

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 3 - EDUCATION

Wednesday 4 September 2019

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING

UNCORRECTED

The Committee met at 9:30

MEMBERS

The Hon. Mark Latham (Chair)
The Hon. Mark Banasiak
Ms Abigail Boyd
The Hon. Anthony D'Adam
The Hon. Wes Fang
The Hon. Scott Farlow
The Hon. Courtney Houssos
The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox (Deputy Chair)
Mr David Shoebridge

PRESENT

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell, *Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning*
Mr Kevin Conolly, *Parliamentary Secretary for Education*

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 Portfolio Committee No. 3 dealing with the portfolio areas of Education and Early Childhood Learning. In particular, I welcome Minister Sarah Mitchell, Parliamentary Secretary Kevin Conolly and the officials led by Mark Scott, head of the department. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of Education and Early Childhood Learning. Today's hearing is open to the public and is being broadcast live via the Parliament's website.

In accordance with the broadcasting guidelines, while members of the media may film or record Committee members and witnesses, people in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photography. I would also remind media representatives that you must take responsibility for what you publish about the Committee's proceedings. The guidelines for the broadcasting of proceedings are available from the secretariat. All witnesses in budget estimates have a right to procedural fairness according to the procedural fairness resolution adopted by the House in 2018.

There may be some questions that a witness could only answer if they had more time or with certain documents to hand. In those circumstances witnesses are advised that they can take a question on notice and provide an answer within 21 days. Any messages from advisers or members' staff seated in the public gallery should be delivered through the Committee secretariat. I remind the Minister and the officers accompanying you that you are free to pass notes and refer directly to your advisers seated at the table behind you. Transcripts of this hearing will be available on the web from tomorrow morning. I ask everyone to please turn their mobile phones to silent for the duration of the hearing.

All witnesses from departments, statutory bodies or corporations will be sworn prior to giving evidence. I remind the Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary that they do not need to be sworn as they have already sworn an oath to their office as a member of Parliament.

PAUL MARTIN, Acting Chief Executive Officer, New South Wales Education Standards Authority, affirmed and examined

GEORGINA HARRISSON, Deputy Secretary, Educational Services, Department of Education, affirmed and examined

LESLIE LOBLE, Deputy Secretary, Education Futures and Governance, Department of Education, affirmed and examined

MARK SCOTT, Secretary, Department of Education, sworn and examined

MURAT DIZDAR, Deputy Secretary, School Operations and Performance, Department of Education, affirmed and examined

PETER RIORDAN, Deputy Secretary, Corporate Services, Department of Education, sworn and examined

DEIRDRE MULKERIN, Deputy Secretary, People and Culture, Department of Education, affirmed and examined

TRACY MACKEY, Executive Director, Early Childhood Education, affirmed and examined

DAVID MURPHY, Executive Director, Corporate Governance and School Standards, New South Wales Education Standards Authority, sworn and examined

ERIK MARANIK, Chief Operating Officer, School Infrastructure NSW, Department of Education, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of Education and Early Childhood Learning open for examination. Our Committee has resolved that Government members will not be asking questions so the session will run from 9.30 a.m. until 11.30 a.m. It has been further agreed that generally it will run in blocks of 40 minutes, with half to the Labor Opposition and half to the crossbench, of which there are three members, myself included. We have an allocation that we have worked out in advance that will become clearer as we proceed. The Minister and Parliamentary Secretary will not be questioned in the afternoon and evening sessions. There is no provision under our standing orders for any opening statement so we move straight to questioning. Again, I thank everyone for their attendance.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Welcome, Minister and many public servants. Minister, are you still confident that you will totally clear the school maintenance backlog by July next year?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, I am confident with the progress we have made in relation to that commitment. We have made the commitment that that is what we are going to do and I have no reason to doubt that that will be the case.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What is the current liability for school maintenance as at today's date?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I might ask the secretary to respond to that?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can we just get a figure for the liability as at today's date?

Mr MARANIK: At the moment, the liability for the maintenance backlog stands at \$622 million, which is approximately \$274,000 line items of activity that will be completed this year.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, is asbestos removal covered by the school maintenance program?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again, I will get Mr Maranik to respond to that question.

Mr MARANIK: Sorry?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Is asbestos removal part of this school maintenance program?

Mr MARANIK: In terms of asbestos, it is a very broad program. What we have is a whole series of ways to deal with asbestos as part of the program. In relation to maintenance, asbestos is dealt with as we find it and a risk assessment is done in accordance with the guidelines in relation to how that is treated.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: We will get to the guidelines in just a moment. Minister, there are 2,200 schools in New South Wales, is that correct?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: There are approximately 2,200, yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The Asbestos Management Plan for New South Wales government schools, which is dated November 2015, revised 2017, is the document used to manage asbestos in New South Wales schools, is that correct?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That is my understanding, yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And the Department of Education asbestos register hazardous materials and risk assessment is a document that lists the locations of asbestos in specific schools in New South Wales, is that correct?

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

Mr MARANIK: In terms of known asbestos, that is correct.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: In terms of known asbestos?

Mr MARANIK: Correct.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So there is the potential for unknown asbestos in New South Wales schools?

Mr MARANIK: The portfolio over the 2,200 schools has a very significant age profile to it in those eras where asbestos was actually used as a very common building material across a whole range of products in which asbestos was contained. We are vigilant and our processes in terms of whenever we are working on buildings picks that up. So from that perspective, the schools have an asbestos register, which is accessible, that indicates that. But that still means that we do reviews of materials as we progress through any building works or maintenance works.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: We will come back to that in just a moment. Minister, is it true that, according to the NSW Department of Education asbestos register, 2,185 of the approximate 2,200 schools in New South Wales have asbestos on their grounds?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again, I will ask Mr Maranik to comment on that.

Mr MARANIK: I would have to take the question on that particular number on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I can inform you that my office and I have searched through those documents and that is the figure that we have come to. Can we accept that—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, Mr Maranik said that we will take the question on notice to clarify the figure. That is what we will do.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What program do you have for asbestos removal in schools in New South Wales?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will refer to Mr Maranik, who has responsibility around that issue.

Mr MARANIK: We have adopted a multi-layered risk-management approach. There are the guidelines and the compliance framework that relates to asbestos in New South Wales, which we comply with. We have the asbestos register in place for those schools where asbestos is identified. Then we have a process that is well documented that we step through with any works associated with schools and the unexpected finds protocol.

Mr SCOTT: I add to Mr Maranik's answer that we are managing asbestos appropriately, as all other government agencies and households need to be able to do. We all understand that there was a period of time of construction in New South Wales when asbestos products were widely used. We know that it is important that that asbestos material be contained. We understand that there needs to be significant protocols in place when such buildings are disturbed or when maintenance work is taking place. In the hazardous materials register you can get a sense that the department is aware of the need to manage asbestos, as does the health department and the transport department, as well as households all across the State. We take that responsibility diligently and seriously. We need to appropriately deal with that circumstance, as does the rest of the State, given the history of construction that has taken place with the use of this material.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I appreciate that, Mr Scott. Have you read the register yourself?

Mr SCOTT: I have seen the register, I have been through the register and I have been briefed on the register.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, have you been briefed on the register?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am aware of the work that the department does on asbestos management and that is something that we have discussed.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Have you sought any specific briefings around asbestos in New South Wales schools?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, I meet regularly with my department to talk through a range of issues, including the work that we are doing in schools. I have confidence that we have a rigorous system of maintenance and monitoring at our schools across the State, in line with what the secretary said in his earlier answer.

Mr SCOTT: I think it is very important. We have got more than—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Scott, I am sorry but we have really limited time so I am going to—

Mr SCOTT: But it is a very important issue and it is very important—

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order: The Hon. Courtney Houssos has asked a very detailed question. The Minister and the secretary are attempting to provide the high level of detail that the member is asking for. I ask that they be allowed to answer the question.

The CHAIR: As a general practice we should observe what we do in the main parliamentary Chamber, which is that when a question is asked we allow an answer in full. I know that there will be times when the questioners need to hurry things along, but in this instance we should allow Mr Scott to finish his answer.

Mr SCOTT: Thank you. I simply reinforce that we have 800,000 children in New South Wales schools. Their parents send them off to those schools. We have an absolute commitment to creating a safe and healthy environment for those students. Of course, there has been concern about asbestos in the community. But I think it is important that we reassure parents that we have strong processes underway to identify where there are issues and to manage any issues with asbestos to keep the community as engaged as we can with the management of this issue. It is not specific to schools but is an issue across our society in homes, private-sector buildings, public-sector buildings and the like.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, are you aware that according to your department 109 schools in New South Wales have the worst category of asbestos, which is known as friable asbestos? That means that the asbestos is decaying.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again, I will refer to Mr Maranik to answer that question.

Mr MARANIK: As I said before, the scope and scale of the portfolio and the history of asbestos in the manufacturing and construction industries means that there are a whole range of asbestos cases that we are aware of and that are documented. Those cases are managed in accordance with the guidelines.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I appreciate that it is a problem—as Mr Scott has outlined—that we have asbestos in our buildings and in a range of locations. But my question relates to what your department categorises as "friable asbestos", which, as I explained, is the worst category. It is literally decaying and the fibres are breaking down. That is the case in 109 schools across New South Wales.

Mr MARANIK: As I said before, we understand the breadth of the issue and we have the processes in place to deal with that. What more can I say in response to that question?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I appreciate that. Minister, do you have anything to add?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, I have confidence in the processes that the department has in place to manage this issue. As the secretary pointed out, this is about doing everything we can to ensure the safety of the students at our schools. I have confidence that—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: But do you think everything possible is being doing when there are 109 schools—

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: We can keep going through points of order but I have very limited time this morning.

The Hon. WES FANG: I understand that. I am not trying to waste your time. We just want to allow the Minister to answer.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You are wasting my time.

The Hon. WES FANG: We are not wasting your time. We are just trying to allow the Minister to answer the question that was put.

The CHAIR: That is fair enough. The proceedings over the six hours will unfold more efficiently if there is some latitude for the officials and the Minister to answer the questions as best they can. Obviously if it gets too longwinded it is not unreasonable for the questioner to jump in. But it think "longwinded" probably extends past 45 seconds. Let's give them a chance to answer.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will be brief. As I was saying, when the presence of asbestos is reported, I have confidence in the processes that the department, particularly School Infrastructure NSW, has in place regarding appropriate action.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I want to talk about the procedures that are in place. In New South Wales schools there is an Asbestos Management Plan and, as we have outlined, there is a register. According to that register the classes of asbestos are graded. Minister, are you aware that 998 schools have damaged asbestos— asbestos that is breaking down?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again, because this is a matter that falls under the responsibility of School Infrastructure, I will ask Mr Maranik to respond to that question.

Mr MARANIK: The numbers that you are quoting are available. We make the information available so that contractors and facility management teams that are working on schools understand what the risks are and apply the appropriate standards and protocols to manage those risks. That is the construction industry approach that any other portfolio would adopt.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I dispute your claim that it is publicly available. It is well buried within your website. It is difficult to access. The latest data that is available is from 2017. Minister, do you have more updated information than the 2017 data?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will take the question on notice as to what else might be available for you. I do dispute the premise of your question that things are buried. As Mr Maranik said, we make that information available. I will see if there is any updated data that could be made available to you.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you agree with his characterisation? An individual PDF document that is well inside your department's website is not making the information easily accessible for the public.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I think it is accessible to the public.

Mr SCOTT: You said "well inside the department's website." I think another way of presenting that is to say that it is on the department's website and is fully available to anyone who seeks to access it. As I said earlier, the issue with asbestos in public and private buildings is not specific to the education department. Yes, we are very conscience of that issue. We have documented well—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Scott, you have made the point—

The CHAIR: No, I will stop you there, the Hon. Courtney Houssos. The secretary has only been going for 15 seconds. He is not being longwinded yet.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: But he is being repetitive.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So are the questions.

The CHAIR: We do not get to determine the answers. We must listen to them, up to a point.

Mr SCOTT: The premise of the question was a suggestion that the information was somehow buried away. I was simply pointing out that it is on our website. We have a policy and we have disclosed the information that we have. We are very diligent, particularly around—and I think this is where the question started—the maintenance program that is running. We are aware that the management of asbestos is a critical issue when school building works are being done. That, in part, is why we identify schools as we do. That is why we engage constructors and those doing maintenance with the protocols that we have. I dispute the suggestion that somehow there is a discovery here, as well as the premise the we are somehow not being transparent around this.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Scott, the most recent publicly available information is from November 2017. Do you have updated information?

Mr SCOTT: I will take that on notice, as the Minister said, if there is further information available.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You have characterised the department's response as being open and transparent. Would you say that providing data that is two years out of date is being open and transparent?

Mr SCOTT: The thing about the data, of course, is that the data represents the historical picture. What may have changed in those circumstances, of course, is we have new buildings coming into play, there are not asbestos issues in new buildings. There is a sense that it gives us a state of play in 2017. If there is further information that comes to light, of course, that will be known to School Infrastructure. But I will check the timetable if they are updating that record.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you tell us how many schools have had a reinspection in the last 12 months?

Mr SCOTT: Let me take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you tell me how many asbestos inspections have been conducted in New South Wales schools in 2017-18?

Mr SCOTT: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And 2018-19?

Mr SCOTT: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many schools have had the initial survey reviewed since 2019, 2018 and 2017?

Mr SCOTT: I am happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, you have just heard that over 1,000 schools in New South Wales have asbestos in school buildings that is potentially releasing airborne fibres. According to NSW Health, they say that broken and damaged asbestos can become loose and airborne which poses serious health risks. Do you have a response to that?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: My response would be in line with the answers given by the secretary and Mr Maranik in terms of we take appropriate measures to manage those risks. We have, as the secretary mentioned, 800,000 students attending public schools every day. Their safety is very important to me as Minister. Parents would expect that as well and that is a view that I share. As I said in an earlier answer, I have confidence in the processes that the department has in place in relation to these matters.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: This is not asbestos that is sealed up in the walls: This is asbestos that is breaking down, that is underneath classrooms, that is debris, that is potentially fraying in school toilets, in staff toilets, in school libraries and halls around the State in over 1,000—so almost half of—New South Wales schools. What action are you taking today to address this?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said in my answer, I have confidence in the processes that we have in place to manage the risks related to asbestos.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You are confident that the response is appropriate?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have confidence in the processes that the department has in place.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The information that has been provided to the public is out of date. There is no clear plan for these 1,000 schools that are potentially releasing airborne fibres at the moment and your department's response is that if we discover more as part of the maintenance program then we will deal with it. Is that appropriate?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will get the secretary—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, I would like to hear your response.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have responded to your question in terms of I am aware that we have many of thousands of children attending public schools every day. For me as Minister, of course their safety is paramount. Making sure that we have the appropriate measures in place for the management of asbestos is

incredibly important and I have confidence in the department's response and management in relation to those issues.

Mr SCOTT: I would add that the NSW Department of Education is not working in isolation on these issues. The issues that we face are similar to other government departments, private sector organisations, even homes. We are working with SafeWork NSW. Our protocols and plans and strategies align with the advice we have been given and we are happy to provide further information.

Mr MARANIK: In terms of the maintenance, those protocols are very strict and robust. We work through proven protocols with our \$622 million planned maintenance scheme. That involves the identification process all around asbestos and the built form fabric of all of these buildings that we enter. It is the children as well as our workforce that are protected by these protocols and guidelines.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I would dispute that they are currently being protected but, Minister, in June 2018 your Government committed to deliver 1,000 air-conditioned classrooms for students across New South Wales. Can you guarantee that the amount of asbestos in New South Wales schools will not affect the roll-out of that commitment?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We have made those commitments in relation to air conditioning and those commitments stand. I might ask the secretary or Mr Maranik to provide some more information in relation to the specifics. We do have ageing school infrastructure. There are, at some schools, issues that we need to manage when we are installing the air conditioning. That includes, in some cases, managing issues around asbestos.

Mr SCOTT: As the Minister has outlined, when you are putting air conditioning into aged school building infrastructure that was constructed in the era when asbestos may have been used particular care will need to be taken. I can assure you it is being taken. That means that the rollout of the air conditioning strategy needs to be done on a school-by-school basis, taking a close look at the history of the school and the state of that stock. That is exactly the process that we are undertaking now.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Scott, can you tell me how much of the \$500 million has been allocated for asbestos removal?

Mr SCOTT: I do not have that precise figure.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You can take that on notice then.

Mr SCOTT: The commitment is to put air-cooling systems into schools. It will be different in every school and every circumstance. Yes, at some schools we will need to be careful around remediation issues as far as asbestos is concerned—as you would want. But it was understood at the time that we were rolling this air conditioning into some buildings that were quite old and that there would be asbestos issues. That is part of the cost of rolling out the air cooling commitment.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So you can guarantee that the cost of asbestos removal will be included in the \$500 million?

Mr SCOTT: No. What I am saying is—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is what you just said.

Mr SCOTT: With respect, that is not what I just said. What I said is that of course part of the complexity of rolling out air cooling will be putting air cooling in buildings where there may be a risk of asbestos. That needs to be taken into account. Part of the cost of rolling out air cooling is putting in the appropriate system and the appropriate construction method for that system given the history of the building.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What you are saying is that you do not actually know if there is asbestos in there. We have got over 1,000 schools where we know that the asbestos is breaking down—

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order—

The CHAIR: We will hear the answer, thank you.

Mr SCOTT: There are a lot of numbers floating around here.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: There are more than 1,000 schools where asbestos is decaying in school classrooms.

The CHAIR: We will hear the answer in full, please. Mr Maranik?

Mr MARANIK: We have a very robust process of due diligence for each and every site.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I would not characterise it as robust.

Mr MARANIK: In terms of the air conditioning and Cooler Classrooms work that is undertaken, the availability of each asbestos registry at each site is taken into account. There is risk reduction and due diligence activities that are undertaken, not just with asbestos but electricity supply and a whole range of factors before the design is rationalised for that particular and contextually individual site.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you think it is appropriate—

The CHAIR: Sorry. The Opposition allocation of 20 minutes has expired.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you and good morning. I wanted to ask you about children with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder [ADHD] in our schools. Is ADHD recognised as a disability by the Department of Education?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I would just make a general comment that it is important to me as Minister that there is support for children with additional learning needs, including ADHD and disability. I might ask Ms HARRISSON to comment on the support provided for children who have ADHD.

Ms HARRISSON: Schools are provided funding to support students with additional learning needs. That funding is calculated using the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data where teachers make an assessment about adjustments that are made in class. If a student with ADHD requires an adjustment in their class, that will be captured and fed into that data collection and funding comes through to support that. In terms of the way we then allocate funding to that school to provide support, we provide it in two forms. The first is through an adjustment for low-level disability in classrooms which is done on a needs basis by a school. Then we provide integration funding support, depending on the individual needs of a student. Some of those require medical diagnosis and some are not captured in the funding allocation around ADHD. So we have a variety of different tools. Schools are supported through their low-level disability funding and they are able to make the local adjustments for any student in that class in order to support their learning needs.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Is ADHD recognised as a disability by the Department of Education?

Ms HARRISSON: We have a number of different disabilities that are recognised. They are done in categories that are pre-agreed with the Commonwealth around funding.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Where does ADHD fit?

Ms HARRISSON: I can take the specifics of where ADHD sits on notice and provide that back to you.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: What policies are in place to ensure support for ADHD students specifically?

Ms HARRISSON: The policies that are in place to support all our students with additional learning needs are in place to support those with ADHD as well. We expect our schools to differentiate the needs and support the needs of all the learners in our classrooms. Additional support is provided through funding through our resource allocation model [RAM]. We provide a loading for disability that is provided to schools based on their student population.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: What education is given to teachers and principals in relation to ADHD specifically?

Ms HARRISSON: We offer a wide range of ongoing professional development for teachers, including for the support of students in classrooms with complex or varying needs and that covers a broad range of disability types and learning needs and we focus on how you address those learning needs in a classroom—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Is there anything specifically for ADHD?

Ms HARRISSON: I can take the specifics of that on notice. There are obvious provisions by us as a department of education to our system, and there are also a variety of courses that are available externally that teachers and schools can access to support other teachers in that practice.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: It is my understanding that there is no ADHD-specific training for teachers and principals in New South Wales on how to support children with ADHD?

Ms HARRISSON: I think it is important to recognise that training and development of teachers comes through a variety of different sources. The department is one provider—and I will provide the specifics of what

I am able to provide of our offer to you on notice—but there is a broad range of professional development available that schools can access which is beyond the remit and boundaries of the department.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I appreciate you will you take that on notice, but what I am hearing is that education is not mandatory by the department in any way.

Ms HARRISSON: In terms of the professional development that teachers undertake, that is determined through the discussions they have at a local school level about the local needs of their students and they make choices then about the correct professional development to meet the needs of their staff.

Mr SCOTT: Can I just add? We will get the material on notice that you are requesting, of course. We do have broad training courses. There is a course on disability standards for education, 92,000 staff have completed that over time and ADHD is addressed in the context of that. I am informed that 25,000 departmental staff and assistant staff have completed other professional learning courses of which ADHD is part. I think you are asking if there is a specific stand-alone course. What I just wanted to add was, ADHD is of course covered as part of professional development offerings from the department, looking at the range of disability that is evident in our classrooms and the complexity of different student needs.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: There has been a really encouraging amount of education now being given to teachers and other educators in relation to autism, for instance.

Mr SCOTT: Yes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But we do not see the same level of attention given to ADHD. These questions are directed at really finding out why. Minister, you are no doubt aware that around one in four children with ADHD are suspended from school and on an average of 3.7 times per child. Those rates of suspension are quite alarming, especially for parents of children with ADHD. Do you think that that is a product of lack of education and training for teachers and principals?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I think as Ms Harrison said, there are supports and professional learning is available for teachers in relation to these issues. But, more broadly, I am certainly aware of some of the public commentary and views that have been put forward by parents of students with ADHD. Looking particularly I guess at suspension rates, that is something that we are considering at the moment. I know that there is a review underway into suspensions and really getting to the root causes as to why some of these matters are taking place. If there is more that we need to do to support, particularly our teachers to help them to address or manage any professional development that they need for children with ADHD, then as Minister I am certainly open to considering that.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: At what stage is the suspension review? Who is being consulted as part of that?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I might get the secretary to provide some commentary in relation to that.

Ms HARRISSON: We have our overall behaviour policy under review and we are engaged with a variety of stakeholders around that work. Suspension is one element of that. Specific work around suspensions was initiated this year and we will be continuing to engage and consult with stakeholders on the way forward.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: When you talk about stakeholders are you also including disability advocacy groups as part of that?

Ms HARRISSON: We do. We work in close partnership with all our stakeholders. It will include, obviously, our teaching professionals, the NSW Teachers Federation, the principal association body, as well as those who represent the students and their families in our schools—all of the advocacy groups too.

Mr SCOTT: The other thing I would add to that we are watching the suspension numbers closely. This is an issue that we are increasingly looking to monitor. There are some schools that I think have outstanding records as far as a strong sense of personal responsibility and behaviour, strong training for staff. In a way you see that, in part, in their suspension numbers and the way they have been able to reduce suspensions over time. That is not to say that in some circumstances suspensions will not be appropriate; we are looking at our behaviour policy. We are also looking at what the data shows us. We are also looking to learn from schools that seem to be doing this very well.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: In the past 10 years, Minister, how many employees and former employees of the New South Wales Department of Education were paid out-of-court settlements? What was the total cost of those settlements in each of the past 10 years?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I think you might have asked me this matter in the House before. I will take the specifics of the question on notice and come back to you with those figures.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Yes, it was actually a little bit different.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Similar.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: On 30 July 2019 a reporter on *Seven News* referred to two totals for successful compensation claims by teachers for injuries due to stress. They acknowledged a bill of \$11.5 million but at the end of the item stated it was \$36 million. Will you clarify the correct figure and whether it is for the past 12 months or for some other time period?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes. I will take that on notice, check those figures and come back to you.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Do the conditions of settlement agreed to by employees and former employees of the New South Wales Department of Education limit in any way the evidence they can give to parliamentary committees?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I might ask the secretary.

Mr SCOTT: Let me check on the specifics of that and come back to you.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Will you also check whether it precludes them from talking to members of Parliament outside the committee process?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, I can take that on notice.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Is the Minister aware that employees of the Department of Education have actually been warned not to talk to members of Parliament about this issue? Who issued that directive?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have not been approached by anyone with that information. If the Hon. Mark Banasiak has concerns or specifics about that example—whether here or off-line—I am happy to speak to him about that.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Do you agree it does not really comply with Article 9: freedom of speech, and Article 22: freedom of association, under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again you are mentioning hypothetical cases. I would be happy to talk to you about some specifics, yes.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Minister, is it ever acceptable for an employee of the New South Wales Department of Education to dismiss complaints made about their own conduct?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Obviously we have processes in place in relation to employee performance and conduct. I do not know if the secretary wants to add any more.

Mr SCOTT: We clearly do have a set of rules and guidelines in place for employee performance and conduct. As you know that has just been significantly reviewed—and I am happy to talk about that if that is where you would like to lead the conversation—but there are rules and guidelines in place for management of these issues. They are the guidelines that we follow. I am not sure if Ms Mulkerin wants to add to that.

Ms MULKERIN: No.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Can someone dismiss complaints made about their own conduct? That is the crux of the question.

Mr SCOTT: Is there a specific issue that you are asking about here?

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Yes. Would you like me to go straight to it?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, why don't we cut to the chase?

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Okay. Minister, why did you request the subject of a complaint that had serious wellbeing ramifications for 20 employees to be handled by the subject of that complaint?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again, I might the secretary to respond. As Minister I do not get involved in those sorts of decisions.

Mr SCOTT: I am not aware of the specific issue that you are referring. Perhaps if there is some detail that you would like to raise. I can say that it is difficult for us to go into specific cases. If there have been hearings around specific issues there will be privacy matters around that. There might well be a matter that you want to raise.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: The Committee secretariat has passed you some documents. There was a series of complaint letters sent to you regarding 20 employees of the health and safety directorate.

Mr SCOTT: Oh, yes.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: There was a letter to the Minister. The subject of that complaint was about yourself and Mr Riordan. It was then handed—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: "Yourself" being Mr Scott?

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Sorry, Mr Scott and Mr Riordan. The Minister actually handed it to Mr Riordan to respond to that complaint.

The CHAIR: For the record, it is noted that the documents tendered by the Hon. Mark Banasiak are now available to the witnesses.

Mr SCOTT: Yes. Thanks for alerting me to the case that you were referring to. Let us talk about the health and safety directorate and the cultural issues you have raised. Yes, we did have some complaints raised about that directorate by some staff. There were some changes and change management processes that took place in that area and there were some staff complaints. Those complaints were independently assessed and evaluated and as sometimes is the case where complaints are made the people who made the complaint were not happy with the finding. We then had some circumstances that I thought were inappropriate—attacks on the leader of that division and emails that were circulated to every staff member of the department and a range of other, I believe, unhelpful actions.

We subsequently did get a health check done of that division, which provided some advice back to us. But your suggestion is whether, in fact, we should have been investigating complaints about ourselves. I would simply put it to you that complaints that had been raised about that division and about some people leading the division were independently reviewed and that had been thoroughly documented for a considerable period of time.

The CHAIR: To finish off the first round, as Chair I have a few questions. Minister, I think the question that the parents around the State would be asking is: Why are we spending record amounts of money in school education but the results seem to be flatlining, particularly in high school NAPLAN?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It is a good question. I think the timeliness is important, given that we did have those preliminary NAPLAN figures released just last week. Obviously we are seeing record investments in Education and we want to see improved student outcomes as part of that. As me having been the Minister now for just over four months, there is a range of measures that we have started to introduce prior to NAPLAN results coming out in relation to lifting our student results and outcomes, starting in the primary school years. There is a lot of work done in those early years.

I would note that our primary school results in NAPLAN have seen some improvements, which I think is pleasing, particularly when we invest in those early years—kindergarten, year 1 and year 2—around literacy and numeracy. We know that that early support makes a big difference. I think the work that we are doing around the phonics check that we will be introducing next year, our outcomes-based budgeting, the expansion of the Bump It Up program looking at literacy and numeracy results and targets for each school, attendance, wellbeing and equity—there is a range of work already underway prior to the release of the NAPLAN results to start to address these issues.

The CHAIR: What improvements are you expecting in the coming years? Can you quantify that?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Obviously as Minister my view—and I think that would be the view shared by everyone in this room and frankly by parents as well—is that we should be going for continual improvement and uplifting results for our children. Particularly with Bump It Up we found that when we rolled that out to the 137 schools it was successful. If you aim for nothing you hit nothing. If we set targets in conjunction with schools, if we look at what programs are working, evidence-based practice, as the Minister, that is really at the core of decisions that I will be making. I would like to see improvements, as I think everyone would.

The CHAIR: On that question of evidence-based practice, how do you respond as Minister to what is really the central paradox in school education policy that all these things have been measured right around the

world for 50 years or so. We know what works in classrooms. John Hattie's *Visible Learning* has a list here of four pages of everything that works and does not work. There are schools that are researched and case studies and exemplars put out by the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. Why are not these things scaled up? Why are they not happening in every school in New South Wales?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will provide some preliminary comments and then I might ask the secretary to also respond. What I will say is that is something that as Minister I am very interested in looking at. I have visited some really great schools that have done some wonderful things. Particularly with this year's NAPLAN results, I am going to be more interested in the more detailed data that comes out shortly because that will give a school-by-school indication of results to see how some of these schools are using their teaching methodologies to see what practice is in place. The way that we have moved towards, as I said, both outcomes-based budgeting and Bump It Up, if we can look at schools that are statistically similar—similar cohorts of students and similar numbers—and look at one or one or two or particular schools that are going well and what their practices are and if there are opportunities to scale up these programs based on evidence, then certainly, as Minister, that is certainly something that I am keen to explore. I might get the secretary to provide a little bit more detail.

Mr SCOTT: The question about how you lift a system is a fundamental one. I am guided by McKinsey's work that has looked at high performing systems around the world and how they lift. There are a few things in that research that are significant. One is that it takes some time. They say it takes about six years till you begin to see a lift. I think you can make an argument that we are seeing that in New South Wales. The preliminary analysis of the NAPLAN results this year will indicate that we have hit the Premier's Priority target about lifting more students into the top two bands through 2015 to 2019. In most of those areas, particularly in primary school, as you indicate, we are beginning to see that lift. What the research also says about best performing systems is that you need to provide tailored support to schools, the right kind of support and the right kind of intervention given where they are at. That is what increasingly we are doing too.

I have seen your reference to Blue Haven and the work that is taking place at Blue Haven. That is why the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation [CESE] has done a case study of Blue Haven; that is why the principal of Blue Haven is speaking widely around the department. I think what the research would say is that different kinds of support and different kinds of interventions are required for schools at their different level of progress where their students are at now. What we are looking to do—Ms Harrisson is leading this exercise—is to use the evidence to provide quite specific support to identify the help that they need at their particular stage of development.

The other thing we are doing, that the Minister referenced, is that we are going to come up with clear targets for every school—literacy, numeracy, attendance, wellbeing and a range of other metrics as well—so we will be able to track improvement over time, look at what is happening in schools like Blue Haven that are doing really well and learn from that experience and also ask questions about the investment and the focus at schools that are not achieving the improvement that they expected to achieve.

The CHAIR: Minister, you just said you would look at school-by-school results for NAPLAN but you have made public statements pointing out what you regard as serious faults in NAPLAN. How do those two things square together. Is NAPLAN a reliable guide to what schools are doing or is it something that is unreliable?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I have said publicly in relation to this before, NAPLAN is the current diagnostic tool that we have. It is the one test that we are required to do through our arrangements with the Federal Government and while that is our testing regime we have to extract as much data from it as we can. Clearly I will be looking at this year's results in detail in terms of school by school because we also know that we did have issues with those schools who did participate in NAPLAN online. Some had significant connectivity issues as well. That is why I want to look at the breakdown of individual schools and the circumstances in which their NAPLAN tests were sat.

But more broadly, yes, I have called, along with counterparts in other States, for a review into NAPLAN. I again make it clear that this is not about moving away from testing or diagnostic testing. It is incredibly important. We need to have data as Ministers and as policymakers and teachers need to have that in their classrooms to be able to know where they need to support their students. But the NAPLAN test is over 10 years old and I do not think it is fit for purpose or that it is the world's best in the way that it could be. I think there is opportunity to extract more data out of a better test and that is what I would like a review to look into.

The CHAIR: Are there a number of schools that are reported to the department in some critique-type document of schools that do not like using NAPLAN for assessment purposes? I have looked at the CESE material

and also visited schools and they all seem very keen on what they call triangulating their assessments with departmental tools: classroom observation and using NAPLAN as supplementary they say are useful, not central, to what they are doing. How many schools refuse to use NAPLAN in their assessment?

Mr SCOTT: We do not have NAPLAN refusers.

The CHAIR: You do not?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, schools do it; it is a requirement that schools do it. I think some of the critique of NAPLAN comes in the simplistic interpretation of its results, as exactly you say. The best educators that I see say that they value what they are learning from classroom assessment. There are other assessments they run; NAPLAN can reinforce that. There would be very few great educators that I would say though who would say that NAPLAN is the be-all and end-all and is not at all times reliable. I think as the Minister has pointed out, there are reliability questions, I think, that come to bear when some of your students are doing a pen-and-paper assessment and some of your students are doing an assessment in this transition phase.

Also the educators would say to us—the psychometricians who do the work—that there would be questions over the reliability over time of different parts of the NAPLAN assessment. I think over time we have queried writing in particular and the ability of NAPLAN to really be able to give a clear assessment on writing. These are the kinds of things. The review that the Minister has indicated we are going to set up is a good opportunity for us to re-examine 10 years into NAPLAN.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I would like to start by first placing on the record that my partner is a teacher employed by the department and that she is affected by the pay inequity issue, which I intend to ask questions about. Because of a perceived conflict of interest I sought the advice of the Clerk of the Legislative Council in relation to this matter. The Clerk has advised that under the sessional orders because my partner is in a class of persons within the general public I am okay to proceed.

The CHAIR: The Committee notes the declaration, thank you.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Minister, are you aware of the pay inequity issue around the transition to Standards Based Remuneration?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, I am aware of that. I have had correspondence from several MPs in relation to that matter. What I am also aware of is that those specifics were part of the award that was negotiated previously with the Teachers Federation as well.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So you are aware. In light of the fact that there is clearly a situation where more experienced teachers are being paid less than their less experienced peers, do you believe that that is an inequitable arrangement?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, that was part of the agreement that was made in relation to the most recent award. I will add that I do support standards-based pay—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It is a simple question. Do you believe it is inequitable?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am still answering.

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order—

The CHAIR: Let us give the Minister a chance. She was going for about nine seconds there.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will also add that we are due to negotiate a new award later this year with the Teachers Federation and I have no doubt that that will be part of the discussion that we have.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Do you agree that it is an inequitable arrangement that some teachers with more experience are being paid less than teachers who have less experience?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, that was part of the agreement that was negotiated and—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It is a simple question, Minister.

The CHAIR: I am going to have to call you to order, Mr D'Adam, on the basis that the Minister so far, I think, and the secretary have been very good in giving concise answers that help the Committee progress its matters of inquiry. I do not think we have a problem here with verbose answers, so let us give the Minister a chance to answer. I also suggest that sometimes you find as Ministers talk about matters you get information that is useful for other questioning.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr Chair. I will also get the secretary to make a comment in relation to—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I did not ask the secretary.

The CHAIR: I think it is reasonable for the Minister to ask the secretary to briefly give a supplementary answer.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It was a closed question, Chair.

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Point of order—

The CHAIR: I am taking the point of order. I really think this is going to work a lot better, Mr D'Adam, if we just allow these concise answers. I promise I will call them up if they are verbose and long-winded; so far they have not been. Can we just get 20 seconds from Mr Scott?

Mr SCOTT: We meet regularly, of course, with the Teachers Federation, the Secondary Principals' Council and the Primary Principals' Association. It is not unusual in the time an industrial agreement is in operation that points of concern will be raised as to how that is working in practice, and this is an issue that has been raised. Principals raise things about how the principal classification system is working in practice; we note those. There is an appropriate time to engage on changes to the agreement and that is in the industrial negotiation that we are working up to now. This agreement falls due at the end of the year so we will be discussing the impact of the previous agreement and how it operates in practice as we negotiate a new one.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Mr Scott, was it a mistake? Is this a mistake?

Mr SCOTT: I would simply say it was an agreement reached—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So did the department intend this outcome?

The CHAIR: You have really got to allow Mr Scott to give his answer. He got about five words out then. He is trying to answer the question: Was this a mistake?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Point of order: These are closed questions requiring a yes or no answer.

The CHAIR: You did not ask for a yes or no answer. You asked: Was it a mistake? Mr Scott was allowed to have five words of answer and I think in all fairness to these witnesses, who have given up their time and have so far given us concise answers, we should allow that pattern of concise answering to continue.

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order: While the Hon. Anthony D'Adam can ask the question, it is not up to him to determine how the question is answered.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Fang, you are just wasting our time. We have got limited time. Just let him get on with his questions.

The Hon. WES FANG: It is up to the Minister to determine how he or she answers the question. It is also up to the Minister whether she wants to—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If you want to ask questions then you should take your time.

The CHAIR: Let us not have cross-Chamber banter. I have ruled on this. Mr Scott, was it a mistake?

Mr SCOTT: It was a transition arrangement that was agreed between the department and the NSW Teachers Federation. Mr Riordan was involved in the negotiation; perhaps he can bring some further insight.

Mr RIORDAN: Thank you for the question. It certainly was not a mistake, it was put in place as a protective mechanism otherwise we would have had many, many teachers who would have been caught by the change to standards-based pay. We moved from a 13-step scale to a seven-step scale and the basis of it was accreditation. So if a teacher who may have been, for example, on step eight of the old scale at the time of transition and had not been yet accredited at the proficient level would have suffered a salary decrease. So the incremental arrangement was kept in place so that not one single teacher suffered a disadvantage from the transition to the standards-based pay system.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So you actually intended for this outcome to occur—that there would be some teachers who are more experienced being paid less than teachers who are less experienced? That was the intention of the department? That is your evidence, is it?

Mr RIORDAN: I did not say that was the intention. Our intention was to protect teachers to ensure that nobody went backwards in pay.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So you modelled this prior to the negotiations? You modelled the impact; you understood exactly what the department was doing?

Mr RIORDAN: We understood that the transition to standards-based pay would impact people in different ways and we took a protective position to ensure that no-one lost pay.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: What about the inequity that emerged out of that strategy?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If I could add one comment. Obviously, when we go through negotiations or when the department goes through negotiations for these industrial awards the awards have to be worth the paper they are written on. The previous award, as I said, was agreed to by all parties. But, as I have also indicated, we are about to negotiate a new award in relation to these matters and it is something that I understand will and should be looked at as part of that new arrangement, as is appropriate.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Minister, what message does it send to teachers about their value when you are prepared to accept this fundamentally inequitable outcome?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I think teachers should be very confident to know that, as Minister, I completely value them and the work that they do every day. It is a very important role being a teacher and I hold them in the highest esteem for the work that they do every day. As I said, and Mr Scott and Mr Riordan have both reiterated, these were matters that were worked through as part of an award agreement that were agreed to by all parties. As the secretary mentioned, there are times during an award period where you find ways that you can make changes or improvements. These are things that we will discuss as part of the new arrangement later this year with parties including the Teachers Federation.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So you understand the consequence of this change is that some teachers once they reach parity on the incremental scale will be almost \$40,000 behind in pay.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As Mr Riordan said, the processes that were put in place to ensure that no teacher went backwards in terms of their pay, no teacher lost money. This was part of a transitional arrangement as, again, I think Mr Riordan has covered quite eloquently, and these are issues that will be determined further in the next round of negotiations for the upcoming teachers award. I think I have made that quite clear.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Your proposition is that this inequity will remain in place—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What I said was—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: —and those affected will not be compensated—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: With respect, Mr D'Adam, what I have said is that this was an agreement by all parties in relation to the award. There are clearly concerns that have been raised by teachers in relation to these matters and they have been raised with me, as I said, by local members, and these are the sorts of matters that will be negotiated as part of the upcoming award. I really cannot add anything further than that because that is the appropriate mechanism to deal with these matters.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It is your intention, is it, to fix it through the new award?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The intention is for this to be looked at as part of that award negotiation.

Mr SCOTT: It needs to be fixed under the award. It is an agreement when the award expires we will enter into negotiations on this, as we have already indicated to the Teachers Federation.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is it your intention to negotiate that award within the confines of the wages policy?

Mr SCOTT: We are—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Are you going to seek an exemption?

The CHAIR: You asked the question, Mr Scott tried to make an answer and this time got to half a word. We are going to give Mr Scott a bit of time to answer the question.

Mr SCOTT: We are not going to pre-judge and pre-rehearse the negotiations we are going to have with the Teachers Federation here—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Mr Scott, you would be well aware—

The CHAIR: I am calling you to order, Mr D'Adam, on the basis that the witness must be given a reasonable chance to provide the answer.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: He has provided an answer: They are not prepared to be pre-empted.

The CHAIR: You have interrupted in mid-sentence. He has had 10 seconds and I think this Committee will function much better—and it is a reasonable thing to say—if Mr Scott can finish his answer.

Mr SCOTT: Whilst I note your concern, and those concerns have been articulated to me and to the Minister, I would simply point out, as Mr Riordan said, this was a complex matter of transition that affected tens of thousands of our staff moving to a new scale. This was the agreement that was reached between the department and the NSW Teachers Federation in trying to deal with that complexity. It was an agreement that runs for three years; that agreement is soon to expire. I expect it will be raised by the federation and we will deal with it appropriately as part of that negotiation.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: In order to negotiate you need negotiating parameters from the Wages Policy Taskforce. Will you seek an exemption from the policy—

Mr SCOTT: We are not going to comment on the detail of the negotiation. I have told you the matter will be negotiated and perhaps when we meet again I will be able to report on the outcome of that negotiation.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, I would like to ask you some questions around your election commitment for all New South Wales high schools to have a mental health practitioner in them. I understand this was an \$88 million election commitment. Can you update the Committee and tell us since the election how many new professionals have commenced work in New South Wales schools?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Obviously, as you have mentioned, this was a commitment that we made in the election largely in light of the fact—and it is certainly feedback that I have received from high school principals particularly since taking on this portfolio—that there are increasing complexities that children are dealing with, particularly in high schools. We do have systems and programs in place for psychologists, counsellors and student support officers in our schools. This is to reinvigorate that. We are now looking at having one counsellor or psychologist at each school and one student support officer as well. There is significant work underway regarding the people to fill those positions.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am going to ask you some specific questions but I am just after a number. I totally agree with your sentiments; this is a very important issue. But I have very limited time. Can you tell me since the election how many new professionals have started work in New South Wales schools?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will take the specifics of that on notice in terms of the most up-to-date figure.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many psychologists will form part of this plan?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I might ask Ms Harrison to provide a little more detail. But, as I said, the commitment is around—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am just after a figure. I have read the commitment extensively.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Ms Harrison will provide the details.

Ms HARRISSON: As part of this package up to an additional 100 school counsellors or school psychologists will be employed so that every high school will have full-time specialist psychology support onsite. It will be determined locally by a school and the availability of staff whether or not that is a school counsellor or a psychologist.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sorry? It will be determined by the school or the staff?

Ms HARRISSON: By the availability of staff.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: By availability?

Ms HARRISSON: They will advertise for positions that they will seek to fill and it will be an appropriate qualified individual, either a school counsellor or a psychologist, who will be appointed.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Counsellor or psychologist?

Ms HARRISSON: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: **Thank you.** Minister, can you confirm that these positions will be full-time positions in every high school?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Full-time equivalent is suggested and, as Ms Harrison had mentioned, that will depend obviously on availability of staff in certain areas. I will also add that we are doing significant work in terms of scholarship programs to train and retain staff for these positions as well. Because, as you said, it is very important and we need to provide that support.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you tell me how many high schools currently have a psychologist?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will take that question on notice. From memory it is about—no, I will take it on notice because I don't want to give you the wrong figure.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You might want to take this question on notice as well. How many have at least one full-time mental health worker?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, I will take that question on notice, just to get the specifics as well.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And a part-time mental health worker?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am happy to take that on notice for the detail.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And average amount of hours undertaken by mental health workers at school?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again we will take the specifics on notice to give you the correct figures.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are you aware of any research that the department has done on the availability of mental health workers and psychologists, particularly in rural and regional areas?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I might get Ms Harrison to provide some comment. But I have certainly been briefed from the department regarding this particular election commitment and how it will be rolled out. As I mentioned in an earlier answer, we do have scholarship programs in place and part of that is to address the issue of attracting and retaining these professionals, especially in regional areas. Part of the scholarship program will be looking at prioritising those in regional areas as well because we know that there are added complexities and issues in attracting those staff to the regions. And that is part of what I have asked the department to do.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am happy for you to provide that further on notice; we have very limited time. Will school counsellors be replaced with mental health workers or psychologists?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As Ms Harrison said, the commitment is to have either a counsellor or psychologist. My understanding is that a counsellor is a psychologist with a teaching degree as opposed to someone with a psychology degree. That is the information that I have received. The aim of this commitment is to have one full-time psychologist or counsellor and one student support officer as well. That is the commitment we want to roll out.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: But no existing school counsellors will be replaced by psychologists or other mental health workers?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As Ms Harrison said, and again I might get her to comment, there will be absolutely the opportunity for individual schools to look at their particular circumstances and staff retention as well. The goal is to make sure that in all our public high schools across the State we have one of each of those staff.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I absolutely agree with the goal but I am just interested to know whether school counsellors will be replaced at any school?

Ms HARRISSON: Current school counsellors will, of course, maintain their position and when vacancies come up schools will make decisions about who to recruit and who they are able to recruit to fill those vacancies.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you, that's all.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Minister, is there a ratio for how many students to a toilet in a New South Wales primary school?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will ask Mr Maranik to respond to that.

Mr MARANIK: There is a document that is the *Education Facilities Standards and Guidelines* that sets out a whole range of parameters, including toilet requirements, floor space to teaching spaces and those sorts of things.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It sets the number of students per toilet when you are building a new school, does it?

Mr MARANIK: Yes. There is a whole range of standards in that space that talk about that as well as a whole range of other parameters around play areas and those sorts of things.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How does this standard apply to the situation in Parramatta East? Does Parramatta East meet the standard given that there is 80 per cent demountables, 500 students and only 10 toilets? Does it comply with the standard?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We have actually put more toilets into that particular school but I will get Mr Maranik to comment on that.

Mr MARANIK: What we have is a whole range of demographic pressures around that particular location. Certainly the way to look at it is you have a core facility and then the teaching spaces. The core facilities include the canteens, libraries, toilets and those sorts of things. Then you have the teaching spaces component. We have brought more toilets in to Parramatta East and we are working with the school community in terms of—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is there actually a ratio?

Mr MARANIK: I would need to get back to you in terms of what the specific ratio is on that. I will take that on notice.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is the ratio different for students and teachers? Obviously staff have separate toilets to the students. Is the ratio different?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We will check. We will take that on notice.

Mr MARANIK: We will take that on notice.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How many new toilets get added when demountables are added to increase the student capacity?

Mr MARANIK: Again, what the process of educational facility planning does is make sure those ratios are there. As for that particular one, I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How many schools have had demountables added in 2019 and had additional toilet capacity added?

Mr MARANIK: Again, specifically in terms of the number I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can you take that on notice for 2018 as well?

Mr MARANIK: Yes, certainly.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Minister, are you confident that school toilets are a safe place?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I would expect that all schools will be safe places. I think it is important that we do everything we can to make sure that is the case, whether it is the toilet or any other classroom or learning space on a school site.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Are you aware of any incidents of assaults occurring in school toilets?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will ask the secretary to comment regarding that.

Mr SCOTT: Mr Dizdar can comment on that.

Mr DIZDAR: Operationally it is very important for us to have appropriate supervision in schools. I am happy to answer to a specific case that you might have. But I am just giving you the broader picture operationally

where at recess, lunch, before school we would have staff supervision of all of our school spaces including the toilets.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: You are confident that they are safe places, that assaults don't occur in school toilets?

Mr DIZDAR: What I am confident of is that our staff on the ground fulfil their duty of care requirements in a supervisory capacity as best they can. If you have a specific matter I am happy to answer.

Mr SCOTT: Let's be very clear, there are 800,000 students in our schools today. Our schools are overwhelmingly safe places. We have a commitment to the safety and wellbeing of every student in our care. That is not to say that with 800,000 students in 2,200 schools there will not be incidents from time to time. If you have a specific issue that you would like to raise we can take that on board. But I can tell you we have a commitment to safety. We have a commitment to safety for our students no matter where they are in our school grounds.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is there a minimum requirement for green space per child? Is there a ratio for green space in schools?

Mr MARANIK: Again pointing you back to the *Educational Facilities Standards and Guidelines*, there is a play space parameter that we work to which is generally 10 square metres per child of unencumbered space.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is it 10 square metres per child?

Mr MARANIK: Yes.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is that affected when you put demountables on green space?

Mr MARANIK: It depends on the context of the local school and how that play space is delivered. In some cases the play spaces are well beyond the 10 square metres and it doesn't impact it. In other areas we manipulate the demountables in such a way that they don't impact play space. In those cases where it does we will engage with others such as the local councils and whatnot to see if we can reset the play space and operationalise that.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Are there schools that don't meet that standard?

Mr MARANIK: Certainly across the portfolio of 2,200 schools, historically and particularly about some of the urban infill areas and those sorts of things, there are schools that are under the 10 square metre guidelines.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Looking again at those suspensions of children suspended over the last five years, how many of them were in stage one?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We might take that on notice and get an exact figure for you.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That would be great. Also how many of those suspended over the last five years had a disability and specifically what were those disabilities? For those purposes I am including ADHD as a disability.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Just to be clear, of all suspensions over five years or just in stage one?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Those are separate questions. Of the children suspended over the last five years, how many of them are in stage one? And how many of them—as a separate question—had disabilities?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sorry, I just wanted to make sure we had the right information.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: And what were those disabilities? And also what were the causes and triggers of those suspensions both for the stage one children and also for the children with disability?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes. I might ask the secretary if he wants to comment.

Mr SCOTT: Thank you, Minister. I would simply say we will get that material for you. Under the policies now, disability used to be taken into account when the assessment was made to suspend a child. I need to make it clear that under our protocols and practice, suspension is not like a sentencing. It is a time out of school where clearly something has gone wrong, there has clearly been a breakdown and behaviour has been manifest that is inappropriate in a school setting. What suspension is meant to do is really buy some time for engagement between the teachers, the school, the parents and the student themselves, hopefully, where appropriate, to look at how we can actually have a reset so that the behaviour can be appropriate. So that is the design of it, and of course

if a student is presenting with a disability then that is a factor that should be taken into account at the time of the suspension. That is how our policies should work.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Do you have any figures showing success of that suspension process on future development?

Mr SCOTT: Yes. I would be happy to do that. The Chair referenced the CESE. One of the advantages of being a big system is that you have lots of case studies. We have lots of case studies of schools that have worked. We have had case studies of schools that have significantly reduced their suspension rate and seen a lift in student performance, and I am happy to provide you with some details of those.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you. How many legal actions have been taken against staff and schools for the treatment of children with a disability in New South Wales public schools in the last three years?

Mr SCOTT: I would have to take that on notice.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I would also like to know following those legal actions how many staff faced sanctions and what those sanctions included, whether Education was part of the response to those incidents, whether any staff were reprimanded or transferred away from working with children with a disability and whether any teachers were removed from their posts entirely.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again, given there is quite a bit of detail in your question, we will take that on notice and provide that information to you.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you. Minister, you will have no doubt been aware of some quite high-profile cases of children with a disability being mistreated in New South Wales schools. Generally, what is your approach to attempting to deal with that?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I would say at the outset that obviously the safety, the welfare and wellbeing of all children in New South Wales public schools is paramount and I think there should be—and there are—appropriate measures in place to investigate these matters. Again, I would ask the secretary to provide a little bit more comment.

Mr SCOTT: Yes. In our strategic plan we make a commitment that every child is known, valued and cared for. Where circumstances come to light, where there are allegations that are raised, then this is one of the reasons we have our Employee Performance and Conduct [EPAC] division. And depending on the circumstances, a range of different protocols will step into place. That matter will be investigated. It is not uncommon for teachers to be removed from that classroom setting while the investigation takes place. It would also not be uncommon for teachers to be instructed to have no contact or to not deal with students from that class or others in the classroom setting, but it will vary on a case-by-case basis. But we take allegations very seriously when it comes to protecting the health and wellbeing of students in our schools.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Do you think that a lack of education, awareness and general training around disability and a lack of supports for teachers in schools are part of the problem?

Mr SCOTT: This is an issue that we are looking closely at. Last year the department really, for the first time in several decades, undertook a complete review of disability policy. We had excellent engagement with stakeholders on that, and that process, I think, was very highly regarded and acknowledged. One of the things that it certainly did identify is the need to expand professional development on offer for teachers dealing with students with a disability. We are seeing increasing assessment of students with disability across the department. Our student population rate is increasing by about 1 per cent each year. The percentage of students with a disability is increasing at about 4 per cent each year. I think it is true to say that fewer than 10 per cent of graduates of initial teacher education come out having done strong preparation in dealing with students with a disability, so we know that we need to improve our performance in providing professional development.

There are four things that we really identified as part of the Disability Strategy: strengthening, as I said, the professional learning and support to build the capacity of not only teachers but also the support staff who work in those classrooms as well; increasing resources available to schools to deploy the support that they need on the ground; improving the family experience—the upper House inquiry into disability generated some telling examples of parents who have been very frustrated by their engagement with the department, so we are looking to improve that; and also to attract the improvement of outcomes of students with disability. Just as we are committed to the improvement of every student every year, that includes students with disability. I think we need to do a better job at being able to identify, track and monitor the progress of all these students over time.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Just looking at that upper House inquiry, there were 39 recommendations. I understand the New South Wales Government endorsed all of them. What is the process of actually implementing those recommendations?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As the secretary alluded to in his answer, the Disability Strategy that we have worked on and that was introduced or announced earlier this year is very much focused on a lot of the elements and issues that were raised as part of that upper House inquiry. It was good work and I think there were some good recommendations that came out of it. Now it is about implementing that strategy, and there is work underway in order to do that. But I will also give the honourable member and the Committee the assurance that I am being regularly briefed and updated on this as the implementation of that policy gets underway.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I draw your attention to the Tedeschi report, which was just released recently. Because many of the people across the table have had a hand in and, I guess, been a part of leading or managing the EPAC directorate, I will let you decide who wants to answer the question. Minister, you have been briefed on the Tedeschi report?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have, and I have read the report. Yes.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Just for the benefit of everyone here, I will just go through some of the findings and recommendations and then get you to give some comment. Mr Tedeschi recommended that there be a focus on those candidates with suitable skills in communicating, interviewing, location and analysis of evidence and reporting and/or writing skills. He also said that there were inconsistent decisions about interim measures, poorly drafted allegations of misconduct, a lack of transparency, a vague definition of misconduct, inexperienced investigators, no training of investigators, poor communication and in some cases inappropriate interview techniques and poor documentation of those investigations.

I put it to you that these are fairly basic things that we would expect the department to have in place. Considering that EPAC has been running for 23 years and it has been running as a quasi-judicial organisation with the power to punish people, ruin careers, ruin lives and put people under enormous pressure and stress, clearly the Tedeschi report has revealed that any fair process under law in terms of any independent investigation has been lacking. How would you respond to that and respond to the Tedeschi report in general?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will make an initial comment and then ask the secretary and Ms Mulkerin to add further information, but what I will say is obviously it was clear to me as Minister that Mr Tedeschi's review has identified how operational efficiency can be improved and how matters can be dealt with in a more timely fashion, and that would certainly be consistent with feedback that I received from teachers and principals while this review was underway.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Would you agree that they are fairly basic in terms of the recommendations that he has made?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I think that he has made appropriate recommendations, also looking at how procedural fairness can be made clearer to stakeholders. I think that is important. I am also happy that the department has already begun the implementation of the recommendations, all of which will be acted on, I am advised, by mid next year and I think that is appropriate. I think it is important that we do have a strong EPAC unit and that there is procedural fairness. I think that Mr Tedeschi's review has shone a light on some of the issues that I have certainly received indications from various stakeholders on that improvements needed to be made. As I said, I am now pleased that the department is beginning work in those areas. I might ask the secretary—

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Just before you do, though, Mr Scott, you mentioned a time line as to when you will implement these changes. Are you going to suspend investigations since there has been no fair process? Will you suspend investigations until that structure is in place?

Mr SCOTT: I think you have seriously misrepresented the findings of the report. I commissioned the report because I know EPAC is a big operation. Let me be clear at the outset: Nothing is more important than the safety and the health of our students and also we are committed to the safety and health and wellbeing of our staff but when allegations are raised—serious allegations—they need to be investigated seriously. I know there are critics of EPAC but some of those critics are people who are unhappy with the findings, and I stand by the commitment that at times the department will find that some people should not be teaching in our schools. Let me be clear about that. EPAC will make findings from time to time that some people should not be teaching in our schools and that will be an appropriate finding. So I contest your line that EPAC ruins careers and lives. What EPAC is attempting to do is to uphold the integrity and the quality of our system.

Let us be quite clear what Mr Tedeschi did not recommend. He did not recommend we abolish EPAC. He did not recommend we move it outside the department. He did not recommend that we suspend or review previous decisions made by EPAC. He did not suggest that we stop its processes now whilst we implement changes. What he said was that we need to resource it properly. He said that a series of problems that have emerged around timeliness has come from an understaffing of EPAC, given the complexity and demands of its work.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: In saying that, how many teachers currently, as of today, are sitting in a regional office or another school as a result of a pending EPAC investigation and how long have they been in those positions? I imagine you will have to take that on notice.

Mr SCOTT: I will take it on notice. But as I take it on notice I will say, yes, at times a decision will be made, because an allegation is serious, that that teacher should not be in a classroom. Our default position is to protect our students and that is what we will do, and if there have been long-time processes in EPAC reaching judgements that is why we are putting more staff into EPAC in order to shorten those time frames.

The CHAIR: Mr Scott, you mentioned earlier on that in the school system you do not have NAPLAN refusers. How many schools through their principals have requested a review of NAPLAN, the type of which has been announced by the Minister?

Mr SCOTT: I must say I have sat in meetings with the Primary Principals' Association, the Secondary Principals' Association, the Teachers Federation, the Association of—

The CHAIR: No, how many school principals—

Mr SCOTT: —Independent Schools, Catholic; they have all supported the Minister's stand that it is appropriate that NAPLAN now be reviewed.

The CHAIR: My thesis is there is a disconnect between those peak interest groups and school leaders and teachers at the coalface. How many school principals have asked for the review?

Mr SCOTT: I would have to check on that.

The CHAIR: Are there any?

Mr SCOTT: I have spoken to numbers of principals who have expressed concerns of how NAPLAN operates and are supportive of it being reviewed. There are some who would scrap it tomorrow.

The CHAIR: How many?

Mr SCOTT: Well, there are 2,200; I do not have the number in mind. But I can tell—and you are a presence in social media from time to time, as am I—you will find principals out there who have expressed their disquiet at how NAPLAN is currently operating. So the idea that says we review it, we go to experts, we look at what it promised 10 years ago, we look at the outcomes, we look at how it is positioned for the future, I feel there is nothing wrong with reviewing it. And most of the feedback I have had is there is no downside in a review.

The CHAIR: To the Minister or Mr Scott, what is the timetable for the review, the terms of reference and who will actually be undertaking it?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sure. Obviously this is something that I am working in conjunction with colleagues in other States, most notably Queensland and Victoria. We are currently finalising the terms of reference and the membership of those who will conduct the review on behalf of our States. I am expecting to be able to make some further announcements about that very soon.

The CHAIR: The Victorian education Minister, Mr Merlino, has already said that he would move year 9 NAPLAN to year 10 and link it to a proficiency certificate. Is that something New South Wales supports?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, we are working in relation to this review with other States and other States will bring their views to the table. I think we need to look at why we have the NAPLAN test that we do and what the purpose of it is. It is supposed to be diagnostic testing. When you start to link it to future careers and further attrition outside of school, I think that raises other questions. My view, from our perspective, is that it should be a strong diagnostic test. But these are matters, again, that can and will be raised, I am sure, as part of the review, and States and stakeholders—including teachers and principals—will be able to contribute to that process.

Mr SCOTT: Can I just add to that? The structure of the NAPLAN test—because it reports, in a sense, on a common scale that makes comparisons possible from years 3, 5, 7, 9—allows us to track improvement. So if you look at the Victorian suggestion, the only thing you would do to do it in year 10 rather than year 9 is change

the year on the front of the test. You still run the same test; it still reports on the common scale. The kinds of questions as to what might be the most appropriate year and what kind of information might best be drawn from it, that is the kind of thing that the review can look into.

The CHAIR: Yes. I think Mr Merlino was suggesting year 9 students were all disengaged and that is why NAPLAN in his State is disappointing for that cohort. But apparently the engagement level lifts in year 10?

Mr SCOTT: Miraculously in year 10. They have a big summer at the end of year 9.

The CHAIR: To my other point, do you find it curious that your Victorian colleagues would be announcing the outcome of what they think should happen before the review has even started?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: With respect, Chair, I did not see Mr Merlino's comments as moving towards an outcome. I think it was a suggestion from him as something that he would like to see. I have suggestions that I would like to see in relation to that test, as I have mentioned earlier, looking at the diagnostic test, looking at the timeliness of the data that comes back to schools and principals. As I said, we have recently got the preliminary results for a test that was sat in May. I think there are opportunities around that. Obviously every Minister will have their views on things that should be considered as part of that review. Minister Merlino has raised that as one area that he wants to be considered, and that is the purpose of a review: to look at all angles of this.

The CHAIR: His comments were on the front page of *The Australian* on Saturday.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, I am aware of his comments but what I am saying is that I would not necessarily jump to the conclusion that that is the ultimate outcome of a review. I take it as he has suggested that is something he would like to see but the review process will consider that, along with many other elements of NAPLAN and the testing regime itself.

The CHAIR: Minister, earlier on you said that you were going to examine the school-by-school NAPLAN results. If we move to a different type of diagnostic standardised testing, won't there be a discontinuity in measuring the performance and possible improvement of schools over time—there will not be a constant thread in the measurement methodology if we move to a new type of NAPLAN as per whatever findings the review comes out with?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again, these are the matters that we would need to consider as part of the review. We have moved from different testing regimes before. I remember doing the basic skills test when I was in primary school—I am showing my age a little bit there. We now have a NAPLAN testing regime. We also now have to look at comparability of data, with some doing the test as a written examination and some doing it online. Comparing methodologies as testing regimes evolve is something that we need to be doing regarding the current NAPLAN as it is, and of course that would be part of what we will consider in relation to this review.

The CHAIR: Do you acknowledge that is a problem, though—the discontinuity in measurement?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, until we go through a review process to look at what improvements can be made, they are the sorts of issues that we want the experts to provide advice on, as they have in relation to other iterations of diagnostic testing over the decades.

The CHAIR: And is it possible in your mind that there will be no improvements identified, that we can have one consistent set of testing methodology that continues in our school measuring performance of students and schools?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sorry, I do not quite understand the question?

The CHAIR: Do you acknowledge it might be possible that the review committee does not come up with any worthwhile recommendations for change?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I think that, based on the feedback I have received, it is likely that there will be responses around ways that the test could be improved. But, again, that is why we want to have the review. We have had reviews at a Commonwealth level through the Education Council into things like the reporting of data. We are now looking at online testing and the issues that happened this year. My view was that after 10 years—and I took it quite clearly to my colleagues, including those in other States, Territories and the Federal Government—it is time to look at the whole text. Issues have been raised with me around teaching to the test, the ways in which it is not linked to the curriculum as it could be and, as I said, the timeliness of the data. These are not unique issues and they were raised with both of my predecessors as well. New South Wales has

come to the position that we support diagnostic testing but we would like to see a review. That is why we have done the work that we have.

The CHAIR: If I can just come to another review process, there has been a report that the Federal Government is reviewing the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians from a decade ago. What is the input of the New South Wales Government to that process?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That matter is part of the Education Council, on which I sit as education Minister. We have had consultation sessions run by the Federal Government here in New South Wales. We have also had two sessions run by our department: one in Cabramatta and one in Tamworth. We are due to discuss the progress of that review at the next meeting of Education Ministers at the end of next week.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Minister, I am going to continue the line of questioning of the Hon. Mark Latham. You would be aware of the article that was in *The Australian* on the weekend. Is this the secret weapon that the department is going to employ to achieve the Premier's NAPLAN targets?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It is always good to have a prop at estimates.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It is a joke that something like a Chupa Chups lollipop can influence the results of a testing regime as serious as NAPLAN. The article asserts that it was 20 points. NAPLAN has no credibility, does it?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: My understanding is that the article referred to a school in Victoria in relation to that particular Chupa Chups lollipop. As I said, I have made my thoughts clear on NAPLAN. It is the diagnostic tool that we have; it is what we need to use. We are required to with our arrangements with the Federal Government. But obviously in New South Wales we would like to see a review of the testing regime itself. I have been very clear on that. That is why I took the position that I did to the Education Council. The council operates by consensus. It was my hope that other States would agree that it was time for a review and that the Commonwealth would share that position. It did not.

That does not pre-empt the States that are conducting the review to do that. It is our intention to take any findings back to the Education Council. This would need to be a change at a national level; I accept that. But I do not accept that it is okay not to look into something when clearly there is feedback from the sector that it is time we had a look at it. I do not think there is any need for us to put heads in the sand over this. What is wrong with reviewing a testing regime to make sure it is still fit for purpose after a decade? I think that is a sensible approach.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, I want to ask you about the Service NSW survey on before- and after-school care. When did the New South Wales Government launch that survey?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will check.

Ms HARRISSON: It was at the start of July.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How was it promoted?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The Premier and I visited a school to announce that it was going online and was available for parents to provide feedback. We issued the appropriate media releases as part of that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Was that just to free media? Was there any paid advertising or communications with schools?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will take some advice on that.

Ms HARRISSON: My understanding is that we did not pay for any media through the Department of Education, but I will double-check.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Was there any communications with schools?

Ms HARRISSON: We have encouraged schools, in our communication with them more generally, to make their parent bodies aware through their P&Cs, newsletters and other communications, and to encourage the parents to let us know what their needs are around before- and after-school care.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Was there any specific directive to say, "Communicate with your parents about this"?

Ms HARRISSON: Not that I am aware of, but I can check.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: No, that is fine. How many people have participated in the survey so far?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The figures that I have in front of me state that since 1 July more than 2,000 parents have told us where and when they need more care via that website.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So, on average, there has been one response from each of the schools across New South Wales?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We cannot make that assertion. I am saying that 2,000 parents have told us where and when.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is a fairly low response rate.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, the survey is still up and it will be up for a period of time. It is an opportunity for us to get data from families as to where assistance is most needed.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How are you communicating with parents who take the survey to ensure that they know that it does not guarantee them a place in before- and after-school care next year?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I might ask Ms Harrison to comment on the specifics of what we are doing with that data.

Ms HARRISON: Obviously the questions are available publicly and you can look at those. We are quite clear that they are about seeking the intent of parents around their future needs so that we can help where we have supply-and-demand issues in the State. We want to be able to make progress on that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, can you confirm that you are on track to deliver before- and after-school care for every parent at every public primary school by 2021?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What I can confirm is that we are on track with our election commitment, which was to provide before- and after-school care at every primary school in metropolitan areas and in major regional centres. As part of that commitment, we also allocated funding for smaller regional communities for more bespoke solutions, given their practicalities—which I am sure you would appreciate—for some of our regional communities. We are doing an awful lot of work in this space. We are consulting with the sector and with principal groups. We know that it is important for parents to be able to access these services and I am confident in the progress we have made so far.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: When in 2021 will it be delivered?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We are working to the timetable that we made as part of the election commitment to make it available for term one.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Just to clarify, are you going to have before- and after-school care available for every parent in every public primary school by term one in 2021?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, that is not what I said. It is not every parent in every public primary school. It was in line with our commitment in metropolitan areas and major regional centres. As I said, in other smaller regional communities we are working on more bespoke solutions, given the differences that will be the case in some of our smaller towns. I am confident that we are on track with what we committed to.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I appreciate that about smaller regional centres—

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order: Once again, the Hon. Courtney Houssos is asking the Minister a question and the Minister is providing a very detailed answer. The Minister should be allowed to answer the question.

The CHAIR: That is our policy. But we do not want detail to morph into time occupation. That is not what is happening with this Minister. But I ask that she wraps up her comments.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have answered the question.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Just to be clear, in metropolitan areas and major regional centres every parent in every public school will have access to before- and after-school care by term one in 2021?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Where there is demand for those services. Also, keeping in mind—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is a walk back from the original commitment.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, it is not. As I said, we are sticking by our election commitment. That is notwithstanding the fact that we already have several before- and after-school care services operating in our public schools across the State. But we are on track with our election commitment to deliver what we said we would do.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Will the demand be based solely on this survey?

Ms HARRISSON: We look at demand across the system. We engage with schools around where the needs are for them and their communities. We are using a number of different strategies to meet that demand, including funding for additional facilities, rental subsidies for operators on public school sites and \$20 million in an innovation fund to allow people to come forward.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I have read the specifics of the election commitment. I am interested to know whether the results of the survey being conducted through Service NSW will reduce the amount of before- and after-school care locations where it will be delivered.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That will be part of the data that we will consider. But, as I said, we are also consulting with stakeholders and the peak bodies in relation to before- and after-school care, as well as our principals. That is one element of the data that we will consider; but not the entirety.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you confirm how many additional schools will have before- and after-school care services operational by the end of this year?

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

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you also take on notice the number by the end of next year and the start of 2021?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will take that on notice and provide you with the information that we have. Obviously there are many schools that already offer a before- and after-school care service. But I will see what data is available and provide it to you.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What is the Government's plan once the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education is removed?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Given that this is my third year as the Minister responsible for early childhood education, I have spoken about this many times before. We have had year-on-year agreements. It is important to stress that I have raised with both the current and former Ministers at a Federal level that we want longer-term certainty on the funding. Recently we signed a deal going forward for the next 12 months. The Federal Government is also undertaking a review. As I said, I have made it clear to Minister Tehan on a number of occasions—as have colleagues from around the country—that we would like to see longer-term deals on the national partnership arrangements so that there can be greater certainty for the sector.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am pleased to hear that you have been advocating on their behalf.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Absolutely.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The review is not due until 2022. The current announcement from the Federal Government is that the funding will end in 2021. What are you going to do once that funding runs out?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again commenting a little bit on a hypothetical, but we have year on year—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It is not a hypothetical. It is a budget announcement.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, we have had in place year-on-year arrangements in the early childhood space for a number of years. Obviously for us in New South Wales we are proud of the investments that we have made into early childhood education, particularly the work that we are doing in our preschool sector. My advice is that the review from the Federal Government is due in early 2020. Part of that will be obviously coming back to us as States as to what the future is in terms of long-term agreements. But I will always advocate for longer term agreements. I do not think year on year provides enough certainty to the sector. As I said, that is a position I have taken from my very early days as early childhood Minister.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: But this is a very different situation. This is not just year-on-year funding. This is a fundamental change from the Federal Government that said it will vacate the space. It will end

the national partnership funding and disband the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority [ACECQA]. That is the understanding that I have been given.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Are you talking about quality as opposed to the actual national partnership agreement?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am talking about both.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Right, that was not completely clear. I will ask Ms Mackey to make a comment but I will also say something in relation to support for quality. As I think we talked about last year in relation to the budget when there was a decision from the Federal Government to not provide that funding in New South Wales, we stepped up and provided that so that it was available to continue to operate. I will ask Ms Mackey if she wants to provide—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I only have minutes to go. I will hand over to my colleague.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: My question is addressed to the Parliamentary Secretary. What special tasks have been asked to provide assistance with?

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: The role of Parliamentary Secretary obviously is set within the Minister's official handbook available on the website of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: My question is about the specific tasks that you have been allocated.

The CHAIR: In all fairness, we have to let Mr Conolly answer the question.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: The standard tasks relating to correspondence and representations to Ministers and so on are included in that, in my case. The particular aspect of specific focus, I suppose, that is included in my charter letter relates to a role in the review of civics and citizenship in the NSW Curriculum Review that is being undertaken at the moment.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Will you table that charter letter?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will take that on notice just in case, yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, in the absence of ACECQA, which is what is currently planned at a Federal level, what body will provide the checks and balances or the direction for the directorate in New South Wales?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will ask Ms Mackey to comment in relation to that.

Ms MACKEY: There are currently two reviews, just to clarify your earlier question. There is a review of the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education and separately there is a review on ACECQA. They have been initiated by the Commonwealth Government—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The ACECQA one is the one due in 2022?

Ms MACKEY: No, they are both on a very similar time frame. The ACECQA draft report will go to the Education Council before the end of this calendar year and then a final report will be going to Education Council early in 2020. In terms of future funding for ACECQA, the Commonwealth has said future funding is predicated on the outcome of the review. There has been no commitment made at this point around whether there will or will not be future funding. As you would be aware, ACECQA was previously funded by all of the jurisdictions as part of the national partnership for the national quality agenda, whereas now, since the budget announcement and the cessation of that national partnership, the Commonwealth directly funds ACECQA.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Will you guarantee that no directorate staff will be cut if the ACECQA review comes back and says it is not going to continue funding at a Federal level?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That is a hypothetical question. Ms Mackey has just indicated there is a review that we are waiting for. I do not think we can pre-empt the outcome of that review and any follow on ramifications of that. We need to wait and see what the review says.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is fine. Are you confident of the current rating and assessment scheme in New South Wales?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am confident that we have a risk-based assessment approach to ratings and assessment. I think that it is important that we do effectively target the services that are higher risk. I think there is a lot of effort put into the regulatory regime here in New South Wales, and that is appropriate.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: We have talked about this matter at budget estimates for a number of years, and I have talked about it with your predecessors as well. There are 802 New South Wales centres that have been rated as "working towards" for up to seven years. Do you think that is appropriate? I appreciate your comments about a risk-based assessment but we have got 802 centres that have been rated as "working towards" for seven years.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will get some clarity in relation to those figures but I will say that we have actually got a working towards program that we have introduced. I think we have done two rounds of it so far.

Ms MACKEY: We are part way through the second round.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We are part way through the second round, and that is about working specifically with those services that are working towards by providing extra support for them to lift their standard. It is something, as Minister, that I am very cognisant of. That is why we have undertaken that work. Frankly, if there is more to do in that space we will.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I will have more questions for Ms Mackey this afternoon. How long will the Service NSW survey be open?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will take that on notice. My understanding is until the end of the year but I will check.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I refer to *Budget Paper No. 2*, page 2-9. You talk about the different schools that are going to be upgraded. On page 2-10 you talk about the schools that are going to have planning undertaken. I want to be clear about an election commitment. For those schools listed as planning, over the next four years you will only undertake planning works for those schools? Is that correct?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, every school that is listed in the budget papers will be completed as per our election commitment. The reason why some schools are listed as "NA" or there are planning requirements—as again I think I have mentioned certainly in the House in relation to these issues—is that there is a process in place when we are building and upgrading schools. It depends if we are building a new school, an upgrade, or if it is a greenfield site or an existing site. It does take time. Obviously we have planning to begin with and then we go through a tendering process and business cases and then we move to construction. Until we reach as point where those projects are in construction those numbers are commercial-in-confidence. That is why the budget paper is reflected the way that it is.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I want to be clear, it is not about the budget papers. My time has almost run out—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You asked me a question about the budget papers.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I want to ask you about a reference in the budget papers that specifically talks about planning for the following projects and lists Birrong Boys—I can read them out but I will use up all my time. I specifically want to ask you in the next four years is your election commitment for these schools listed under planning only going to be to plan them?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Our election commitment is for 190 new and upgraded schools \$6.7 billion over the next four years to deliver those projects.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: For the schools listed as planning will it only be to plan them?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you want to make a comment?

Mr SCOTT: No.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, it is not.

Mr SCOTT: We have identified we are at the planning process. Then after we have planned them and that work is done we intend to build them.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That is what I said.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Within the forward estimates, within the time frame?

Mr SCOTT: The Minister has outlined that there are reasons why we do not attribute dollar figures to the planning process that are clear and commercial and sensible.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I want to ask about Local Schools, Local Decisions. That policy has not worked, has it?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I do not agree with the premise of your question. I think the concept behind Local Schools, Local Decisions to give principals more autonomy in terms of their funding was a good decision.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You have been to schools and talked to principals?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You would have had a number of them tell you that they have not got the adequate time or training in order to fully expend the funding that has come in to them from Local Schools, Local Decisions. Many of them are struggling, aren't they?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will ask the secretary to provide some more comment. But obviously in terms of the way that the funding is distributed to schools, Local Schools, Local Decisions is a change. It was a change from what was previously the case.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I know it is a change, Minister.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I understand obviously that with that comes more administrative responsibility and there are a range of things that the department is doing to assist principals in relation to that. I will ask the secretary to comment further.

Mr SCOTT: For Local Schools, Local Decisions I think most principals I speak to welcome the opportunity of spending money locally on what they believe to be educational priorities. However, because we are consulting with principals and local school leaders we appreciate we have needed to put some additional support in place. That is why we put \$50 million extra out there to provide additional administrative support to schools. That is why we are making a big investment in school leadership because it calls for a different level of capability. They were not happy with the budgeting tool we gave them. We created a new budgeting tool and we trained every school administrative staff on that new budgeting tool.

The principle that suggests to put money where local decision-making can be tailored to local need, we think is a plus. We appreciate we have needed to improve some of the mechanisms to support it. One of the things we have done is to have a big program on lifting the administrative burden from schools. In practice we are looking to make it work better. We are talking and consulting extensively with principals around how to do that. We have had strong support for the improvements we have rolled out in recent years.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, you know the Auditor-General is about to do an audit of Local Schools, Local Decisions. Are you aware of that?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You must have done some preliminary analysis knowing an audit is coming. How much is currently unspent of the Local Schools, Local Decisions money?

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

Mr SCOTT: We have been monitoring school expenditure closely. I think the report on the last financial year is a very positive one.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: How much?

Mr SCOTT: The report on the last school year is a very positive one. We appreciate that when schools first got this money, they had to develop their capability in order to do that, but it was largely spent—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Scott, the question is not a complex question and it was directed to the Minister.

The CHAIR: Let Mr Scott answer as best he can.

Mr SCOTT: I can get the detail on notice for you. There is often an annual accounting that is reported. What I can tell you is that in the best part of \$9 billion put into schools last year to be spent locally on staff and projects. They spent that money to, I think, close to \$100 million, which on the scale of things, is really a pretty impressive record and a significant lift on previous years. Schools have had to develop this muscle; they have had to develop this capability. We had to give them new tools and support to do it. They are doing a good job. I tell you, Mr Shoebridge, I have spoken to no principal who has said to me, "Take back the money"—not one of them.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Nobody is suggesting "take back the money"—

Mr SCOTT: Local Schools, Local Decisions is about giving them the money.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —but my question was kind of simple: How much is unspent? You say you track it carefully. You say you do it.

Mr SCOTT: I can take the figures on notice.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is it \$1 billion? Is it \$2 billion?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The secretary has just said he would take that on notice.

The CHAIR: Order! Mr Scott has taken that on notice, Mr Shoebridge.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, I think most people welcomed the cancelling of the Confucius Classrooms program following the receipt of the final report, but the department had in its hands a draft report from November 2018 that made it clear that New South Wales was the only government department in the world to host a Confucius Institute and that this arrangement placed Chinese Government appointees inside a New South Wales government department. You had that advice in November last year and it took almost 12 months to act upon it. How do you explain leaving that in place for such a long period of time when you had that unambiguous advice in November last year?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will ask the secretary to comment in relation to that review, given that it was commissioned by the department. More generally, what I will say is that that report, as you have indicated, did suggest that they were unique governance arrangements in relation to the Confucius Institute.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That is a euphemism if ever there were one.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The department has made the decision to not continue with that program and it is a decision that I support. I will ask the secretary to make further comments.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Explain that delay, Mr Scott.

Mr SCOTT: If you read the report, you will see that the report did not recommend at first instance shutting down of the Confucius Institute.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You could not read it and not want to shut down the Confucius Institute, Mr Scott. It jumps out at you: Shut the thing down.

Mr SCOTT: I simply point out to you the fact. You referenced the report, I referenced the report also—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I read directly from the report.

The CHAIR: Order! Mr Scott will be given a chance to answer.

Mr SCOTT: I also pointed out that the report does not start with a recommendation to shut down the Confucius Institute immediately; it talks about how these services can be provided in other ways and about whether, in fact, we could find some other partner to work with on it. That is the initial work that we did. We finally came to a view that our priority was the continuity of language study for those students in the 13 schools that have been engaged with the Confucius Institute. I pointed out that they represent only 15 per cent of the students who were studying Mandarin in our schools—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: My time is short and rather than a long treatise—

Mr SCOTT: Let me answer; it is a complex area, as you know. But we came to a view that finally it was appropriate that the department fund the teachers and the support staff who were providing language study in our schools and to bring the Confucius Institute more in line with arrangements we have with other governments or organisations that support languages.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, is it—

Mr SCOTT: Under the terms of our contract, we indicated to Hanban that we would be terminating the contract. At the same time, we indicated that we would be recruiting staff locally so continuity of studies could continue.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I have not heard an explanation for the delay, Mr Scott, but I am going to move on to the next question because time is short. Minister, is it true that under the maintenance contract between the department and Spotless, there is a minimum call-out fee for schools of \$500?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will ask Mr Maranik from School Infrastructure to respond to that because it has responsibility for that matter.

Mr MARANIK: In relation to the Spotless contract, I would have to take on notice the quantum of the call-out fee.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is it in the order of \$500? You must know that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: With respect, he said he would take it on notice.

Mr MARANIK: I will have to take that on notice.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What oversight is there for charges imposed on schools under the contract? Are there oversight arrangements for the charges imposed by schools?

Mr MARANIK: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Perhaps you can give me details of that on notice.

Mr MARANIK: We work with all our school partners—the facility maintenance contractors—across all of that. We have records and our local asset management units are involved with the process. They work with the local school, they commission the scope—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Are schools allowed to seek other quotes? Are they stuck with the Spotless contract or are they allowed to seek other quotes and get a local tradie in to do the work if that is determined to be a better option?

Mr MARANIK: There are categories of work. For those categories of work that are through the facility maintenance contracts, that is that bucket and for other work that they can move through or liaise with our asset management units and we can satisfy that client—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Perhaps you can give us details of that on notice.

The CHAIR: We have to wrap up now. I have the final burst of questions. We will come back to the officials later in the day. Minister, coming back to your earlier comments about the review of the Melbourne Declaration, what is your view of the adequacy of it?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I think that the intention around the Melbourne Declaration—to be looking at making sure that we have a strong education system in this State—is still valid. I do think that there are opportunities for improvements. Interestingly, I attended the session at Cabramatta that we had where we had representatives from lots of different schools from all parts of the sector, including public schools, Catholic and independent schools, P&Cs and also students. In truth, some of the best and most valuable insights on the day came from the students who are currently in the system who talked about what they want the education to look like in the future. I think some of the issues were raised around more of a focus on the early childhood years and also that concept of lifelong learning, that we should be encouraging our education systems to look at that continually to improve opportunities for people from naught to 100.

The CHAIR: Do you think it was a mistake a decade ago for school authorities to move beyond the traditional role of content, knowledge and skills in the education system and get into the social development of children, particularly values, something that normally had been the preserve of parents?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The Melbourne Declaration, as you have mentioned, was a group of particularly Ministers and politicians at that time making some statement as to what education should be focused on. I think a review of it provides the opportunity to re-look at it. It is one part of something that we considered, but, frankly, as Minister, I do not make decisions based solely on a Melbourne Declaration or the new iteration which, I understand, will be decided on in Alice Springs; it will become the Alice Springs declaration. It is part of a broader conversation with stakeholders about some of the themes around education, but the day-to-day matters for our schools, I think, are separate to those discussions.

The CHAIR: Do you accept that parents have the primary responsibility for the development of values and the social attitudes of their children?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I think that that is the responsibility of parents. I will obviously make the point that children are required at schools. They spend a lot of their day at school and I think you want them to have a positive experience while they are at school. But in terms of individual family values and views, of course that is the responsibility of parents.

The CHAIR: Would you be concerned if parents find that children come home from school and there is a teaching of values that is different from what the family unit is trying to develop in those young people?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again, it is quite difficult to comment on hypotheticals. I think if parents at any particular school have concerns around any of the matters that are being taught at the school, they should raise it with the principal or with the school teacher, as is appropriate.

The CHAIR: Do you think it is a clearer division of responsibility for families and parents to look after the value tuition of their children and for schools to stick to content, knowledge and skills?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Obviously, it depends, as I said, on the specific circumstances. If there are children attending the Catholic system there would be Catholic values within their education and that is a choice that parents make depending on the school system that they have for the child. I can say in my own experience as a parent, I think my children are having the values from my husband and I, and that is our role as parents. That would be the role of parents right across the State.

The CHAIR: In terms of improving the teaching profession—because we all want the best teachers in our schools getting the best results—what progress is being made in introducing Teach For Australia into New South Wales schools, particularly given the success of this program in Victoria and Western Australia?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am aware of the program, as you know. We have spoken about it before and it has been mentioned in the parliamentary Chamber as well. As I said earlier, I am open to considering any evidence-based approaches when it comes to making improvements in our schools. That includes things that we can do in terms of teachers. I have asked some information in relation Teach For Australia. There are varying degrees of successes in the programs they have run in other States. I am also due to meet with Teach For Australia within the next few weeks—very shortly—to discuss that matter further.

The CHAIR: Are you anticipating a decision about their role? I note that 75 per cent of these people who come into education with new ideas and skills go into low socio-economic status [SES] schools and at the end of the program 84 per cent of participants are still in the education sphere either as teachers or working in the department or the non-profit sector.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will repeat to you what I said previously in that I want to sit down and have some conversations with them about their program and I will be doing that within the next few weeks.

The CHAIR: Can I ask how many government schools are still using Reading Recovery? If so, why would they be using that program given the findings of the CESE report in 2015 that found there were no benefits to students?

Ms HARRISSON: We no longer directly support the Reading Recovery program from within the department. Schools are able to choose the programs locally that they feel best meet the needs of their students. In terms of the support we provide to the department to the teaching profession and through our literacy and numeracy strategy, it is fully in line with what was published in the CESE report around the effective teaching of reading, in particular. We are actively engaged in delivering professional development to teachers around the instruction of phonics and the elements of that effective reading program that was set out in the CESE report.

The CHAIR: Does the department accept that rigorous education measurement shows that phonics is a more successful reading program than whole word?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will make an initial comment and then get Ms Harrison to respond further. As I indicated in an earlier answer in this hearing, the trial phonics test that we are introducing from term three next year, with expressions of interest to open early in the year, is an example of a way that we want to look at phonics in our schools. It is important that we run that test. I know that it has worked very successfully in other States, particularly South Australia. I have had conversations with the South Australian Minister in relation to it. I am keen for the trial to take place in New South Wales and see what evidence it produces. I will see if Ms Harrison wants to add anything further.

Ms HARRISSON: The CESE report focuses on five explicit areas to support the teaching of reading in schools, of which phonemic awareness and phonics are the first two, which is why we are actively engaged in the support of developing profession and teaching expertise of that across all of our schools.

The CHAIR: When you said earlier that Reading Recovery is not supported by the department but principals have got the capacity to piece together the programs that they think work for their school, what happens when a principal puts Reading Recovery back into the curriculum and classroom against the evidence that Reading Recovery was a dud?

Mr SCOTT: I appreciate we are time-constrained. I think saying Reading Recovery is a dud is a little bit of an overstatement. There will be students who have benefited from Reading Recovery. Part of the challenge is what is the opportunity cost and where should the attention really be? We are quite clear in the advice that we are providing and the professional support we are providing around the evidence of how reading skills are best developed with young people. Principals and teachers do have some discretion as to how they deliver the outcomes. What we are going to be doing is having and developing outcomes for schools, clear targets around literacy and numeracy development and looking carefully at the strategies that are being employed in schools to deliver the outcomes.

The CHAIR: We are right on time so that gives me the opportunity to thank the Hon. Sarah Mitchell and Mr Kevin Conolly for their participation.

**(The Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning and the
Parliamentary Secretary for Education withdrew.)**

(Luncheon adjournment)

The CHAIR: I declare the second session open and thank all the officials for coming back. We will turn to the Labor Opposition for their 20 minutes of questioning.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I will start with the secretary, and you can refer me on if I am asking the wrong person. Is it correct that the Government currently has a stock of 6,100 demountables?

Mr SCOTT: I am not sure of the precise number but, yes, we have demountables. They have been a hallmark of this education system and many education systems for many, many a long year. So, yes, we have thousands of demountables.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Is there someone on the table who can give me an exact figure on how many demountables—

Mr SCOTT: Mr Maranik might be able to have a go at the figure.

Mr MARANIK: Not an exact figure. We have different types of demountables that do different things. For example, we have got specialist demountables that have toilets in them, for test spaces, we use them for emergency response to fires, those sorts of things. I am happy to get the specific number and get that to you on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You can provide me on notice the different types of demountables and the different purposes for each one?

Mr MARANIK: Yes, and, leading to your question, even the purpose of those demountables.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes, that is right, please. If you could give me those same figures for 2018 as well?

Mr MARANIK: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can we generally say that there are about 6,100 demountables that are used for classrooms in New South Wales?

Mr MARANIK: In terms of those used for teaching spaces, I believe the number is a little less than that; it is roughly around 5,100, thereabouts. I can confirm the exact number to you.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Okay.

Mr SCOTT: I should add that is out of 67,000 teaching spaces that we have in operation. So it is less than 10 per cent. If you look at other education systems, in Victoria and others, you need some give in the system because student numbers are not necessarily consistent. You have more numbers that will arrive that you need to be able to migrate around. There is always a lot of discussion around demountables. I sometimes find there will be communities worried about demountables until the demountables are on site and often they are very, very keen to keep them. Some of our battles are about demountables that have been at schools for a while and the school community has put them to good use and they are keen to keep them there.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Will they be totally deployed by next year?

Mr SCOTT: I can assure you that we will always have demountables in the system—always. We have had demountables in the system for decades and decades and decades. Student numbers move and migrate around the system. For example, we are currently deploying demountables where we are doing a major renovation on the

school; so you will need to have demountables in place to accommodate the children whilst renovations are taking place. You can pop down to Ultimo and you will see a pop-up school—a school that is entirely made of demountables—which is being used while we rebuild Ultimo Public School. There will always be student movement; you will not always be able to provide permanent accommodation because sometimes that movement will not be consistent or predictable. So we need to be able to have some level of flexibility in the system and demountables allow this to happen.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Okay, but I am interested to know, Mr Scott, if you have some in reserve.

Mr SCOTT: We have demountables and we have demountable stock and we can create demountable stock if we need to.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You can create it if you need to?

Mr SCOTT: The bottom line is demountables are basically modular prefabricated classroom facilities that are deployed to schools. We have old-style demountables, we have newer demountables, we have newer modular demountable buildings. If you go out to Girraween Public School you will see a double-storey demountable that has been deployed out there. There are advantages with double-storey demountables because they take up less of the floor space at school, as we were talking about earlier. So we continue to look for ways where we can innovate around the deployment of modular classrooms to give us flexibility and be responsible in our management of resources for the system.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Scott, have you got them held in reserve somewhere at the moment?

Mr SCOTT: I will have to take that detail on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If you can tell me how many you have in reserve and where they are held that would be very useful. Have you done any modelling on how many demountables could or will be freed up by your new enrolment policy?

Mr SCOTT: I will have to take that on notice. We can talk about the enrolment policy—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: We will come to the enrolment policy.

Mr SCOTT: I am sure we will.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am just interested to know if you have commissioned any specific modelling.

Mr SCOTT: I do not have that information.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Have any new demountables been commissioned by the department?

Mr MARANIK: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Is that with an ongoing tender, or how are they commissioned?

Mr MARANIK: We have got a long-term arrangement with both the development and delivery of new demountables as well as refurbished demountables that we recover when we are doing capital works programs.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The contracts for the refurbishment and for the development, are they separate?

Mr MARANIK: Yes, I believe they are.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: There was a reference in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, I think, that said there was a \$234 million agreement. Is that solely to refurbish demountables?

Mr MARANIK: I would have to take on notice how that is split. The refurbishment program involves Corrective Services.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: There was a reference to a \$234 million contract that was due to run out in six months. Is that correct?

Mr MARANIK: I would need to take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If you can then tell me if there is a separate contract for commissioning demountables and what the total value of that contract is and when it is due to expire.

Mr MARANIK: Certainly.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are we the only State in the country that uses prison labour to refurbish our demountables?

Mr SCOTT: I really do not know. All I know is that it has been a longstanding arrangement. I believe it is an arrangement that has worked well. It might be a good question to ask when Corrective Services are before an estimates committee.

The CHAIR: Can you take that on notice, Mr Scott, and give an answer that reflects on other practices in the Commonwealth?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, certainly.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What is the longest period of time that a demountable has remained on a school site?

Mr SCOTT: I will have to take that on notice. But I would add that there are some demountables out there that are old. We have a process of refabricating them or commissioning new ones. Some of the fierce battles we have had with school communities have been around demountables that have been on their site for a long period of time that, in a sense, the schools have found uses for. But we can find detail on the stock for you.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If you can tell me what is the longest period of time that a demountable has remained on a school site? Is there ever a situation, Mr Scott, where if it has been there for such a long time that it would then be counted towards a permanent classroom location?

Mr SCOTT: This is a debate and a conversation that we have with school communities. You can be out in schools—Mr Dizdar might be able to speak to this—and they will have had buildings there for a long period of time that were originally conceived as demountables.

Mr DIZDAR: There are many instances where we do count those demountables into the permanent combination structure of a site. It happens when we know that there is a capital build program for that school, whether that is an entire build or additional classrooms to come on site to eventually replace those existing demountables into the count for student enrolment capacity.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you tell me at what point is a demountable considered a permanent classroom?

Mr SCOTT: That would be a school-by-school issue.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is not what Mr Dizdar said.

Mr SCOTT: Mr Dizdar said there will be times when a demountable classroom is dealt with as a permanent classroom when, in fact, that demountable has not been put there to deal with transient population but to deal with the construction of a school build. But one of the issues that we were dealing with—you referenced earlier the enrolment policy. This is a conversation we will be having with schools as to whether in fact a demountable classroom that has been there for a considerable period of time should be thought of as a permanent establishment or not. So when I say it will be dealt with on a school-by-school basis that is what I am referring to.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am essentially asking the question when is a demountable not a demountable? A demountable is not a demountable if it is there to provide temporary accommodation while a new classroom is being built. Is that correct, Mr Dizdar?

Mr DIZDAR: There is a range of circumstances.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If you could explain that would be useful.

Mr DIZDAR: In the main, demountables are there because we have increasing school population and a requirement to make sure we can cater for our in-area enrolments. They are a temporary accommodation structure. They can become longer term and have in some instances, while a capital build program is going to occur at that site. I will give you a specific example—Auburn West Public School that I visited recently. It has a demountable. It is quite a large school, approaching 1,000 students. At Auburn West Public School one of those demountables has been utilised by that school as a centre for community engagement. It is not a classroom to accommodate students. This is a school community that is 99 per cent non-English speaking background. There

are over 50 cultural groups represented and the leadership has done a great job in embracing the diversity of backgrounds there and has created a community centre so that the parents can feel comfortable in their engagement with the school.

When Mr Scott says we will look at it on a case-by-case, school-by-school example, this is a great example when we are looking at what the enrolment capacity of the site is that we take this demountable into account, given the local context and nature for which it is being used. It is not being utilised as a teaching and learning infrastructure piece for our students but, rather, for the community. In that instance, we would encourage the count of that demountable to be in that permanent accommodation structure.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: In the case of Auburn West, it would be considered a permanent structure?

Mr DIZDAR: In that case, the principal would strongly advocate that it be included in that school's accommodation count because they have a specific use that they have outlined for their community. It would be our expectation that the Director of Education or leadership that oversees the school would have that discussion with the principal. Then we would go back to Mr Maranik and the team from School Infrastructure and say, "This needs to be thought of as a permanent facility at that site".

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: In no way would I want to underplay or undervalue these important works that are being done at Auburn West, and I am sure at a number of schools around the State in becoming more inclusive and providing that real community hub. I am just interested, and pose the question again: When is a demountable not a demountable? Would that demountable then be classified in the number of demountables in the centrally held register of demountables?

Mr DIZDAR: It would be classified as a demountable in the systems demountable count, yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: But for the purposes of the local school enrolment policy, it would be considered a permanent structure?

Mr DIZDAR: In the example I am giving you, if the principal and the director both advocate it along the lines that I have indicated, it would be our expectation that we would support that request. It would be included in that permanent count. But if I go back to the secretary's earlier example, with the Ultimo pop-up school in Wentworth Park there are some 30-plus demountables as a pop-up school. When the new school build is completed across the road, those demountables will come back into the system to be utilised where there is demand and growth, as happens right across the State.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many demountables are currently being utilised in the situation of Ultimo Public School?

Mr DIZDAR: As a pop-up site?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes.

Mr DIZDAR: We would have to take the exact figure on notice. But if I give you another example—Alexandria Park Community School, which is not far away. It is a school where we have a build for 2,200 students K-12. Having visited it recently, it has a demountable pop-up school construct to allow us to remain on site to continue the education provision. I have been inside those classrooms, and I have spoken to students and teachers who are thrilled with the facility. It is a new pop-up school that will then go back into the demountable count in the system to help across the State when Alexandria Park Community School and its build is completed. There would be several examples like that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Dizdar or Mr Scott—whoever needs to take it on notice—can you tell me how many pop-up schools you have currently in operation, when you anticipate that they will be concluded and how many demountables will be freed up as a result to come back into circulation?

Mr SCOTT: We can do that. I would add though, demountables are always kicked around as an issue. Some of the school builds that we are doing now will clearly release demountables from schools that have had demountables because of big enrolment growth. But I can assure you with the schools I go to—and Mr Dizdar would be the same—great teaching and learning can take place in demountable classrooms. They have been a feature of the system. If you go to Victoria you are going to find 5,000 demountables in Victoria. That is a school system that has 700 fewer schools than New South Wales and has nearly 5,000 demountables. They are going to be a feature of our schools. We can focus on them. We can provide you with data. But let's not lose sight of the fact that great teaching and learning takes place all around the State, including in demountables, and I see great teaching and learning take place in demountables when I visit schools with demountables.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you, Mr Scott. I would just like to refer you to a Government Information (Public Access) Act request that I lodged last year on the issue of demountable classrooms. In that it gave a breakdown of the age of demountable buildings on school sites as at 25 February 2018. It said that there were 218 demountable classrooms and noted that demountable buildings may include multiple classrooms.

Mr SCOTT: Yes, so blocks.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I should say demountable buildings. There were 218 that were nought to 10 years old, one that was 10 to 15 years old, one that was 15 to 20 years old, 4,182 were over 20 years old and 226 had an unknown date. Are you able to provide me with updated figures for those particular classifications?

Mr SCOTT: We are happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you explain to me how there can be an unknown date of how old these demountable buildings—

Mr SCOTT: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It is not something you can—

Mr SCOTT: No. I am not sure if it goes to record keeping or whatever, but I can take that on notice and we will answer that as part of the answers to questions on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can anyone else on the panel confirm any of that? Mr Maranik?

Mr MARANIK: I think we will take that on notice.

Mr SCOTT: We will take it on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can I ask and you might need to take these—

Mr SCOTT: Just to go back, some of the demountables are more than 20 years old, yes they are. They are—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Scott, according to these figures, I would say that more than the vast majority—4,182.

Mr SCOTT: That is true. I think those demountables are air conditioned. We have had classrooms here since 1848. There are old buildings where students are learning every day. There are demountables that have been well used in the system for a considerable period of time. That stock is now air conditioned. Many of those buildings will have been renovated over that period of time and, yes, they are a feature of the system—as they have been for decades.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Scott, you might want to take some of these on notice. How many students are currently undertaking a VEC course as part of their HSC at school? And what are the breakdown of these courses?

Mr SCOTT: We can take that on notice. Mr Maranik is the acting CEO of NSW Education Standards Authority [NESA] and he will take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many students are undertaking HSC core studies externally delivered at a TAFE site?

Mr SCOTT: Again, we will take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What are the breakdowns of the courses? You will take that on notice?

Mr SCOTT: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many students are undertaking school-based traineeships?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, we will take that on notice too.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If you can give me the numbers and the jobs that the traineeships being undertaken in.

Mr SCOTT: Sure.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many students are undertaking school-based apprenticeships? And if you can give me the numbers and the trades of those? Are you able to tell me today how many trades training centres and schools there are in New South Wales?

Mr SCOTT: Again, let me take that on notice—or I am happy to go into detail on that when we talk about schools. I will be here on Friday.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I would be interested if you could just tell me because it is in a school.

Mr SCOTT: Do you have that detail? No. I will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If you can give me a list of them and their location.

Mr SCOTT: Yes, sure.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And at what percentage they are currently being utilised. That would be useful.

Mr SCOTT: Okay.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Scott, can you explain what the principal improvement program is?

Mr SCOTT: I think Mr Dizdar might be in the best position to talk about that.

Mr DIZDAR: The principal improvement program is designed to have a formal program of improvement for a principal to undertake their role. It is enacted by a director of educational leadership who has account and support responsibility for principals in principal networks.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And how does someone participate in the program? Do they get referred to the program? Do they volunteer to participate in it?

Mr DIZDAR: The line manager, the Director of Educational Leadership, has ongoing performance conversations with a principal. Our network structure is one Director of Educational Leadership per 20 principals. We have a formal performance and development framework where the principal and the director would have collegial discussions in setting goals for the year for that principal. Then there is ongoing monitoring and support to achieve those goals.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Could we characterise it as performance management?

Mr DIZDAR: That is the performance and development framework. Where the director may have concern from time to time with the principal's performance as it relates to the New South Wales principal role description, the director would make the principal aware of what those concerns are. And if you go to a principal improvement program that you asked about, that then is a formal program of improvement that is enacted by the director to enhance the skill capacity of that principal to execute their role.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And how many people are currently participating in that?

Mr SCOTT: I would simply add that this is a process that—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sorry, Mr Scott. My time is—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Your time has gone.

The CHAIR: Your time for questions has expired, so we will finish with Mr Scott. Then we go to Ms Boyd.

Mr SCOTT: I would simply say that this is a process that has now been in operation for some time. It operates with the support and the understanding of the Secondary Principals Council, the Primary Principals' Association and the NSW Teachers Federation, and an important part—we have a commitment that every student, every teacher, every leader and every school improves every year. We know that school leadership is absolutely vital, we know that high standards of school leadership are absolutely vital and this is an important part of our quality assurance process.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Mr Scott, how much money has the Government of New South Wales, on behalf of the NSW Department of Education, had to pay in court costs, settlements and discontinuation agreements in regard to legal action against staff and schools for the mistreatment of children with a disability in the last three years?

Mr SCOTT: I will take that on notice.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you. Can you tell me what actions the department is undertaking to ensure that the Employee Performance and Conduct directorate has an element of monitoring in regard to its investigation of allegations against staff involving children with a disability?

Mr SCOTT: Yes. Perhaps Ms Mulkerin might talk about that. Ms Mulkerin has joined us. She is the Deputy Secretary looking after People and Culture and now will oversee the work of EPAC.

Ms MULKERIN: Thank you, Mr Scott. As you referenced, the review report into EPAC was quite a lengthy tome—176 pages long and some 60 recommendations. What we have been working on since receiving the review is to create an action plan that we will make public about how we intend to implement recommendations from the review. So there are a couple of oversight mechanisms which really go to your question. There will be an internal governance committee set up across the organisation, across the department to implement some of the actions. And then I will chair an oversight committee which will include some of our external partners, the stakeholder groups. And we will provide information publicly about how we are progressing with the implementation of those recommendations.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: So it is very much at the planning stage at the moment in response to the couple of reports that we have had. The NSW Ombudsman's report in 2017 as well as the parliamentary inquiry recommended that there be some sort of oversight of EPAC in this regard. So we are still in that?

Ms MULKERIN: So I was really making reference to how we will be making public and transparent our implementation of the EPAC review, which is really what I was responding to.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Can you tell me if there is going to be some sort of oversight of EPAC when it comes to these sorts of cases?

Ms MULKERIN: So there is the oversight which I have just talked about in relation to the actions arising out of the review. And then there are also external oversight bodies that do already oversight the functions of EPAC. For example, the Ombudsman has a role. The Office of the Children's Guardian has a role. And of course they are not diminished by this review report.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Is there anything specific in relation to children with a disability though in relation to this particular issue, in relation to claims against teachers and staff in relation to mistreatment of people with a disability?

Ms MULKERIN: The recent EPAC review did not really go to that issue. So my comments were really about the EPAC review.

Mr SCOTT: I understand the concern that has been raised. You have had representations on this matter and so have I. One of the things that Mark Tedeschi has recommended is for this oversight panel to, in a sense, review the final decisions of EPAC before they are made. And so if there was a concern that the way that EPAC operated was finally being quite narrow, with a narrow single decision-maker and without the opportunity to test or triangulate the process and the decisions that are being made, that is exactly what Mark Tedeschi has recommended the panel to be able to do. So the fact that there will be a number of people who review the evidence, review the process and shape the final decision I think should give people confidence in that process. And it addresses one of the criticisms that had previously existed around EPAC.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Forgive my ignorance, is that panel currently in place?

Mr SCOTT: No, it is not. It is being developed now and it is a recommendation of the Tedeschi inquiry. One of the things that has happened with EPAC is that it has had a single decision-maker, a single person who signed off. And what Mark Tedeschi has said, just to paraphrase, is that you should have a panel that is finally involved in signing off the EPAC decision process.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: When will that be in place? Do we know?

Mr SCOTT: We are looking to develop that now.

Ms MULKERIN: Yes. As you can appreciate, with more than 60 recommendations there is a sequencing of them. So for example in relation to the panel, this is not something that we have had in place before. As Mr Scott has said, it will be at the point at which the investigation is complete and the information is all together and prior to the final decision it will go to a panel to take account of the information that has been gathered. We have not had one of those before but there are other jurisdictions or like mechanisms which we can easily model the panel on. I have begun the discussion, for example, with our oversight bodies, like the Office of

the Children's Guardian, to ensure that none of the processes that we introduce as a result of the review in any way becomes a worry for them in regard to their oversight of our work.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you. I suspect you are going to take this on notice but are you able to provide the number of, the details of and the outcomes of all complaints made against staff in the last 18 months in regard to the treatment of children with a disability?

Mr SCOTT: Yes. We will take that on notice.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: How many schools for specific purpose [SSP] are listed in New South Wales for 2017, 2018 and 2019? Do you know?

Mr SCOTT: I will just have to check on that. Do we have that on our list? Yes, 115.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: For 2019?

Mr SCOTT: I think that is the current figure. Yes, 115 out of 2,210.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: And do you have the figures for 2018 and 2017?

Mr SCOTT: We can provide you on notice figures predating that.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you. And how many primary mainstream schools in New South Wales have a separate support unit for children with a disability?

Mr SCOTT: Let me take that on notice. I will come back to you.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: And how many secondary mainstream schools in New South Wales have a support unit?

Mr SCOTT: We will take that on notice too.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: And how many New South Wales primary mainstream schools are fully inclusive for children with a disability?

Mr SCOTT: What is your definition of "fully inclusive"?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That is a very good question and it does vary.

Mr SCOTT: We will have to come back. I think we are out of time on this one.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I think in this context what we are really getting at is the ability for children with a disability to be within a mainstream setting with supports.

Mr SCOTT: I suppose one of the reasons I paused is I think we have a clear commitment to inclusion. To some extent, it is a somewhat loaded word. One of the reasons that I asked you for your definition of it is that I think people take different views on it. I would argue that we are committed to inclusion in New South Wales education. We are committed to finding the most appropriate setting for each child. And so even for a child in an SSP we are committed to providing the most inclusive education we can for them in their context, whether a student in a support class or a student in a mainstream class. The overwhelming majority of students with a disability in New South Wales public schools are in mainstream settings—overwhelmingly. Perhaps we can come back and talk more about our disability review. I suppose I would argue we are committed to inclusiveness. We are committed to working with parents and educational experts to find the most appropriate setting for each child so that each child can improve, be engaged with learning and flourish, and there is debate as to what those settings are—which I think is what you are alluding to.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: When we were talking about the health and safety directorate you mentioned that a health check was done?

Mr SCOTT: Yes.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Was it correct that that was conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers [PwC]?

Mr SCOTT: A bit of context—I appreciate we were truncated earlier—I was concerned, I suppose, with a number of things that we had seen. There had been some change that had taken place in that part of the department over a couple of years. There had been some complaints that had been independently investigated. Then all of a sudden there were a number of anonymous emails that were circulated across all staff attacking leadership of that directorate. The issues that were raised were matters that had been investigated but clearly

I thought it was good to get an external, or independent, look at the health division. Mr Riordan was responsible for the division so he will speak to it.

Mr RIORDAN: It identified a range of issues, predominantly again around staffing and the high numbers of temporary staff that were in place and interrelationships between people, the way in which communications were carried out across the division because there are some staff based in regional areas and some of those staff got a bit outside of the main hub of people who were there. We moved that group from Bankstown into our offices at 105 Phillip Street, which created more of a collegial atmosphere across the whole of the corporate services environment at the time. A range of recommendations came forward from it, most of which were administrative in nature, and now Ms Mulkerin is moving to implement those.

Mr SCOTT: Maybe Ms Mulkerin could provide more of the context.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I am happy with an explanation, but just the actual details of how the audit, inquiry or whatever you want to call it was conducted? Were the interviews of staff done individually or were they done in a group setting?

Mr RIORDAN: It was a combination.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: It was a combination?

Mr RIORDAN: There were a range of factors but they also had an opportunity to participate in individual interviews if they wished.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: If an individual wanted an individual interview, what was the process in achieving that?

Mr RIORDAN: That they contact PricewaterhouseCoopers directly and ask for that.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Obviously the executive staff were also involved in those interviews or were they done in a separate manner?

Mr RIORDAN: They had the opportunity to take that up as well. I think approximately 97 staff took up the option of an individual interview.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Are you both satisfied that the recommendations that were made and the progress that you guys have made since those recommendations were handed down are on the right track, considering that some of the complaints went back to 2012?

Mr SCOTT: I think that is almost precisely the point: There had been some complaints. Some of those complaints came from restructuring and changes that had taken place some years ago now. They had been investigated at the time, so hence the health check. It might be good to bring in Ms Mulkerin, who has joined us now, has responsibility for that area, is aware of the PwC work and is now overseeing the work of that area.

Ms MULKERIN: I think it is fair to say that this particular area of the department has experienced a significant increase in workload and that was some of the feedback that came through the health check. Every day they provide support to teachers and principals across the State. They run an instant support line, so if a critical incident happens in a school they are on the front line with our colleagues in schools to manage incidents. It is definitely a high-pressure, high-volume area of the organisation. I think what the health check rolled out was two things: some areas of work that collectively as a leadership group we need to pay attention to, to ensure that everybody in the group feels included, heard and supported in the work; and some call-out for the organisation about ensuring that we have the right amount of resources to manage the workload. And we are actively working on those.

Mr SCOTT: I would add to that: We are part of a big process to try and make sure for our staff that this is a great place to work. That is one of the projects that we have running at the moment. We are studying carefully the People Matter Employee Survey, which gives us good insight into the mood and engagement of our staff in different parts of the organisation. We take concerns seriously, we put good processes in place and we will continue to monitor over time.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Just quickly, one of my first questions to the House was to the education Minister and was around the election promise of 4,600 teachers and the change of the staffing formula. While she gave a fairly basic understanding of the staffing formula, she did not necessarily answer my question. What is your understanding of these 4,600 teachers? Are they new, permanent, full-time teachers, are they casual or are they a combination?

Ms MULKERIN: Progressively, the new positions will come online over the next couple of years and, yes, it is our intention that they will be permanent, ongoing positions. I am sure there will be other questions about staffing.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: That would have been my follow-up question, which I am probably not allowed to ask now.

The CHAIR: No.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I will come back to that one.

The CHAIR: Mr Scott, early on you mentioned your adherence to the McKinsey model of school improvement. Have McKinsey consultants been involved in helping you with this task?

Mr SCOTT: Yes. We engaged McKinsey a year or so back to help us work on education services. When I joined about three years ago, what I heard from principals was that they were grateful for the money but they felt they wanted better support from the department. So we have looked carefully at what kind of tailored support we are giving schools in terms of the advice we are giving them through Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation professional development, around existing curriculum and new curriculum document as it lands, but also things like helping deal with complexity in the classroom, including behaviour and students with disability. So what McKinsey helped us do was create a tailored support model which helps ensure that, according to different positions of schools' need, we have the right support. That, in a sense, is based on the work McKinsey has done with key education systems around the world, which is reflected in these reports on how you deliver systems over time.

The CHAIR: Can you provide us with the cost of that consultancy?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, we can provide you with that costing.

The CHAIR: In the McKinsey research paper by Dorn, Krawitz and Mourshed, they point out in their assessment of the Programme for International Student Assessment data that the main approach to uplift school performance is growth mindset, which is something you yourself have propagated throughout the school system. What is growth mindset?

Mr SCOTT: I talk about growth mindset but I should put it in a broader context. Growth mindset is a recognition that, in order to learn, you need to show levels of resilience and engagement and you need to commit in order to learn. You need to show grit, you need to show perseverance, you need to learn from your mistakes. You need to recognise that your mastery is not simply something that you are born with but something that you acquire over time through endeavour. I do not think anyone around the table would think all you need is a growth mindset; you need a lot more than that.

In fact, you referenced earlier, I think, capabilities and I think the view of the executive—and certainly the view of the work we are doing with NESA—is that clearly knowledge is important as well as any capability. So growth mindset is something but you still need to master the fundamentals of mathematics or understand history or understand fundamental literacy and numeracy. So you need in-depth knowledge but then you need an attitude to learning as well, and growth mindset is an attitude towards learning.

The CHAIR: Other than the McKinsey, is there any other evidence base for thinking that growth mindset has a high-effect impact on learning?

Mr SCOTT: There is, yes. I have read other research, absolutely, that has come out of the United States and other places to say that an attitude towards learning and student engagement is an important attribute towards learning. If students are committed to learning and being engaged in learning, then that is an important part of making the learning experience happen. But I do not think any of us are saying that is all that matters.

The CHAIR: Can you provide that research on notice?

Mr SCOTT: Sure. I am happy to find some detail.

The CHAIR: The McKinsey paper I cited just moments ago states, "So far, the academic research on this subject is both nascent and predominantly US-based." Is it appropriate to base a key objective of the New South Wales school system on something that is nascent and from another country?

Mr SCOTT: I question whether it is a fundamental of what we are advancing. I am happy for Ms Harrison to add to what I have to say here, but we are taking a very evidence-based approach to driving and improving teaching and learning outcomes. If you go to the CESE website and the research it has done on what

works best, that is very much evidence based. You referenced John Hattie today; that is in reference to John Hattie as well. It is to do with what happens in the classroom. The number one effect size is the quality of teaching. The number two effect size is the quality of leadership.

There is a strong argument about the collective efficacy of staff around professional development. These are things that we are absolutely committed to, as well as having a strong evidence base. There is a sense that students being engaged in learning is important. What the growth mindset really says is that you need to put in effort. That is what growth mindset is. I think it is a good lesson for students to learn, along with all the other work we do.

The CHAIR: Yes. I think that is also fairly obvious in how you improve yourself in any walk of life, including the school system. Coming back to my question, do you acknowledge that this research is nascent and predominantly based in the US?

Mr SCOTT: I want to reference that report; I just do not want to overstate the weight that we are putting on growth mindset. In reference to what you just said, I think there are people out there, including students, who think that you are already gifted or you are not; that you are talented or you are not; and that you are born with it or you are not. Sending a message to our students that hard work, industry, learning from your failures, being committed and having grit and resilience are good attributes and values is a good part of the learning experience.

The CHAIR: Yes. But do you think it is possible, with the McKinsey research, that this is a double-counting exercise? Growth mindset is really a proxy for socio-economic factors because the research paper concludes that mindsets are not everything. They cannot compensate for all economic and social disparities and, in general, being richer rather than poorer remains a great educational advantage.

Mr SCOTT: Of course. That is why we have a needs-based funding model. That is why, under the Gonski funding that we are rolling out to schools, significantly more money is going to schools of students from low socio-economic areas and students who have other areas of disadvantage. The evidence, as you pointed out, is absolutely self evident.

The CHAIR: That is funding, but we are talking about growth mindset being taught in the classroom. Do you think it can be taught or does ambition in life essentially come from the home environment and parents?

Mr SCOTT: You referenced that this morning, but I think it is important we do not get a false dichotomy around this. Schools and families working closely together is absolutely the most powerful combination that we can find. As you know, there is that line, "Words are a poor man's arsenal". Socio-economic disadvantage can be overcome by education.

The CHAIR: But can ambition be taught?

Mr SCOTT: I would be interested in your views on this, but I would think that, no matter what school a child is at, it is good for us to be teaching them that hard work, ambition around their work, being resilient and learning from their mistakes are important attributes no matter where that child—

The CHAIR: Yes, but we visited a school in south-west Sydney which had on its website a statement on the importance of growth mindset. I asked them what that meant in practice and I got the impression that it was there because they thought it was important. But when we drilled down to what they actually do in practice to try to teach growth mindset they essentially said they do a lot of rote to give the students the confidence that they can get an answer and that there is an element of streaming—that the smarter kids are challenged so those who are struggling a bit do not feel like they are drowning. Is that what you expect schools to do in practice—rote learning and streaming being used as tools in the practical teaching of growth mindset?

Mr SCOTT: No, and I must say that I have not had growth mindset explained to me in that way. Again, I do not want to overstate growth mindset as part of the full inventory of support that we are providing to schools and the things that we are emphasising. The things that we are really emphasising are evident in the tailored support that we provide to schools. That is about literacy and numeracy strategies, a strong knowledge-based approach to subjects and the development of other capabilities that are important as well. What you find in the tailored support work—and I will hand over to Ms Harrison here—is that the tailored support work indicates that different schools will need different strategies according to where their levels of achievement are.

Ms HARRISSON: This morning the Minister gave us a good overview around some of the elements we are using across the system to try to lift and improve school performance. That starts with a clear sense of what we are aiming for and the bump-it-up strategies that the Minister announced that we will be adopting through the balance of this year. It involves a strong investment in leadership, with the leadership strategy the department is

currently implementing. As we touched on this morning, it involves the ongoing development of our workforce in effective practices that we know can have an impact in the classroom and improve students outcomes. Then there is this concept of tailored support, which is really saying that we need to be really aware of context when we try to understand where a school is up to in its own improvement journey.

We know that our principals are motivated to improve the performance of their schools and to improve the outcomes of students across our system. What we want to do as a system is to meet them where they are at and provide support to each individual school based on the things that they are focusing on that we know can lift the school's performance. For example, this term we are working with around 500 schools across the State on a variety of different issues. A number of the schools are focusing on literacy and numeracy as areas where they want to embed practice. A number of the schools are working on data and the use of data within the schools. We are providing tailored support around that. Some are working on behaviour.

We are trying to work through—with every single school—where they are at, how we can help them improve and how we can support that improvement journey and demonstrate the impact it is having. On top of that, we have some of those targeted strategies—including Connected Communities, the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and Early Action for Success—where we are really pointing out where we see the need for additional investment and support in our schools and where we can work together with our schools communities to lift performance overall.

The CHAIR: Thank you for the work you do.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can you tell me how many participants there currently are in the principal improvement program?

Mr DIZDAR: I would have to take that question on notice and come back to the Committee on that.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Mr Riordan, does the agency support the principle of equal pay for work of equal value?

Mr RIORDAN: Yes.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: In your previous evidence you said that you had done some modelling around the teacher pay inequity prior to concluding the original agreement. Is that correct?

Mr RIORDAN: Correct.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: You foresaw the outcome that has come to pass?

Mr RIORDAN: We certainly undertook some research into the disadvantage that an employee would suffer if they had a reduction in salary. We did not do any extensive examination of what the impact would be on temporary teachers. It would take longer than one year to move through the incremental scale.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So you had not anticipated the problem that has emerged?

Mr RIORDAN: Correct.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So it was a mistake?

Mr RIORDAN: I am not saying it was a mistake. It was part of the award negotiation for in-place transition arrangements. It is part of two awards. It was agreed to back in 2013. It found its way into the 2016 award as well.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: In the second award you understood that there was a problem and that it was an unanticipated consequence of the agreement in the first award. Is that correct?

Mr RIORDAN: No, that is not correct.

Mr SCOTT: I will add, I have been at the department for three years—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: My questions are directed to Mr Riordan.

Mr SCOTT: But it is material and I answered the earlier question. In my many discussions with the Teachers Federation this matter—and I might stand corrected—was first raised with me in the last 12 months. It has come to a head in recent months. If in fact it has been a feature of the transition arrangement that has taken place over two awards, certainly in recent months it has been raised through correspondence and other engagements with the Teachers Federation. As I said this morning, we are now in the position where we expect that that will form part of our reshaping of the award that we need to do at the end of this year. There is a number

of matters that have come up on the operation of the award in practice. You sign off on an award and then you look at how it works in practice. There is a number of matters that have come up that I expect will be a feature of the negotiation.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Would you accept that there is a problem?

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order—

Mr SCOTT: I have indicated to the Teachers Federation this is a matter that we will discuss with them in our negotiations. That is what we will be doing.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: This goes beyond the Teachers Federation, Mr Scott.

Mr SCOTT: There are a number of other matters they have raised with us as well and that is why we are going to have the negotiation. I look forward to reporting back on what the finding of all that will be. I hope to have it all resolved by the time we meet here again.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Are you going to make other teachers pay for the—

Mr SCOTT: No, we will negotiate with them. That is why we are having the negotiation. I am sure it will be productive.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It goes to the question about the operation of the wages policy though. Do you understand the wages policy has a 2.5 per cent cap?

Mr SCOTT: I do understand the wages policy.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: This is obviously going to have costs.

Mr SCOTT: I understand when we negotiate with the union that will be with the wages policy with us. I am happy to report back in February on the outcome.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Does the department have a growth mindset?

Mr SCOTT: I want to read the McKinsey research before I come back with that.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I think recognising your mistakes and acknowledging them might be reflective of a growth mindset, Mr Scott.

Mr SCOTT: I appreciate the clock is running but I would simply say this is a matter that came out of an award negotiation with the federation. They have raised concerns with us. We have acknowledged those concerns. We are going to sit down and negotiate with them. I hope that has an amicable and productive conclusion.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Don't you have a higher duty to your employees beyond the Teachers Federation? The Teachers Federation are obviously one party to the negotiations but you have a higher duty, don't you?

Mr SCOTT: I am sorry, Mr Chairman, I think we are going to have to spend a bit more time on this matter. We reach agreements with our staff. We stand by those agreements for the duration of those agreements. Whilst those agreements are working out we will have people who come to us and say, "This is not working in a way that we think is fair or we think was intended at the time. Here are issues we want to raise." We say, "Okay, well, let us go and reconsider those matters at the time the award is up for renegotiation." This is one matter. There are other matters that have been raised by primary principals, by secondary principals and we have a process for that negotiation. That negotiation will be taking place. I can assure you it will be on the agenda for the negotiations.

The CHAIR: I suggest that the line of questioning—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I will move on.

The CHAIR: No, it is not a question of moving on. We try to draw out matters of fact from the witnesses. A question asking about a higher sense of duty is not really in that category. I think we need to stick to the facts of the matters that Mr Scott and others are responsible for.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I will let you craft your questions, Mr Chair.

The CHAIR: There are standings orders about questions in order. I think your question about the higher duty might be stretching it, that's all.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I will move on. What has prompted the tightening of the enrolment policy?

Mr SCOTT: Thank you for the question. As I said, there are 2,200 schools and 800,000 students in those schools today. There is significant growth coming into the system and already you can see some signs. We talked about the capital works program that is underway now. Clearly we are preparing for significant growth that comes in. The department has had an enrolment policy for decades. We have a clear commitment, under the Education Act 1990, that we need to prioritise enrolment for local students and then if you are out of area there will be a series of criteria that will be used to grant a place. In a sense we are not making great changes to that enrolment policy; we are applying that enrolment policy. Part of that is being good stewards of the system that we have now. Yes, we need to build places for new students but we recognise that we need to ensure we have places for local students in local schools and we are making the best use of the resources that we have.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is that being driven by an assets utilisation mindset? There are underutilised assets.

Mr SCOTT: There is the word "mindset" again. I think it is fair to say there are a number of factors that are in play. Firstly, I think we want to ensure that every school is a great school and is a great option for parents. I received correspondence a little while ago from a parent who said—as we were working on this enrolment policy—that they had approached a school out of area. They were then encouraged to go back and look at their local school, which they had not considered. They went to that school. They were very glad that they did. They will be enrolling their student in that school. We want to make sure that every school is a strong school and a strong proposition for parents—that is a clear priority for us.

Also we do want to make sure, as we use significant taxpayers' dollars—there is more than \$6 billion allocated around capital works to take place for the growth—that we are making effective use of the school facilities that we already have. That means to certainly be in a position where we are guaranteeing a place for parents at their local school, encouraging parents to consider their local school and really only facilitating out-of-area placement where that is appropriate and that works. That actually has been the hallmark of enrolment policies here for decades now.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Why is there such a high level of out-of-area enrolments and a high demand for out-of-area enrolments?

Mr SCOTT: I think a number of things have taken place. Some people would say that a market has emerged in the education sector, not just between government and non-government schools but within government schools. Transport is provided to students no matter which school they go to. You could even make an argument that there have been incentives for principals to enrol students and to basically take anyone who turns up at the door. But we need to manage the system. We believe to have a system that makes the guarantee of the local school, encourages parents to assess local schools and allows for us to be able to manage our asset base are all important features.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It is more than encouragement, is it not? Where does this leave the Government's commitment to choice?

The CHAIR: I rule that point of order because you are asking the secretary to reflect on Government policy. It is not within our standing orders.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I withdraw the question. I accept that. You touched on incentives for principals. Will you explain how there are incentives that might cause principals to—

Mr SCOTT: The only thing I was referring to is it goes to an award decision which has been much debated previously which ties, in a sense, principal remuneration to a series of factors, including size of school. But what we really want to do is to make sure that we can manage enrolment applications well and that there is consistency in the decision-making. There are clear criteria that are spelt out to help principals working through how they deal with parents who come through the door and to make sure that the enrolment choices are clear for parents.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I am interested in the criteria for out-of-area enrolments. As I understand it, for out-of-area enrolment the criteria cannot rely on ability, performance or achievement. On what basis do schools actually decide?

Mr SCOTT: The first thing is if you are a local you get in—that is guaranteed under the legislation.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: This is out-of-area enrolment.

Mr SCOTT: Yes. First up, the locals are guaranteed a place. Then we have got some criteria for school selection panels to consider out-of-area applications. What are some things we will think about? If there are siblings already enrolled in the school, yes, we will take that into account. If there are proximity or access questions—proximity to the school—we will take that into account as well. If, in fact, your local school is a co-educational school and you are only interested in single-sex education, or your local school is a single sex school and you are interested in co-education, yes, we will take that into account.

If there are issues that pertain to the family around the arrangements that they have made, say, for before- or after-school care or other care arrangements taking place and they think that there are safety and supervision issues, we will take that into account. At high school curriculum choice is an issue that is important to students and parents. The range of curriculum on offer at schools will often be driven by certainly the history at the school but also the size of the school and so there might be an argument that might be made around a student. A student has a particular area of interest. It is not open at X high school, it is offered at Y high school—these are all factors that would be taken into account and these are all things that are articulated as part of the enrolment policy.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: What is the mechanism for the department to actually ensure that ability, performance and achievement are not being used, given the incentives that you have mentioned around principal empire building?

Mr SCOTT: It certainly was not a phrase that I used, the record will show. I did not say "empire building" at any time.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: The question is: What is the mechanism to ensure that ability, performance and achievement are not used as criteria for out of area—

Mr SCOTT: Our local directors of educational leadership will be involved in this process. Mr Dizdar can speak more to it.

Mr DIZDAR: I can help the Committee here. This current enrolment policy provides greater clarity for all our schools and our communities in this area that you are referring to. It is important to recognise that a school will have to publicise its out-of-area enrolment criteria in line with the department's enrolment criteria. It is important for the Committee to appreciate that this comes into play where a school is not at its capacity. The policy makes it clear that they will need to develop their enrolment criteria for out of area, taking into account what the secretary has spoken to. Principals and school communities, in leading to this new policy, wanted greater clarity because, yes, in the past we have come across some sites where they have taken into account material of academic performance and evidence of it to make decisions about enrolment for out of area.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How is that detected?

Mr DIZDAR: It is important to reiterate what the secretary said that ours is a system of provision of public education. Our stewardship responsibility is to create 2,210 great schools not at the expense of having a site or sites—my words—cherrypicking what out-of-area enrolment can look like on academic grounds as opposed to what this policy clearly stipulates: that we have to recognise families and siblings first, that we have to look at proximity of access to the school, we have to look at single sex education or co-education provision, the safety and supervision of students, and the availability of subjects in curriculum offerings. I must say I have been out and about speaking with principals and school communities—including stakeholders in our Secondary Principals' Council, Primary Principals' Association and the NSW Teachers Federation—and they welcome the fact that we have clearly called out that you cannot take into account the criteria that you are referring to in trying to make an out-of-area decision.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: My original question was: How are you policing it? How do you actually guarantee that that is not actually the case? It is all well and good requiring schools to publish criteria; making them apply the criteria is a different proposition.

Mr DIZDAR: Let me help the Committee there as well. Step one: I think it has been incumbent on us on calling that out in the new policy because the 1997 policy, which was the previous version, certainly did not do so. We have now given clarity to all of the system in that area. The secretary referenced our directors of educational leadership who have the line management of our principals and school contexts in network configurations of 20 schools and 20 principals, and they will be the monitoring arm of ensuring that this is the case. It will be quite transparent for everyone in the system, given that the enrolment for out of area has to be published.

Mr SCOTT: I think that is absolutely right. If, in fact, we have had a policy that there has been either a blind eye turned to it or it has not been talked about much or it seemed to be of the last century, what we have

done is juice it now for the new circumstance. We have made it quite clear what the criteria are, we have given the guarantee for the local school to make quite clear what the criteria will be, we have said that there will be selection panels and transparency around the process. Principals have said to us, "You've helped us here; this is a good thing." If, in fact, you have one or two principals who decide that they are still recruiting like a rugby league coach, then I think that the other principals will be very aware of that and we will come to that information quite quickly and I think we will be in a position where the directors of educational leadership can engage around this.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: What consultation have you undertaken with the parents around this tightening of the policy?

Mr SCOTT: I believe the P&C Federation has been briefed around it. Do you want to talk about this, Ms Harrison?

Ms HARRISSON: Certainly. In the development of all our policies, we engage with our school communities through our principal associations and through the Teachers Federation. We also engage with the P&C Federation as the representative body of the parents. We negotiated and agreed this policy with them all the way through.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Do you think parents are misguided in their desire to enrol their kids in a school that they perceive to be superior?

Mr SCOTT: What I think we want to do is a few things. We want to make sure the local school is a really good option. We want parents to understand what is on offer at the local school and to consider that but then, if there is space in an out-of-area school and they meet those criteria, then they will be in a position to do that. We are not saying there will be no out-of-area enrolments—if there is space available and if good arguments can be made then that will be on offer. But we do want parents to consider the local option; we want to make sure the local option is a good option.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You said that the P&C Federation was briefed on the policy. Have they spoken to you prior to the release?

Ms HARRISSON: Yes, they were consulted during the development of the policy.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So there was a consultation, almost a briefing.

Mr SCOTT: Yes, that is right.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can I ask about teacher burnout? Are we losing good teachers to burnout, Mr Scott?

Mr SCOTT: It is a really interesting question; I thank you for it. I appreciate that in some of the discussion, there is concern about teacher burnout. When we look at our numbers, that is not exactly what we see at all. In fact, there is a lot of talk about teachers in their first five years in the sense of high burnout. Every now and again, you see a figure that says you lose one in two in five years. That is not true: We have retained more than 90 per cent, I believe, of our permanent teachers through the first five years.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is permanency not the key? You are measuring permanent teachers but actually most teachers enter the system as casuals or temporaries? Is that not the case?

Mr SCOTT: There are casuals and temporaries in the system.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Almost one-third, I think, of the new teaching force.

Mr SCOTT: But still, I do not think it does equate to some of the folklore and the language. I do not think it is a surprise.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How can you know if you do not measure temporaries and casuals?

Mr SCOTT: Ms Mulkerin has some more detail but before we do that, I say that it should not be a surprise to us that on that permanent teacher number that I said perhaps one in 10 people who are teaching after five years decide it is not for them. It is not for everyone. I do not believe that everyone can teach; I do not believe that everyone should teach. Some people, for personal reasons or professional reasons or whatever, will decide it is not right for them. What we need to do is create an environment where teachers feel well supported. One of our most successful programs acknowledged internationally has been the program of support we put in place for beginning teachers: that they have a lower teaching load and they have a mentor who works with them. This has been very well received. Ms Mulkerin will give us a few more statistics.

Ms MULKERIN: I am happy to talk about resignation rates. In the 10-year average, resignation rates of teachers in their first year of teaching is 2.2 per cent; the resignation rate of teachers in their first five years of teaching is 8.8 per cent; and the resignation rate of all teachers is 1.1 per cent. The attrition of our existing teachers is not really the key issue that we are grappling with at the moment in relation to the teaching service.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Are you talking about permanent teachers? This data that you have provided is on permanent teachers, right?

Ms MULKERIN: I will take on notice the data source so that we can be explicit about the source.

Mr SCOTT: We lose far more at retirement.

The CHAIR: Can I hand out a bouquet to say that I know you have made a big attempt to bring down the average age of teachers to avoid the problem of an ageing, tired profession. I think you have done a really good job in that area. The statistics are quite encouraging for what is being achieved.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: We were talking before about inclusive education in schools. What is the definition of the Department of Education of what "inclusion" in schools is?

Ms HARRISSON: I am sure the Committee will have seen the Disability Strategy that we published earlier this year. Our definition around inclusion focuses on the experience our students have at schools, rather than a location or the classroom they are taught in. I have visited a number of our schools that have support classes, for example, on site. Those can be entirely inclusive educational experiences where students are supported with that specific learning need in some areas of the development and education in that support classroom with additional staff and the support they need to enable them to learn in that environment but also access mainstream classes alongside that provision and then, obviously, be fully included in the school community throughout. Partly I think the secretary alluded that everyone has a very different definition of it. We do not have an explicit definition partly for that reason because what we do not want to do is rule out the opportunity for those positive learning experiences to occur in a particular setting based on a definitional argument and disagreement that we could have for years and years.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Looking at the schools for specific purposes, the SSP schools, how many of them have a full curriculum for children with a disability?

Mr SCOTT: It depends a bit what you mean by a "full curriculum". I think some of the absolute finest teaching that I have seen takes place in SSPs. Mr Dizdar spent a full day in an SSP a few weeks ago and as soon as he was out he was on the phone to me telling me what an extraordinary professional experience that had been. I sometimes think when you are dealing with students of great complexity in the sense of profound disability, some of the teaching that takes place to be able to track their improvement over time is absolutely remarkable.

The kind of learning opportunities, the kind of learning structure for a 16-year-old in that setting is different from a 16-year-old at a regular high school, and I appreciate that. But these are students with extraordinary complexity and an extraordinary commitment for teachers. So what is a full curriculum? It might be a different learning structure in the classroom for them, but I still think it can be meaningful and important for them, strongly supported by professional teachers who are experts in their field and strongly supported by their parents as well, but different; I accept it is different.

Ms HARRISSON: And within those settings every student will have an individualised learning plan that sets out what their learning goals and needs are, which will be delivered and supported by the staff.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Do you think there is the same opportunity in SSPs for individuals to take advantage of individual progress in particular areas and have the opportunities that these students have? For example, if there was a particular child in an SSP who had a particular skill in one particular area do you think it is as easy to accommodate that and to allow the development as it would be if they were part of a mainstream school?

Mr SCOTT: What is interesting on that, I think, is what you see an SSP is in the sense of this intense personal engagement. Going to many SSP classes there will be six students and two adults; so the kind of individual attention that a child can receive in that kind of setting might be very different if they are in a mainstream class. I think also our new policy that we brought out about gifted students and recognising the talents of students recognises that those gifts and talents might be evident everywhere in every setting, including an SSP setting. So I would hope there would be an opportunity for those students to flourish and develop their gifts and talents, no matter where they might be. And I think we certainly have compelling case studies of that in SSPs.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I suspect you may need to take this on notice, but are you able to give us the figures for how many children with disability who initially applied for enrolment in a mainstream school in 2018-19 were actually enrolled in that mainstream school as part of a mainstream class, and how many of them were enrolled as part of a support class?

Mr SCOTT: Let us see what the data can show us on that.

Ms HARRISSON: I will be very happy to see what data we have available on that.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: And also how many children with disability who initially applied for enrolment in a mainstream school actually ended up being enrolled in an SSP.

Mr SCOTT: Sure, yes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: And also how many children with a disability who have been in an SSP have transferred to a mainstream class in a mainstream school in the last financial year.

Ms HARRISSON: I am very happy to take that on notice. I just reiterate the point that Mr Scott made earlier that the vast majority of our students with disability are in mainstream settings, being supported in mainstream settings every day. So I just want to make sure the kind of context of that as we provide it back is that it is the minority of the students.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Moving to something slightly different, how much funding is the New South Wales Government investing in the delivery of respectful relationships programs in New South Wales?

Ms HARRISSON: We need to take that on notice.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Is the department putting any resources into developing new programs for schools that realistically and transparently discuss domestic and family violence, healthy relationships and consent?

Ms HARRISSON: That issue is covered in the Life Skills program that replaced Crossroads last year.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Is that the same as the respectful relationships programs?

Ms HARRISSON: No. The Life Skills program—and Mr Dizdar will provide the detail of when that occurred—is a two-week program that all students go through.

Mr DIZDAR: It is a program that we undertake in year 11 across all our secondary contexts and we leave it to the school to determine when best to fit that into their operational structure. But, like Ms Harrison has indicated, it is a two-week program of education and development for our young people.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: And who provides that?

Mr DIZDAR: Our staff provide that and they are also able to tap into departmental expertise that Ms Harrison has in her Educational Services division.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Have any programs been rolled out to replace Safe Schools?

Ms HARRISSON: Safe Schools was a Commonwealth program not a New South Wales program—just to be clear about that—so it was not something that was provided by the department or endorsed by the department. We have a wealth of material available to support students who need additional support at any given time, particularly for anti-bullying strategies and websites that provide support for any student feeling like they need that, and for teachers of course.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I quickly want to go back to one more question about the PwC process. Is it true that, until the PSA intervened, if you wanted an individual interview you had to send an email to the executive director of the health and safety directorate?

Mr RIORDAN: No, that is not true—it was never to the executive director of the health and safety directorate; it was to a person in my office. Could I just correct that there were 89 complaints before, 89 people attended focus groups and 104 people all up had an opportunity to go directly with PwC.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: That is fine. I just wanted to clarify that one. Ms Mulkerin, back to the 4,600 teachers, is this going to require a change in the staffing formula or is this a fact that we are playing catch-up on schools that were previously understaffed?

Mr SCOTT: Neither. One thing we need to recognise is that more students will be coming into the system and we will need more teachers. So no change to the staffing formula. We are looking at the staffing methodology as exists in schools—how staff are allocated to schools—but that is not linked to that commitment.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Moving on to teacher improvement programs, I know we have spoken about principal improvement programs. Is it my understanding that there is a supportive process?

Mr SCOTT: Yes.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Looking at the latest figures, they show that only 50 per cent of teachers placed on a teacher improvement program actually pass and remain in the system. Are you satisfied with that as a supportive process?

Mr SCOTT: Let us look at it. About 60,000 teachers are operating in the system. Yes, we will have tough conversations. It is a supportive environment but not everyone is going to reach the standard that is required.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I acknowledge that, but I am just wondering are you happy with that 50 per cent?

Mr SCOTT: What we have done is we have put teams out in the field to work with principals. Part of the criticism that we received was that this process took too long, was too bureaucratic, did not work well. I am grateful for the support and engagement of the Teachers Federation in working with us to help us streamline the system as far as the time it took was concerned to streamline some of the processes, and then we invested in teams on the ground to work with principals around this matter. But, sadly, even with support and encouragement, some teachers will not get to the standard required. I can tell you though that the number, I think, who left the system in the last year was about 100 after this process. So out of 60,000 it is not a huge percentage.

So I just think, in a sense, yes, we will create a supportive environment, we work with teachers, we work alongside the union. But, fundamentally, we say we have standards and expectations that we need to have in the system if our students are to learn, and not everyone will be able to reach those standards. If we have to come to a separation around that then that is what we will do, but we are following the rules and the guidelines that have been agreed on with our staff.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: With that in mind, are you aware that there is a teacher currently in the Blue Mountains with 20 years experience that has been placed on the tip immediately after returning from workers compensation?

Mr SCOTT: I cannot speak of any specific details.

The CHAIR: Can I just clarify, you are taking that on notice or you will pass it on to the individual?

Mr SCOTT: I will take that on notice. I must say though, Mr Chair, I am a little concerned about going into specific detail.

The CHAIR: Yes, I am worried about that. It is outside our standing orders. But I think the general descriptor of "a teacher in the Blue Mountains" is broad enough to protect privacy.

Mr SCOTT: Yes, it is broad and the following remarks are not in relation to that case, which I don't know but I need to speak about it more generally. Part of the complication that we have, and I am happy to flag it here because I have discussed it with the union, is the link between staff being on leave, sick leave, and on discussions around performance management. This is not an issue that is particular to the Department of Education nor any government department. But part of the difficulty that we have is that sometimes when you start to have a performance conversation all of a sudden staff members can be on leave and might be on leave for a period of time. This is part of the complication that we need to work through. I don't mind standing strongly for the fact that we need to have a strong eye for teachers of high quality and high standards in the teachers who we put in front of kids in our classrooms. That will mean tough conversations from time to time.

The CHAIR: Mr Scott, has the department accepted the research findings of the CESE paper from two months ago on general capabilities? It is a fairly compelling critique to say that these so-called twenty-first century skills can't be taught and can't be assessed.

Mr SCOTT: Yes, thanks for raising it. There is great insight in that paper, I think. The way I like to almost explain it is that you can talk to employers and you can talk to a range of experts out there about what the workforce of the twenty-first century will need. And you will get arguments about general capabilities. Employers will say this to you, "I need people with communication skills, critical thinking, who can work in a team and collaborate, these general capabilities". I think where the debate has come is whether these are in fact standalone

subjects that you try to assess on their own or whether in fact these capabilities are far better taught where they are embedded in areas of knowledge and subject expertise.

I note today that one of our departmental heroes Eddie Woo of the famous Wootube—his book has been released in the United States and we wish him well—I think he is one of the finest communicators that I have ever seen. But Eddie Woo is a fine communicator because he really knows his mathematics. He really knows his subject area well and his communication skills emerged from his deep understanding of the subject area and knowledge. Similarly if you want to have a critical thinker around history or a critical thinker around economics or geography, to have deep subject knowledge is a prerequisite, if you like, for the development of these general capabilities.

Where I think the debate has been in education at the moment are people who are thinking that critical thinking is the same no matter what the subject area is or collaboration skills are the same no matter what the subject area is. I think what the CESE report identifies is that we shouldn't be thinking about the capabilities in that way. We should be thinking about how you develop these capabilities when they are embedded in areas of deep knowledge. Ms Leslie Loble has done a lot of our work on Education for a Changing World which is about how we think about the curriculum and the needs of this change. She might want to add to this.

Ms LOBLE: Thank you, Mr Scott. I think from the frame the department takes it is quite clear that literacy and numeracy are absolutely essential for accessing learning. But these sorts of, if you will, thinking capabilities such as critical thinking, computational thinking and the like are absolutely essential for accessing knowledge. It is not that you don't have those but it is quite clear both in the CESE research as well as other work we have commissioned by Dan Willingham from the University of Virginia that these capabilities are increasingly important. But it is important to teach them in the context of knowledge. It is not one or the other. In practice, our standards in the Higher School Certificate and our standards in terms of assessment clearly anticipate that there are higher order thinking skills that can be demonstrated so that it can be taught and demonstrated so it can be assessed.

The CHAIR: Is this a departure from Gonski 2.0? Or are you saying it is a reordering where you need deep knowledge and content first and then creativity if possible to come on top of that? We want to see the future.

Ms LOBLE: I don't know that it is at odds with Gonski 2.0. Indeed, part of Gonski 2.0, for example reference learning progressions in literacy and numeracy, as you would be aware it is now part of our funding agreement that we will indeed at a national level progress those learning progressions, to repeat the word. Gonski, while referencing those capabilities, I don't recall that the Gonski review specifically said that we should not have curriculum-based instruction and instead only focus on the capabilities. As I recall, the point that the report was making and that others have is that these skills in fact always were relevant and they are increasingly relevant in an era where information and complexity is changing significantly.

Mr SCOTT: I would add that one of the things the CESE paper is critiquing is this view that does exist in some circles that says, "Well, knowledge is a commodity now because everyone has Google. You used to go to school and you would get knowledge. Now you have Google, you don't need that anymore. We will teach you to be a good communicator and be a good critical thinker". We reject that view. We think the mastery of deep knowledge will remain absolutely vital. These capabilities which are valued by employers and are great life skills are important but they will really only be developed in a meaningful way in the context of knowledge. What we don't anticipate is a standalone subject on critical thinking or a standalone subject on collaboration. But for students doing advanced work in deep knowledge, these are skills that they will develop as part of that deep knowledge.

The CHAIR: Ms Loble, in your project about the future of the education system, are you trying to anticipate what sort of industries will emerge in the future and then build skills around that particular vocational requirement? Or do you subscribe to the view of the secretary in his very interesting book published earlier this year—

Mr SCOTT: I knew someone read it. I wasn't aware it was you, Mr Chair.

The CHAIR: —from his career at the ABC, which we all love, that it is virtually impossible to know where the media world is going in five years' time, there is no clarity, it is all changing so quickly. Isn't that true of every industry now and it is totally futile to try to anticipate industries and jobs of the future when really we do need a content base?

Ms LOBLE: I think much of the impetus behind the work we have been doing is in fact the pace of change and, as I mentioned, the scale of complexity is significant and growing. In fact the purposes of schooling

always have been to prepare children for that. It provides the platform for being able to continue to learn to be able to access employment. In the vocational space in our department our work would be much more closely aligned to trying to identify where skill needs are and where investment should be in training. But our work goes to what are the fundamental places for knowledge, skills and capabilities that students will need so they are positioned well when they leave schooling for whether it is further education and training or employment.

Mr SCOTT: Can I add, as you know I think it is very hard to anticipate precisely the jobs that will go and the new jobs that will come. I think you can make some sure bets though. The research would indicate to us that literacy and numeracy remain vital because they are the passport to further learning. To come to mastery in subject areas, almost irrespective of what those subject areas are, they will be important and the capabilities will be important too. But all the evidence would suggest that young people will need to be lifelong learners, given the rate of change and the changing shape of the workforce. In a way we need to equip them with the ability to come to mastery of subject areas, master their energy and be lifelong learners. I think that is a "no regrets" approach, given the uncertainty of the world that they are going to face.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Mr Scott, did you write your book using departmental time or resources?

Mr SCOTT: Certainly not. I took leave over summer and I wrote it then.

The CHAIR: It is not a very long book.

Mr SCOTT: It's not a very long book.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: My next question is to Ms Mackey. Are you able to tell me how many notifiable incidents occurred in family day care centres in the past 12 months?

Ms MACKEY: In terms of notifications, are you after an overall number of incidents?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Yes.

Ms MACKEY: We have a number of different categories rather than an overall number. We have serious incidents of 705 and other incidents which was 213.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So 705 was the serious incidents, was it?

Ms MACKEY: Yes.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is there a scale in terms of seriousness?

Ms MACKEY: There are certainly criteria that are outlined in the regulations.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can you elaborate on that for me? What is the most serious?

Ms MACKEY: The most serious is harm to a child. It works backwards from there. So, for example, if a child is left on a bus, that is a serious incident. If something occurs in terms of an allergic reaction for a child, that is a serious incident.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can I ask about the harm to a child? Have there been any incidents in the last 12 months where children have been harmed in family day care?

Ms MACKEY: That would be captured in that serious incidents category.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So 705 times. 705 children have been seriously—

Ms MACKEY: It would be captured as a part of that.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: You do not have more detail than that?

Ms MACKEY: I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: That is fine. What action does the department take when a serious incident is notified?

Ms MACKEY: We have a triage team. Given that there are over 5,500 services, they take into account not only the notification of incidents—which is required under the regulations—but they also take complaints and they can come from the providers themselves, family members or staff or other community members. Those incidents are triaged through the triage team. Then they are allocated depending on the severity and the urgency of the matter. Sometimes services over-report, so having a child scrape their knee as they are running through the play area—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: That is not a serious incident.

Ms MACKEY: That is not a serious incident but sometimes it will be reported as another incident. We will note that, talk to the service, and that will be the end of that. Then we have a range of other options available to us. Those that are most serious are referred immediately to our investigations team and an investigation is undertaken. Those that require a level of assessment are allocated to our frontline staff across all of the hubs across the State.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How many matters have been allocated to the investigations team?

Ms MACKEY: I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am happy for you to take this on notice, but they can be referred to an investigation, they can be allocated to frontline staff. Is there any other way that they are dealt with?

Ms MACKEY: If they are less serious, like the bandaid scrape that I described, then we would have a staff member contact the service, confirm what has happened. If it is a complaint they would contact the complainant to confirm what has happened and there may not be any further action required.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: There are only two different outcomes? Is that correct?

Ms MACKEY: Not in terms of outcomes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sorry. Two different courses of action.

Ms MACKEY: There are three.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What is the third?

Ms MACKEY: We would make initial contact with the service or the complainant to determine that no further action is required. We would refer it to our hub for a frontline staff member to review what has occurred or we would refer it to our investigations team.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Are you able to provide us with a report of the investigations including at which centres those investigations have occurred?

Ms MACKEY: In terms of active investigations—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Investigations over the last 12 months.

Ms MACKEY: The number?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: The details: which centres, what type of incident, the level of seriousness.

The CHAIR: Can I ask the secretary about this? I am worried that these are incredibly sensitive matters. Would the department normally hand out material here?

Mr SCOTT: I think we would want to seek advice on this. We are happy to put the matter on notice. Let us take advice and come back with a response.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: We are happy with that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If we could get numbers around those specific courses of actions? How many have been referred to an investigative team? How many have been made contact with and dealt with? How many have been allocated to frontline staff at your hub to be dealt with?

Mr SCOTT: We can take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Then any additional details.

The CHAIR: I do not think we can breach privacy at any time.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Scott, I want to come back to the enrolment policy. Is there any provision under the new enrolment policy, if you do not agree with the way—

Mr SCOTT: The decision is made?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: No. If you do not like the pedagogy of a school. The Chair asked questions earlier about Reading Recovery or project-based learning. What happens if you do not like that?

Mr SCOTT: The criteria that I identified around curriculum choice and the appropriate learning setting for your child—single sex versus co-education—if you had a view that there was something about the teaching and learning that gave you a preference for one school over another, then that would be the kind of matter that would be taken into account at a local level.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Have any schools indicated they want to be part of the trial of the year one phonics check?

Ms HARRISSON: We will be going out with an expression of interest for the year one phonics check in term one of next year, as the Minister indicated this morning. We will be carrying out the check in term three next year.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So you have not given any schools the opportunity to indicate interest yet?

Mr SCOTT: Not yet.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you tell me if there has been any progress on determining the location of the new selective school in south-western Sydney?

Mr SCOTT: We are still determining that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You are still determining that?

Mr SCOTT: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many people are currently working on that?

Mr SCOTT: I would have to check that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Just to be clear, you are going to take that on notice?

Mr SCOTT: Yes. I am not sure it is a case of how many people are working on it. We are constantly working on our new schools growth pattern. We will come to a decision on the most appropriate setting for that school, announced by the Premier in due course.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you have a time line for that?

Mr SCOTT: I do not have a time frame.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If you could take it on notice and provide us with some kind of update on where that is at? How it is progressing? What modelling you have undertaken?

Mr SCOTT: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That would be useful. How many rounds of funding have been provided to schools under the Cooler Classrooms Fund?

Mr SCOTT: Mr Maranik is all across the Cooler Classrooms Fund?

Mr MARANIK: There have been two rounds. One has been fully assessed. The second round is under assessment.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So the first round, that was the one announced in term three last year?

Mr MARANIK: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That has been fully—what were your words?

Mr MARANIK: Round one has been fully assessed.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Fully assessed. What does that mean?

Mr MARANIK: That means that we have taken on board the school's application, understood their funding envelopes and profiles and we are currently going through a range of due diligence exercises in terms of working out the schedules. Some of those schools have already been completed, others have been scheduled to have their due diligence, particularly around things like electricity supply and those sorts of things.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Asbestos. In terms of round two, was this one that opened in term one?

Mr MARANIK: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Let me go back to round one. When do you anticipate that construction will be fully completed under round one?

Mr MARANIK: It is a five-year programme. All of those will be delivered over that five years as we roll out those which have gone through due diligence to make sure that we have the right technical response to that particular context of the location of the school.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are you saying that a school could have received it in term three last year but not receive it for five years?

Mr MARANIK: It is a five-year programme.

Mr SCOTT: Let me speak to this if I may. As I indicated this morning, this is a very complex part of our school infrastructure plan. Some of our schools have been around for 100 years. To retrofit air conditioning into some of those buildings is highly complex and will be a complex piece of design work. To roll out air conditioning in a school classroom, we will have limited windows where we can do that. That will be a weekends, school holidays and evenings operation rather than a daytime operation because we do not want to be interrupting classes that are at work.

As Mr Maranik has indicated, it is not just air conditioning. There are questions of power supply to run the air conditioning system and we are also looking at the most environmentally sound ways in which we can do that. It is not like going to Harvey Norman and bunging up air conditioning units on the wall. It is having an integrated system in old buildings that are of complex construction and there are power matters as well. We indicated at the time of the announcement that this would take some years to rollout and that is the process that we are doing it.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am happy if you want to take this on notice, Mr Scott or Mr Maranik, but if you can tell me what was the total amount of classrooms that were allocated—you said they are fully assessed, so what is that total number? How many have commenced construction? And how many have completed construction?

Mr MARANIK: I am happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Could you provide me the same information for round two, which, as I understand it, opened in term one this year. Is that correct?

Mr MARANIK: Round two is currently under assessment in terms of the applications.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So the applications have closed?

Mr MARANIK: Correct.

Mr SCOTT: Yes.

Mr MARANIK: And we are currently assessing those at this stage.

Mr SCOTT: So we can give you a state of play on those.

Mr MARANIK: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you tell me how many applications have been received?

Mr MARANIK: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So if you apply, does that mean you automatically get funding?

Mr MARANIK: No.

Mr SCOTT: No, it is an application.

Mr MARANIK: It is an application process. We do not do that assessment.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are they assessed against criteria or are they assessed against cost?

Mr MARANIK: They are against criteria.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Okay. So the data—

Mr SCOTT: Except the only thing I would add to that is there was a funding envelope that was announced for the program. We are making assessments of schools and there is a funding envelope that we are expending on the Cooler Classrooms strategy.

Mr MARANIK: I am happy to take the round one figures on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes, you have taken the round one figures on notice and you are going to tell me how many applications you have received under round two?

Mr MARANIK: And round two, we can tell you the number of applications on that.

Mr SCOTT: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes. And if you can tell me what they are being assessed against, that would be useful as well.

Mr MARANIK: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you tell me what data has been used to calculate the average temperature?

Mr MARANIK: That is the Bureau of Meteorology's data.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And what time period is that over?

Mr MARANIK: In terms of overall? I would have to get back to you in terms of that.

Mr SCOTT: It is the mean maximum January temperature data.

Mr MARANIK: But in terms of the time sphere of the data that that looked at, I would have to get back to you on that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes. If you can tell me the time period that it is being assessed against, that would be great. So when are you looking at releasing the results of round two of the funding for Cooler Classrooms?

Mr MARANIK: At the conclusion of the assessment.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And that will be?

Mr SCOTT: When it is done.

Mr MARANIK: When it concludes.

Mr SCOTT: There is a team hard at work. I work close to them at School Infrastructure down here in Sydney. They get in early every morning. There is a lot of work to be done.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So it is just when it is done, it is done?

Mr SCOTT: I can assure you they are working hard at it. As I said, it is a lot more complex than whacking up a Harvey Norman air cooler on the wall.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And you have not just marked a date on the calendar that you would like it to be completed by?

Mr SCOTT: No, no. We are keen. We will give you an update and the answer on notice.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Before next summer?

Mr SCOTT: We will give you an update on the answer on notice. We have said that it is a multi-year rollout, and schools understand that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And kids are about to sweat it out during summer and their parents would like to know when they are going to be receiving air conditioning that was announced in term one.

Mr SCOTT: The Government has made the commitment.

The Hon. WES FANG: I think you are campaigning now.

The CHAIR: The point is well made. We need to return to the questions.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Wes, if you want to ask your questions then you take your time.

The Hon. WES FANG: Okay. Thank you.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: If you want to answer them, become a Minister.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are before- and after-school providers required to pay for electricity that they use at New South Wales Government facilities, including for air conditioning?

Mr SCOTT: Let us take that on notice. I want to double-check that. We will take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Okay. And if they are, can you tell me how the appropriate amount is being determined?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, sure. Happy to.

Ms HARRISSON: Our providers do pay rent to use our school sites for before- and after-school care. One part of the election commitment around this is to provide a rental subsidy for those providers operating on our school sites to enable more providers in to provide more service for our communities.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you. Ms Mackey, we referred earlier to the support that has been provided to early childhood centres that have been assessed at "working towards". Can you explain when that program was formulated and what support is being provided to centres?

Ms MACKEY: Sure. Our program is in response to trying to achieve the objectives of the national quality framework, which is part of continuously improving for all services. So that is particularly targeting working towards services.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sorry, so does that mean that only services that are classed at "working towards" are eligible to work in the program?

Ms MACKEY: Yes. Can I just get to that? That working towards program, the initial target is working towards services but the information that is being developed through the program—particularly the information around self-assessment for services—is something that is being created for the whole sector. And we are just about to work with the sector on the rollout of that. It has been very successful. It is being delivered on our behalf by ACECQA, so it is giving services really bespoke support around how to improve what is happening in their service. We know that if a service goes through the program, they are three times more likely to be rated as meeting or above when they next go through assessment and rating.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You said the service is being provided by ACECQA. What does that mean?

Ms MACKEY: We have done a procurement process and ACECQA was appointed to deliver the working towards program.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So this is the New South Wales Department of Education that has then subcontracted to ACECQA to provide this program to services in New South Wales. Is that correct?

Ms MACKEY: That is right.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And how many services is it for?

Ms MACKEY: It is for up to 300 services.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Up to 300. Every year?

Ms MACKEY: We are currently in our second round and each round was for 150 services.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Okay. And what is the total funding envelope?

Ms MACKEY: It is \$5 million.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Okay. And when was the program developed?

Ms MACKEY: I will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Roughly two years ago?

Ms MACKEY: Maybe 18 months ago.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Okay. That is fine. So can you tell me if there are any future plans for future rounds, or you only have a \$5 million funding envelope at the moment?

Ms MACKEY: At the moment, the two rounds have been announced.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Okay. Is that all you have at the moment?

Ms MACKEY: We have two rounds and we are currently rolling out the second round.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Okay. In my question this morning I asked about the 802 services that are being classed at "working towards". I am happy if you have got updated information as to how many centres in New South Wales are rated at "working towards", but I would hazard a guess that it is over 300. If a child care centre is rated at "working towards" and has not been successful in these applications, what support has been provided to it by the director?

Ms MACKEY: Can I just clarify this morning that you mentioned that figure of 802 that had been rated at "working towards" for seven years. That figure is actually 27. So there are 27 services that have been rated at "working towards" for that period of time. All 27 of those services are participants and have been offered participation in that working towards program. Eight of them are currently actively participating. The remainder have yet to take up the opportunity and we have not closed off this second round.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sorry, can you just go back a second? So there are only 27 that have been rated at "working towards" for seven years, eight of those are participating in the program—

Ms MACKEY: Or have completed. They have already been.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are participating or have completed. And, of the remaining ones, they have the opportunity to participate in the second round. Of course, that has not been fully utilised. Is that correct?

Ms MACKEY: No, because it is still rolling out. So we do not start them all at the same point in time. We are still in the implementation phase of that second round.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Okay. So how many centres are currently rated at "working towards" in New South Wales?

Ms MACKEY: As of 1 August, 1,317.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So those 1,317 centres, there were 1,000 centres more who were rated as "working towards" than are going to be able to participate in this program. Is that correct?

Ms MACKEY: Approximately.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So what support is being provided to them by the directorate to improve their services?

Ms MACKEY: We have a range of quality programs that have been put in place over the last few years. We have particularly targeted Aboriginal services. We have an Aboriginal quality program. We have been out talking to those services that are Aboriginal owned and operated as well as those services that have high numbers of Aboriginal children in their services. So it was quite a targeted program to look at how they could best be supported to meet the arrangements under the National Quality Framework. We also have a targeted program for outside school hours care programs. They are over-represented in the working towards area. That is why we did the targeted program.

That was delivered by Early Childhood Australia, together with a network of community organisations. That included a range of, again, opportunities for engagement across the State. We have the working towards program that we have talked about and we also have a family day care quality program. Again, family day care is over-represented at "working towards". And we have been working with the NSW Family Day Care Association on the delivery of that program. There are some of the things. There are a range of other professional development sector support and sector development activities.

Mr SCOTT: I just think we need to add in the context—because we get deep into the conversation and deep into the numbers—let us be clear: We are the regulator. We are not running these systems. We are not running these programs. We are providing feedback and support, but fundamentally it is the responsibility of the system and those who are running and operating these services to improve their services. They are given a clear signal on where they are currently operating, where they need to improve and information on what the benchmarks of best practice are. As a regulator we provide that information but these services are not run and operated by the department.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Secretary, what happened between when the initial catchment for the Inner Sydney High School was announced and when it was revised and who was spoken to or consulted with?

Mr DIZDAR: We took a range of information, like we do when we are designing or adjusting catchments, so we spoke with surrounding principals. This is the establishment of a new provision so we looked at the existing provision around and we worked with our School Infrastructure division, with our demographic planners there. We looked at the planning data as well. We are also mindful of enhanced provision coming down the road at Alexandria Park for instance and surrounding schools. We spoke to the school principals, our planners and then made that initial boundary determination.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Were there any basic principles like identifiable communities or cohorts of students from primary schools remaining together? Were any of those sorts of basic underlying principles applied?

Mr DIZDAR: They are all factors that are taken into account in doing our best to get a catchment that is as appropriate as possible, so we do look at the primary school context as well as what transition may look like. We are talking about, as you would appreciate, is a pretty dense and diverse part of Sydney here.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Who were particularly angry about the initial catchment, which seems so irrational?

Mr DIZDAR: Let me get to that too. We had Sydney Secondary College at Alexandria Park, Rose Bay—you know, there is a rich tapestry of schools there that we have got to look at alongside.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But there were kids who could throw a stone into the back of the new school and were not going to be in the new catchment area?

Mr DIZDAR: Let me finish what I was just covering. Getting that exercise right is not easy. We take all that data into account and, yes, it is true when we put out the catchment we had representation to indicate from those in close proximity that we had not met their need and that is why we went back and reflected on that catchment and made adjustments to it.

Mr SCOTT: I would add that, yes, there were concerns. We consulted again. We put out a new catchment plan at the end of February. I think that has been pretty well received. One thing I would say, and it is really interesting if you look at the system, it goes to the enrolment policy. This is not straightforward stuff. Schools, I can assure you, are not equally distantly located with purity of population allocation between. There are a whole series of factors that come into play when you look at a catchment area. Yes, you are looking at feeder primary schools, you are looking at the flow of population and where students are. You are also looking at the knock-on effects of where you put those boundaries on a range of schools that are nearby. You will be aware, Mr Shoebridge, of a lot of debate around eastern suburbs high schools. A lot of that debate is around—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: We will come to that.

Mr SCOTT: I would be shocked if we didn't. A lot of that debate is around catchments and capacity. There is no precise science to it. We accept in this circumstance the community was concerned. We revisited it. I believe they are now happy.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Why was there a decision made to cut a couple of blocks of the Bourke Street Public School catchment out of the new Inner Sydney High School catchment when literally the rest of Surry Hills falls within the catchment?

Mr SCOTT: I will have to come back to you on that. I am happy to provide you with an answer on notice.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In regards to that, concerns have been raised directly with us. Is there a capacity to correct that, which looks on the face of it an error—just a couple of blocks of the Bourke Street Public School?

Mr SCOTT: Let me take that on notice. We will take a look at those maps.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Staying with the Inner Sydney High School, how many out-of-area enrolment applications have been received for the high school and how many were successful and unsuccessful?

Mr SCOTT: I will take that on notice.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Has there been any assessment done on where the in-area enrolments for the new year 7 intake will come from and is it evenly spread across the catchment?

Mr SCOTT: I will take that on notice.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: As to planning for new secondary schools in the east of the city, what is the state of play for a new secondary school in the east of the city?

Mr SCOTT: This is an area that we continue to engage with. As we do that, we look at the capacity that exists within the high schools at the moment, the population allocation at the moment and we look to maximise the utility of the high schools.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: And assume at some point that I will come to the Randwick Boys and Randwick Girls aspect as well?

Mr SCOTT: Good.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is useful to address it all in one go.

Mr SCOTT: Yes.

Mr DIZDAR: We announced that we would not be converting Randwick Boys High School into a co-educational provision. We took into account significant feedback, online, face-to-face as well as written representations. It goes back to what the secretary was indicating earlier that schools do not operate in isolation—a new school and a change of provision at a school impacts on the surrounding context. As you would appreciate, we have Alexandria Park Community School not too far away. It has got a major capital build program for Mr Maranik's team, which will become a site of 2,200 students. One that we are really proud of, given the number and change in that area, is the new Inner Sydney High School starting next year with year 7. That was not part of the provision equation. We have the J. J. Cahill Memorial High School that has room for further growth. We have got South Sydney High School, whose principal is the merit-selected principal of the Inner Sydney High School, and its great understanding of the context of the geography. It is important to recognise those existing provisions.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But there is a 10 kilometre hole, isn't there, or more in some cases, between Rose Bay secondary and any of these facilities you are talking about for a co-ed public school in the east?

Mr DIZDAR: True, and like the secretary indicated these are not exact sciences or nice neat fits.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is a nice big hole though is the point.

Mr DIZDAR: If you will just allow me to finish. That is why in announcing that the department would not be changing Randwick Boys High School into a co-educational provision, we committed to undertake with School Infrastructure NSW to develop a comprehensive eastern suburbs strategy for the future, looking at enrolments out to 2031, not only from an infrastructure sense but the educational provision offerings in terms of single-sex, co-educational curriculum patterns, opportunities with tertiary providers—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Changes between public and private school demand?

Mr DIZDAR: Yes.

Mr SCOTT: We will look at all of that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: When will that review be completed?

Mr DIZDAR: We have not set a time line yet. We have only just recently announced Randwick Boys but we anticipate that it is considerable work that we will undertake this year.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Are there terms of reference for the review?

Mr DIZDAR: We are happy to come back to the Committee with that.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Going to procurement issues, I will rattle off a few examples of quotes from local tradespeople compared to Spotless and other tenders. Cost to install six bubblers at a local Sydney high school from a local plumber was \$4,500 as opposed to a Spotless quote of \$26,000. The original quote for two basketball courts from a local tradesman was \$80,000. The quote from Spotless was \$260,000. More specifically, Randwick Girls in 2016-17 had asbestos floors replaced in a handful of classrooms and some classrooms painted. Their maintenance backlog went from \$2 million to just over \$200,000 in one year. It seems like that is expensive paint and carpet. Another example, Bronte Public School in 2017 had their carpets steam cleaned as part of the asset maintenance schedule and then the following week those clean carpets were removed and replaced. Some of these examples, in my mind, would tread a fine line between maladministration in terms of the code of conduct. Can you explain the disparity in those quotes?

Mr SCOTT: Let me talk broadly on these things and Mr Maranik will provide a bit more detail. Firstly, we talked about Local Schools, Local Decisions today. School principals have delegation up to \$10,000, I understand. So a whole lot of those quotes that you raise there your local school principal would engage local tradespeople to do local work.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: One of them.

Mr SCOTT: Yes, but I am saying that discretion is there. We are also looking at what our arrangements are to increasingly engage local tradespeople around some of the lower-level work that is done in schools. One of the challenges around these kinds of contracts is that you do need to have a contracted arrangement where work can be done everywhere in 2,200 different locations, including some of the most remote parts of the State, and also where work can be done quickly and where you are contractually obligated to have that work done quickly and well. That is one of the things that the service-level agreements allow to be provided. Mr Maranik might want to give a little bit more detail.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: But would you not agree that \$1.8 million for painting a few classrooms and changing carpets is a bit excessive, despite the service contracts?

Mr SCOTT: We have a series of control mechanisms around that.

Mr MARANIK: I am happy to take that sort of specific detail and look into it. We have a whole range of stories around that. There could have been a major asbestos removal as part of that. I do not know what the scope of that work is. I am happy to look into that specific example. Fundamentally, we have got a whole-of-government contract for facility maintenance and management that is run—now under the machinery of government changes—through the Public Works Advisory. We are one of the major clients of that contract.

In terms of being the Department of Education, we work with those providers on the statutory maintenance component. But there is also a whole range of discretionary work. Some of those discretionary works are commissioned by us through our local asset management unit and some, at different levels with different risk profiles, are delivered through the local school communities. What we are trying to do is move as much of that work as possible to the local school communities. We have on-boarded about 42 new asset management officers, particularly across the regions, so that we can get as close to that work as possible.

Mr SCOTT: I will add, in my discussions with the Minister, she is keen for us to develop mechanisms whereby local trades can be engaged. We see this as a good opportunity in rural and remote areas and communities that are struggling. We are looking for mechanisms that will allow that to happen more readily.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Can you also take the Bronte Public School example on notice and explain how such a mishap could have occurred?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, we would be happy to explore that.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I respect the fact that there is a five-year rollout for the cooler schools program; it is a massive job. Some of the successful schools have informed me that because they have now had to wait up to 12 months and have gotten a little bit antsy they have installed their own air conditioning at the expense of their P&Cs. Will they be reimbursed or will you write them off and say, "Well, you've done this"?

Mr SCOTT: I do not want to write anyone off, as you would understand. I must say that I would encourage school communities to wait, rather than going off on their own. There is a scheme in place and \$500 million has been announced. We are doing reviews. Part of the challenge that we have got is that over the years under successive governments a range of schools have put up their own air-conditioning systems. That is somewhat ad hoc around the State. I can assure you that those systems are hardly state of the art and are hardly energy efficient. They reach end of life and then there is a cost of replacement program. We are doing our best to keep schools informed. Hot summers are not a new phenomenon; schools have dealt with them. We have \$500 million allocated and we encourage schools to be patient as we come up with these programs.

Mr MARANIK: I would like to add that I am happy to take any of those examples on notice and look into them. But I very much encourage the school communities to engage with our local assets management units because they are fully across the work that is done and the scheduling of that work. I refer back to an earlier answer and the notion of looking at due diligence, particularly around electricity supply. Changes to the context of the school around electricity supply can change the due diligence settings. If an additional electrical load is put in without our knowledge then that can change the electrical design that we do when we come through. I very much encourage those schools to contact and reach out to their local AMU and talk through what their plans are so there can be a properly coordinated response.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. Mr Martin, you have had a quiet time, mainly because we probably thought that the answer to every question would be the Masters curriculum review. Is it true that the NSW Education Standards Authority is currently reviewing its Statement of Equity Principles and, if so, what is the purpose of the review? What is the timetable?

Mr MARTIN: NESA is reviewing its Statement of Equity Principles. We have had a statement up for a number of years. At various points in the past 12 months there has been discussion around whether they are still fit for purpose. We have taken the step to review it and consult with stakeholders, et cetera. We will have a new Statement of Equity Principles up at the beginning of next year.

The CHAIR: What is the purpose of the review, though? Was it just the time factor for the update, or are you aiming to move certain types of goals and content and replace them with others?

Mr MARTIN: It was last reviewed in 2010. It is just timely.

The CHAIR: I was told through a Government Information (Public Access) Act application that in June 2016 new words were inserted in the equity principles. They state that one principal is, "Providing opportunities for students to evaluate and deconstruct gender and sexuality with particular reference to historical construction, representation and the influence of family, peers and the media." What does that have to do with content and deep knowledge skills in education? Isn't this just more postmodernist pap?

Mr MARTIN: That is an interesting perspective. One of the reasons that we are reviewing the principles is that those issues—including the one that you have raised, but also a range of others—have created some level of discussion. It is reasonable for us to put the whole thing in context. We do not particularly pursue a deconstructionist approach in any of our syllabus documents; nor do we expect that a deconstructionist approach is necessarily the right approach. It is merely one of the arguments that occur in universities, in schools and in systems. In order to make sure that our work is current, including that set of equity principles, we will have a look at them and make sure that they fit with what the community's expectations are in relation to the NESA's work.

The CHAIR: Is it likely that this deconstructionist content will be removed, given that it is anti-educational and is confusing young people, who are being made to think that nothing is true, nothing is real and there is no fixed knowledge in this world and it all needs to be deconstructed?

Mr MARTIN: The review of the principles will cover those arguments. I will not anticipate what the review will come up with. But that particular perspective that you put will certainly be part of the discussion of the review of the equity principles.

The CHAIR: The Government Information (Public Access) Act inquirer tells me that they could not quite work out from the documents why those words were inserted in June 2016. Could you take that on notice and provide an answer as to how, where and why those words popped into the equity principles?

Mr MARTIN: Yes, I could.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. Just turning to capital works, what has the department learnt from the planning failure at Oran Park Public School, which got 42 demountables, including demountable toilets, in an area that was clearly growing with young families. No-one was expecting retirement home type people to move into Oran Park. How did we end up with 42 demountables? That is the equivalent of a whole new sizeable school that was not planned for.

Mr SCOTT: Let me talk generally, and then Mr Maranik might be able to go more into the Oran Park example. One of the things we are working on now at the department is the creation of School Infrastructure NSW, which is an entire division focused on the development of these new schools. We are closely integrating the work of School Infrastructure NSW with an advisory board that works to closely integrate that with the work of the Greater Sydney Commission and the planning projections from the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and elsewhere. I need to make it clear—and this was not always the case in the past—that the department is not relying on, in a sense, its own planning projections as to where developments are going to be and what the profile is of communities that are going to exist.

We are joined at the hip with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, and the Greater Sydney Commission. That is the way that School Infrastructure NSW, which has only been in place for about 18 months, is now setting up and operating. That is how we are setting it up now. The challenge of planning failures in the past is that the department has not always been integrated with those who make the decisions around planning and developments. That now is the case. Mr Maranik, do you want to add further on the case of Oran Park?

Mr MARANIK: I am more than happy to talk to that. There has been a whole range of lessons learnt, to be absolutely frank.

The CHAIR: From Oran Park in particular?

Mr MARANIK: Oran Park, as it extends all the way through south-west Sydney. The demographic growth in that area—as you would appreciate—has been absolutely significant. On a personal note, I grew up out there and I have seen it change in so many different ways. As part of the school infrastructure program, we have put a new whole focus and centre of excellence around service planning that engages hand in glove with other agencies, particularly the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and Transport for NSW, so that we can get a much more long-term spatial and temporal understanding of the demographics and the service needs around the schools and their environments to service those communities.

The CHAIR: I appreciate that. But at least for 40 years, to my knowledge, in western Sydney we have heard this promise of better planning time after time after time. Why in planning for the needs of Oran Park public education would you not look at a place like Glenmore Park in the south—a similar size, demographic, rising middle-class population—and just think, "Well, if many children were needed in a school, accommodation, that's what we'll provide at Oran Park." Is this rocket science?

Mr MARANIK: What we are doing now is validating and cross-referencing against our own enrolment data, for example, validating the common planning assumptions of government more broadly which we are imposed to use and validating against that. I absolutely agree those lessons are recognised and absolutely through a service planning approach we are looking at working with the other agencies more broadly too, understanding how the schools all relate to each other in terms of the inter-relationships between the primary/secondary and in the way the curriculum feeds—

The CHAIR: In the relationship of schools in that corridor what is the solution? I ask the question and the Minister gave an answer on the *Notice Paper* of 24 July pointing to East Leppington Public School. That is way north towards Liverpool and a totally different suburb—no solution there. And Eastwood Hills and Gregory Hills are on the other side of Camden Valley Way and not seen as contiguous by parents to Oran Park growth. The best solution is the Catherine Fields which will be linked by a road just to the immediate adjoining north of Oran Park. If you refer to *Budget Paper No. 2*, page 5-6, "Catherine Fields (new primary school)" is marked "n.a." Will there be an attempt to fast-track that project in recognition of the desperate situation at Oran Park?

Mr MARANIK: We are going through that whole service planning approach at the moment. The quick answer is yes. That particular part of Sydney, the linear features that you call out in terms of the old Hume Highway, Bringelly Road et cetera, the traffic flows, the sophistication of our planning that Mr Dizdar was relating to before, the time series data is much closer together so we are getting a lot more granularity so that we can address that. I must note that that is in concert with how the schools actually relate to each other and how they relate to the high schools around them.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Mr Scott, earlier in your evidence you said words to the effect that "we want every school to be a great school".

Mr SCOTT: Yes.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: You did not say "every school is a great school". Are some schools better than others?

Mr SCOTT: Yes.

The CHAIR: Is it the Soviet Union?

Mr SCOTT: There are so many different ways to this conversation. Let us look at it. Each school is different and every context is unique. In our strategic plan we put students at the centre. We have said irrespective of where that child goes to school we want that child to be improving, the school to be improving, the leader to be improving, the teachers to be improving. We want every student to be known, valued and cared for. Not every school is the same. Some schools are achieving extraordinary value add year on year, other schools are not. Some schools have tremendous success in getting students to turn up every day but not every school does. It is one of the reasons why we think the idea of every school setting targets for how they want to improve around literacy and numeracy, around attendance, around student engagement and around other criteria is a very good thing to do. The Minister spoke about that today. But every school is not the same.

We want every school to be a great school and that is what our strategy is all about: to provide the supporting infrastructure and the great leadership to ensure that every school is improving and achieving at its

potential. But I am not one of those people who sits there and thinks simply because it has got a New South Wales government school badge on it it is a great school, when principals I often speak to will say they are working hard but they want to see improvement. One of the things I said to principals when I met with 1,800 of them earlier in the year is "I know you are working hard, I know it is a demanding job but our test is not how hard we are working. Our test is whether we are seeing improvement". We are committed to being a system that sees improvement across a range of criteria and that is what we are working towards. We want every school to be a great school and that is the supporting infrastructure that we are putting in place.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is it fair to say that there are schools that the department believes are very good schools? In fact, when the Chair asked for a list from the department of best practice schools, I think they were described, the department was readily able to provide a list.

Mr SCOTT: Sure, and I think this is one of the great things about being in a large system that we can find great case studies. We can find great case studies of schools with students from a very low socio-economic status background and they have seen a real lift. We can see schools with great engagement with Aboriginal students, schools that have seen a significant improvement in behaviour, schools that have seen literacy and numeracy value add year on year on year. What we do is we study those schools and we ask, "What have been the factors in place at those schools that have seen the significant improvement?" We take those case studies, we publish them, we put them in podcasts and we use them as a basis for our professional development. Every school is not the same. There are some schools where we see great improvement and we focus effectively on those schools to share their lessons of success and to disseminate best practice.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Isn't the out-of-area policy really an opportunity for those parents to send their children to a better school?

Mr SCOTT: Let's be clear about it. We are not saying that there will not be out-of-area enrolments. We are saying that the priority under the 1990 Act has to be for local students. You have a right to go to your local school. We need to make sure that that is prioritised and then if there is other space that is available, once the local students have been catered for, there are criteria that we can use to develop that. But I do not resile from the fact as well that if in fact there is a school that parents are avoiding, then it is a very legitimate question for us as a department to ask, "What is going on in the minds of those parents?"

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Won't the new enrolment policy effectively force parents to send their children to a school that they may have no confidence in?

Mr SCOTT: No. What the enrolment policy will do will allow there to be a focus on local schools and the quality of local schools. You make it sound like the enrolment policy has simply just been created. What we are doing is enforcing an enrolment policy that has been there since the last century. Fundamentally there will be out-of-area placements but it is going to be a fair system now with fair criteria that is transparent and available to all. We think that is a positive thing. We want to be able to work with schools that parents may be concerned about and to work in a way that ensures that every school is a great school.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Do you collect data on the number of out-of-area enrolments by school?

Mr SCOTT: Yes.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is that data able to be produced.

Mr SCOTT: We do not have that material here.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is it able to be produced to the Committee?

Mr DIZDAR: We have recently made that data available to our principals and our Directors, Educational Leadership, so it has become recently available.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is it available to be produced to the Committee? Can you provide that data?

Mr DIZDAR: There are 2,210 sites. If there are specific sites you would like?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: We would like the data on how many out-of-area applications are received for each school for the last 18 months.

Mr SCOTT: Let us look at the material that is available and see what we can do.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I return to the issue of teacher burnout. Is the department measuring and monitoring the workload of teachers?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, it is a good question. If I can start with school principals. As part of our school leadership initiative we had Deloitte come in and do work on principals' workloads and the life of a principal. It gave us good insights. It came into play as well with the work that is being done by the Australian Catholic University on principal workload and the intensification of principal's work over time. The other thing that we have done is that we have implemented a program by our delivery unit where we have looked at what is the administrative burden we are putting on schools.

We heard the feedback when we were out consulting that Local Schools, Local Decisions that we discussed earlier. Was that giving rise to an increased administrative burden that was being passed on to schools? We are really pleased with the work that has been done. What we have done is systematically challenge the demands that we are making on schools administratively and we have challenged some of those activities. Some of the work that has been done estimates that we have saved almost 350,000 hours of local administrative work by just stopping doing things—67 hours of principal's administrative tasks that we have asked them to do that we are no longer asking them to do. So we are very conscious—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: My question was about teachers, not about principals.

Mr SCOTT: The best principals I know say that they are teachers at heart and fundamentally this goes to the administrative burden that we are putting on schools. One of the issues that we have not been able to discuss, the Masters review. We await the draft copy but I know that part of the consultation around the Masters review was around how loaded the curriculum is and how much demand that that puts on teachers and whether in fact we need to thin that out. We are very conscious of the administrative burden we put on teachers. We are looking at the amount of time it takes. We expect them to train on new systems that we are rolling out into schools. There is a range of administrative details that we have looked to lift, and I would think we would hope that the Curriculum Review will also lift some of the demands that exist on teachers.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Do you have any mechanism to measure the number of hours worked outside of contract hours by teachers? Is this a work health and safety risk?

Mr SCOTT: Teachers are professionals and, as long as I have known and many of us have known, teachers have never been nine-to-three kind of operators.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I am not suggesting that; I am asking whether there is a measure. Do you know?

Mr SCOTT: I am saying this is not a new phenomenon. What we have tried to do, though, is to measure the additional demands we are putting on teachers. In every new system or policy or process that we are rolling out, we are asking what this will mean for the classroom teacher, what extra demands it will put on them so as to challenge and interrogate whether that is really necessary or important.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can I ask you about the performance and development plan [PDP]? I think that is the correct terminology of the performance and development system that you have in place. How long has that been in operation in the department?

Mr DIZDAR: We introduced the Performance and Development Framework in its current iteration in 2015.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How much time is allocated for staff—classroom teachers—to complete their PDP?

Mr DIZDAR: When we introduced it we had significant consultation with primary principals, secondary principals and the NSW Teachers Federation. One of the impetuses of introducing it was to reduce the administrative burden from what we had previously in place. Previously there would be reams of documentation that a teacher or a leader would provide as part of their PDP. We have a streamlined pro forma that has been in existence since 2015, which goes to goal setting, mid-term monitoring—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: The question was: How much time does it take for a teacher to complete their PDP? You must have some estimate because there is an expectation that it is done during working hours.

Mr DIZDAR: I do not know that I can give the Committee a single figure. What I would say is that this is our professional platform, really highly regarded by the profession for the performance and development growth

of the profession. Investment of time in this space by the individual teacher as well as their supervisors and leadership teams is really important. In fact, I just visited Bonnyrigg High School, with Michael Bryce as the principal, last Friday. That is a very big school in south-western Sydney with 1,700 students and 100-plus teaching and non-teaching staff. Their PDP operation and cycle is really important. I expect a number of teachers and a number of supervisors really value that process. I think it is important for the community to realise that time invested in that is really important time for the individual to get feedback on their growth and development as a teacher.

Mr SCOTT: Let us be very clear: It is central to our strategic plan. In the strategic plan is the commitment that every teacher will improve every year. I think this is an area where, in Education, we need to make sure we are very clear-eyed. There is nothing "back to basics" about teachers improving their craft every year.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I am not questioning that.

Mr SCOTT: We are very clear that that is what the professional development plan is all about: where you are up to, what you need to work on, what is the support that comes into play, where you are going to get the support, how do you know that you are improving in your craft, and that every one of our teachers has a strategy around improvement is central to creating a world-class system.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Given that centrality, did the department provide any relief from face to face [RFF]—additional RFF—to enable teachers to complete their PDP process?

Mr DIZDAR: I know you are pressing on the quantification but it is quite difficult. If I take you back to Bonnyrigg, when I am talking to a teacher whose PDP goal is to strengthen and further gain better confidence in classroom management, the school has provided internal support as well as professional development for the system for that individual.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: But the time has to come from somewhere, does it not?

Mr DIZDAR: Please allow me to finish; it is really important. Quantifying the development of the plan and enacting the plan is not an exact science. It is not easy to do across 67,000 classrooms. What I would say to the Committee is that this is something that the federation and the department have recently come together again on to provide some information back to our schools, which we are going to do later this year because all parties agree that the instruments in play since 2015 are vastly superior to what we had previously and are really important to help grow each individual in an individual context and specific to where their needs are at.

Bonnyrigg High School—a large high school—using its flexible resourcing and funding through the resource allocation model in our sixth year really innovatively, is a site that looks at how it is running its faculty and staff meetings. It is a school that does not run any administrative meetings but simply does it through email and utilises what were traditional slots as administrative information exchange for professional collaboration and dialogue. It has created internal space for all that—and Bonnyrigg is not unique in that context; many sites do that.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I come back to the quantification because obviously, even if it is half an hour or an hour, on the scale of the department it is quite a significant investment of time and, therefore, money and resources. Has there been any evaluation of the effectiveness of the PDP, given that was introduced in 2015? How can you be sure you are getting value for money out of this?

Mr DIZDAR: My colleague Georgina Harrison may be able to add further, but we have had the Auditor-General's office conduct a teacher quality audit. We have engaged very productively with the Auditor-General's office and we are looking forward to what insights it gives us because it has looked at the PDP process. We are looking forward to the findings and recommendations it may have in that space, and we will consider that report when it arrives.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is there something that you say to teachers not to do once you impose the PDP process on them?

Mr DIZDAR: What I would reiterate is that the process is not new; we have always had performance and development processes for our staff. Again, this goes with the professionalism of the profession. What I would like to reiterate to the Committee is that in 2015, in a really well-received enhancement and refinement of the PDP process, we stripped away a lot of administrative burden that was on all parties in the system and introduced greater clarity and simplification around goal setting and tracking and monitoring of the development of the individual. That has been in place since 2015. When I entered the profession at Ashcroft High School in 1997 in

the classroom as a newly appointed teacher, we had performance and development processes that were available as a system that were required by all of us. It is no different now in 2019, except that it is vastly superior and what we require from our people is vastly better received and vastly streamlined and simplified so that our people can demonstrate in their normal course of operation rather than through reams of documentation.

Mr SCOTT: The feedback we get is that our staff know that they are professionals. They know their professional development is important and this is the methodology that helps them focus on that.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: What proportion of staff have active PDPs?

Mr DIZDAR: All our staff.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is it 100 per cent? Is that your evidence—100 per cent of staff?

Mr DIZDAR: Please allow me to finish. All our teaching staff and all leadership teams are expected to have their performance and development plan in action.

Mr SCOTT: You might be able to scour around and find some who have slipped through the cracks, but that is the intent and there is a strong reason for that. We stand by our commitment to working with our staff to improve their professional standards because we are committed to improvement.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It is a development plan. Are there any training moneys specifically tied to it?

Mr SCOTT: There are vast amounts of money allocated to training. It is a plan and then the idea is how you are going to operationalise that plan and what training you are going to access. Ms Harrison can talk about the work that we have in place to provide professional training for our staff.

Ms HARRISSON: We provide professional learning from the department that our teachers can access throughout the year on key areas of focus for the department: on professional development; on effective reading, which we touched on earlier; how to support students with different disabilities; on behaviour—you name it. We can provide professional development across the suite of professional areas we would expect a teacher to be focused on, including around the introduction of new curriculum, what the content looks like and how we support that.

So there are vast opportunities for teachers to engage in that professional development; it is delivered in a number of different formats—face-to-face professional development, courses available online so that teachers can access it no matter where they are. I also want to draw the Committee's attention to how important training is within the school environment and that the most impactful professional development happens inside a school and the PDP is a key element and a key tool that supports that. The best professional development teachers will receive will be in their classroom with colleagues, collaborative teaching structures with supported leadership in their schools, but it is focused on improving the practice in those classrooms every day. That is what we want to see happening and that is where the PDP is a really important focal point for a whole school community around what we are working on.

Mr DIZDAR: Just one other point that was remiss that I left out with the PDP as well that is really important for the Committee is that the PDP is aligned to the Australian teaching standards, the national teaching standards that the profession accepts and stands by that are impartial and allow us to give greater clarity to our people when we are working on their development. That was not the case prior to 2015. I think that is a really important call-out for the Committee.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can I ask about assaults in schools? How are these reported? What is the mechanism for recording and reporting?

Mr SCOTT: Incident reports are made and they flow through to Mr Dizdar.

Mr DIZDAR: We have a well understood incident reporting system in our schools.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can you step me through that process?

Mr DIZDAR: Where there is an incident that has happened, as the Committee would appreciate, the management and working through of that incident is very pivotal. Once that is occurring or is in a reasonable space we ask that our principals or our leadership teams make a report to our incident report hotline where they describe the nature of the incident and they are able to get advice on further support that may be required in a particular incident. That report is made available to those that support the schools in School Operations and

Performance, the area that I am responsible for, and my colleague Georgina Harrisson in Educational Services, so that we are across the report and we can also go into proactive support for a school.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can you tell me what that report is called?

The CHAIR: No, we have got to move on to Mr David Shoebridge.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Scott, I think we can all agree that the school week is really busy now—multiple demands on students, multiple demands on teachers but particularly students. It is a very busy week. Do we agree?

Mr SCOTT: I think our students are busy; there is lots on. I think that is self-evident, yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: From my personal view as a parent comparing the amount of things my children are doing in State schools and their being time poor—

Mr SCOTT: Are you talking about in class or extracurricular activities? What are you referring to?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Both in class and extracurricular. There are more, if you like, core subjects, a greater diversity of compulsory subjects in the school week than there were when I was—

Mr SCOTT: I think there is an argument again that goes to the feedback we have had on the Masters review that the curriculum is pretty loaded, and the New South Wales curriculum, as I understand it, even stands out in the national context of having more mandatory requirements that fills more hours. I think that is an attribute that the Masters review will be looking at.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: My children are learning acronyms far quicker than I ever did largely through the different courses they are doing at school. With that crowded curriculum—more crowded than it has ever been before—can you tell me how many hours a week children are sitting doing nothing when special religious education [SRE] is on?

Mr SCOTT: Mr Dizdar can take us through how the special religious education program works.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: No, is there data on the number of kids every week sitting there doing nothing for an hour because a tiny proportion of kids in that school are doing special religious education?

Mr SCOTT: Ms Harrisson looks after this policy for us.

Ms HARRISSON: Firstly, it is important to recognise that for a number of our parents and our communities the provision of religious education in schools is a key component of what they expect in public schools since public schools began. It is a maximum of one hour a week that we would expect any school to be involved in the provision of special religious education in any context. We can do the maths for you and provide the final total in detail, but it is up to an hour.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I know it is up to an hour a week but have you got school-by-school data that show the proportion of children doing special religious education on a school-by-school basis?

Mr DIZDAR: We do not centrally collate that data but we do have it over an individual school level, an individual school site. I just indicate this with SRE, having been a principal in the system as well, that where you provide and afford the opportunity there may be the uptake but with the non-availability or the non-provision SRE may not come into play at that site. On a site that it does, like Ms Harrisson has indicated, it is up to one hour.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But whether or not a provider turns up or not, it is an hour that is scheduled out of the curriculum every week, is it not, at most schools?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, and ever thus. We were talking about it earlier. I think you go back to Henry Parkes—ever thus.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: We used to get tuberculosis and we have got rid of that.

Mr SCOTT: Your metaphor not mine.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Indeed.

Mr SCOTT: I would simply say we note your question, no we do not have centralised data on it.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Why not?

Ms HARRISSON: We gather on the enrolment form an indication of parental intent. That enrolment form is collated locally and it enables schools to plan for the provision that they would want to provide for their community in this context, covering the demands of the local community and to meet that as best they can.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Do you have data on the number of children who are doing ethics classes or special education in ethics [SEE]?

Ms HARRISSON: Again, we do not collect that data.

Mr SCOTT: We do not collate that but schools know their enrolment.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What about the number of children who want to do ethics but cannot because there is not the ethics provider? Do you have that data?

Mr SCOTT: The school, again, would have that data.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: We seem to be in a data-free zone for activities that occupy one hour a week for every kid in State schools and I cannot understand why it is a data-free zone. Can you explain why it is a data-free zone?

Mr SCOTT: I can simply say that we do not have that information centrally. I would say there would be quite a lot of activity that takes place locally around local activities that fill the school day.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Some kids empty the bins, some kids do the recycling and some kids watch a DVD, some kids just create trouble.

Mr SCOTT: I am sorry, you asked me a question, let me have a go at answering your question. There clearly is some information that we collect centrally around curriculum, and things like the HSC really give us a great insight and data of students taking different subjects and clearly student demand around subjects triggers the provision of teachers. So that gives us some information, but there will be lots of activities that take place in and around the school that we are not in the process of creating the administrative detail of uploading and asking them to report on. This is managed locally by school principals; the school principals will have that detail. But no, we have not sought to aggregate that for 2,200 schools.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: How can you be satisfied that that is quality time in a crowded curriculum if you do not even get the data? How can you be satisfied it is quality time, or is there no satisfaction? Is it just, again, a sort of data- and knowledge-free zone—you do not know what kids are doing?

Mr SCOTT: I would simply say that this is the policy. The policy was reviewed a couple of years ago, as you know. The report and the recommendations of that report were released in April 2017 and we have responded to those, we have implemented the policy. This is the Government's policy and this is what we are implementing.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: The independent review that you are referring to recommended tracking enrolment numbers of SRE and SEE classes and the Government rejected it on the grounds that it does not consider it the best use of resources. Is that still the position?

Mr SCOTT: Yes. We are not collecting them centrally, no, it is being dealt with locally.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Scott, is not the reason you are not collecting it centrally because there is political pressure not to get the data because the data shows only a tiny fraction of kids do SRE?

Mr SCOTT: I am aware of no political pressure. I have had no comments provided to me to that end by any of the three Ministers I have worked for on this matter.

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order—

Mr SCOTT: It has not been a matter that has been the subject of policy discussion that I have been involved in with any of the three Ministers that I have worked with and fundamentally this is an issue that is dealt with locally. There is an opportunity of choice for parents around religious education and ethics. Providers can be identified, it is up to an hour a week and it has long, long, long been a feature of education in our schools as when you were in our schools and I was in our schools and the Chair was in our schools.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I remember the hour doing nothing waiting for the thing to end.

The CHAIR: We will take that as a statement not a question. I will move on to a bouquet about instructional leaders in my recent visits to schools in south-west Sydney. This is a crackingly successful program. It is putting experienced leaders in disadvantaged schools to look after the cohort of younger teachers in the school

who are straight out of uni. How long has it been in place? Is it going to be expanded beyond schools classified as disadvantaged? What can we do to pump up the resources for it because it seems to be a winning initiative?

Mr SCOTT: Let me give you a couple of comments and then Ms Harrison can speak to it more. It is part of the literacy and numeracy strategy that we have been rolling out. We have been very pleased by the lift we can see in those schools and the involvement of instructional leaders. This was part of the literacy and numeracy strategy and I am heartened by the latest NAPLAN results where you do see this stronger performance in primary schools and you do see, at least from the first cut of those results, we have reached the Premier's Priorities challenge for 2019 on schedule. I think that is an encouraging thing. The other thing you can see is that in addition to this program we have put cash inside the school gates. It goes to Local Schools, Local Decisions. One of the things that many schools have done with that is employ their own instructional leader capability on the back of that cash being allocated. Ms Harrison can give us more detail.

Ms HARRISSON: We have, as Mr Scott has indicated, the instructional leaders in place and supported essentially in our Early Action For Success schools as part of the literacy and numeracy action plan. We have invested over \$340 million in that initiative and have worked to support those instructional leaders in developing their professional practice that they can take back into schools in the way we talked about earlier to build the capacity of teachers on their site. We have seen a threefold lift in reading and numeracy results in those schools as opposed to those outside of that program. As Mr Scott indicated, many schools have adopted that instructional leader model. It is one of the areas we are looking at very closely within the evaluation of the literacy and numeracy strategy and something that we will consider in relation to the staff in the school.

The CHAIR: Is there an intention to scale it up?

Ms HARRISSON: It is the final year of the existing strategy next year and we are currently underway with work to develop the subsequent strategy for the schools.

Mr SCOTT: I think we need to look at it. As we said, it is working well and it is working well particularly for those students from low SES backgrounds. We have had other strategies in place such as Bump it Up, which has made a lot of the other support material available to schools without the instructional leaders. They are also seeing a lift as well. We will do the evaluation. What I think we can see is that schools are really focused closely on literacy and numeracy uptake. They are taking advantage of the expertise that is available. They can see improvement. The instructional leaders are part of a suite of initiatives that we have put in that we will be reviewing. But yes, we think the initial signs have been encouraging.

Ms HARRISSON: For the Committee's information, it is 528 government schools that have instructional leaders in place.

Mr SCOTT: It is almost a third of primary schools.

The CHAIR: On a separate topic, what work has the department done on the introduction of performance pay for principals?

Mr SCOTT: It is an area of some debate and I have noted your comments on it. I must say in all the meetings I have had with the NSW Secondary Principals' Council, the NSW Primary Principals' Association and the Teachers Federation it has not featured heavily in their endorsement of priority areas of reform. Part of the debate would be the complexity of working out what would the criteria be and it has not been a hallmark of any systems around the country. When you ask what work has been done, this has not been something that has been strongly advocated to us by principals or their industrial representatives.

The CHAIR: Have you done your own work on it and put that up to higher authorities?

Mr SCOTT: No. It is not an area we have done—I think there would be other areas that I would look to as well. But I do not want to canvass them here. What we want to do is to be clear with principals that we want to support them on being a pathway of improvement for their schools. One of the things I would say about performance pay—and I value having had a discussion with you on it—the intrinsic rewards for our principals, fundamentally, is what drove them into the profession. None of them say to me, "We went into it for the money." They went into it for the intrinsic reward of seeing a lift.

I think it is very interesting. There has been a lot of discussion about the operations of bonuses and whether bonuses fundamentally change behaviour. This has been debated very widely. Part of the feedback that I have had from principals on it is, "Are you really saying to me that if \$20,000 is on the table I'm going to work harder or work more effectively than I'm working today because I want to see my kids improve over time?" I think we have to be pretty careful saying to our principals who are working hard and trying to see improvement that

really \$20,000 is going to turn their heads and make them work harder. That is not what they are saying to me. What they are saying to me is, "We want to have good support and good evidence so we can see a lift in performance over time." In this cultural setting it is a complicated one but an area of debate I am happy to have.

The CHAIR: Why aren't HSC results by school available in a public easy to understand format such as the NAPLAN results on the My School website? Wouldn't that be an act of transparency, parents using HSC results to inform their choice of secondary school?

Mr SCOTT: Schools, of course, get access to the material but I think there are legislative constraints on the publication of HSC results that enable them to create linked tables. I think you will find that there are legislative provisions that prevent that.

The CHAIR: School by school?

Mr SCOTT: Yes. That is longstanding. It goes back more than 20 years.

The CHAIR: Would you like to see those removed?

Mr SCOTT: I think you have to be careful on it. Schools circulate their results. There is an area of visibility and that is also under the agreement. You can see how many schools have students who are over 90 in every subject. You can see how many schools have students in band 6. Through the work that is released you can see the percentage of students who are getting band 6 for different subjects. There is a level of visibility. But we appreciate that simply raw numbers do not reflect the complexity that exists in different school settings. We would expect selective schools to do better from the cohort that they take in. There are other schools where students come from highly socio-economically advantaged backgrounds. If you were just going to run those results without factors that take into account the complexity of the settings, then you would have to be careful about that. I think that was the cautiousness that gave rise to the legislative enactments more than two decades ago. I am not sure if Mr Martin wants to add to that.

The CHAIR: Can I clarify something from earlier in the day? Mr Scott you said that in terms of principal attitudes to NAPLAN, you took it off social media. How many principals have written to you asking for a NAPLAN review?

Mr SCOTT: I must say they do not write to me all the time. If they have concerns their first course of action is not necessarily to pick up a pen and write to me or the Minister. There is quite strong feedback. We do not see a lot of principals apart from when I go out with Ms Harrison and Mr Dizdar and we address 1,800 of them. I see most of them when I go to the State councils of the primary principals or the secondary principals. You can see many hundreds there at a time. Yes, their questions will raise issues about the nature of NAPLAN, the nature of NAPLAN online, how we are using the data. There is some concern about My School reporting. That is often the mechanism for feedback and that is what I am hearing.

The CHAIR: You will take it on notice?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, I will take it on notice if I have got any mail.

The CHAIR: We have 12 minutes left of Committee time and these are all such critically important matters in the school system. Are we able to go around one by one with questions that can be answered in just a couple of minutes?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I want to come back to the question of assaults in schools. You were saying that there is a central reporting. Do you collect statistics across the system around assaults?

Mr DIZDAR: We do.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Do you classify the assaults on the basis of student to student or student to teacher? Is there some kind of classification of the assault?

Mr DIZDAR: I would have to take how we categorise on notice. I do not have it in front of me. What I do know is we collect the data and we make the data publicly available. I think it is important for the Committee to realise the backdrop, that schools are still one of the safest places in society. The 810,000 students today—they have gone home a couple of hours ago. But 810,000 students across 2,210 sites is a lot of humans.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: The ones who are not doing extracurricular activities.

Mr DIZDAR: There are going to be things that happen in that context, both internally and sometimes we are the subject of what can happen externally to a school that impacts on that school. So I think that data is important to realise with that backdrop.

Mr SCOTT: The other thing I would say is that we are really encouraging schools to report. We want to get a full sense of what is going on. One of the issues that we can be concerned about and that principals and teachers can be concerned about—and we have had some incidents that have been high profile—are assaults on people inside school grounds from those who have come outside school grounds, be they parents or other members of our community. That is not unknown in our system. We are saying to report incidents and we do get reports on the incidents that take place outside school grounds, including teachers and parents, which are then reported back in coming back to school. We want the evidence, we want the data and we encourage the reporting.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Do you classify the incidents and is there a different response in relation to the classification of more serious incidents? When does the central part of the department intervene or get actively involved after an incident has been reported of an assault in a school?

Mr DIZDAR: Like I indicated in my earlier answer, the director of educational leadership for that school, who oversees 20 schools, receives that report. So do our colleagues in Ms Harrison's area in Educational Services. Having received the report, we are able to make contact and see what is in play and then also support from a system level. I would also say this to the Committee: Often before we even get the report—because I indicated that the management of the matter locally is really important for all parties—depending on what that matter is, we will have received phone calls to indicate the nature of it and we will have already put things into play.

Mr SCOTT: You get a multifaceted response. You may have support, an extra principal or senior staff that come into play. You may have a counselling service that lands. We have close contact with the police, including police staff who work within the department. If it is a criminal event, the police will be involved.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I wanted to ask about where the duty arises around protecting students. Does it arise under the Work Health and Safety Act or is there some other legislative basis where you have a duty around the protection of the health and safety of persons on the school grounds?

Mr DIZDAR: We have a duty of care to every young person on our school premises. Is that the duty that you are referring to?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I am just looking at the legislative basis. Is that the Education Act or is the Work Health and Safety Act an overlay on that?

Mr SCOTT: This is a workplace. We have a work health and safety responsibility that comes into place. Part of the responsibility and burden on a principal is that they are the senior officer on that site and they are responsible for the work health and safety of people on that site.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: What I am getting at is that work health and safety obviously has quite a detailed framework in terms of specific duties and risk minimisation. It is directed at workers in a workplace, where obviously other people in a workplace also have some level of cover under the Work Health and Safety Act, but I wanted to know what the specific duty is around risk minimisation for children.

Mr SCOTT: We will take that on notice and come back to you and give you detail on that.

Ms HARRISSON: There are a number of different legislative instruments and policies from the department. If it is around student behaviour and their violence, that would be covered by our student behaviour and discipline policy. I am very happy to come back to you. It would be useful to have the specifics of which type of incident you are interested in.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I am specifically interested in assaults.

Ms HARRISSON: Assaults between which parties?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: An assault by a student to another student would not necessarily invoke the protections of the Work Health and Safety Act, for example. Maybe it does, but that is my question.

Mr SCOTT: Let us give you a breakdown. We will put that on notice and come back to you.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Scott, to your knowledge has the department sought legal advice on its legal liability as a result of the asbestos present in New South Wales schools?

Mr SCOTT: Let me take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Okay. I am happy for you to take it on notice to see if it actually has been done, but I am asking you to your knowledge today if that is the case?

Mr SCOTT: Let me come back to the asbestos questions, because you raised some this morning. We have a series of protocols in place around dealing with that, which are perfectly consistent with the advice that we have that exists across government. If there is any incident where we become aware of an asbestos risk, that is immediately managed as a priority for the department. I am not aware of any liability question that has emerged.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I will endeavour to be brief. Mr Scott, what is the current status of the Darlington Public School rebuild?

Mr SCOTT: The rebuild? Are you in a position to talk to that, Mr Maranik?

Mr MARANIK: I can talk to our level on that. We are engaged through the planning process at the moment through the Project Reference Group or PRG's involvement with the community in a range of discussions on potential building form outcomes of the project.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: The Project Reference Group?

Mr MARANIK: That is a forum of consultation with a whole range of interested parties.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: When was the last time the department updated the P&C about this?

Mr MARANIK: I would have to take that on notice. Typically the P&C rep sits on the PRG. So it would be at the last PRG meeting.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What about the last time the department attended a P&C meeting and provided information in some kind of written form?

Mr MARANIK: Traditionally through our normal project governance the P&C rep sits within the Project Reference Group framework, and that would be the way of engaging. On that particular project, I can get back to you with a meeting schedule on those.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What about just an update to the school community that can be distributed to parents? The reason I am asking these questions is people do not know where it is up to and they would like to know where it is up to. Can they get an update for the school body?

Mr SCOTT: We are happy to do that. Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: How far advanced is the proposal to relocate The Forest High School to make way for the new northern beaches town centre?

Mr MARANIK: Across the whole State we are in a whole range of conversations on service planning and needs analysis driven by, effectively, asset renewal and growth. The peninsula and specifically around The Forest is no different. We engage with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment around all of those activities. It is part of the cohort of work that we are doing, as we do across the whole State.

Mr SCOTT: As you would be aware, I drive past that area.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I understand you can test that.

Mr SCOTT: That location has changed dramatically. If the opportunity opens up to build a new school on a new site that is not in the epicentre of activity then—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Could I ask you about the new site, Mr Scott?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Let him answer, David.

Mr SCOTT: —that could be to the benefit of everyone.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Given the proposed area for relocation is land in the Manly-Warringah War Memorial Park and at the headwaters of the Manly Dam catchment zone and it is currently zoned for public open space and recreation, who has made the decision to propose that and what are the environmental studies that you have done?

Mr SCOTT: Let me take that on notice. No final decisions have been made. It is still in the planning process.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Could you also take on notice concerns about there being a toxic waste dump on that site?

Mr SCOTT: Yes.

The CHAIR: Finally, a big part of the Hattie research might affect results that come from a rich interchange of ideas and knowledge and inspiration between teachers and students. It is obviously very hard to build that up if there is a churn of teachers through the classroom. Disadvantaged schools in particular say that staff stability is a big challenge they have. Are there any statistics on how many classrooms in 2018 would have had just one single teacher for the year with normal sick day arrangements? What is the department trying to do to stabilise school populations, particularly in those disadvantaged schools?

Mr SCOTT: You are absolutely right. Hattie talks about collective efficacy, teams working together. It has a high impact on improved learning. We have been looking carefully at issues of staff turnover and staff stability over time. There have been issues raised about temporary teachers. One of the things we are keen to do is to take advantage of where there are opportunities to create permanent teaching positions and to do that to inject stability into the school system as well. I think it is unlikely that we would centrally hold data on how many classes have only had the one teacher. The vast majority, I would have thought, would only have had the one teacher, but there are more areas of staff turnover and we can see what we can find.

The CHAIR: Take that on notice and maybe it is a good area of study.

Mr SCOTT: Yes, it is.

The CHAIR: It is a legitimate complaint concerning disadvantaged schools.

Mr SCOTT: Yes, that is right. We hear that too. I think there are temporary teachers out there and if we can create permanent teaching positions, we are looking for opportunities to do that.

The CHAIR: That brings the afternoon session to a close. We will take an adjournment for an hour. I thank the professionals, who have provided detailed answers and hung in through a long session.

(Dinner adjournment)

The CHAIR: I declare the hearing reopened and thank everyone again for their participation. The plan here has been revised slightly to go to 7.15 p.m. at which time we will pull up stumps.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Mr Scott, are you able to tell me about a working party to examine teacher workload that was established some time last year?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, I am. This came out of the broader work that we are doing on reducing the teacher workload and lifting the administrative burden. I mentioned earlier today that the delivery unit had done work on that. As part of that we commissioned a working party, led by Stacey Quince, who is the substantive principal at Campbelltown Performing Arts High School, to provide us with some advice and feedback.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How frequently has the working party met?

Mr DIZDAR: They meet quarterly to give on-ground advice and suggestions on things that could be removed or could be streamlined for the system. I give you an example. The staff email box was one example where they were looking for that to be increased for staff, which we were able to deliver across the system. You might think: How does that add to the administration burden? Well, when it was not a limitless box they would have to constantly delete emails to create space. So a suggestion like that might sound very small but can have significant impact. They come up with suggestions of things that we can take into account. We also put into place through that work group change-free periods in the department so that we respect the operating rhythm of schools. Schools are busy places always but there are peak periods, for example, NAPLAN report writing et cetera, where we could be more cognisant of the operating rhythm of schools. That is also come in consultation with that working party.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is it possible to produce to the Committee the minutes of that working party?

Mr DIZDAR: Sorry, minutes of the working party?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Yes.

Mr DIZDAR: I will have to take that on notice.

Mr SCOTT: Let us take some advice on that. These are minutes of a working party of the department. It was an advisory group that was established to provide advice to the Minister. It is really designed to help reduce administrative burden and help find some simple solutions, so let me take advice as to whether it is appropriate to provide notes from a working party.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Either way, can you also provide the dates that it has met?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, I am happy to provide that.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can I ask about the People Matter survey?

Mr SCOTT: Sure.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Education has regularly had a lower than the sector return rate. Can you give us some information about the difference between teaching staff and non-teaching staff in terms of the People Matter survey response?

Mr SCOTT: Let me provide a high-level answer then Ms Mulkerin can provide more detail. I am delighted to say the response rate is up in 2019. I would say that when I started in the department I was told there is no way in the world that teachers in schools are going to fill out a survey like this and it has been noted—it was certainly noted at the Secretaries Board—the marked success we have had over the years in getting schools to engage with this. Our communications team, along with our human resources team, prepare good material that alerts schools to the availability of the survey and we are pleased that over time we are seeing an increase in the participation numbers.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Do they get additional RFF to complete the survey?

Mr SCOTT: No, it is a survey. Let me be clear on this: These are professionals in our schools. They understand that part of their professional workload takes place when they are in front of classes with students, and that part of their professional work takes place outside when they are preparing lessons, marking lessons or doing other things that professionals do. I filled in the People Matter survey. I imagine it takes 15 minutes to 20 minutes. It happens once a year. At no time am I aware that any staff member requested extra time to be allocated for them to fill in a survey. There are benefits that come from this survey, from us having a greater insight into the mindset of our staff, areas of friction, areas of frustration, things they want us to work on. So I am pleased to say that our staff, in tens of thousands, fill out this survey because they believe that there is value in it. But no, I am not aware of requests from our staff that they be given time off class to fill in an online survey.

Ms MULKERIN: If I could chip in?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Sure.

Ms MULKERIN: For the whole-of-organisation results participation this year was at 45.8 per cent; different results for what we call "corporate office", that was at 95 per cent; and for schools, it was 42 per cent. Half of the respondents from schools were teachers. We have the results now down to locations and units. My colleagues will have their results and we will be having a series of detailed discussions about what we see from the results. We can see at the high level—engagement with work and engagement with the organisation is high. Results have increased across nine key topic areas such as engagement, how our staff sees senior managers' communications and, of course, it helpfully claws out the areas where we have more work to do.

One of them particularly that we feature at the bottom end of the scale—so not where we wanted to be as an organisation—is the confidence of our people that we will take the results and turn them into actions. This year we will be doing a whole raft of both visible big things and some small things. For example, all of my colleagues at the table have had put into their performance agreement with the secretary that we will use the results, that we will live the values. We will all make public commitments about how we would use it and we will be working with our executive directors and our directors so that they deeply understand what our colleagues, have taken the time to tell us. It is really valuable information to us to help us point where we need to put more effort.

Mr SCOTT: I can add, because you have asked about a school setting, that the principals groups have strongly supported this on a promotional video that we put out encouraging people to do it. I believe there were principals who were engaged with that. If you are a principal, this is not just data that is coming back corporately so that Mr Dizdar, Ms Harrison and Mr Riordan get the results on their terms. If you are the principal of a school, you get the data on your team if the school is above a certain size—I think it is 10.

Mr DIZDAR: Yes.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So you have access to the full dataset?

Mr SCOTT: The full detail has not landed yet. We have high-level data that has come in from the divisions but it will be data that becomes available.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is that data that you would be prepared to publish?

Mr SCOTT: That is a question for the Public Service Commission. This is a Public Service Commission—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I mean, it is the department's data ultimately?

Mr SCOTT: Yes. Again, let me—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It is the data of the teachers and the staff.

Mr SCOTT: Let me take some advice on that.

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order—

The CHAIR: Mr Scott can finish his answer.

Mr SCOTT: This is a survey that is conducted across the public sector. We value it, we promote it, we get data from it and we use it. I think questions about the public release of data, particularly data that goes to that granular, school-by-school level, is a question more appropriately asked of the Public Service Commissioner who is responsible across government for the carriage of this survey and also is responsible for the release of the data.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I note that in the Public Service Commission report that the Public Service Commissioner has not provided agency-by-agency data around bullying?

Mr SCOTT: Yes.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Obviously, if you have access to the full dataset you have access to that information?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, we do.

Ms MULKERIN: Yes, we do.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: What is the result of the survey in relation to bullying?

Ms MULKERIN: In relation to the 2019 People Matter Employee Survey data, it is stable from last year, so no change.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: What is the percentage?

Ms MULKERIN: So 34 per cent of our staff indicated that they had witnessed some bullying event and 18 per cent experienced—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So one in three have witnessed bullying?

Mr SCOTT: But I must be clear: It is not over the past year what you see. It is: Have they at some point experienced or seen bullying or experienced bullying. My read of that is twofold. One is, as I recall, the education results are akin to the rest of the public sector. There is not evidence of a spike or an area of concentration in the NSW Department of Education. But the other thing I would say is that because we are such a big employer, because in a sense the denominator of that is such a large number, we appreciate that that is still a significant number. Bullying, vigilance around a bullying culture, reporting of bullying is work that we are focused on and Ms Mulkerin is focused on. We are going to be working with the Public Service Commissioner on that. We want there to be zero tolerance of bullying in our workplaces.

Ms MULKERIN: I do not in any way want to minimise what the data is saying to us, but one of the things we do need to work on is some shared understanding about what we mean when we say bullying. There definitely are occasions and examples where any person in the street would say that is unacceptable behaviour and that is bullying, right through to what you might consider low-level workplace conflict. All of that is important in the context of a safe work environment. It all will need to be focused on in different ways because the serious bullying, which eats away at all workplaces no matter where you are, has such significant impact for all of our employees. We also want to address any kind of low-level bullying but help our own people have healthy working relationships with each other.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: You would be able to identify hotspots with school level data, wouldn't you?

Ms MULKERIN: Yes, we will be.

Mr SCOTT: Yes, we will be.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I want to go back to Ms Mackey. You told me about some different programs that are in place for childcare centres that have been rated as "working towards". You said there is a program for Aboriginal centres, there is a program for centres with high numbers of Aboriginal children. There is a targeted before and after school care program. There is another working towards program and there is a program for family day care. Are you able to provide me with a breakdown of how many centres each of those programs are actually supporting?

Ms MACKEY: I would have to take that on notice. A number of the programs include webinars and the like. So while we understand participants, we do not necessarily have full details of the services.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: On notice, could you provide me with a summary of each program that is provided and how it is provided—whether it is a webinar, whether it is an in-centre program—and the number of centres or participants, if that is possible. I am interested to get a sense of how many of the 1,317 are actually being supported.

Ms MACKEY: They are all being supported. I provided you with a sample of the quality programs that are in place. We also have a range of other supports that are available to all services. For example, through our sector development program we do a range of professional development supports for all services. We are currently running one at the moment which would be of use to many working towards services, which is being delivered by CELA, which is the Community Early Learning Australia organisation. They are delivering specific professional development around assessment and rating and what services need to do to improve their practices around all the different quality areas in terms of the assessment and rating process.

But there are significant numbers of opportunities for professional development for services available that we fund. They are all on our website. They are promoted to all services. We do very simple things. As we see trends—in terms of compliance activity or assessment and rating—we do something called a spotlight on quality. We put those out about every four to six weeks. We focus on a particular area to help services who might need some support in terms of how to improve their practice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Is there any program in place that allows centres that have been assessed as "working towards" to be prioritised or pushed up the list to then be reassessed again?

Ms MACKEY: There are a couple of options available to them. Firstly, we are very much a risk-based regulator. If there is a change of circumstance for that service, for example a change of ownership, that would possibly change their risk profile. That would change the time frame for when we go back and rate them again. Any service at any time can apply to have their rating reviewed. They do that through the National Quality Agenda IT System, which is operated by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority on behalf of all the regulatory authorities. They can do that. Very few services apply to have their rating reviewed.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: There are 292 of those 1,317 centres that have been assessed as "working towards" that were last assessed over three years ago. When will they be reassessed?

Ms MACKEY: I am not sure where that figure is from. I can tell you that we have another 1,021 assessment and ratings scheduled between now and the end of January. There would be very few services remaining at that time that would be over that time period.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So 1,021 assessments by January?

Ms MACKEY: As scheduled.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you provide to me on notice how many centres will still be outstanding as not having been assessed in the last three years?

Ms MACKEY: I am wondering what the three-year period is. We do not have a requirement to do an assessment and rating every three years because we do risk-based regulation. Many services are assessed and rated within that three-year period. Others are assessed and rated within about a three-and-a-half-year period. There are a very small number of outliers and that is because they are services that still hold a service approval. But all of them, except two, have a show cause to cancel.

The CHAIR: Are you taking that on notice?

Ms MACKEY: I can take it on notice.

The CHAIR: Thanks. Does the department have an enterprise risk management framework that meets the whole-of-government requirements of the NSW Treasury?

Mr SCOTT: Yes. We have a risk framework and I believe it meets broader government requirements.

The CHAIR: As a percentage of your budget, how much is allocated to ensure the risk framework is operating effectively?

Mr SCOTT: Let me take that on notice.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. Some of the Committee members are proud products of the selective school system in New South Wales which has evolved very much over the years. Culturally, I think our greatest education asset is the work ethic of Asian communities, the tiger mum, tiger dad, tiger teacher model which I am a big supporter of. Is the department worried about some of the negative comment in the education sphere? An academic at the University of Technology Sydney seems to be fairly down on the tiger mums. Is the department worried about this? Is it a dampener on the work ethic and enthusiasm in the selective school system which is so important?

Mr SCOTT: Thanks for the question. Selective schools have long been a feature of the New South Wales public education system. A decision was made several decades ago to expand their footprint to make sure there was representation of those selective schools where the population has migrated to over time.

The CHAIR: You were there at the time.

Mr SCOTT: We have a mix of fully selective schools and schools that offer selective classes. They are an important part of our offering and I see that continuing. We have done a review of the selective schools test. That has been a valuable thing to do. One of the arguments in the creation of selective schools would have been, no matter where you lived, no matter what your background, if you had the opportunity to go to a selective school you could have a tremendous educational opportunity. One of the things we could see through the research of the test was that only about 3 per cent of students getting into the school were from the bottom SES quartile. It seemed that a message had somehow been sent that your access to selective schools was really only through a pathway of intensive coaching, purchasing of preparatory textbooks and the like. That may well have sent a message that in fact if you were not in a position to avail yourself of that, then you need not apply. Our feeling was that the selective schools test had not been significantly modified over several decades and could we do a better job in identifying high potential that was open to all students and not skewed in a socio-economically selective way.

The CHAIR: What does the review of the test show?

Mr SCOTT: The review has said that we believe we can make modifications to the test. There have been some modifications to the test this year. We are putting that test out for tender, and we will be looking to see what changes can be made to the assessment system because we want to make sure that this is as broad and inclusive an opportunity that is available to students where they exist anywhere.

The CHAIR: I am a fan of parents who put their kids into tutoring. I think the more education, the better. But can I just say with regard to the test, it is almost impossible to get into a selective school unless you do the tutoring. The problem with the test is that it is linked to IQ rather than the curriculum. If it was a curriculum test, even without the tutoring perhaps the brightest of the bright from that lower socio-economic cohort have still got a fair chance to get in, but if you do not do the IQ tutoring it looks like science fiction.

Mr SCOTT: That is the question we are asking, because I think in an ideal world—look, I understand the argument about coaching; people have put it to me. There is no criticism of parents if their kids are doing cello or gymnastics practice. If they are doing this coaching then we should not stand critical of the parents. I think the question is: Is this the best assessment we can have to identify high-potential students who will flourish in a selective school? That is the question we will be asking when the test goes out to tender.

The CHAIR: That is welcome and we look forward to the results there linking to curriculum to give everyone a fair go. But within the selective schools themselves I have had some feedback from parents that they are being told by principals not to do tutoring, not to push the kids too hard, to develop the social skills, to do group work. There is a feeling that the Asian work ethic, which is a great ambition for parents in our system, is being suppressed by the social values type agenda that some principals are trying to develop in the selective schools.

Mr SCOTT: Sorry, is this in selective schools or trying to get into selective schools?

The CHAIR: Yes, I sat in a year 7 orientation where the principal said, "Do not do any tutoring and do not push the kids too hard." He changed the classwork to project-based learning to supposedly develop cooperative social skills. Isn't it really the role of the principal to deliver a curriculum and class work in selective high schools

that meets parental ambition and values? If they want to push their kids on, that is their choice, not the choice of the principal.

Mr SCOTT: Yes, I would say a few things on that. I think it is a complicated issue. What we will be clear about is that we expect to see improvement everywhere. This is from the targets that we are working with schools to create now, and that will include selective schools. If schools have an intake of strong, high-potential students, we are expecting to see improvement in those students and we will be monitoring that in selective schools, as we are monitoring in every school. I think principals are also conscious of the complexity of the students in their mix. I have spoken to principles of selective schools and they say, "Just because our kids are bright, do not underestimate the complexity of the students who are presenting in our schools." There is a desire, whilst seeing them develop to their potential, to make sure that the pressure-cooker environment is not too intense for them and to make sure that they actually remain engaged in schools and that they are known, valued, cared for and nurtured.

I can understand. It is that hothouse question, right? You want to create an environment where students are flourishing but you also want to create an environment where you are sure that kids are not burning out. I can see a sweet spot there. But we are going to be looking at all of these measures with the school targets we are creating. Yes, we are seeing improvement. Yes, we are seeing value add. But, yes, we see that students remain involved in their learning and their attendance levels are high.

The CHAIR: Can you guarantee the Committee and the public that the department is fully supportive of Asian work ethic in the selective school system, and principals would be reflecting that attitude?

Mr SCOTT: Firstly, I can say we are clearly supportive of selective schools. The Premier has announced another one. Selective schools are part of our system. Also, we fully respect the rights of parents to be strongly supportive and engaged in their students' education. We look to work in partnership with parents. That is the hallmark of our system.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Scott, there have been concerns raised with my office that counsellors employed by the department for schools do not have appropriate qualifications. Indeed, there are clinical psychologists providing counselling for schools whose qualifications expressly prohibit them from diagnosing students. Is that true, and what are the qualifications for counsellors?

Mr SCOTT: Ms Harrison will speak to this.

Ms HARRISSON: I am not aware of any particular cases that you are raising. If you have particular concerns that have been raised with you or your office, we would be very happy to look into those. The requirements of school counsellors are for them to be both a teacher and a trained psychologist. Our psychologists are required to hold an appropriate psychology qualification. They have the appropriate professional oversight through the organisation to a senior psychologist in the department. That would be the context.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Does that include skills in children's psychology?

Ms HARRISSON: I can come back to you on the specific qualifications that are eligible for those positions.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Recommendation 2 from the Legislative Council inquiry into students with a disability or special needs was that:

... the Minister for Education make a Ministerial Statement in Parliament which reports on the educational progress of students with a disability in New South Wales.

That was accepted by the Government. When are we going to get that?

Mr SCOTT: Let me go back and check that. The thing I would say is that since that report landed we have consulted extensively with stakeholders around a disability strategy. This was the first fundamental root-and-branch review of disability strategy that had been undertaken in the department for decades. That detailed strategy was released, talking about strengthening support, increasing resources, improving the family experience and tracking outcomes. It was released, it is fully available online and I believe that Ministers have spoken to that in the Chamber. Now, I am not sure whether in fact you will interpret that the same as a statement, but it is a detailed policy that has been released by the education Minister that has generated significant discussion and is available to be questioned on. I am not sure if Ms Harrison wants to add to that.

Ms HARRISSON: I am conscious the recommendation was a precursor to a regular statement, so the understanding is that, yes, the Minister will be making a regular statement to Parliament and it would be inappropriate for me to talk on her behalf.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Can you consult and provide answers on notice about the regularity with which we are to expect those statements?

Ms HARRISSON: I am certainly happy to follow that up with the Minister and come back to you.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I know you were asked some questions earlier by Ms Boyd about data, but recommendations 11, 13 and 16 of that report related to the collection and reporting of data. When will data be reported on regularly and publicly in relation to children with disabilities seeking enrolment and not obtaining that enrolment, and tracking and monitoring the numbers who attend special and mainstream settings? When are we going to see this clear, transparent reporting?

Ms HARRISSON: We recognise the importance of the transparency and I can come back to you on notice with the detail of the time line.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That report was in 2016, we are now in 2019 and you would have thought that the transparent tracking of data would be low-hanging fruit. What is the reason?

Mr SCOTT: I take that on board. What I would say, though, in the interim is that we have done the most comprehensive review of the provision of disability services, which had all stakeholders involved. That was about a year-long process I must say, even though—as you would know—you get strongly held, divergent views on the best approach in disability services. There are strong views. Those stakeholders with great—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I am asking you about data, not subjective responses. I am asking—

Mr SCOTT: I am just giving you a bit of context here.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: As much as I appreciate context, I have a limited amount of time, Mr Scott. I asked you about data.

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order—

Mr SCOTT: Mr Chair, it is important that this context—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: To the Chair, I would ask that you—

The CHAIR: You have asked your question and Mr Scott will give—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It has to be directly relevant, not generally relevant. This is not directly relevant.

The CHAIR: I think he is relevant enough for my judgement. Mr Scott, come to the point of the question.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: The test is "direct".

Mr SCOTT: I think the achievement of getting all those stakeholders in the room, despite their strongly divergent views, was a priority through 2018. We now have a series of reforms that we are looking to initiate. Some of those reforms have been greeted with absolute acclaim, including the decision to put 200 additional specialist support classes being established this year—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Scott, my question was about data. You are now just having a general rave when the Government—

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order—

The CHAIR: I do not think you can say that the witness is having a general rave. He has been very concise in answering a huge number of questions today. That is not a fair reflection on Mr Scott. The question is when will we get the data?

Mr SCOTT: I will come back on the reporting schedule after today.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In relation to recommendation 29, what steps has the department taken towards providing school counsellors at the minimum ratio of one to 500 and what is the current ratio?

Ms HARRISSON: I can come back to you on notice with the specific current ratio. As we discussed earlier today, the Government has made a commitment to have a full-time position at all our secondary schools. That will be rolled out over the coming two years.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But even one full-time position at each of the secondary schools will not get close to the one to 500 ratio. If that is the only commitment, then has the Government dropped its in-principle agreement to that recommendation?

Ms HARRISSON: This is the positions that are provided through our allocation of staffing to schools. Further resources are put in place in schools locally and local resources are used to employ additional staff. We also provide and are currently seeking additional providers for Telehealth services to provide provision in rural areas where it can be hard to access that expertise to make sure that all of our students are able to access the support that they need.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Every child with disability or with special needs requires, I think we could agree, an individualised education plan. There was a commitment that there would be one developed and implemented as a mandatory requirement for all students with disabilities and special needs. What is the state of the implementation of that recommendation? What proportion of children with special needs have got individualised education plans?

Ms HARRISSON: Our expectation is that all students with disability in our system have an individualised education plan in place.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I was not asking you about the expectation, I was asking about the numbers.

Ms HARRISSON: Our expectation is that in every one of our schools every student with a disability will have an individualised learning plan in place. It is the responsibility of that school and its teachers to ensure that that is in place.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Could you provide me the numbers on notice?

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order—

The CHAIR: The question will be taken on notice.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: They have not said they will take it on notice.

The CHAIR: I have said they will.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is not your job as Chair, with all due respect.

Mr SCOTT: We will take that on notice.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I will preface my question by saying that after 15 years in education I have done my fair share of budgeting and planning for professional development. I am looking at professional development funding within the schools. When you break down the figures it largely equates to about two days per teacher per year. That is not including the school subsidising professional development through RAM funding, which we know occurs. Then you need to factor in that we have got 100 hours of training over five years, both accredited and not accredited, to meet the accreditation requirements. Clearly there is now a push to go to online training to satisfy those accreditation requirements. Considering the fact that the feedback that I have received and the feedback I will give you now personally is that the majority of the online training provided by the department can best be described as death by PowerPoint and does not really adhere to any quality teaching principles or educational theorists' views on what quality learning looks like. What is the department doing in terms of action steps to improve the quality of online professional learning, considering that is the direction we are having to head in?

Mr SCOTT: Ms Harrison will have detail on that. I am interested in your number and your calculation around professional development. As you know, our schools have a number of pupil-free days for professional development. There is professional development provided by the department that teachers can access and there is money that schools themselves put into professional development on top of the money that they get—

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I am specifically talking about the money allocated for professional development, not the RAM funding and not the pupil-free days.

Mr SCOTT: All I am saying is that you have come down with the calculation that it is only the equivalent of two days but you are only counting a small element of the pot. The pot is a lot bigger. I am saying that there is a big investment in professional development that has been made and we are looking at the quality of that.

Ms HARRISSON: We have been working on the quality of the professional development provided by the department over the past 12 months to 18 months. We have a quality assurance rubric that is built on the evidence of best practice in teaching, the adult learning principles and the impact of professional learning on student outcomes. We assess the design of our professional learning against that rubric before we publish it and launch a course. We have removed courses from our offer that did not meet that quality assurance standard. We have gone back and revised courses to ensure they do and to ensure that we are focused entirely on those outcomes for students and the impact on the practice of teachers. We have had exceedingly good feedback from schools and teachers about that quality assured professional development. We remain absolutely committed to ensuring that if a teacher is engaged in professional learning with the department they will benefit and their practice will improve, along with the outcomes of their students. That is our aim.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I want to talk about NAPLAN Online. The department would say that there have been challenges and the public would probably be a little bit stronger in their language. Whether we stick with NAPLAN or go to another standardised testing regime, are we abandoning NAPLAN Online testing or are we going to continue to flog a dead horse?

Mr SCOTT: I will talk broadly about that and then the NSW Education Standards Authority may want to comment. This is a matter that is being discussed by education Ministers at the moment. They will receive a report on what happened with the NAPLAN assessment this year. I will say that there are some real advantages to NAPLAN Online. Our experience thus far is that the opportunity of getting the results back faster helps with the diagnostic element—it is three weeks rather than three months. It is far more relevant when you get it available more quickly. Also, our evidence is that students find it more engaging and there are upsides for that as well.

Clearly there were some issues this year. I am not in a position to reveal what those issues are but suffice to say that it was an IT question and education Ministers around the country will be briefed on that in the coming weeks. The expectation is and certainly the indication from our schools would be that they want to continue doing NAPLAN Online next year. My prediction would be that NAPLAN Online will continue to roll out next year around the country. But education Ministers have already put the timetable for a migration to NAPLAN Online back 12 months. We expect that it will run again in 2020. Ministers will carefully interrogate the findings of the review that has been made for NAPLAN Online this year and the particular IT issue that gave rise to the difficulties, particularly around the writing test and particularly on the first day of NAPLAN Online. Do you want to add to that, Mr Martin?

Mr MARTIN: The only thing I would say is that it is inevitable that online testing increases rather than decreases. We cannot have trucks driving paper around the country.

Mr SCOTT: I will add that the other thing that I think is particularly valuable about NAPLAN Online is that it is an adaptive test. That means that as you answer questions the test changes as a result of the answers that you are giving. That means that there will be some students who have done NAPLAN with pen and paper who have gotten every question wrong and there will be other children who have done NAPLAN with pen and paper who have gotten every question right. As a result of it being an adaptive test, we are far more likely to be able to get granular information about students' performance across the full level. We talked about students with disability earlier. Some of the strongest feedback that we have had about NAPLAN Online has been that students with some quite significant disabilities have for the first time been able to work their way through a NAPLAN assessment and get a result and feedback in a way that the pen-and-paper test would not enable.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Mr Scott, you were just talking about a much larger bucket of money available for professional development. Are you able to provide a dollar figure by full-time equivalent [FTE]? I am happy for you to take that on notice.

Mr SCOTT: Let me give you the context of that. What I can give you is the amount of money that the department is spending on the provision of professional development. I can calculate for you how much money, in the calculation of money that goes to schools, is being identified for professional development. It is harder for us to immediately—but we will be able to do it over time—identify the additional money that schools themselves are then with their discretionary funding putting into professional development. The money that is allocated as part of the RAM funding is not a ceiling and it is not a floor; it is just some money that has been allocated and is badged for that. We know from experience that many schools are putting more money into professional development. We can give you some shape of that.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I wanted to ask you about whether, specifically in relation to the enrolment policy, there was a specific issue that related to Helensburgh.

Mr SCOTT: Yes, we have looked at that issue.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I wanted to know whether either your office, the department or the ministerial support unit within your department have received representations from the member for Heathcote, Lee Evans, on this matter.

Mr DIZDAR: Helensburgh Public School—we have received information from on the ground with our director of educational leadership and our executive director.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It is a very specific question about whether you have received representations.

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It is a very specific question.

The CHAIR: Order! We will give the witness a chance to try to answer the specific question.

Mr DIZDAR: I would like to answer your specific question. The information that we gathered was from our director of educational leadership as well as our executive director on the ground that indicated that we had been—we had been, organisationally—providing incorrect information to the Helensburgh Public School community about what their local in-area high school was, and we had been doing that for some time. We became aware of that as a department earlier this year and put in place steps to rectify that mistake of ours.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: That is not directly relevant to the question I asked. The question was about representations from the local member for Heathcote.

Mr SCOTT: We will check the correspondence file.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Thank you.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Ms Mackey, you talked about services receiving show cause notices. Are you able to tell me how many services have current show cause notices?

Ms MACKEY: I can tell you for over a period; I would have to take it on notice how many have one today.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You can take that on notice. Can you tell me, how long do they have to respond to a show cause notice?

Ms MACKEY: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many services in 2019 have been closed as a result of not sufficiently responding to such a show cause notice?

Ms MACKEY: I will take it on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many have continued to operate?

Ms MACKEY: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you give me a breakdown of family day care, long day care or before- and after-school care and preschool services?

Ms MACKEY: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And then can you give me all that data for 2019 as well, please. Sorry, I asked you for 2019—if you can give it to me for 2018 as well.

Ms MACKEY: We will have it collated as a financial year. That is the way it is collected.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Let me be clear: It is 2018-19 and then 2017-18.

Ms MACKEY: Okay.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you. Mr Scott, are you familiar with Passfield Park School in Minto?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, I am.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: There are some significant issues around severe mould in classrooms and playgrounds and issues of access, which is particularly concerning at a school that is catering for children with a medium to severe intellectual disability, including some with a physical disability. When is there

an upgrade that is planned for the school? Sorry, let me be clear: When will an upgrade on this school be completed?

Mr MARANIK: From an infrastructure perspective, we are currently going through the service planning requirements more broadly across that entire catchment for the needs of special needs children more broadly and how that interfaces with a whole range of services for these children, including the interrelationship with health care, transport, whatnot. That service statement is expected to land very, very shortly and that will then feed into the functional design briefing process that will land to the business case that will support the redevelopment of Passfield and the service it provides. It is not until I get that service statement that I can be confident in providing an overall program for any works at that site.

I have been to the site personally and my personal concern at the site was that part of western Sydney has the orange Wianamatta Shale clay. That is a really interesting material when it comes to foundation design and water into buildings and the fabric of buildings, so to get an absolute contextual understanding of that site and how that will form into a built form response is very important. The roof work that is being done there and all of those things point to a broader issue in relation to water. We have been working with Health as well on that particular part. In terms of the operationalisation of Passfield, I refer to Mr Dizdar.

Mr DIZDAR: We continue to work with our principal, Wendy Low, there to make sure that we are in the safest of conditions for our students and young people while, as Mr Maranik indicated, we work with the school community also on the longer-term development of the site for a business plan concept.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So you are in the very early stages of planning the total school response, but there is no specific upgrade that is being planned for that school. Is that a correct characterisation?

Mr MARANIK: There is always ongoing activity at the school in relation to dehumidification, in terms of dealing with the commentary and the input from the school and the school community and the Department of Health. So that is an ongoing. That will continue while we work through what the service planning need is for that particular area so that we actually learn those lessons, I guess, from the previous answer and make sure that we get the right outcome for that community and particularly for those service needs so we can operationalise them robustly.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So you do not have a specific plan for what you are going to do to that school yet?

Mr SCOTT: We are doing the planning, I think. Let us be clear: We all understand that there were issues raised at the school. We have been out at the school. Environmental health officers have been out at the school. We have now done a series of steps that have responded to issues that have been raised—dehumidifiers, mesh screens under windows to let air flow into the room, issues around the cleanliness of walls and brickwork—and carried out preventative ceiling work and painting to the brickwork. Air quality testing is being undertaken on a quarterly basis. We are continuing to think through what the infrastructure needs are of that school and that work is ongoing. I expect that work to be completed shortly, and then that next step will then scope the project. So we expect there will be works at that school. Planning is underway now. I am not going to pre-empt the planning with speculation. We are going to let the expert team do their work.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What work is being undertaken so that the students in wheelchairs—as is told to me, they have to battle ramps that are too steep and doorways that are too narrow.

Mr DIZDAR: Mr Maranik will give specific details, but there have been a series of ongoing works that I am across operationally where there have been adjustments to particular classrooms to cater for students with wheelchairs. My understanding is that we have also got a lift going in, but Mr Maranik will be able to give those details.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: When will the lift be operational?

Mr MARANIK: Again, I would have to come back with the specifics of the works there. We have got over 200 different types of integration projects running more broadly. Passfield is certainly well within that focus. Again, the work that we do in partnership with School Operations there is genuinely with the school and with the school community to get the best outcomes for those children.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Maranik, it sounds as though the issues at Passfield Park are pretty serious. Do you think the school has to be demolished and rebuilt so it is fit for purpose?

Mr MARANIK: It is not until I have got the planning that I can make that informed decision. I think the partnership and the work that we have been doing with School Operations, NSW Health, the local health

officers, the hygienists, the environmental reports that have all come through are all indicating that for the environment that is in there the remediation and the work that we have done is reasonable and appropriate. The broader context, though, is the special needs requirement of that particular local area—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes, and I did understand that you are undertaking a plan.

Mr MARANIK: —and doing that service planning so you understand in terms of how that drives—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I have got very limited time left. I have got a series of local questions that I would like to pose to Mr Scott, so if you could deal with them quickly that would be useful. Have you got any plans to build a high school at West Dapto?

Mr SCOTT: I am going to have to take West Dapto on notice, I think.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are you aware that there are more than 1,000 school-aged students that are going to be moving into the area?

Mr SCOTT: We will be doing detailed planning. As I said to the Chair earlier, we are working closely with the Department of Planning and Environment and, as far as Sydney Metro is concerned, with the Greater Sydney Commission—working closely on population movement, projections of population growth—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: West Dapto is outside of the Greater Sydney Commission area.

Mr SCOTT: I said that, but I did caveat within the metro area, the Greater Sydney Commission. But the Department of Planning and Environment's responsibility, as you know, runs across New South Wales.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: They have not given you a school site, is the problem.

Mr SCOTT: What I am saying is that we are working closely with the authorities who are responsible for monitoring and making key decisions around population growth. We are working hand in hand with them, so let us go back and find out.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I will move on, because I have limited time. Have you purchased the land for Jerrabomberra High School yet?

Mr SCOTT: I am not in a position to reveal that at the moment. I will take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you have a date when year 7 students can expect to commence at Jerrabomberra High School?

Mr SCOTT: No, we will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I will move on to Googong primary school, where you do actually own the land. When will the kindy kids start at Googong?

Mr SCOTT: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: When do you expect to commence construction?

Mr SCOTT: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am asking for a specific year, please.

Mr SCOTT: Okay.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Have you a location for Bungendore High School yet?

Mr SCOTT: I will take it on notice too.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: These were promised and are all included in the budget papers.

Mr SCOTT: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Will you come back to the Committee with a time line for the upgrade of Corrimall High School?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, we will take it on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Will you explain why there was such a delay in releasing the survey results of the community at Randwick.

Mr SCOTT: Yes, we are happy to talk about Mr Randwick.

Mr DIZDAR: The survey was over a December-to-February period across the summer and term break as well. As the Committee would appreciate, it is really prudent that the department looks at all of the material provided with the required due diligence. This was an extensive survey opportunity where there was an online survey, an opportunity to provide written submissions and an opportunity to have face-to-face meetings. There was a rich feedback of data that was given through that survey process. We certainly wanted to make sure that we considered all the feedback very, very carefully before indicating what our position might be, having looked at that data, and that took some time.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Initially it was said that the results were going to be released soon after the closure of the survey?

Mr DIZDAR: The survey closed, like I said, I do not know the exact date but it was around February. It was a December-to-February period and it took some time to analyse the rich information and submissions and the meetings in terms of what was fed back to us. The actual online survey part is a lot quicker given the online nature of looking at that data but we had to make sure we took all the feedback into account, and that did take us some time. We do not apologise for that. I think it is prudent for us to consider the information carefully, particularly when you have got a major decision in front of you in terms of potential changes—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I have only a minute to go. Mr Scott, are Randwick girls and Randwick boys schools being treated as one school by the department in any way?

Mr DIZDAR: I have met with both principals. They already have some curriculum opportunities that they share together, which is a great outcome for our students. They are quite keen, with the planning on what the upgrades of those sites will look like, that we work with them together as well.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am specifically interested in why there was a single line item for Randwick boys and Randwick girls schools when separate upgrades were promised during the election campaign.

Mr DIZDAR: Mr Maranik may be able to give further detail, but operationally when I have met with both principals to give them the decision of the department in relation to what we would be doing there they are very keen for us to work with them together on what the physical asset enhancements may be at that site so all the children can be the beneficiaries of that.

Mr MARANIK: Because of the spatial relationship of the school, some infrastructure perspective, it is common sense to work —

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You mean they are next to each other?

Mr MARANIK: Well, they are next to each other. Traffic management plans, electricity, sewer, water and all of those elements—

Mr SCOTT: Very real benefits in looking at that as a single planning lot. But, as far as staffing allocations are concerned, budgets are seen as a separate source.

Mr DIZDAR: They are separate.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Scott, how many students were impacted by the information technology [IT] failure in the online NAPLAN?

Mr SCOTT: Let me draw up the material on that, if I can.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You probably cannot get onto the parliamentary wireless.

Mr SCOTT: Mr Martin has that, I think.

Mr MARTIN: I am just trying to get the exact numbers.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: We are having an IT failure to get the answers?

Mr SCOTT: No, our IT has hummed along here. While we look for the precise number, as I said, the technical disruption was fundamentally on day one, and was fundamentally addressed by the writing assessment.

Mr MARTIN: I have here that 406 schools opted to resit the affected tests. That was approximately 10,600 students in New South Wales schools resat the tests.

Mr SCOTT: And that is across all sectors.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Scott, you said you are not in a position to reveal to this Committee what the IT issue was with the online testing?

Mr SCOTT: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What do you mean you are not in a position to reveal?

Mr SCOTT: Because that is a report that has been commissioned by Education Council, which is the group that is made up by State and Territory education Ministers. That review has been commissioned by them and the final report back on that will go to education Ministers at the next meeting of Education Council, which is on Friday week. It will then be up to education Ministers to determine the information that they then release. What I am saying is it is not my report, it does not come back to me and I am not in a position to release that information. I expect that there will be a release of information by education Ministers once they receive the report.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Scott, I will press you directly to answer the question: What was the IT issue that meant 10,600 New South Wales students could not sit the NAPLAN test and had to resit?

Mr SCOTT: I can tell you that education Ministers were deeply concerned with the IT failures that gave rise to concern and disruption to the operation of NAPLAN online. They commissioned a specialist report to come up with the reasons why there was an IT failure, and the nature of that IT failure. I expect that that report will go to education Ministers at their next meeting on Friday week and that education Ministers will make a public statement on the key findings of that report shortly thereafter.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Sitting there now, being a New South Wales official, you know, do you not, what the IT issues were with the NAPLAN test? I am asking you directly what the IT issues were with the NAPLAN test?

Mr SCOTT: The detailed report which has been undertaken will be delivered to education Ministers who commissioned that report. I can tell you, Mr David Shoebridge, I have not commissioned a report. The report was commissioned by education Ministers—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You have said that.

Mr SCOTT: Education Ministers will receive that report and I anticipate that shortly after the meeting of education Ministers a briefing will be provided.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is that Friday week?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, Friday week.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I invite you to take the question on notice.

Mr SCOTT: I am happy to. By the time we have to return it, everyone will know.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Perhaps. Mr Scott, going back to the recommendation from that 2016 inquiry into students with special needs, recommendations 29 and 30 spoke about the obligation to have training of principals in their legal obligation, the disability standards for education and mandatory training and also as part of the accreditation process for all teachers and principals. Have all principals now had the legal training in the disability standards for education?

Ms HARRISSON: I am very happy to come back with specific numbers that we have available on that. Over 95,000 people have completed that training across our system, is the figure I can provide today. I will come back with the specifics around school principals on notice.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is it mandatory for school principals?

Ms HARRISSON: I will take that on notice.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: The Department of Education's Disability Strategy, which was released in February 2019, I think asserts that inclusion is embedded in all aspects of a school life and is supported by culture, policies and everyday practices. To ensure that inclusion is actually embedded as stated, when will your department review the policy and legislative frameworks so they comply with, I believe it is, general comment No. 4 of Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability, which is the right to inclusive education? It is a core demand.

Mr SCOTT: I will begin to answer the question and then Ms Harrison might want to join in. As we said earlier, it is a highly complex and demanding area. We are committed to providing the best possible

educational opportunity for every child in our care. But from my experience, and possibly from your experience too, there are people who hold strongly divergent views as to what that means in practice. I have spoken to people—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But there is only one United Nations standard—

The CHAIR: Mr Scott can finish his answer.

Mr SCOTT: Let me answer this question because it is such an important question. I have spoken to people who would strongly advocate that we shutdown the more than 100 SSPs that we operate. Their definition of what you have eluded to there would be that we should have no special schools and that we should probably not have support classes, and every student should be in a mainstream setting. With the greatest respect, I do not accept that.

I think some of the finest education that I see take place takes place with students with very significant disability working with specialist teachers in specialist settings in our SSPs. I am committed to inclusive education for that child—the best possible educational opportunity for that child—and, as I said overwhelmingly—the overwhelming majority—students with disability are in mainstream settings. But when people try to get me in a corner and say that mainstream setting is the setting for every child then I pause.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Scott, I am not trying to get you in a corner and you are mischaracterising my question. I am talking about that globally accepted standard, which is general comment No. 4 of Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Mr SCOTT: Well, I refer you back to our statement, our policy, which does talk about our commitment to inclusive education. But my concern at the way that that UN statement has been tabled to me is that some of the people who table it and advocate for it are also those who take a very harsh view on our operation of any specialist settings for children with disability. Those specialist settings are only used for a small percentage of our students and we believe there is strong educational validity in that.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I will skip my question about my former high school, Corrimal High School. Ms Houssos beat me to the punch on that one. Going back to some of the comments you made about the People Matter survey, Mr Scott, you said that there is no specific time frame given in the questions about whether someone has witnessed or experienced bullying?

Mr SCOTT: Yes. I think that is right.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Yes. Would you concede that it would probably be more useful for the department to actually have questions that go to the specific time frames? Your data is current?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, I think that is a fair question.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Yes.

Mr SCOTT: That would be valuable to us. As I said, the numbers around bullying are no higher than you see elsewhere in the public service, but any evidence of bullying is of concern for us. That is why it is a focus for us. Many people in the department—every now and again I sign these long service certificates—I sign 50-year certificates; I sign 40-year certificates and 30-year certificates. People have worked with us for a long period of time and I think it is a very different question to say, "At any time in your career did you ever at any point witness bullying?"—

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I think that is drawing the longbow.

Mr SCOTT: —to saying that you are experiencing and part of a bullying culture now in the department. So some nuance around that question I believe will be valuable and I will be making that case to Emma Hogan, who is the Public Service Commissioner. There is a desire for some standardisation of this survey across the public service for obvious reasons, but I think there is merit in your argument.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Thank you. You just answered my follow-up question about whether you make representations.

The Hon. WES FANG: He is good like that.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Thank you for the interjection. My last question is in terms of online testing. Mr Martin, you said that we cannot avoid not having more online testing. Has the department taken any steps to look at transitioning the HSC to online testing, considering that a significant percentage of the marking of the HSC is now done online? Would it not make sense to marry up those two systems to streamline the process

and reduce the amount of administration work that we all know that happens at marking centres with the NESA staffers frantically scanning scripts?

Mr MARTIN: While I think I said there is an inevitable move to online testing, the first thing that has to happen is that it has to be delivered effectively and efficiently. As we saw with NAPLAN this year, we have to have a delay in the delivery of online testing because of connectivity issues which were referred to earlier. The first HSC course that is an online course is the science extension course, which is delivered this year—800 students will be sitting that. It has some of the interactive capacity that Mr Scott referred to earlier. Taking it slowly, making sure that we get it right; it is a major enterprise, the HSC, and it has high stakes. But, yes, there are slow moves, steady, towards online testing.

Mr SCOTT: And I would add to that: I think one of the things that NAPLAN online has allowed us to do is to build up the information technology capacity and infrastructure needs in order to be able to deliver that assessment. One of the things that we have done is make a big investment in IT infrastructure in rural communities, connecting our schools with access to high-speed wi-fi. So there is a capacity now to deliver this that we may not have had in the past.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Thank you. That is it from me. As a former teacher, I might be able to give you an early mark.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. Good stuff. I have a few questions left.

Mr SCOTT: Yes, sure.

The CHAIR: Is the department concerned about the growing number of 6-year-olds or near six years of age starting in kindergarten so that it is possible to get an 18-month difference between the oldest and youngest children in the class starting in kindy?

Mr SCOTT: Well, Chair, I think that has long been the case because, really, it has long been the case that you can start a child at four and a half all the way through to six.

The CHAIR: Yes. Is it time to tighten these parameters, given the trend for some parents to start the kids as late as possible?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, it is a good question. One of the things the education Ministers debate around the country is the different approaches that are made in different States. We have had really for quite a long time that gap between four and a half and six. It is quite interesting to do analysis about the take-up of that between genders and the take-up of that in different parts of the city and different parts of the State. That is an area that we continue to look at and monitor.

The CHAIR: Is there a review to tighten those parameters? These numbers are getting bigger, aren't they?

Ms HARRISSON: There is no specific review underway, but we are very happy to look at the data and come back to you with further information, if that would be useful.

The CHAIR: It would indeed. Does the department collect data on the marital status and sexual orientation of its staff?

Mr DIZDAR: No, we do not.

The CHAIR: How then will the department meet the goals set out in the secretary's circular from 3 December last year about aiming to foster a more inclusive culture with respect to age, marital status, sexual orientation and so forth if you do not know what people are doing in their bedroom? How do you create diversity in the workplace? I am not urging that you know about the bedroom.

Mr DIZDAR: Thank you.

The CHAIR: But it is here in black and white and I am asking about it.

Mr SCOTT: Well, I think in a way this is where the People Matter survey is valuable to us. I have just been advised as well—I want to go back and check and I will check on the record—about the bullying questions and what advice, whether there are questions about the last 12 months.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I think they are the last 12 months. I am fairly certain they are the last 12 months.

Mr SCOTT: I will come back and correct that, so I am happy to correct that on the record, Chair.

The CHAIR: Okay.

Mr SCOTT: I mean, I suppose our staff will tell us, right? You know, we are not about to take surveys of—

The CHAIR: What do you mean they will tell you? They are married or they are straight, gay, in between, both?

Mr SCOTT: Well, the bottom line is I think in a way the People Matter survey is really quite a good example that we are keen to make the department a great place to work. If people feel that we are not inclusive, we are not tolerant, if they are not comfortable at work, then we expect that they will let us know and we will respond to that. I am not sure if Ms Mulkerin wants to add to that.

Ms MULKERIN: I am not sure that there is anything else I can add to that.

The CHAIR: In the five focus areas, one of them is male teachers. What are you hoping to achieve there?

Mr SCOTT: One of the issues I think we need to be aware of is that there is great value in having female teachers. We have disproportionately female teachers in the department, particularly in primary school. We would like to encourage more male teachers in primary schools. We think this would be a beneficial thing to have a mix. I think it is 85 per cent female.

Ms MULKERIN: Around 81 per cent female in primary and it is around 60 per cent in secondary.

The CHAIR: What are you doing to encourage more men into the teaching profession? Lowering the Australian Tertiary Admission Ranks? Paying extra money, targets, affirmative action?

Mr SCOTT: I think if you go back—

The CHAIR: There is a long list.

Mr SCOTT: —50 or 60 years, there was actually a lower entry mark for men to enter.

The CHAIR: Was there?

Mr SCOTT: Yes, in post-war years. I would have to check that. But, no, as part of our staff methodology review, where that work eventually will go is to more detailed work around workforce planning. We know that with the growth that is coming into the system we are going to need to recruit more teachers. I think we need to do more research on what we can do to make teaching a more attractive pathway, either to those who are just leaving school to enter university but also for mid-career entry into the profession.

The CHAIR: Given that the majority of school principals in New South Wales are female, why is there a category for women in leadership? How do we get a rising proportion of women in leadership and male teachers into the profession?

Mr SCOTT: Yes. It is an interesting question and one that we have debated. I think you will find that overwhelmingly primary school principals are female but the split in secondary school might be, if I recall, 48 per cent female and 52 per cent male.

The CHAIR: Correct.

Mr SCOTT: That is not a reflection of the broad staff in our secondary schools, of course, which is a clear majority of them are female. There are some targets about women in leadership positions across the public sector also being driven by the Public Service Commission. I think under many of those criteria the Department of Education has more women in senior leadership positions elsewhere, but this is something that we want to continue to monitor and review and make sure that everyone has an opportunity to aspire to leadership and that there are no inhibitors to that that are placed by the way the department operates.

The CHAIR: We all love women in leadership, particularly in this building of course. Have we ever had a female secretary of the department?

Mr SCOTT: I am delighted to say that we have had two female secretaries. One of the key statistics that the department has gone backwards on is at the secretary level—my predecessor was a female and I am not.

The CHAIR: I am not too sure that is necessarily a regression; it is a very small sample. Do not punish yourself too much with a small sample.

Mr SCOTT: I am just saying that when you judge it.

The CHAIR: In your circular to staff, you said that one of the three priority areas was:

... attracting, recruiting, developing and retaining a workforce which is more reflective of the community we serve.

Is there any evidence to show that we will get better school results in all the indicators—I assume these are identity indicators—if the people working in the education department match the community?

Mr SCOTT: It depends a little bit what you mean by—

The CHAIR: Evidence?

Mr SCOTT: —"identity" and evidence. I would have thought that in the public education system you want to reflect the community. When you look at the diversity, I would hope that our staff represents the broad multicultural community that exists. I think clearly there are advantages with students having role models that they can have a strong point of identification with. I do not think that is controversial.

The CHAIR: Your diversity parameters are about ethnic background?

Mr SCOTT: I am saying it would be quite broad but that would be a key one, I would have thought.

The CHAIR: What about intelligence, because I think the public would expect that the education—The public is very intelligent and their information access is wonderful but do we not want the very smartest, most capable people working in the education department rather than being reflective of the community average?

Mr SCOTT: I take your point. However, I would point out that, if you look at our policy and our practice, we are doing all we can to urge universities is to be more rigorous in their selection of students into initial teacher education programs. We have implemented a new scheme, as you know—I have seen you refer to it publicly—where we are doing more rigorous screening at recruitment around graduates coming into the department, including looking at university transcripts, psychometric testing as an aptitude and fitness for teaching, all of which shows we have high standards that we are pursuing.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. That is the closure of our hearing this evening. I thank you for the high standards you have displayed as a group of officials. We appreciate the facts. We must be one of the best informed committees now in the Parliament in this vital area because the serious work of giving young people in the State a better future is absolutely critical. We thank you for the way you have presented and the diligence with which you met all the questions.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Point of order—

The CHAIR: We are closing at quarter past.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: That is right. I have one further question.

The CHAIR: Come on, let us not be too fanatical. It is 7.12 p.m.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I promised them an early mark.

The CHAIR: Mr Buttigieg is a very good teacher; he gave us an early mark of three minutes and I am enforcing it. We will close at that point. The Committee can take up the extra three minutes to work out what we do on Friday. Thank you again to the officials. We have had a good go, and we appreciate it.

Mr SCOTT: Thank you.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.