be a number of primary schools that are somewhere along the stages of planning at the moment-new primary schools. Do any that are on the planning books at the moment, do they have an early learning centre, after-hours care or public preschool attached to them in the planning?

Mr ROB STOKES: I understand a number that we are looking at are looking at exactly those sorts of joint use arrangements with councils and also potentially with parents and citizens [P&C] groups, too. I am not sure. I can provide more details on notice, to the extent that those conversations have reached a stage at which it is appropriate to share.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Just to be clear, where there is a partner-either a P&C that is willing to run potentially a preschool service or day care service, or there is a council that is prepared to run an early education service-that is where you look at this? You are not necessarily considering public preschools with public education teachers inside those preschools? They are quite different things.

Mr ROB STOKES: Yes.

ANSWER

I'm advised that the Department of Education does allow the use of school facilities for children's services, including the delivery of early childhood education and care and out of school hours care.

QUESTION – PAGE 39 – MR JUSTIN FIELD

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Minister, can you guarantee that there are no for-profit operators operating long day care centres or preschools on public primary school grounds?

Mr ROB STOKES: I will take that question on notice. We have a tendering system that we are in the process of reviewing that has a categorisation that effectively preferences those operated by P&C associations first; they are not-for-profit operators. Then the for-profit operators, in terms of the tendering system, would be at the end of the list. I do not know the answer to your question off the top of my head, but I will take it on notice.

ANSWER

I'm advised that the department does have for profit and not for profit preschool and long day care operators on school sites. P&C Association run services and other incorporated school-based parent operated services are the preferred providers of OSHC services.

For profit operators currently account for around 13 per cent of the total providers for 2018.