

# **PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 3 – EDUCATION**

**Tuesday 24 October 2023**

**Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas**

## **EDUCATION AND EARLY LEARNING, AND WESTERN SYDNEY**

**CORRECTED**

**The Committee met at 9:15.**

### **MEMBERS**

Ms Abigail Boyd (Chair)

The Hon. Anthony D'Adam  
The Hon. Rachel Merton (Deputy Chair)  
The Hon. Tania Mihailuk  
The Hon. Sarah Mitchell  
The Hon. Bob Nanva  
The Hon. Emily Suvaal

### **PRESENT**

**The Hon. Prue Car**, *Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney*

## **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**



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**CORRECTED**

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**The CHAIR:** Welcome to the first hearing of the Portfolio Committee No. 3 - Education inquiry into budget estimates 2023-24. I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are meeting today. I pay respects to Elders past and present, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales. I also acknowledge and pay my respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today or watching us via the broadcast. I welcome Deputy Premier Prue Car and accompanying officials to this hearing. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Education, Early Learning and Western Sydney. I ask everyone to please turn their mobile phones to silent.

Parliamentary privilege applies to witnesses in relation to the evidence they give today. However, it does not apply to what witnesses say outside of the hearing. I urge witnesses to be careful about making comments to the media or to others after completing their evidence here today. In addition, the Legislative Council has adopted rules to provide procedural fairness for inquiry participants. I encourage Committee members and witnesses to be mindful of these procedures.

I welcome our witnesses and thank them for making the time to give evidence. Deputy Premier, I remind you that you do not need to be sworn as you have already sworn an oath to your office as a member of Parliament.

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**CORRECTED**

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**Mr MURAT DIZDAR**, Secretary, NSW Department of Education, affirmed and examined

**Ms CATHY BRENNAN**, Acting Deputy Secretary, School Performance (North), NSW Department of Education, affirmed and examined

**Ms DEBORAH SUMMERHAYES**, Acting Deputy Secretary, School Performance (South), NSW Department of Education, affirmed and examined

**Ms LEANNE NIXON**, Acting Deputy Secretary, Learning Improvement, NSW Department of Education, affirmed and examined

**Mr MARK BARRAKET**, Acting Deputy Secretary, Early Childhood Outcomes, NSW Department of Education, affirmed and examined

**Ms CHLOE READ**, Deputy Secretary, Education and Skills Reform, NSW Department of Education, affirmed and examined

**Mr SHAUN RUMING**, Chief People Officer, NSW Department of Education, affirmed and examined

**Ms SALLY BLACKADDER**, Acting Deputy Secretary, and Chief Operating Officer, NSW Department of Education, affirmed and examined

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

**Mr PAUL MARTIN**, Chief Executive Officer, NSW Education Standards Authority, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Today's hearing will be conducted from 9.15 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. We are joined by the Minister for the morning session only, which runs from 9.15 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. with a 15-minute break around 11.00 a.m. In the afternoon we will hear from departmental witnesses from 2.00 p.m. to 5.30 p.m., again with a 15-minute break for afternoon tea around 3.30 p.m. During these sessions there will be questions from the Opposition and the crossbench members only. There will then be 15 minutes allocated for Government questions at 10.45 a.m., 12.45 p.m. and 5.15 p.m. We will begin with questions from the Opposition, and the Hon. Sarah Mitchell.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Good morning, Deputy Premier. Good morning, officials; it is nice to see you all again, from a slightly different angle this year. Deputy Premier, were you the Acting Premier on Monday 9 October?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'd have to check my diary, which is disclosed in—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Sorry, you don't remember? That was the day of the Palestinian Action Group rally.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes, I was, Ms Mitchell.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You were? Thank you. When were you first advised that that group would be holding a rally that day?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** If I'm to remember correctly, I gave a press conference in the morning at Ashfield Boys High School about the Government's—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I'm asking when you were advised about the rally, not about the press conference.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes, I'm providing an answer, Ms Mitchell, seeing as this is the budget estimates hearing for Education. I went to—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, and I'm asking you some questions. I want to know when you were advised about the rally. I'm not asking you about your press conference that day.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I held a press conference about the mobile phone ban, which has been received brilliantly across New South Wales.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, Deputy Premier, that's not what I'm asking. I want to know when you were first advised about that rally taking place. Were you briefed prior to your press conference?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** About the rally? What rally are you referring to, Ms Mitchell?

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**CORRECTED**

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**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The Palestinian Action Group rally that was held that night; the one on the stairs of the Opera House that was seen all over the world. Surely you are aware of that? Were you advised that day, as Acting Premier, that police had an idea that that rally was going ahead that day?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I was not briefed about that.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You weren't briefed? Okay, thank you. Did you discuss it with the Premier?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Did you discuss it with the police Minister?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Sorry, I'm not sure why we're going down this route when this—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Because you were the Acting Premier—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —is the budget estimates hearing for Education.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** —on that day. You've just confirmed you were the Acting Premier—

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

**The CHAIR:** Order! I will hear the point of order taken by the Hon. Anthony D'Adam.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** This is an Education estimates hearing. It's not an opportunity for the Opposition to question the Deputy Premier on issues outside of the portfolio of Education. This is an Education and Early Learning estimates and the question—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** To the point of order: The Deputy Premier has confirmed she was the Acting Premier that day.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can I please finish my—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I want to know—

**The CHAIR:** Order! I will hear from one of you at a time.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I want to know what happened.

**The CHAIR:** The Hon. Sarah Mitchell will come to order.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I am going to take my point of order.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You're just wasting time.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The longer you take interrupting me is eating into your time. My point is this: This is an Education and Early Learning estimates hearing. It's not an opportunity for the Opposition to ask questions about this subject matter.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So there's no accountability when this Deputy Premier is the Acting Premier?

**The CHAIR:** The Hon. Sarah Mitchell will address her response to the point of order through me.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Chair, I'm asking questions about the Deputy Premier's role as Acting Premier on that day. She has already said that she was not made aware of that and hadn't spoken to any of her colleagues about that. It is well within the remit of what budget estimates is about.

**The CHAIR:** I will allow the questioning because this is the only chance members get to interrogate the Deputy Premier in that role. But I ask that we allow the Deputy Premier to respond to the questions adequately.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you, Chair. Just to confirm, Deputy Premier: You didn't discuss it with the Premier or the police Minister and you weren't briefed by the police even though you were Acting Premier that day?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I was not briefed about what was planned to occur that evening.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Right, so no-one was in charge that day?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm sorry, Ms Mitchell, but if I can take this opportunity to say—I really hate to start on this track straightaway, but I think the fact that the former Minister's first question—

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**CORRECTED**

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**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, you're not here to debate the questions that I'm asking. You were the Acting Premier on the day—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —has got nothing to do with our schools—

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Point of order—

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

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —says more about how you feel about your record.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** —where, you could argue, that this country was brought into disrepute by what happened at the Opera House—

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** —and you had no idea what was going on.

**The CHAIR:** I will hear the point of order.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Chair, the procedural fairness resolution is pretty clear about treating witnesses with courtesy at all times. I would assume that that would extend, in the first instance, to allowing the Deputy Premier to answer a question when it is asked of her.

**The CHAIR:** Let's get this point of order out of the way early on. We do allow robust debate in these estimates hearings, particularly when it does come to Ministers, but we do need to allow the witnesses to respond. The Deputy Premier wasn't even getting a sentence out there. For Hansard, if nothing else, I ask if we could just have one person speaking at a time.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Thank you, Chair.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you for confirming, Deputy Premier, that you weren't across that on the day. Did the Teachers' Federation talk to you before it put out its pro-Palestinian statement last week?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Have you reached out to any of the Jewish schools or students over the past few weeks to offer any support?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes, I have spoken multiple times to the Jewish community.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Could you table and provide advice as to who you've spoken to and on what dates for the Committee, please?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I will take that on notice. But I inform the Committee that it is a matter of public record who the Ministers in the State Government—as you well know, as a previous Minister—meet with and speak with. It's all openly disclosed—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's fine, but if you've met with them I'm sure you won't mind sharing who and when you did. That would be great.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I will. They'll all be open disclosures.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Let's move on, Minister. You could also take it on notice to let us know as a Committee who you have met with. Is there any new money available for air conditioning upgrades for schools this budget?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Can I just thank you for this question about air conditioning, because it's actually one that I would really like to address for the Committee. I believe stage two of the Cooler Classrooms Program began when? In 2019. Of course, I think Ms Mitchell, you were the Minister at that time.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, I was. We delivered \$500 million for schools.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** And I have to say—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Minister, my question was very specific—

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Point of order—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Is there any new money in the budget for air conditioning?

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**CORRECTED**

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**The CHAIR:** Order! I will hear the point of order.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Under the procedural fairness resolution, the witness ought to be given the opportunity to answer the question that has been asked of her.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** To the point of order: I asked about what was available in this budget. I'm not asking about the previous Government in 2019. It's a very specific question. Was there any new money for air conditioning in this year's budget under your Government? Yes or no?

**The CHAIR:** Order! This is going to go very slowly and we will have a lot of interruptions if we don't allow the Minister an adequate chance to respond. It's very clear, if the Minister begins to waffle or you feel she is going off point by all means you can interrupt at that point, but we are not even allowing the Minister to get a sentence out at this point. If we could have a bit more balance. Thank you.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you for your ruling, because I am being directly relevant to the question that you've asked, Ms Mitchell. It is important that we put this in context of just what, I'm sorry, but you left to me—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, I know Deputy Premier, what we did.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —in terms of the budget.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What did you put in the budget? You're the Minister now.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** Point of order—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What did you put in the budget? Is there money? Yes or no? The answer's no and you just don't want to answer that.

**The CHAIR:** Order! A point of order has been taken.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Do you know, there are school children here.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** So, it's a little bit embarrassing.

**The CHAIR:** I will hear the point of order.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** The Hon. Sarah Mitchell is directly flouting your ruling.

**The CHAIR:** Again, it is in the interests of all members who are asking questions to avoid interruptions from Government members, in particular, to allow the Minister to respond to questions.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Thank you, Chair, again. What has occurred here is that the previous Government—and I am sorry that you find it hard to hear, Ms Mitchell, but this is the truth—opened round two of Cooler Classrooms by asking schools to apply in 2019. Those schools were never funded for their air conditioning.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Have you funded those schools, Minister?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** They were never funded for their air conditioning.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Have you funded those schools, Minister?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** So, what we faced, schools that had all this false hope, they put in applications but they were never funded.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** All right, well, did you fund them? You're the Minister—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm sorry, I'm sorry—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The Minister is midway through her answer.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You have left me, the previous Government left this Government with an unfunded program of air conditioning expectations, and that is the truth.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, Deputy Premier, we funded \$500 million

**Ms PRUE CAR:** And I'm sorry, you can try to interrupt me all you like, Ms Mitchell, but that is what you left me.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, you are now the Minister. You are responsible for the budget that was delivered this year. Did you allocate any further funding for air conditioning? Yes or no?



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**CORRECTED**

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**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell, I am responsible for the budget. I have been the Minister—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The answer's no, just be honest.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —for two terms and your Government was in for what? Forty-eight terms? Forty-eight full terms—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, we put in \$500 million. Did you put in any money?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —and at the very end, after 12 years, you did not fund the air conditioning.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So, the answer is no.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You left us with an unfunded program. You can interrupt all you like—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** In front of the school children—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —that are in the audience, but that is the truth, Ms Mitchell.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier—

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The truth is your budget does not contain a single dollar for new air conditioning projects, does it? Yes or no?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell, did you fund—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, we did.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Did you fund—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Five hundred million dollars.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You did not fund—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Five hundred million dollars.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You did not fund round two.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You did not fund round two.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Does your budget contain a single dollar for additional air conditioning at schools?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You know, since we've come to government—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It's a simple question.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —we have actually—I'm actually answering this, Ms Mitchell.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, it's yes or no. The answer is no.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Point of order—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You are not endearing yourself, I'm sorry—

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm sorry, Chair—

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm directly responding.

**The CHAIR:** Apologies, Deputy Premier, if you could just hold for a second.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Since we have come to government—

**The CHAIR:** Order! I have to hear the point of order now it has been called.

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**CORRECTED**

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**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Chair, this is going to be a very long hearing if we cannot settle this. Proceedings in this hearing ought to be respectful, ought to be civil, and that includes allowing the Minister sufficient time to answer a question.

**The CHAIR:** Again, it is about balance. At this point it is impossible for Hansard to be recording this accurately. There is room for some backwards and forwards but there is too much talking at the same time. In that particular exchange the witness was also asking questions. If we could allow each other to speak so that Hansard can record it, that would be great. Please go ahead, Ms Mitchell.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, a final time for you to put it on the record. Did you provide a single dollar for new air conditioning projects in this year's budget? Yes or no?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We have air conditioned a thousand classrooms, libraries, learning spaces, in a total of 67 schools. You actually did not—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Is there any more money in the budget?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —fund round two of all our classrooms—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** There's no program. Thank you, Deputy Premier, let's move on. You didn't answer. The answer is no.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The truth does hurt, Ms Mitchell.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Let's go to the money that the previous Government signed off on under WestInvest—\$130 million for a further 160 schools in western Sydney for air conditioning. Why did you cut that money?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Further again, I will ask Mr Manning to provide some details.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, no, no. I'm asking you. It's about WestInvest. You're Minister for Western Sydney, what happened to the WestInvest money for air conditioning?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Once again, Ms Mitchell, I am attempting to answer and you're interrupting me. I am attempting to answer.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Don't you know?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I very well do know, so I don't like being verbally by the former Minister in estimates, thank you. I am going to pass to Mr Manning to give some further details. But I will say, that the truth of it is, and I'm sorry, but it has to be put on the record, that you encouraged schools to apply for a program that was not funded.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, no, Deputy Premier, I'm sorry, I will correct—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** And this is a story of what the previous Government—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Excuse me, it's my turn to ask questions.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —provided to us, unfunded programs—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** One hundred and thirty million dollars under WestInvest for 160-odd schools—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That were never funded. I'm going to ask Mr Manning—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** —in Western Sydney were signed off in February.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You have not delivered that money.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The Minister has asked—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You have cut it, you have cut money from air conditioning from Western Sydney schools.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** —Mr Manning to provide an answer. He should be given the opportunity.

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**CORRECTED**

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**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You are the Minister for Western Sydney and that has happened on your watch. It's not Mr Manning, I'm asking you.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell, if you are asking me if we—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You've cut it, just admit the truth.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Why aren't you telling the truth?

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Point of order—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** If you are asking me—

**The CHAIR:** Apologies, I have to hear the point of order.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** I'm sorry to have to keep interrupting, but we are veering away from questioning to the making of statements. The Deputy Premier has said that Mr Manning will provide a response. I'm very keen to hear that response.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You can ask him a question in your time.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** If we can allow Mr Manning to answer that question that has been asked by the Minister.

**The CHAIR:** I will rule on that particular aspect because I think this will come up a few times. It is within each member's discretion as to who they direct their question to. If the Minister cannot answer it, they are able to direct it to somebody else. But if in the interests of time we would rather come back to the bureaucrats in the afternoon, that is within the discretion of the member.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, thank you. We would like to focus on the Minister this morning. I will hand over to my colleague now.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Can I attempt to answer that question please?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No.

**The CHAIR:** Out of procedural fairness, can we have an answer from the Minister please?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Thank you, Chair. If you are asking me, Ms Mitchell, if we have had to find money to pay for the building of schools in Western Sydney—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, that's not what I asked. That's not what I asked, Deputy Premier.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell, seriously—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I asked why you cut the WestInvest announcement of \$130 million that was signed off in February.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** To fund schools that you did not build—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm not asking you about that.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Jordan Springs, Gregory Hills, Leppington.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm handing over to my colleague now. This isn't the lower House, Deputy Premier, you can't get away with the political spin here.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Deputy Premier, what legislation are you responsible for in your capacity as Minister for Western Sydney?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** As Minister for Western Sydney, I would have to take that on notice because we have changed the—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You don't know.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —role of Minister for Western Sydney to really be—I see my role as—

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** It's been a long-standing role for many governments.

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**CORRECTED**

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**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The way that I'm approaching being the Minister for Western Sydney—as a resident of Western Sydney and a long-term member of Parliament for Western Sydney—is really to be the advocate for issues that Western Sydney families feel passionate about and need their government to act on. I am going to say, I will come back to what I was tempted to say in the previous answer—

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** So, legislation specific—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The delivery of schools and hospitals in Western Sydney that the previous Government refused to fund, while hundreds of families moved into areas like Marsden Park without—

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Deputy Premier, if I could just recap, legislation relevant to the passion in Western Sydney that you identify and everything, the legislation relevant to your work there as western Sydney amounts to—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Zero.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The role is really to advocate for Western Sydney—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So you do not know if your are responsible for any legislation?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** She has taken it on notice.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The role is really to advocate for Western Sydney.

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

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The role is to advocate for the people of Western Sydney, Ms Merton.

**The CHAIR:** Apologies, Deputy Premier, we have a point of order.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Deputy Premier—

**The CHAIR:** Order! What is the point of order?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The question was asked, the Minister took it on notice. That's the end, move on.

**The CHAIR:** Again, it is within the discretion of the member to ask a question they have already got an answer to. If they want to have a repetitive answer, that's what they will get. If I can just remind all members, if you are not the member asking the question and you are not raising a point of order, I don't expect to hear your voice. Go ahead.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Deputy Premier, how many meetings have you held to discuss matters relating to your Western Sydney portfolio?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Merton, I am regularly meeting with government agencies, members of the public, members of the community about issues facing Western Sydney. All of my meetings are publicly disclosed, as I've said before. But can I just say, since the first day I entered this building as the member for Londonderry and now as the Minister for Western Sydney, one of the things that I pride myself on is I have advocated for the families of Western Sydney and I would urge you to look at some of the issues historically which I have fought on, and I'm continuing to fight on this time within government.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Thank you, Deputy Premier.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** So I'm fighting for the people of Western Sydney every day.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Deputy Premier, what department supports these responsibilities?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Well we receive—

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Western Sydney.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes, we receive support from the Premier's department and also I receive support from within my own ministerial office.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** How many departmental staff are allocated specifically to this portfolio?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I have a number of departmental staff within my office and they share responsibilities, Ms Merton.

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**CORRECTED**

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**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Sorry, if I could just recap, specific to the Western Sydney portfolio, how many departmental staff?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I've just answered that question, with respect, Ms Merton. The departmental staff, not within the government—are you talking about DLOs within my ministerial office?

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Yes.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** They share responsibilities.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Deputy Premier, I asked you about staff in your office dedicated to the portfolio. We've addressed the departmental liaison officers. Any other staff in the office dedicated to the Western Sydney portfolio?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm not sure what you're looking for, Ms Merton, but it won't shock the Committee to know that there are advisers that advise me on Western Sydney. I'm not sure what smoking gun you're looking for, Ms Merton, but, yes, there are policy advisers within my ministerial office that help advise on Western Sydney matters as I'm Minister for Western Sydney.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, could you maybe provide on notice to the Committee how many DLOs in your office and who specifically looks after Western Sydney and the same for your ministerial staff? Do you have staff who are purely dedicated for work on Western Sydney or are they shared responsibilities?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm happy to take that on notice, sure.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That'd be great, thank you. You said that you're an advocate for families in Western Sydney. Obviously cost of living is a huge issue. How come your Government isn't continuing Back to School vouchers or Before and After School Care vouchers that help with cost of living and indeed have massive take-up in Western Sydney? What did you do to fight for those?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I maintain my previous answer. I'm fighting hard for the people of Western Sydney each and every day.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But you didn't deliver. The vouchers aren't there; they've been cut.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Can I just tell you, the examples that you've just provided, Ms Mitchell, are very similar to what we were just discussing before, and I'm loath to bring this up because of the reaction that ensued, but the issue of Cooler Classrooms is almost frighteningly similar to those issues about unfunded programs. The previous Government left to us \$7 billion I think, and I think any reasonable person would not expect a brand new government to have magically filled a \$7 billion black hole, and that's what that is about.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thanks, Deputy Premier.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** But let me talk about cost of living for families across New South Wales, including Western Sydney, and that—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I've asked a specific question about the vouchers. That's what I'd like. If I could just ask you a further question from what you've just said there, you said you're an advocate for Western Sydney. You were involved in the formation of the budget. You sit at ERC and you determine where the money goes. You are responsible for what you have chosen to fund and not fund.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As a government, we now know from this morning you've cut the WestInvest money that was there for air conditioning in western schools. There is no Cooler Classrooms funding going forward, Back to School vouchers are gone and Before and After School Care vouchers are gone. So what on earth are families in Western Sydney getting from you? You're cutting everything.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm not sure if this is a—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** How do you stand behind that decision? What did you do to advocate? They're worse off with you. You've been in for six months.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm not sure if this is a trick question, Ms Mitchell, but do you know what families in Western Sydney are getting from this Government that they didn't get from you, they're getting a high school at Marsden Park.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We'll get to that later, Deputy Premier. I'm asking about air conditioning.

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**CORRECTED**

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**Ms PRUE CAR:** They're getting a high school at Jordan Springs. They're getting a primary school at Marsden—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm asking about, with respect—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You asked me a question.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I asked you a very specific question.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We are funding the schools and hospitals in Western Sydney, and do you know what a lot of them are getting? A lot of them are teachers and they're getting a historic pay rise.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, Deputy Premier, as I said earlier, I'm not interested in your political spin. What I am interested in—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No, I'm answering the question.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, you are not.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Just because you don't like the answer, Ms Mitchell—

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I asked you about Cooler Classrooms, I asked you about Back to School vouchers and I asked you about Before and After School Care vouchers. You as a government have made a conscious decision not to fund any of those programs, so kids in Western Sydney will be sweltering in a hot summers heat, families will not be able to access back to school vouchers—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Point of order: Is this a speech or is this a question?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Families will not be able to get back to school support this summer because you've cut them.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What do you say to those families? What is your response?

**The CHAIR:** Order! Ms Mitchell, apologies, I have received a point of order.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You just don't like it.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The shadow Minister needs to have a specific question. Giving speeches at the stump is not the purpose of budget estimates.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** My specific question is: What is your response to those families when you have cut all of those programs?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** She needs to ask a specific question and direct it to the Minister for an answer.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm happy to answer it.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You've cut all those programs.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm happy to answer it, Madam Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Order! When I say "order" you all shoosh. In relation to the point of order, again there is balance here. If we can get to the question. Some statements are permitted. If we can get to the question. Please go ahead.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The question was: Those families have now lost air conditioning in their kid's schools. They've lost those cost-of-living vouchers because your Government, you as Deputy Premier sitting on ERC, you have chosen not to fund it.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** What I say to those families is: I say to you, Ms Mitchell, in terms of the kids sweltering in classrooms as you claim, the classrooms that you never funded to be air conditioned, what do you say to those families?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We did a thousand, Deputy Premier.

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**CORRECTED**

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**Ms PRUE CAR:** What do you say to those families?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, we did a thousand. You haven't—it's your choice.

**The CHAIR:** Order! The Opposition's time has expired. I'm going to take this first chunk of crossbench question time and then I'll hand over to my colleague. As you commented, Deputy Premier, there are four lovely year 10 students sitting in the gallery today. They have given me some questions to ask you, which I am going to repeat faithfully without editing. I will let you know that they have read the plan for New South Wales public education that was released this week, so their questions are asked in full knowledge of what's in that plan. Their first question is: Are there any other policies that you would be looking to implement to bolster student wellbeing?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I acknowledge the students from a range of schools. I think it's two government schools and two independent schools, one Catholic systemic school not far from me, in the audience. We did launch our plan for public education yesterday, and a huge part of that—and you're really right to ask this question; it's of great concern to everyone in education—is wellbeing. We are really working so hard on our commitment to recruit more school counsellors and psychologists. That has to be one of the most important things we can do. It was an election commitment, and part of our historic pay rise for teachers included a historic pay rise for school counsellors. What we're going to do is we're going to deliver on that commitment to get more school counsellors in our schools. We've seen an unacceptable lack of school counsellors under the previous Government, so we can get support for kids like those wonderful year 10 kids in the audience. Because we know it wasn't just a post-COVID problem. We know we must do better for our kids. I'll pass onto Mr Dizdar who has consulted widely on the plan for public education.

**The CHAIR:** I'm going to come back to Mr Dizdar later.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'd love to add further, Chair, if possible because it's a really important area.

**The CHAIR:** Apologies, Mr Dizdar, I do want to get through the rest of the questions, and I don't want them to be Dixers, so I'm going to continue.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes, fair enough.

**The CHAIR:** As I said, they're unedited. The second one: How can we encourage a love of learning given kids in primary school report it is boring?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Report it is boring? Yes. Great question. Through you, Chair, I would say the most important thing—and this won't shock people to know that this is my answer. The single most important thing we can do to encourage a love of learning in our classrooms is support the wonderful expert practitioners in those classrooms, support our teachers. They're the experts that encourage a love of learning, that get that spark started in primary school, in kindergarten, and the truth is we just don't have enough of them at the moment. Even today's revelations show that we've got 10,000 classes uncovered every day because of the neglect of the previous Government. It's teachers that will encourage a love of learning, and this Government makes no apologies for that being our focus to improve outcomes and hopefully to make primary school a little less boring.

**The CHAIR:** Their third question—and again apologies, Mr Dizdar, I'm sure you'd love to step in on these but these are questions that wanted to be asked of the Deputy Premier, so I will continue. Thirdly, how are you tackling the difference in quality of education between metro and regional kids to ensure there is an equal playing field for students to learn with the same learning materials and resources?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That is a really great question, and it's something that is of great concern to me as Minister and to all the officials around the table and to us as a government. Really we know from today's results from the census we've done about merged and cancelled classes that rural and regional and remote schools suffer worst. I'm going to maybe sound like a bit of a broken record today, but there's a reason for that. The biggest thing we can do to support our regional students, the number one ticket item, is to get more teachers in the classrooms. Really that is the magic of what happens in our schools. We are a government totally committed to rolling out the new curriculum, to building schools where they are needed. But, at the end of the day, the magic of a school is a wonderful, expert practitioner—a teacher—in front of children. That's the thing that can make a difference in their lives. We all remember teachers who have changed our lives. That is the single best thing that we can do to improve outcomes for all the hundreds of thousands of children across our 2,200 public schools, especially in rural and regional New South Wales.

**The CHAIR:** I'm glad you mentioned curriculum. Their fourth question was is there a way that we can use student feedback to update and influence the curriculum?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes, another great question. I think I might want to powwow with these students afterwards. They seem to have some great ideas for education. We of course encourage student feedback

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**CORRECTED**

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constantly. Through the rolling out of the new curriculum via NESAs, which Mr Martin is here to represent, there are many ways that students can input their feedback. They are living documents. Teachers, as part of their expert practice, will always be engaging with students and families. So, as Minister, of course I encourage that.

**The CHAIR:** I may come back to some of these later. The final one from the students is how are we updating the assessment criteria to cater for the different learning styles of students?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** This really speaks to how every school and every classroom is slightly different. Part of the beauty of our plan for public education that we released yesterday is that it includes an ability for our department—I know that Mr Dizdar would say this, I think, if I were to pass to him—to work with schools on particular targets and assessment requirements that would actually work for their schools and their classrooms. We are a government that is committed to working with schools on a case-by-case basis about what would work for them, with the top-line achievement that we want to reach of improving outcomes for all of our children, no matter where that child is, where they go to school, what level they may be at or whether they have complex needs. Each and every child in our system deserves the best quality education in New South Wales. That's what gets me up each and every day.

**The CHAIR:** Unfortunately, I cannot tell from their faces what they thought of your responses, but I'm glad that I could bring their voices in.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I welcome their feedback.

**The CHAIR:** In the few minutes I have left before I pass to my colleague, I will come back to that issue of taking the ideas of students and directly feeding them back in. That's not something that we have seen—over the past 12 years, at least.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Student councils. We like the DOVES.

**The CHAIR:** I acknowledge the mumbblings from my left. In terms of taking that direct feedback on policies, what has your Government been doing so far to directly involve the voices of children?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I acknowledge the interjection of the previous Minister. It's true, we both love the DOVES.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We agree on some things.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** They have wonderful feedback about what we can do within our system. But you're right, it is something that we really need to concentrate on. I'd love to be able to do more work in this regard—how we can actually encourage student agency and student voice. There's a generation of young people who really want to have their say about the way their school works, their curriculum and the way the world works around them. I go to a lot of schools and they have great opinions and they're going to be wonderful leaders in the community. I'm going to be working really hard on making sure that student voice is part of what we do through official channels. Something I do as well when I go to every school is I make sure I spend time with students and teachers, talking to them on the ground about what's happening. Because, absolutely, you can meet the stakeholders—you can meet with all the peak bodies—but you've got to meet with kids in classes as well and talk to them about what they feel we should be doing better and what we're doing well.

**The CHAIR:** As an example, did you consult with schoolchildren in relation to the mobile phone ban?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We encouraged, through the consultation process, for schools to consult with their school community, including the students. I'm going to use the example of Ashfield Boys High School. I know that the principal there—an outstanding public education leader—ran consultations that were basically adult-free zones. They were just with the children, just with the students, about how it would work for them. I know that's happened all over the place. I'm sure Mr Dizdar would be able to elucidate on this.

**The CHAIR:** Can I clarify—the concept or the policy of the ban rather than the implementation of the ban. Were children consulted about whether it was needed and whether they thought it would be a good idea and achieve the stated objectives for the plan?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Clearly, Chair, it was an election commitment of the Government in opposition, so it was clear that that's what we wanted to do after hearing from certain areas in particular.

**The CHAIR:** Was that commitment based on consultation with children, though?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We consulted on the implementation. That's what we did: We consulted on the implementation of the ban. Many schools were doing it already, but we definitely consulted through schools.



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**CORRECTED**

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**The CHAIR:** Are you aware that there are many, many children who think that the adults are completely out of touch when it comes to this mobile phone ban? Why weren't they consulted? Was it just an election commitment that was dragged out of thin air?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You're totally right to raise this. A lot of children are on my social media about this mobile phone ban, I can assure the Committee. This was an election commitment based on feedback from parents, principals and teachers. I acknowledge that there are a lot of students who need access to mobile phones, and our policy includes flexibility where it is needed.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Good morning, Minister. I haven't seen you for a while. Congratulations on your wedding. Out of interest, did you have a welcome to country at your wedding?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I did.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** That's excellent. When you had the welcome to country, did you coordinate that with the local land council?

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Point of order—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm happy to answer this, but I think the welcome to country at my wedding—

**The CHAIR:** I'm sorry, I need to hear the point of order.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** I don't see how this is relevant to the terms of reference with respect to budget estimates and the Consolidated Fund and budget papers.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** The Minister said she was happy to answer it.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** It's not really within the parameters of the Committee's ambit.

**The CHAIR:** Order! I will leave this one to the Minister's own—

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** She may be but it's not in order.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** It's not about her ministerial duties.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, I appreciate it. I uphold the point of order but I will also allow the Minister to answer or not answer the question as she sees fit.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** My answer, Chair, with respect, is yes, there was a welcome to country at my recent wedding. There was an acknowledgement of country provided by the celebrant.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** So it wasn't a welcome to country?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It was an acknowledgement of country. I tell you what, in my preparations I didn't expect to be asked that.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Because it has nothing to do with the portfolio.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** You should be across it because for your HSIE draft syllabus, you're expecting kindergarten kids to understand the difference between welcome to country and acknowledgement of country. Given that you've had trouble answering this, don't you think it's extraordinary to expect that kindergarten children be across that type of detail?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mihailuk, with respect, I will not agree with the premise of your question. We proudly have a curriculum that encourages the deep learning of our country's long history, particularly the First Nations people of our country.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** But you are changing it. You're going through a review of the syllabus at the moment.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm not sure where Ms Mihailuk is going, Madam Chair, but yes, we are encouraging all of our children within our schools to have an appreciation of the deep history of our nation, including the First Nations people of this country.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** But you're expecting five-year-olds to decipher the difference between a welcome to country and an acknowledgement of country.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It might shock the Committee to know that I don't have an extremely detailed knowledge of every syllabus document within the curriculum.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** It doesn't shock us at all.

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**CORRECTED**

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**Ms PRUE CAR:** If we're actually after a very detailed answer on the syllabus documentation within the curriculum, I would, with respect—through you, Madam Chair—ask for Mr Martin to give an answer about the curriculum.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** That's okay. Mr Martin can provide it in the afternoon. Don't worry, I have plenty of questions there too.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Point of order: We have a range of people who have been sworn in as witnesses for the first session of the day. If they have no purpose, why are they here? If questions cannot be directed to them and if the Minister cannot seek further elaboration on the answers, at this point in time why are those witnesses here?

**The CHAIR:** In relation to the point of order, this was well traversed in budget estimates in the previous term, when, unfortunately, Mr D'Adam, the now Labor Government members were on the opposite side. During that time, the practice was well established that it was within each member's right to direct the questions to the Minister during this limited time if they wished.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Madam Chair—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Further to the point of order—

**The CHAIR:** I will hear further to the point of order.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** That is true—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** You're just eating into my time. That's all you are doing.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** —but there was certainly a scope for—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Madam Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** —the Minister to seek further elaboration on questions from other members of the witness panel.

**The CHAIR:** I have ruled on the point of order.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Minister, could you elaborate a little bit on what sky country and water country mean?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mihailuk, I think any reasonable person would accept that I have not come here to answer detailed questions on the syllabus or the curriculum.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's exactly what you are here for.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Minister, you have a review currently—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes, I am answering questions on what the Government is doing in education.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Your department is undertaking a review into the syllabus.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** You're actually introducing sky country and water country content for year 1 students. I would have thought you would be relatively across that.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I make no apologies, Ms Mihailuk, for us as a system and for NESA as the authority, for implementing a curriculum with age-appropriate content—always age-appropriate content—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** So only six-year-olds can understand it.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —acknowledging the deep history of our nation. Let me just say that when we are talking about the syllabus within the curriculum, for the benefit of the Committee, we are talking about more than 200 syllabuses that are currently being reviewed. You are talking about every lesson in every school—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** The Government has boasted about introducing additional content around Aboriginal customs, traditions and languages.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes. I said I'm proud of it.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I would have thought you would be a little bit across it. It doesn't seem to be the case. You couldn't tell me the difference between welcome to country and acknowledgment of country

**CORRECTED**

earlier. Minister, can I just ask you a question about the treaty? Will the \$5 million listening tour treaty that your Government has announced for this year be visiting schools? Will there be any consultation at schools?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The Premier has made it very clear about our commitments before the election and the priorities of our Government. I look forward to working with—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Will any of that consultation happen at schools?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I look forward to working with my Cabinet colleagues on the consultation around that.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** You don't know if they are going to be. Will you rule it out?

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Point of order—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No, I'm not ruling anything out, Ms Mihailuk.

**The CHAIR:** A point of order has been taken.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm sorry you're looking for a smoking gun that doesn't exist.

**The CHAIR:** Order! I will hear the point of order.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** The Deputy Premier has answered the question. I ask that the member move on, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** I generally uphold the point of order. We will continue.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** On the issue of the Voice referendum, I have raised in Parliament my concerns about teachers providing their political views in the classroom to students. I had reports of a year 8 maths class where the teacher decided to give their view on the Voice referendum. Was there a clear directive from you or, indeed, from Mr Dizdar that teachers couldn't discuss the referendum in class?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes, there was a clear directive from the secretary, Mr Dizdar, that teachers are to remain impartial at all times. Let me just say, in reality, what we are talking about is this. There are many people around the Committee that have children and know. What happens is that schools don't operate in a vacuum, as we all know. Children hear things on the news. They are more likely to see it on TikTok. They come into their classroom and they ask a trusted adult, which is normally the teacher—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Yes, Minister, but it is up to the teacher to drive it back onto the curriculum.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —and it's up to the teacher to try to provide a balanced view.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** If you're talking about a maths class, you shouldn't be talking about the Voice referendum.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We were very clear—

**The CHAIR:** Apologies, Deputy Premier. There is a point of order.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The Minister is trying to answer the question. Ms Mihailuk is speaking over the Minister. The Minister should be afforded the opportunity to give a proper answer to the question.

**The CHAIR:** Again, the balance had got slightly out there. We will allow a little bit of response time.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The answer to your question, Ms Mihailuk, is yes, there was a clear directive.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Is there a directive in relation to teachers handing out material on election day at the school that they work at? I've had reports of teachers handing out material at both the State election and at the referendum at their own schools that they work at. Have you banned that?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Are you suggesting, Ms Mihailuk, that myself as Minister or Mr Dizdar control what teachers do in their own time? We cannot do that.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** It is a bit off-putting for parents and children who turn up most likely to their local school to vote to see their teachers handing out political material. Wouldn't you agree with that?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I don't know how much clearer I can be that there are specific and detailed directives about teachers remaining impartial. In fact, one of the most important roles of a teacher is to provide balanced information and balanced perspective to children in classrooms.

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**CORRECTED**

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**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** On election day? Handing out material on election day is balanced information?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** With respect, through you, Chair, I really would urge the Committee to enable me to ask Mr Dizdar to elucidate on this because it is he who issues the directives to teachers about how they provide balance in the classroom and not to be partial.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Minister, are you aware that a teacher was disciplined for handing out election material in the seat of Port Stephens back in March? Are you aware of that?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Ms Mihailuk, I can talk to the policies here. We've got very clear guidelines for our 95,000 teachers across the public education system.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Very clear.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** They are covered in the code of conduct.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** But they are allowed to do what they like on election day, aren't they, Mr Dizdar? Is that right?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Let me get to that so I can help the Committee. It's an important—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I think you've got about five seconds.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I would like to give the answer to the Committee. It's an important question.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The question has been asked. The answer should be able to be given.

**The CHAIR:** Before you respond, Mr Dizdar, I clarify for new members that, as long as the question is asked before the end of the time, we allow the question to be answered and then we reset the clock for the next person. Please, go ahead.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** The policies here that come into play are the code of conduct and also the Controversial Issues in Schools policy. The code of conduct is part of annual refresher training for all staff. All staff in our system, from induction to very experienced teachers, know that they've got to be politically neutral and that they can address controversial issues in line with the curriculum because they can be rich opportunities for learning in the classroom. When I was an economics teacher, I know that when I wanted to teach—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** How many decades ago was that?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Your question time is over.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I have been in the system for 27 years.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** It's not my time now. That's okay.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I know that if you are going to teach Keynesian economics, you had to also teach its counterpart in Marxist economics. So you don't take one particular view. In my experience, our staff widely adhered to the policy.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I did 3-unit economics. I remember all that.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** It is well known. If you've got any information about a specific concern, I am really happy to take it offline and look into it for you, Ms Mihailuk.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, do you have responsibility for WestInvest as Minister for Western Sydney?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Do you know which Minister does?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The Treasurer.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you for clarifying that. I just want to take you now to some of the specifics in the budget paper. I am assuming you've got a copy of the budget papers with you.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ask me a question, please, Ms Mitchell. Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Fantastic. Firstly, you said before that this budget was prepared with your direction and your explicit involvement as the Minister and as someone sitting on ERC, so I'm assuming you are across the details.

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**CORRECTED**

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**Ms PRUE CAR:** I think they were your words, Ms Mitchell.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You're not on ERC?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I am, but I think your—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I am going to take you to page 2-9 of the Infrastructure Statement. Can you confirm under oath that all of the 34 new schools, preschools and upgrades that you've got listed there in that first table will be delivered and opened on day one of term 1 in 2027?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We have made a record investment as part of this budget in new schools, particularly in schools in Western Sydney, which is obviously a matter close to my heart as the Minister for Western Sydney. It was asked previously what I'm doing as the Minister for Western Sydney and I think that's a clear example. But I will ask Mr Manning to provide some details on the rollout of that infrastructure. It is a key priority of the Minns Labor Government. We have been elected to build schools where they are needed and, with respect, Ms Mitchell, where you refused to build them. Mr Manning?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Sorry, Deputy Premier, you have made a lot of public commentary about many of these schools, saying that they will all be delivered within this term of government. Are you saying that's not correct? Are they all going to be delivered in this term of government or not?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We have made significant commitments to build schools. You well know, Ms Mitchell, where they are—where you refused to build them, like Jordan Springs and Gregory Hills, and where parents campaigned and campaigned.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Will they be delivered in this term of government. Yes or no?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I will pass to Mr Manning.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So you don't know. Mr Manning?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We stand by all the election commitments that we made for schools that will be built and ready on day one, term 1 of 2027.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** All of these will be delivered by the next election?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Mr Manning?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** All the schools that were funded through the budget process for delivery are intended to be delivered, ready for day one, term 1, 2027.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But not all of them were funded, were they? There are quite a few that are planning only, aren't there?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** There are a number of projects that are planning only.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We will come back to that this afternoon. So, actually, not all of these will be delivered in this term of government because they haven't actually been funded for capital build, have they?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** All the ones that are funded through to the delivery phase will be delivered.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But the planning ones haven't had any capital money allocated, have they?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** At this stage, the planning ones are purely to do the planning.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, do you know how much it costs to build a primary school?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It depends on what sort of primary school you're talking about, Ms Mitchell.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** On average.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm sorry, but you well know, as the previous Minister, that one primary school is not another primary school. I will ask Mr Manning to provide an update.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We normally allocate about \$70 million for a 1,000-place greenfield primary school.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So about \$70 million for a primary school is a fair assessment. Is that correct?

**CORRECTED**

**ANTHONY MANNING:** For a 1,000-place greenfield primary school, yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If you looked at some of the previous builds that are listed in this budget, you've got Gulyangarri in Liverpool; Googong, which was \$60 million; Ngarala Public School is about \$60 million. So, really, you're going to budget for about \$60 million, \$70 million?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What about for a high school? What's the average cost to build a high school, Deputy Premier?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Once again, I know that you are desperate to try to catch me out, Ms Mitchell—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I'm not. I'm asking you—with respect, what does it cost to build a high school?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —but one high school is not another high school is not another high school—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Can you give me an average figure?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —and you well know that.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, can you tell me about the most recent high school? You have been out at Wentworth Point, turning the—no, we turned the sod, sorry. You have been laying the concrete. How much did that school cost?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I know you're very sensitive about Wentworth Point, but—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I'm not. How much is that school? It's listed in your budget papers. How much is the cost for delivery?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm sorry, but one high school is not another high school is not another high school.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** How much is—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Mr Manning—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** How much is Wentworth Point costing?

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** High schools cost differently.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It's in your budget papers. You said you know your budget papers.

**The CHAIR:** Order! I will hear the point of order.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The Minister can be asked one question at a time, not multiple questions. The member is directing multiple questions and expecting the Minister to provide an answer. It's unreasonable. The Minister should be allowed to answer the question that is asked first, and the member can ask a second question.

**The CHAIR:** I uphold the point of order.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What was the cost for Wentworth Point, Minister? It's listed in your budget papers as an ongoing project. You said you're across the detail. What's the cost?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I am across the detail, Ms Mitchell.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, give me a figure.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm telling you that the delivery of Wentworth Point—and I know you're very, very sensitive about this—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm not sensitive about it at all, Deputy Premier. Just give me a number. If you know it, what is it?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No, I will ask Mr Manning to provide the details about Wentworth Point.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So you don't know. Mr Manning, \$160 million. Is that right? Is that what the cost is in the budget papers?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** That's about right, yes.

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**CORRECTED**

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**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** For a cost of a high school in Western Sydney Growth Area, what would you budget to deliver—on average—a high school in Western Sydney to cater for growing communities?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** A standard budget for a 2,000-place high school—again, in a greenfield site—we would budget an initial budget of about \$200 million.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I just want to take you now, Deputy Premier, to page 2-11 of the budget papers. You've got a commitment here where you say, "Key new education projects. Four new primary schools and 10 new high schools". Some are for planning; some are delivery. You've allocated \$767.1 million. If Mr Manning has just confirmed that it's about \$70 million to build a primary school and you budget \$200 million for a decent-sized high school in Western Sydney, you don't have enough money to build those, do you, Deputy Premier?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell, I'm sorry to say it like this, but I'm not sure with what credibility you come to this Committee criticising this Government on the failure to build schools in new growth areas.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, I'm not interested in you reflecting.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Let me talk to you about the parents of Jordan Springs and Gregory Hills—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm sorry, Chair—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —who have waited and waited and waited for you to build schools that never eventuated.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, Deputy Premier—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We have funded these schools.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, you haven't.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We will deliver these schools.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You haven't.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We have been elected to build these schools.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, can I just make the point that Mr Manning has just said, under oath, that to deliver a 1,000-place primary school you are looking at at least \$70 million; to do a decent-sized high school, say in Jordan Springs in your electorate, you'd need \$200 million budgeted. But you're trying to tell the people of New South Wales that you can deliver four primary schools and 10 high schools for \$767.1 million. Now, I know maths isn't your strong point, but tell me how you have enough money to do that.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Point of order—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell—

**The CHAIR:** Order! I will hear the point of order.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Neither is Aboriginal culture and traditions.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It doesn't add up. There's not enough money.

**The CHAIR:** Order! I will hear the point of order.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Procedural fairness resolution—witnesses need to be treated with respect and civility.

**The CHAIR:** In relation to the point of order, we do allow a little bit of extra banter when it comes to Ministers, but that one was pretty direct.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** It was accurate.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The member should be asked to withdraw that comment. It was an adverse reflection.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell, I'm happy to answer this because I take great delight—and I'm actually surprised that you would come into this Committee today and actually even utter the words "Jordan Springs" because you had refused to acknowledge that that suburb even needed a high school.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's not true, Deputy Premier.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You have absolutely no credibility on this issue. I am happy to say under oath, Ms Mitchell—sorry, I'm answering the question. I am happy to say under oath that we have committed to build

**CORRECTED**

these primary schools and high schools and deliver we shall. You have absolutely no credibility when it comes to this issue. The families of Jordan Springs and Gregory Hills required the election of a new government for these schools to be committed to.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, I am going to labour the point here. Do you have a copy of the budget papers? Can you look at the table that I'm talking about in front of you?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I know what you are referring to, Ms Mitchell, and I can't be clearer—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Can you tell me how—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I cannot be clearer that we are delivering these schools.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, can you quantify for me, if you've got a \$767.1 million allocation over four years, how does that deliver four primary schools when Mr Manning has just said that you'd be looking at \$70 million per primary school? If you need \$200 million—you've got six metro high schools listed here. You are hundreds of millions of dollars short, Deputy Premier. How can you deny that?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell, I'm not sure how many ways I can say this over and over again. I am happy to do so. We have been elected to build schools where they are needed.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But you haven't allocated the money. You're short.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You well know the way the budget works. We allocate money for this year and then the following forward estimates.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I'm sorry, Deputy Premier—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We are going to deliver these schools. I'm sorry it's a sore point because you refused to do it.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, no. Deputy Premier—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You refused to acknowledge Jordan Springs needed a high school. The communities of Gregory Hills were begging you—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, with respect, you're here for the detail of your budget papers. Page 2-11, table 2.5, for these 14 school projects, expenditure over four years to 2026-27 is \$682.7 million. If you need \$200 million per high school and you say you're going to build 10 of them, you are hundreds of millions of dollars short. You can't deny the facts; it's right here in your budget papers. Mr Manning has just confirmed what it cost to build a school.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell, I'm on oath saying to you we are going to deliver these schools.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You don't have enough money. How big are the schools going to be, Deputy Premier?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That will all be announced—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** How big is Jordan Springs going to be?

**The CHAIR:** Order! If we could allow the Minister to answer the question.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Do you know, all that would be required to look at the schools that have been committed to is a cursory glance of our media releases in opposition. I'm sorry that you're so sensitive about the previous Government's lack of commitment to building new schools in Western Sydney, but we are getting on and doing it.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm not sensitive at all.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Is that a joke?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** My point to you is your Government has released this budget. You have released this. You have 14 school projects listed here. We have had it confirmed under oath, the average cost to build a primary school and a high school in Western Sydney. You have not allocated enough money. It is just not there. My point to you—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I think now this is the tenth time I have said this.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, you haven't, Deputy Premier.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We are delivering these schools.



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**CORRECTED**

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**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Point of order—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But you don't have enough money.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You haven't budgeted enough to do it.

**The CHAIR:** Order! I'm going to pre-empt the point of order, I think. Hansard cannot possibly be recording this when we are all speaking over each other. If we could please have question followed by answer, with a little bit of time to allow the response.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you, Chair. There is clearly not enough money that has been budgeted here, Deputy Premier. How big are these schools going to be? How big is Jordan Springs? How big are you going to build that? What's your plan?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You mean the school that you refused to acknowledge is needed? Yes, that one.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, no. I'm asking you what will be the capacity at Jordan Springs—2,000 students? How big is it going to be?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I will pass to Mr Manning whose job is to deliver these significant school infrastructure—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But it's your electorate. Surely you've asked. You don't know?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell, I'm sorry, but I will say it again: The fact that you come into this Committee hearing—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So you don't know. Thank you.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —asking me questions about Jordan Springs High School when you refused to admit that it was needed—I will pass to Mr Manning about the budget allocation and the capacity of the new schools that the new Government—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You don't know how big it will be, and you don't know how much money has been allocated. I've got plenty of questions for Mr Manning to ask later, so I will come back to Mr Manning.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —that required a change of government to deliver.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, in relation to Bungendore High School and its site, has anyone ever lobbied you in relation to that?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Have you ever discussed this project with Tara Moriarty?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm sure that I've spoken to Ms Moriarty about Bungendore. For many years, she was the duty MLC for the seat of Monaro, but now, of course, we managed to win that seat. Now we have Minister Whan as the member for Monaro, and I have spoken many times to him as the local member.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So have they spoken to you about the site itself? Have they been talking to you about that?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I've had many discussions with Mr Whan and, sure, I've spoken to Ms Moriarty about Bungendore.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** And they've talked to you about the specific site of the school, just clarifying.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We've had a few meetings about Bungendore.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I just want to ask you now if you remember telling *The Daily Telegraph* on 7 October last year, and I quote:

There are increasing numbers of people moving into new areas, particularly migrants, who really aspire to send their child to selective schools and I think the government needs to respect that ...

Do you remember that? I've got a copy of the article if you need to refresh your memory.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I take you on your word, Ms Mitchell, that I said that.

**CORRECTED**

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm happy to give you a copy if you would like it, but you did. Why did you then decide to axe the project to build a fully selective school at Leppington?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Let me just say that the fully selective school at Leppington, your Government did commit to and did not build. If we're going to tell ourselves the truth in context for us to answer these questions, that is the truth, through you, Madam Chair. But let me just say our priority as a government—and we've made it very clear in communities like Leppington—is the delivery of comprehensive high schools because your Government failed to deliver them. If the Committee would like to have a look at the announcement of the comprehensive school at Leppington—the high school at Leppington—it will also include selective stream. We've made that very clear.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Just to be clear, Deputy Premier, if you want to talk about telling the truth, which is what you said before, prior to the election you were saying to families of Western Sydney and south-western Sydney, "We understand that you aspire to send your children to selective schools." You're on the record saying that. You've now been elected and what you've done—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** But did you deliver it?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I'm asking you. You're the Minister.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You didn't deliver it.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You've now been elected. There was a selective school funded and ready to go in the heart of that part of the community.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It wasn't ready to go. You didn't deliver it.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** And your Government has come in and said, "We're scrapping the selective school. We'll do a stream."

**Ms PRUE CAR:** But you didn't deliver it, Ms Mitchell.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You're taking a totally different approach to this issue after the election than you did before. You were saying to families in *The Daily Telegraph*, "We support the idea. We know that there's demand for selective schools".

**Ms PRUE CAR:** But you didn't deliver it.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But then post-election—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** But you didn't do it.

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

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But you weren't being honest, Deputy Premier.

**The CHAIR:** Order! I will hear the point of order.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** My point of order is that long diatribes are not permitted. The shadow Minister needs to ask a specific question.

**The CHAIR:** Order! The Minister is also asking questions and making a lot of statements. There is quite a lot of back and forth but, again, for the purposes of Hansard could we have a little bit more of a gap.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, my question is: Did you mislead those families in that area with your comments prior to the election, given the stark contrast of the position that you've now taken on selective schools after the election? Were you telling the truth or not?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell, of course. But let me just put it to you that the Government that misled—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Sorry, of course you misled, or of course what?

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Can we hear the answer?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Of course I was telling the truth.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But you're not building any new selective schools.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Hold on a second. The selective school that you said—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, but you're not building any new selective schools.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —you were going to deliver, you did not deliver.

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**CORRECTED**

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**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Point of order—

**The CHAIR:** Order! I'll hear the point of order.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, it's not about me.

**The CHAIR:** Order! If we stop talking, the point of order will go quicker.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Chair, could we please hear the answer from the Deputy Premier?

**The CHAIR:** It is the same point. We will stop the interruptions and allow the Minister to answer.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Are you building a selective school in south-western Sydney?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No, we are—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Right, thank you.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —building a comprehensive high school.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, thank you. You've just answered the question.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** But did you build one in south-western Sydney? I think former Premier Berejiklian promised one that you did not—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, you are on record prior to the election telling those families that you understand that they aspire to send their children to selective schools and that the Government needs to respect that.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But you've now just confirmed on the record that you are not building a selective school.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You did not build it.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So you weren't telling the truth. I'll hand over to my colleague.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Can I just also put this in context for the Committee?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I'm handing over to my colleague. We're moving on, thanks.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The previous Government had 48 school terms. Do you know how many school terms we've been in government for? Two.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Deputy Premier, do you support single-sex schools in New South Wales?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The Government has a commitment to ensure that, while single-sex schools will remain of course in many school communities, we will give every community the opportunity to enrol their child in a co-educational environment. That was a very clear election commitment and we're actually working through that election commitment—delivery of that right now as we speak.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** In *The Sunday Telegraph* on the weekend there was an article concerning your Government's planned merger of Randwick Girls and Randwick Boys, with the headline "Co-ed plan 'makes girls ill'" by Linda Silmalis. You're familiar with the article?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** What is the Government's response to the stress and the hurt that this merger has obviously already caused the students at these schools? I also add it's an HSC period for these students.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm well aware as the education Minister that it's an HSC period, Ms Merton. Thank you for enlightening the Committee. Can I just respond to this question with this: To deliver our commitment to give every family the opportunity to enrol their children in a co-educational school, we continued as a government the public consultation on what was to happen with Randwick Girls and Randwick Boys that was embarked upon by the previous Government. And the previous Minister might remember that that public consultation occurred. As a result of that public consultation, the overwhelming majority of the local community actually were in favour of co-educational options at Randwick—the overwhelming majority. So what we have done, which the previous Government failed to do, is we acted on that consultation and we are slowly turning Randwick, yes, into a co-educational offering. But we're doing so in response to an overwhelming piece of community feedback from

**CORRECTED**

prospective families entering into high school that actually wanted a co-educational offering for their families. I'll ask Mr Dizdar to actually elucidate on that public consultation.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I just indicate to the Chair that it was a very thorough consultation. It was—

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Thank you, I'm hearing from the Minister.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** It was very comprehensive.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Which existing single-sex schools are under consideration or are confirmed to be going co-educational?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It's been a matter of public record that we have announced changes in the Georges River as well as changes at Randwick. That's been publicised.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Canterbury Boys High School—a great school that counts former Prime Minister John Howard as an alumni. What's the future for this school?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Canterbury Boys High School is remaining.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** What commitment will you or your Government provide today to Sydney Boys High School, Sydney Girls High School? They won't be merged on the basis of co-education by your Government?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I can commit that they won't be merged.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The new high school at Medowie, has land been secured for that?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'd have to ask Mr Manning for an update on the school at Medowie, but I really have to say, because I'm being asked a question about the high school at Medowie, that it is—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I want to know if land has been secured.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —a little bit rich for the previous Minister—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You're not here to provide editorial comment.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —who never acknowledged a need for the high school.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Mr Manning, has land been secured for Medowie?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Can I just say, when I went with the member for Port Stephens to Medowie to meet with primary school students who were desperate—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, Deputy Premier, I don't have much time.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —to go to a high school, they were very, very happy that there's a government that's actually delivering it and not gaslighting the families of Medowie.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Mr Manning, has land been secured for Medowie?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We have a preferred site for the Medowie high school.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Right, but it hasn't been secured. Would you also be able to tell me, Deputy Premier, the community group renewals in Bathurst, Dubbo and Leeton only received about \$750,000 in funding this year across those schools, are you going to put any more money into that in the future?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Look, I'd have to pass to Mr Manning on that. Of course, we are committed as a government to the delivery of upgrades and schools where they are needed, but I'll ask Mr Manning on the update of that.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Could you also maybe respond? Concerned parents, particularly at Bathurst high school, had issues with the state of the toilets there. There were tens of millions of dollars earmarked for those schools under the previous Government. You've only allocated \$750,000. Will those school toilets get an upgrade?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Before I pass to Mr Manning, I will say that I go to a lot of schools.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Been to Bathurst high?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I have to say, as you would know as previous Minister, there are a lot of problems with a lot of toilets in schools—

**CORRECTED**

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Will you go to Bathurst high and have a look at their toilets, Minister?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —and this clearly was not a priority of the previous Government. Mr Manning?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Minister, will you go to Bathurst high and look at their toilets?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell, I've asked Mr Manning to respond.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes or no? The parents would like to know. Will you go and look at the Bathurst high toilets? Yes or no?

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

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** As Minister, I look forward to speaking with the parents and I urge the parents to speak with me about the issues of the toilets that you clearly ignored.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Excellent. We'll lock in a visit for you at Bathurst. Thanks, Deputy Premier. That'd be great.

**The CHAIR:** Order! I will remind all members that when a point of order is taken is when everyone else goes quiet. A point of order was taken. We had the Minister speaking as well as members. I will hear the point of order.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** My point of order is this: The Minister was in the middle of answering a question and then a further question was asked over the top of the answer. I think Mr Manning was going to provide some supplementary information. That question has been asked before the cut off and so we should hear the answer.

**The CHAIR:** I uphold the first bit of the point of order, but the time has now passed. We can come back to Mr Dizdar in the next round.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Minister, the Premier previously announced that there would be an extensive land audit in order to find opportunities for housing. How many schools have been subjected to that land audit?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** This certainly is a question of detail, Ms Mihailuk. It's absolutely worth asking. One of the priorities of the Government is to look at every opportunity for affordable housing.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** So you have offered up schools—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Look, I'm going to ask Mr Manning for the actual detail on this.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** —for housing opportunities? Is that what you're saying, Minister?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That is not what I'm saying.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I just asked you how many schools have been subjected to the land audit.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I would urge you not to use my words as I have not spoken. Ms Mihailuk, that is not what I said.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Point of order—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I asked you specifically how many schools—

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** —have been subjected to the land audit.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mihailuk, can I say—

**The CHAIR:** Apologies, Minister. When I say "Order!", there is no more talking. I will hear the point of order.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** A question has been asked of the Deputy Premier. She is trying to provide a substantive answer to that. Could we please hear the answer?

**CORRECTED**

**The CHAIR:** I uphold the point of order. There was too much talking at the same time. Go ahead. Answer the question.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mihailuk, I acknowledge that you would like me to answer in a certain way that suits your agenda, but let me just answer this.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I have no agenda. I'm asking questions.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I will pass to Mr Manning, but I will answer in this way: What the Premier announced was an audit of vacant land. Where there are schools, they are not vacant—then it's not vacant land. Even schools that are in recess are not vacant land. Mr Manning?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** I can confirm we've got to the entire portfolio. We hold just under 9,000 hectares of land across New South Wales for the more than 2,200 schools. We have approximately 300 hectares of land that is considered vacant—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** And none of it is going to be subjected as part of this land audit for housing?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** As the Deputy Premier said, the intent of the audit is to identify land that is vacant. We have looked across the entirety of the portfolio and provided advice about land that is vacant, and of the close to 9,000 hectares—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** So the Government is looking to Department of Education land to provide land for housing? You would agree with that?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** All agencies are asked to provide that advice. We provided that advice. Some 300 hectares of land is considered vacant.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Deputy Premier, is it customary for—actually, I'll rephrase my question. Have you had social drinks with the Teachers Federation since you become Minister for Education?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I meet regularly with the Teachers Federation. I speak regularly with the Teachers Federation. It will shock the Committee to know that I am the Minister for Education and I believe in consulting with the profession. In fact, I make a virtue of the fact that this Government's approach to addressing the decline in education outcomes brought to you by the previous Government is through—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Minister, I am not asking about the last Government. I am asking if you have social drinks with the Teachers Federation as Minister. Do you socialise with them with drinks?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** All my meetings are publicly disclosed.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** It's a yes or no question. Do you have social drinks with the Teachers Federation?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Is this a general question, or did I have social drinks on one—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** When the deal was struck between your Government and the Teachers Federation and teachers, were there any social gatherings at that time held by you or the senior executive with the Teachers Federation?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It might shock the Committee to know that I talk to the Teachers Federation regularly and, yes, from time to time, I have engaged with them socially.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Minister, there is a difference between sitting down in a meeting room and having a talk, and having a social gathering and drinks. I'm asking you whether, around the time that the deal was struck between your Government and the Teachers Federation, you had social drinks. Was there any socialising that involved celebratory drinks?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mihailuk, from time to time I have engaged socially with the Teachers Federation and with individuals from the Teachers Federation. I don't apologise for consulting with the profession. In fact, they were not listened to for years and years. Let me just say, this is a body that represents 90,000-plus teachers that were screaming from the rooftops about merged and cancelled classes. We learned today the extent—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** How lucky that they can have drinks with you now. Were any of the senior executive having drinks with the Teachers Federation around the time that the deal was struck?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I can't speak for my senior executive.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Okay, well I'll put that down to answer on notice.

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**MURAT DIZDAR:** I can answer that. I don't need to take it on notice. I am very proud as secretary to have led the negotiations with the federation. That was well overdue, having been a teacher in the system myself and a principal, and having read report after report, nationally and internationally—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Were there celebratory drinks when a deal was struck?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** —that the way to attract and retain teachers is to make sure you address competitive salaries and workload. There is much to do on the workload front. There was a lot of work that went into the negotiations. There was no social gathering after that for the department and the Federation to go and—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I understand that there were drinks. The night before the deal was struck there were drinks between the Teachers Federation and members of the senior executive staff.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Not to my knowledge. I was privy to all of those negotiations and meetings as secretary. I went to each of those meetings.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** This was a social gathering rather than a meeting.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I can verify that, as secretary, I wasn't involved in any of that. I led those negotiations. I led each of the six meetings. I'm not sure what you're referring to but the staff that were with me in those negotiations were also privy to the work. There was no function or anything of that kind.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Minister, can I just ask a little bit about cybersecurity? I note that there was obviously a story yesterday which reported that both yourself and Mr Dizdar have announced that you're going back to step-by-step explicit instruction in the class.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'm happy to talk to explicit teaching.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** No, I'm going to ask the Minister to answer. Does that mean you will now ban the use of third-party apps that teachers rely on to teach students?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Before I pass over to Mr Dizdar, and I do so because he is an experienced educator and a renowned school principal now heading our department, with years and years of expertise in pedagogy—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** But you were part of the announcement yesterday, Minister.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm answering this, Ms Mihailuk. In terms of the pedagogy of explicit teaching—which is to different to explicit instruction—explicit teaching is what our wonderful teachers are trained in delivering in the classroom. It is the actual pedagogy of delivering the explicit lesson. That is what explicit teaching actually means. But for the actual pedagogical explanation I'll pass to the educator.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Explicit teaching is well versed right across the system. The research and evidence is really clear that regardless of your learning level or ability level—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** My specific question wasn't about what that means. I asked whether you're going to ban or stop the use of third-party apps that teachers often rely on, like Mathletics, MathsOnline—there's a whole plethora of online third-party apps that schools often rely on. In fact, they send their students home and expect their parents to pay for those apps and, bob's your uncle, they do their homework that way. That's the question that I'm asking. What are you going to do about those particular apps? It's a fair question.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** It's a great question, which I'm very keen to answer. Explicit teaching goes to making sure students understand what they're learning, how it relates to their prior learning, what success in that learning looks like and how to get there. Whether our teachers use particular resources or particular apps as part of the learning process, that is up to their professional judgement. We don't dictate to the profession and say, "You'll use this textbook; you'll use that resource." We trust their professional judgement and, in doing so, it's very remiss to think that using a textbook, using a particular resource that the teacher might have got off the internet or using a particular app is not using quality teaching.

In fact, my two boys are in a public school and I do Reading Eggs with them, which is one of the apps that you refer to. The school sets the Reading Eggs app and, as their father, I sit down with them and go through that. I read the teacher's instructions to my two boys, which are very explicit. I am pleased to also let you know, Ms Mihailuk, that they don't pay for it. The school covers the cost of that.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** In some cases I have seen examples where schools ask parents to pay for access, or share the cost of access to those third-party applications. Can I put to the Minister, are you aware of how many data breaches you've had in 2023?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We take this very, very seriously. We are running a huge system of 2,200 schools with hundreds of thousands of students and 95,000 teachers. In fact, under the previous Government, we had various

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breaches, even of HSC results, which we have allocated funding to improve in this year's budget. We take data breaches very, very seriously. I will ask Mr Dizdar to speak to how seriously we take this as a system and what we are doing in this.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I just need to know how many data breaches there were in 2023, if you could provide that, or you could take it on notice, Mr Dizdar.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I think if you're after an exact figure, let me take that on notice. All I know as secretary is that, as one of the largest agencies in public service in the Southern Hemisphere, we're constantly investing and upgrading our cybersecurity mechanisms. I know as secretary that our IT area, as well as myself as secretary, have sent numerous reminders out to our staff about the role they can play—given a workforce that is 120,000 plus—in ensuring that our systems aren't breached. That goes to passwords, that goes to not opening emails that you're unsure of, that goes to reporting anything that may look amiss when you are corresponding with people in the organisation and outside. I also know, having sat as a member of the Secretaries Board, it's a whole-of-government focus across agencies.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, I wanted to ask you about the Murwillumbah school merger plan and the plan for the demerger. As you know, this was a 2020 decision from the previous Government, and since then there's been significant flood damage to those sites. I wanted to understand how much is in the budget for upgrades to those four individual schools, and what the process of demerging is looking like at this point.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That is a really good question, Madam Chair. It is a bit of a nightmare situation that we inherited. It was probably a lesson in what happens when you don't consult with local communities when the previous Minister went up to a community and said, "Instead of delivering the promised upgrade to Murwillumbah East, we're going to put all the primary schools and the two high schools together into a mega-school that no-one asked for." As a result of our election commitment to demerge—and I will give a shout-out to my incredibly hardworking colleague the member for Lismore, who went to the election saying that if Labor was to come to government, we would demerge the schools—we've made significant headway on that. There's an allocation in the budget to make sure that we get this done properly. But I will ask Mr Manning to give the detail of what we are doing at Murwillumbah because demerging, as you rightly said, Madam Chair, is not a simple thing to do. When you create a dog's breakfast, unwinding it is not easy. Mr Manning?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We've identified a scope of works for Murwillumbah High School. Obviously it includes complete redecoration, recarpeting, upgrade of bathrooms and upgrade of specialist spaces—canteens and those sorts of things. It also includes fully lighting the school with LED lighting as opposed to fluorescent, and installing the Cooler Classrooms air-conditioning systems in libraries and learning spaces.

**The CHAIR:** How much has been allocated to upgrades for each of the two primary schools and the two high schools? Do you have those figures?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We've got \$12½ million allocated in this year's budget allocation to get going with those schools.

**The CHAIR:** For all four?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes. Obviously we'll have a priority around how we progress in Murwillumbah High School first, but it will roll through to the other three schools as well fairly shortly after that.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, you did mention it was reported in one of the articles that there would be money allocated for uniform costs for when students are expected to go back to the old high schools. How much support is going to be available for students?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Madam Chair, this is one of the difficulties that happens when a school is forced to merge and then we're in the process of demerging them. It's one of those practical things—like uniforms, like school name—that do actually cause a lot of the students and parents significant anxiety. We are working through those issues. I know Mr Dizdar has been personally involved in the issue of the uniforms. I will pass to Mr Dizdar to give some detail on that.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Chair, we don't put a cost or dollar limit on that. Any family that's going to need our help—because uniforms are consulted on with the school community, that uniform has got to be decided upon. If we ever change an education provision, we always give the community the assurance that if they need us, we'll be meeting those costs. We do that for our schools. We get the school to fund all of that and then reimburse the school. I'd also add that in Murwillumbah we've given our staff a guarantee with the demerger that there will be no job losses, if I've got the right details, until the end of 2027. We're in 2023 here, aren't we, so for a four-year runway where that demerger happens, we also guarantee all of the permanent staffing in that school to give assurance to the teaching and non-teaching staff there.



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**The CHAIR:** Just to clarify, will uniform vouchers be provided to parents?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We've got a few steps to play out here: consult with each of the schools, and if there's any adjustment to the uniform and they need our financial assistance, we'll be providing that.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Manning, you talked about the \$12½ million to commence the upgrades. When is it expected that the upgrades of all four schools will be completed?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Murwillumbah High School will be done and ready for day one, term 1 in 2025. We will then work through the primary schools. Once the demerger has happened—as you may be aware, there are some demountables that have gone into that school. It gives us the room then to do the work on the existing school without disrupting the education process as part of those works.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, you are also on record as talking about providing ongoing support for staff. In addition to that sort of assurance on contracts, what other support is being provided for staff in that demerger?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We are in constant communication with staff at Murwillumbah, the teaching staff and the support staff across the school settings as well as their representatives—shock, horror—the Teachers Federation. But the biggest piece of feedback that the staff have given me—and I've heard directly from them; I've had sessions with staff in detail, where there have been rapid-fire questions to me as Minister about them as teaching and support staff at the Murwillumbah schools—was that question of a job guarantee. I'm really proud we've been able to do that.

They've been under significant change. The staff at Murwillumbah don't operate in a vacuum. Those staff have been through significant anxiety because of a government-forced decision that was not asked for by the community, on top of a chronic teacher shortage, merged and cancelled classes, and wage suppression through an arbitrary wage cap. They can't operate in a vacuum. The staff across our wonderful system have been operating with severe levels of anxiety, being gas-lit by the previous Government, and the staff at Murwillumbah have had it even harder. I'm really proud we've been able to give them a guarantee.

**The CHAIR:** So we've had, as you've put it, this process of merging these schools, which was not what the community wanted, and now we've got this process of demerging. Are you able to put a dollar figure on what this entire debacle will cost the public purse?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I would have to pass to Mr Manning on that because the whole figure—with respect, Chair, that's a really serious question to ask. The whole impact of the beginning of the decision and then the commitment that was given to the various schools to start with, then the forced merger of the school, then staff at the school and principals and everyone trying to make it work, and now trying to demerge them because we have a mandate with the election of our Government, I would have to pass to Mr Manning as to the whole totality of that cost.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** From an Infrastructure perspective, I think the original budget was in the order of \$150 million. I'd have to check the numbers exactly, but we've probably spent \$23 million doing the design, getting it through the planning process for the merged school and establishing a pop-up school. We think the works to the further four schools is probably about another \$40 million to \$45 million worth of work.

**The CHAIR:** In the time I've got left I wanted to ask you, Minister, about the land at Western Sydney University that is being sold off, I understand, for new dwellings. The community and the campus have been asking for there to be a high school on that land—just at least one parcel of it. Again, you're on record as saying that any new development of that campus must include a new high school. Is there any money in the budget for an acquisition of land for that?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Can I clarify which Western Sydney University you're referring to, Madam Chair?

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, Milperra.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes, this has been a significant concern to the community. It is an issue that was raised with me by the new member for East Hills on a variety of occasions. I believe that is quite far down the road upon us coming to government. I will have to pass to Mr Manning about any knowledge about Western Sydney University, Milperra, but I believe that is actually quite far down the road.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We have no plans around that Milperra site.

**The CHAIR:** So there is nothing we can do now?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** No.

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**The CHAIR:** The final question in the time I have left: This Macquarie Park education campus idea under the previous Government, where they were to share space with shops and apartments—I know I personally found that pretty shocking and raised it a lot in budget estimates hearings. Is that concept of partnering with private enterprise to build new schools something that the new Government will be pursuing?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Madam Chair, I think you probably will recall that in opposition I was quite critical of the use of schools for commercial gain, also in terms of commercial premises. But we are really committed to building the school that is needed at Macquarie Park, as we are committed to building the schools that are needed throughout New South Wales.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** My question is in relation to the member for Vaucluse. Minister, are you aware that the member for Vaucluse is supportive of the merging of Randwick Boys High School and Randwick Girls' High School?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You're right actually, Mr Nanva, thank you for reminding me. The Liberal member for Vaucluse, if I recall, has come out publicly in support of the merger of Randwick Boys and Randwick Girls. That's an important point for the Committee to note, further to Ms Merton's questions. Thank you.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Thank you. My next question is in relation to the survey on merged and cancelled classes and the issue of casual teachers. Can you outline to the Committee what the survey has found and why was it conducted?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Thank you, Mr Nanva, for that question. I have to say that this is truly shocking reading and I think at the previous estimates hearing the previous Minister was asked why doesn't the Government ask schools about the vacancies. What has happened as a result of this census that we undertook of all schools is we found that nearly 10,000 lessons are without a teacher every day. Now, anyone that cares about the education of our young people surely can see that this is a disgrace, and I would argue is one of the reasons why this Government was elected. We have come to Government amidst a chronic teacher shortage, which the previous Government denied and denied.

The previous Minister, the shadow Minister, said it was a beat-up, but that's clearly been exposed as not the truth. When we have 10,000 lessons uncovered, you are talking about in primary schools they tend to be merged classes, stage one and two might go together, or in high schools you are talking about minimal supervision, 50, 60, 70 kids in the outdoor learning area or in the library. And we wonder why we've got problems with education outcomes. This is why as a government we make no apology for focusing on the problems in education. We have a wonderful system but the problem's in education through the prism of the profession.

We must actually get more teachers in our classrooms or we are failing our children. This is exactly why we are cracking down on workload and we have given public school teachers the biggest pay rise they've seen in a generation. Because if we do not stem the tide of resignations from our system and encourage more teachers into our classrooms, then we may as well pack up and go home. Because that's what education is: a classroom with a teacher in front of it. The mess that the previous Government has left me as Minister and the Government as a government is absolutely a crying shame. Fixing that is getting me up every morning as education Minister.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Minister, I ask this follow-up question, not just as a member here but as a very proud parent of four kids in the public education system, whose kids have routinely been subjected to cancelled classes, why hasn't this survey been done before?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Well, I reference my previous answer that I'm fairly sure the previous Minister was asked in an estimates hearing why don't we ask. We kept getting told it actually wasn't a problem. What this survey has actually shown, that not only do we have chronic shortages in the permanent teacher cohort, so they are teachers who are on permanent contracts—many of whom are on more permanent contracts, can I say, after the intervention of this Government—and then the casual teachers—what you might hear on American TV shows as substitute teachers. We are so short of those casual teachers, 3,000-plus, because we have a permanent teacher shortage, principals can't find the casual teachers to even plug in the holes.

This is ground zero for the education system. Almost every question that we're being asked today will come back to this answer: If we cannot get teachers in front of our children, what are we doing? The previous Government sat on it, and sat on it, and sat on it, and every time a teacher or a peak body or the primary principals or the secondary principals or the Teachers' Federation said, "We've got a problem here." They said, "No, you don't. No, you don't." I don't use this word lightly, but this is why I've got principals who tell me now they feel like they were being gaslit by the previous Government—no, no, there's no teacher shortage. Obviously when you ask them, there most definitely is.

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**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** That leads to a follow-up question I was going to ask. What has the response been from the teachers and principals of those schools?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You know, when we did this census, the response—and I'm sure that Mr Dizdar will say something similar, given the opportunity—from principals and teachers when we actually went out with the census was relief. It was, "Oh, thank God we're finally being listened to. We actually want to be able to provide this information in the hope that there is finally a government that is going to do something about it." Instead of a government that says, "There's nothing to see here" when there clearly is a generational problem here. If we've got 10,000 lessons every day uncovered, I can't think of a more important job than a government to address it. I'm biased as the education Minister, but is there a more important job than a government that needs to fix this? I can't see one.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** My question is regarding the historic pay rise for 95,000 New South Wales teachers. I note comments by the Deputy Nationals Leader who said, "When you get a pay rise, you normally need to do a bit more."

Minister, is that possible? Can teachers, who are already overworked, actually work harder?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No. I would urge that particular member of the upper House to go and ask a teacher in a real setting who is probably managing several classes at once, as our census shows, whether they can actually work more. That's clearly not the case. It's clearly why the people of New South Wales elected a new government. We stand behind our life-changing pay rise for teachers, because in the last 12 months of the previous Government we saw resignations outstripping retirements for the first time ever. In terms of issues of retention, we needed to do it to keep teachers in our system, and also for those 15-, 16-, 17-year-old kids in schools that are thinking about what they want to do with their future. They can actually seriously think about becoming teachers now and being able to afford to live in New South Wales and pursue the noble profession of teaching our next generation. I tell you what, we're pretty proud of that.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** I want to acknowledge that we have some of those staff sitting behind you today. My next question is regarding teacher supply. Can you outline what role this Government's significant pay rise for teachers plays in attracting and retaining staff? I have heard some bizarre claims by the former Minister that this Government has not done much in the area of teacher supply.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** There's been a lot said about teacher supply and it's almost like it's a trick question because if there is a government that has clearly said, "Actually we value teachers in a way the previous Government never valued teachers, so much so that we are going to give you pay parity for what you've always deserved." If that's not going to impact on teacher supply, what is? What we are saying to the next generation of future teachers is, you can actually aspire to be a teacher and make it your life's work. In addition to the pay rise for teachers, we have made 16,000 teachers and support staff permanent in just seven months.

Can I say, that was an election commitment over four years and it's already been done. What we are saying to prospective teachers is, "Come be a teacher." I think Mr Dizdar has already been at universities trying to grab them, the baby teachers from their university degrees, to the public education system, saying, "Come to public education, you'll be paid what you're worth, you're an expert professional, for a government that actually values you and you will be able to get permanent work where you can actually raise a family, get a loan, get a house and make it your life's work and teach the next generation of children." It really is a noble calling.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Can I also add, this is a national body of work, the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes, that's true.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** And it says that apart from pay and workload you've got to look at strategies to really raise the profile and respect for the profession. I know the Deputy Premier has, and I keep getting emails from our staff, unsolicited, saying, "You see us. You respect us. I was nine-plus years, 10-plus years temporary. I didn't know from year to year. You've made me permanent." With that email saying, "I can now get married. I can now get a car loan." In one of our school visits together, we had a mother and a daughter at the same school receive permanency on the same day. That mother had been with us—an outstanding practitioner—for 24 years as a temp. That initiative in my 27 years in the department, I've never seen the enormous feedback from our people. It's given great impetus.

I've taken great delight in delivering occasional addresses at Sydney uni and at Western Sydney uni, and of course I'm biased—the Committee might think I'm biased around public ed. I've had students come up to me who are already working in our system and have said, "I'm looking forward to working and joining the public education system." Because we do have an attraction problem and we do have a retention problem—I saw that in

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my time around the Executive and certainly in the seven months in the Secretary role. I'm really proud of the substantial salary uplift alongside tackling workload because—I repeat to this Committee, they're not my words, they're the words of every eminent report around the teaching profession—this is a national challenge and it's an international challenge, and I'm really looking forward to reversing it. The member spoke about his four kids, my own three kids are in the system. As Secretary, I don't sleep easily when my own kids come home and say their teacher wasn't there and the class wasn't covered. The Deputy Premier asked us, "I want the transparent data" and that's what we then went and did.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can I just clarify, Mr Dizdar, did you say 24 years as a temp?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes. We have had people upwards of 24 years as a temp, even longer. I know while I said we have had enormous feedback, the Deputy Premier's instructions to me have been, "I don't want you to stop here, Murat. I want you to now work on round two of this and how can we help and convert more permanent teachers?"

It's part of the work that we need to do with the federation because in this initial round it was teachers who were three-plus years within that same context but many have written to us saying, "I'm more than three-plus years but I've been across context." So we're about to embark on that work.

For this Committee, can I just give a huge shout-out for colleagues like Charlie Milne and Leah Anderson in the People Group. They've been working 24 hours, seven days a week to deliver this in record time, and they've been the unsung heroes behind doors who never get the profile and the coverage. It has been their assiduous work to deliver on this commitment, and they really should be the beneficiaries of the emails and the feedback that the Deputy Premier and I have been receiving. I shouldn't have been shocked but I've been quite taken aback by how life-changing it has been for the workforce.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** Yes, absolutely. Getting a permanent position is truly life-changing for people, particularly in regional communities. My next question is regarding the Auditor-General's report into the Rural and Remote Education Strategy. The report states that when the strategy was announced by the former education Minister, there was actually nothing in place to support it. Minister, can you outline to the Committee what issues that caused for the department?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes. The issues that we see across the system are often felt most acutely, as you say, in rural and regional schools in those settings, and unfortunately the AG's report did show that the announcement of the strategy was just that. There wasn't significant investment in the department to actually roll it out. As a result of that damning report, and on top of work that we're doing in terms of permanency in rural and regional New South Wales and paying teachers what they are worth in rural and regional New South Wales—even more transformative I would argue in rural and regional economies—I have instructed the department very clearly to do some serious concrete work on rural and regional New South Wales. We're going to be saying a lot more about this very soon. What can we do to actually have some outcomes that we can be held accountable for so that this is not a government like the past, like the previous, where we announce something on a media release and then it just sort of goes nowhere. The time for that is over. We have an overworked workforce that needs to see results, and that workforce delivers life-changing learning opportunities to our young people. That's why they matter so much. So Mr Dizdar can probably go into what we're doing in rural and regional education.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We did welcome the Auditor-General's report and accepted all of its recommendations. I must say, as secretary, I don't take great delight in its reading. It's pretty sobering and says we've got a long way to go to get things right for rural and regional. But the Deputy Premier is right. We took her across the report and her next comment to me was, "Well what are we going to do that's going to make a difference? And I don't want to hear 'within the next four years'. What is achievable and will make a difference in the next 12 months?" I've got to give real credit to my colleagues Chloe Read and Mark Barraket. They convened a roundtable, which I chaired, and we got all of the partners in the room. We got the Isolated Children's Parents' Association, the SPC, the PPA, the federation, the P&C—they're all passionate about this topic.

Some 25 per cent of our students are in rural and regional and remote contexts. In that passion we dissected the things that are most important to them, and we've landed on three key areas that we want to really move the dial on in the next year. It wasn't us dictating to them. It was them coming up with these areas. They believe these areas are the most pertinent. We want to make a difference in those areas because we need to win some trust from the ground that they can see us making a discernible difference. And of course we'll comply with all of the recommendations that are in the Auditor-General's report. If we're going to meet the equity challenge head-on, then we've got to move the dial on rural and regional and remote, and I'm certainly going to lead the organisation to focus on delivery in those three areas. In the past in my time we've had upwards of 40 areas and you can lose focus. So to have three that have come from the ground, from the stakeholders, that they want us to make a difference, that's what we're going to narrow in on.

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**The CHAIR:** We are now going to break for 15 minutes to have morning tea lest we all get cranky. We'll be back in 15 minutes, thank you.

**(Short adjournment)**

**The CHAIR:** Welcome back. We will begin again with questions from the Opposition.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, you were saying earlier in relation to teacher vacancies that you need to stem the tide or we might as well pack up and go home. I think that's what you said.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What is the current vacancy rate for permanent teachers in New South Wales as of today? What's the number?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'll pass to Mr Dizdar for actual detail on this, but I believe that the permanent vacancy is slightly north of 2,000. But as the department upon my instruction issued the census to schools, we now know that in addition to that—and as you know as previous Minister they're somewhat combined so it's not one plus one—the casual vacancy is also in excess of 3,000.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, I'm aware of that.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** So that's the actual true impact.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Do you just have the number for what today is for the vacancy rate? North of 2,000? What is it, Mr Dizdar?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes, the Deputy Premier is right, it oscillates every day.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I know that. I just want the number. I know you've got it. You would have prepared it, I'm sure. What's the number?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I might ask Mr Ruming. He might have the exact number.

**SHAUN RUMING:** Yes. As of September 25, it is 2,247 vacancies.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, you've said that obviously you're putting extra money into teacher wages. What's your ideal number for vacancy rates in the State? What's your number? What's your target? What are you hitting?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I can tell you that my ideal number is nowhere near 2,200.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Right, well what is it then? Is it zero?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm sorry, Ms Mitchell, but I'm happy to spend the remainder of my time talking about teacher vacancies—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Okay, well I want to know, with respect—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —because are we suddenly supposed to believe now that you care about teacher vacancies as you've said—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, with respect—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** But when you were a Minister you said it was a beat-up.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, Deputy Premier, I'm not talking about my time as the Minister. You have said that fixing that is what gets you up—"stemming the tide or you might as well pack up and go home".

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You've said you want less than 2,240, which is today's figure or as of last month. What is the metric that we're going to judge on? What is that number? Do you want it to be zero? Your document you have released this week says that you want supply to meet demand. So do you want teacher vacancy rates to be zero? Is that your figure that you're aiming for?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Are you actually suggesting—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I'm asking you.

**CORRECTED**

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —that suddenly we, the people of New South Wales and the teachers of New South Wales, are to believe that suddenly you care about teacher vacancies?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I'm asking you. Deputy Premier, with respect, you are here to answer questions. You have made decisions in your budget in relation to increasing teacher pay, which is your prerogative to do. You've said it's your biggest issue.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Wildly supported, yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You've said it's your biggest issue; that's fine. So what is the metric for success? What is the number that you are aiming to hit? Is it zero? Can you put a figure on it so that we know what that number should be in the months ahead? What is it?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'll be very clear with the Committee. What we have chosen to do—which you refused to do—is we provided a census to all schools in New South Wales. We will be ensuring that we continue to do that and we will measure our success based on that. So I will say, Ms Mitchell—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm sorry, I'm answering your question—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So there's no planned figure, though?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That will be a virtue of our Government that we will be transparent about the shortages—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Okay, that's great.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —which you refused to do over and over again.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well that's not true.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I mean, I've got the quotes here to show it. They're on the public record. I can tell you what I will be doing: I want resignations to not exceed retirements.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thanks, Deputy Premier, but—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That's what happened under your watch. So if you would like to spend the remainder of your time talking about teacher vacancies—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, what I'd like to do—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —please bring it on.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Okay, well I'd like to know, you just confirmed that you don't actually have a target figure for what you want the vacancy rates to be. You've also just said—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You've got to be kidding, surely.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well you didn't give me a figure.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You've got to be kidding.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You didn't give me a figure. Remind me of what the figure was.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Are you coming in here criticising me about teacher vacancies?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What was the figure that you'd like to see for vacancy rates in the State? I'd like a number.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell, you cannot be serious in thinking that the people of New South Wales will suddenly think that you care about teacher vacancies.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You have left me with the highest record teacher vacancies in New South Wales history and a teaching profession on their knees.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So you say. So then what should the figure be, Deputy Premier? If it's that obvious, what's the figure? Give me a number. Is it 1,000? Is it 500? Is it zero?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm telling you that you're never going to hear me says that it's a beat-up.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Do you want to see 1,000 vacancies permanent, 500, zero? What's your number? What do you want? If 2,240 is too many, what should it be?

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**CORRECTED**

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**Ms PRUE CAR:** Do you know what, Ms Mitchell? You've been the education Minister. You can't seriously come in here and ask that question and take yourself seriously.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I can, and I would like an answer. You don't have one. You don't have a number. You can't give me a figure of what you'd like it to be.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** My answer is that we will be transparent with the people of New South Wales on the vacancies, which you refused to do.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Okay, great. On that, Deputy Premier, will you commit to putting on the Department of Education's website a list of every school and the vacancy rates and update that monthly?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We will not be providing—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Right, so you won't be transparent.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —school-by-school data to talk down particular schools. You well know that New South Wales has legislation when it comes to league tables—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, I'm not talking about league tables.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You well know the harm that would do to our public schools across the State of New South Wales.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, with respect—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You should be ashamed of yourself, Ms Mitchell.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, not at all. You just said that you will be transparent. You said that we can judge you on the accountability of having resignations and retirements—all of that.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Why will you not make those figures publicly available?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Let's be clear: I have come to this—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It's a genuine question.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes, and I'm answering it. I have come to this Committee today, having instructed my department—one of the largest departments in the Government, as you well know—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm well aware, yes.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —to undertake a thorough census of every single school in New South Wales. We have made this—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That was for casual vacancies, Deputy Premier. I'm asking about permanent vacancies.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm answering this, Ms Mitchell.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Will you make that public each month—yes or no?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm answering this, Ms Mitchell—please, please. I know the students are no longer here, but please act respectfully.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, it is a genuine question. You have just said that—

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Point of order—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I am answering this question.

**The CHAIR:** I will hear the point of order.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You are really not endearing yourself.

**The CHAIR:** Order! I note that the students are still here, if that's going to help people.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Okay, that's good—even further reason to act like a grown-up.

**The CHAIR:** Order! I will hear the point of order.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** The Minister was asked a question. She was answering the question and she was explaining why.

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**CORRECTED**

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**The CHAIR:** We were going quite well but we did begin to have words tumbling over each other.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you for confirming that you won't make that publicly available. The census that you've conducted—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes, that you refused to do.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, you said earlier that teachers were begging to give you this data.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** They were.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** How often are you going to do that census and will it be publicly released every time?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We have publicly released this—

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I was trying to answer this question previously, so thank you for the opportunity to finally do it. We have publicly released the results of the census and we will be doing it every year.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, if this is such an issue and teachers and school communities are "desperate to be listened to", to use your words—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Are you suggesting they're not?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No. You said that, and I take you at your word.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** But are you suggesting they're not?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I'm not. My question is if they are so—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You wonder why the people of New South Wales elected a new government, Ms Mitchell.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, Deputy Premier, I'm not interested in your politics. If you are so committed to this data being transparent, to tracking how your Government is going—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I just said we're going to do it every year.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Why won't you do it every term? Why are you only doing it once a year?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Because it's going to be a like-for-like every year. You know different terms are—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But you could do it every term, Deputy Premier, and you can compare.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm sorry, I cannot sit here—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm not interested in sanctimony.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Point of order—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —and listen to the previous Minister—

**The CHAIR:** Order! Minister, when a point of order has been taken I need to hear it.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Chair, I think Ms Mitchell is being argumentative. She's asked a question. The Minister has answered the question. We're now descending into argument.

**The CHAIR:** The Minister is also being argumentative, in my view, towards the questioner. There is a bit of give and take there. But, for the purposes of *Hansard*, if we could allow each other to answer questions that would be great.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So it's urgent data collection but you're only doing it annually. Can I move now to when you told *The Sydney Morning Herald* about \$1.4 billion worth of cuts that you're going to be making to the budget. You said you'd be removing 3,000 teachers who were in executive positions in schools. You're talking about teachers who are assistant principals, that's correct? Does that include Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Instruction roles in every school? Are they all going?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I have made it very clear. What has happened in this regard—and you will well know this because this was on your watch and probably under your direction—is that Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Instruction and also assistant principals above entitlement, the ACIP positions, and you well know what these



**CORRECTED**

all are, were recruited amongst our very best teachers and taken off class in the middle of a chronic teacher shortage. Almost 900 were recruited in one year. Can I just say, that's all well and good but our very best teachers have been recruited into those jobs and taken off class.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thanks, Deputy Premier.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You very well know, and I've been very clear about this—I'm answering the question through you, Madam Chair. I've made this very clear in the public arena. We have put a freeze on recruitment of these positions. We are looking at ways that we can gradually move these very best teachers back onto class, because we do not operate in a vacuum. I have to say to the Committee that what these previous decisions did is they took 3,000 of some of our very best teachers and put them in executive positions that weren't—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you, Deputy Premier.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I can understand why you don't want to hear this answer, because you contributed to the teacher shortage.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We'll get back to this, because Assistant Principals, Curriculum and Instruction actually had an important role, and I want to ask you about that shortly. So they're all going. There won't be any more of those in schools. That's correct?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That's not what I said. I said there's a freeze on them and that we're going to work—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, you just said we're in the position of moving them back into it.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Don't put words in my mouth

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's what you said.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That's not what I said, Ms Mitchell.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So do APCI roles still exist?

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I said a very clear—I understand you're trying to get your media grab up.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I'm not. I'm trying to get a genuine answer to a question. It's been hard.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No. Every attempt I've made at a genuine answer is met with rudeness, actually—rudeness.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Let's be honest—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Can I just be honest?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Are APCI roles continuing—yes or no?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** What we've said is there is a freeze on recruitment of those roles. You know what? We have been very clear and transparent with the workforce—something that would be a novel approach for you, I understand—that there's a freeze on that and that we are looking at ways of getting back in the classroom. Can I just say—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So those roles are going? You're not being clear, Deputy Premier. You're really not being clear.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I am sorry, I am wanting to put teachers in front of children—shoot me!

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, that's not particularly lovely language.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Coming from you that's quite rich, Ms Mitchell. Seriously, your language has been very rude.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Wow! Just be clear: Are Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Instruction roles continuing under your Government—yes or no?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** They are continuing in their schools. But do you know what we're looking at doing?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No. Are those executive roles continuing—yes or no?

**CORRECTED**

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Are you talking about the roles that you took out of classrooms?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So that's a no; they're not continuing.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No, it's not a no. I'll let Mr Dizdar give an answer.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Point of order—

**The CHAIR:** Order! I will pre-empt the point of order. I will allow the Minister to explain her answer briefly.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I am going to ask one of the country's foremost educators to answer the question about curriculum instruction and support of the curriculum rollout in schools.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you, Deputy Premier.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** If you genuinely want the answer, you will listen to what Mr Dizdar said.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I would like to know what you know. I'll come back to Mr Dizdar. We've got him all afternoon.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'm happy to add, if you'd like.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No. He would like to answer.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** The question was about whether those roles exist. They do exist.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But are they continuing? That was the question.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** They are continuing.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** In every single school?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Where we've got them in play, they're continuing.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** For how long?

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Point of order—

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Well, allow me to answer. This is an important line of questioning.

**The CHAIR:** Order! Apologies, Mr Dizdar. I will hear the point of order.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Chair, could we afford Mr Dizdar more than five seconds to answer a question that requires a substantive response?

**The CHAIR:** Given the time constraints on questioning this morning—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I would like to go to Mr Dizdar this afternoon.

**The CHAIR:** —it is within the member's discretion to direct the questioning.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, today you're talking about 3,000 casuals needed. What have you got to bring new casuals into the system other than wages? What's your plan to bring more casuals in?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell, if your suggestion is that a significant increase in wages does not encourage people to enter a workforce, I'm not sure whether that's a trick question or not.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's what you've got. Okay, thanks.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We know that wages and workload are one of the biggest reasons to join.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Let's move quickly, because I don't have much time.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I wonder whether that's a trick question or not. Of course wages are going to help casuals into the system.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If you don't understand it, that's a matter for you. You can't pay a casual who doesn't exist more money, so I'm asking you what you're doing to bring in more casual teachers specifically.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Okay. I'm going to step this out very clearly for your benefit, Ms Mitchell. I understand you can't pay a casual teacher who doesn't exist, but you certainly can attract a casual to the system who knows they're going to be paid more than they were paid under your Government.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Where are you getting them from?

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**CORRECTED**

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**Ms PRUE CAR:** We're attracting them with a higher wage offer, aren't we?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But from where? You've publicly said there are less people studying teaching at university and every State is dealing with issues. You've canned programs to bring anyone in who's trained. You don't support mid-career or shortened masters courses. Where are they coming from?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Where they're coming from is we're attracting them through significant reforms like the pay rise. In fact, I would argue to you, Ms Mitchell, what was your strategy to get them in? Sorry, you did have a strategy: to attract overseas teachers. It recruited—what was it?—just six, seven or eight, something like that?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, that's not correct. My point, though, Deputy Premier, is that you are now the Minister.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We were expected to have deputy secretaries at the airport welcoming them in.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You are now the Minister. You have said that this is an issue based on your census today, yet there is no concrete plan at all to bring more people into the workforce anytime soon. You haven't got anything.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I am seriously asking you if you think you have any credibility coming to this Committee asking about teacher supply.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It's not about me. I sat in that chair for six years. It's your turn now. What are you doing?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Well, Ms Mitchell, you just bought it up. You sat in this chair for six years and you left me a disaster.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You are the Government now.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You left a disaster.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** This is your budget, your choice. What are you doing?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** What we are doing is we're giving teachers the biggest pay rise that they have seen in a generation.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But you just said that you can't pay a teacher more that doesn't exist and you are not doing anything to bring new people in anytime soon.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I honestly cannot believe this question.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You have no intervention.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Is it actually a trick question?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Do you not understand what I'm saying?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** When you are going to the community and saying, "Be a teacher. You will be paid a competitive"—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It takes four years to train a teacher. So this will be an issue that sticks in the next term of government?

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Point of order—

**The CHAIR:** I will hear the point of order.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** This is a revolving argument.

**The CHAIR:** Apologies, Minister, we will hear the point of order.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well it doesn't make sense.

**The CHAIR:** Order! We will hear the point of order.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** There is a lot of talking over the top of the witness. I would also say that I think the question has been answered, Chair.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's fine. I'm happy to move on, Chair. Deputy Premier, the Premier said in his budget reply speech last year that families shouldn't have to wait eight years for universal pre-kindergarten and Labor will deliver UPK well before 2023. Can you give me a year or a date that all families in New South Wales will have access to five days a week of free pre-kindergarten, please?

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**CORRECTED**

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**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes. You quite rightly quote from the Premier in his budget reply speech about what was a bipartisan approach to universal preschool. You will recall that we—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You said you would do it earlier, so what year—2029, 2028, 2027? When is it coming?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm answering it, Ms Mitchell. We made it very clear that we will deliver it sooner. I am very glad that you are asking me this question because we are taking practical steps to actually achieve the outcome of universal preschool as opposed to what you did—as you said, when you were in the chair for six years—where at the end of a 12-year stint in government you said, "Actually, we've got a brainwave—universal preschool." Like we were supposed to take you on your word.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, you've just admitted that you will deliver it before 2030.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Can I have a year? What year will it be in place by? Five days a week for every family—free—in the year before school. I would like a year.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** What I would like to give you, with respect, Ms Mitchell, is the answer.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What is it?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The answer is that I reiterate the Premier's commitment that we will deliver universal preschool before 2030. I know it's a sore point that we will do it—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So by 2029 or 2028? You are actually in charge now.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I have answered your question.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You haven't. Before 2030. So 2029, is that when I will take it to be?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I am going to ask Mr Barraket to give some contribution.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I will ask Mr Barraket this afternoon.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No, I am going to ask Mr Barraket to give an answer.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I am asking about what the Premier said. It's not Mr Barraket's responsibility.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It actually is Mr Barraket's responsibility.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Don't worry, I've got time this afternoon. You won't give me a figure before 2029—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It's actually his responsibility and I'm reiterating the Premier's commitment.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Can I just quickly take you—

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I just want to take you to page A5-14 of *Budget Paper No.01*, where we've got all the whole-of-government outcomes. If you are committed to delivering this before 2030 and not changing anything of the previous Government—which, as you say, there is bipartisan support on—could you just explain to me then why in the second last dot point there is a section that states "Universal preschool re-profiling". Why are you re-profiling the money? Where is it going?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You will note that there are some significant differences in terms of the way that we are achieving universal preschool than you—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You are only building 100 preschools. That's not enough.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —proposed to the people of New South Wales that you would after 12 years, can I just say. I take the opportunity to say that one of the biggest ways we are doing this that is different to the way that you suggested the people of New South Wales should trust you to deliver after 12 years is that we are giving the biggest injection of funds into public preschools ever in New South Wales history.

**CORRECTED**

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, you would well know as Minister for Education and Early Learning that that public preschool provision is actually a very small part of the sector and most of it is delivered by community preschools.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** And you would well know as the previous Minister that actually it will be greater as a result of our Government's commitment.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You said at the beginning that you are across the detail in your budget.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If you are not changing anything and if Pre-K is coming and it's coming early, why have you buried in the back of your budget papers a dot point that states "Universal preschool re-profiling"? Reprofiling is Treasury code for "We're moving money." Where is it going? What are you doing?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I put to you, Ms Mitchell—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Don't you know?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Hang on a second.

**The CHAIR:** Order! We will let the witness answer the question.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —that if it's in the budget papers in a dot point, that's not buried. That's actually in the budget papers. It's in the glossy.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Explain it to me. It's not in the glossy. Tell me what universal preschool reprofiling means.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We are proud of what we are doing in universal preschool. This has happened in the LA question time as well. I don't know what smoking gun you guys are looking for when it comes to universal preschool. We have funded the Childcare and Economic Opportunity Fund.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm not asking about the fund.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We have funded universal preschool. We are building 100 public preschools in New South Wales—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, Minister—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —and you build, what, two? One?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If you are—

**The CHAIR:** Order! There is no way Hansard can be recording that properly.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I am attempting to answer the question. We are delivering it differently to the way—sorry, let's be really real here. After 12 years in government—we are to believe and the people of New South Wales were to believe that at the very end of 12 years you said, "Hang on, universal preschool is a good idea."

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That is not right.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** "Child care is a problem. Preschool is a problem. Just trust us. If we are elected for a fourth term, we might do something about it."

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It's a very genuine question.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We are actually doing something about it.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, Deputy Premier—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** When I start opening those public preschools, everyone will see.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If you are genuine about this, why are you reprofiling the money?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We are delivering it differently to the way you—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But why? You don't have to reprofile it if you are not changing anything.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Point of order—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I have actually answered your question, Ms Mitchell.

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**CORRECTED**

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**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You haven't at all. You haven't come within a bull's roar of answering it.

**The CHAIR:** Order! I will hear the point of order.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You don't reprofile if you're not changing.

**The CHAIR:** Order! Again, when I say "Order!" members go quiet. Otherwise, I will sit here quietly and use up members' time. I will hear the point of order.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Chair, I am reticent to keep taking points of order but there was an answer to that question being provided.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, that was too much. We need to allow the question to be answered.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Minister, why have you cut phonics targets?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We haven't. This is a scare campaign.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Your secretary said yesterday—

**The CHAIR:** The Opposition time has expired.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I am happy to answer that.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It's a scare campaign. It's not true.

**The CHAIR:** We will come back to that during Government time, if that needs to be clarified. I want to ask some questions about early childhood education and the Childcare and Economic Opportunity Fund. There have been calls for the Government to make access to that fund contingent on an improvement in wages of early childhood educators. Is that something that the Government is looking into?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** This goes to the heart of one of the biggest issues in early childhood education and care. Similarly, as you know, Madam Chair, to primary and high schools, we really cannot ignore the elephant in the room that if we don't, as a whole-of-Commonwealth challenge, get on top of the pay and conditions of early childhood education workers, educators and teachers then it is going to make it very difficult to roll out these reforms. Yes, there have been calls for that. We are spending some of that money in the budget on workforce. But the Committee will be well aware that many of the workers and the educators working within the system are on Federal awards. I can assure the members of the Committee that at education Ministers' meetings with my Commonwealth counterparts I am constantly advocating for the need to get on top of this issue. I know there are some multi-employer bargaining things being done at the Commonwealth level now. We must get on top of this issue of pay and conditions for early childhood workers. It is crucial if we are to actually address the shortage of early childhood workers. I know that Mr Barraket will have more to say on this.

**MARK BARRAKET:** Thank you, Deputy Premier—

**The CHAIR:** Apologies, I may come back to you in a little while.

**MARK BARRAKET:** I am happy to provide an answer.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It's very complex.

**The CHAIR:** Go ahead.

**MARK BARRAKET:** I agree with everything that the Deputy Premier has said. Salaries for early childhood education and care workers is quite complex. That depends on the location, and whether it's public provision or private provision and the type of service that is provided. We are working very closely with the Australian Government on the workforce plan for EC workers and will continue to implement that. In terms of the fund, there are a range of initiatives that we are currently looking at in regards to workforce. One of those relates to how we can provide fee relief or free funds for workers that work in that sector whose children attend child care. What we are trying to do is influence, where we can, better conditions for those workers in our services.

**The CHAIR:** But is there any commitment in relation to that funding? I appreciate everything you have just said but obviously we have a great lever here to incentivise better pay and conditions in the private sector. Will there be a condition placed on funding coming out of that fund?

**MARK BARRAKET:** The fund is looking at workforce. It is one of the pieces that it is tasked with, and there will be a range of initiatives that we will speak to in due course when we've scoped those up and are ready to announce them.

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**CORRECTED**

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**Ms PRUE CAR:** It is actually a fair question because—you're right—we do have a significant lever. With the fund, can I just say that this something that the previous Government did do that we supported in opposition, with some amendments. But we supported this to continue. We do have a significant lever—and I say this in the context of we're engaged in significant Commonwealth negotiations, where there is the Early Years Strategy going on, the Productivity Commission. We are involved at a Commonwealth level. While we are not ready to commit to that at this point, I'm really open to options in terms of what can we do, as a State government lever, to look at improving the working conditions for early childhood educators and care. It won't shock the Committee to know that that's the opinion that I bring to this ministry. If we don't actually address the issue of workforce, what are we going to do? We don't have the expert practitioners to help our littlest learners. I'm open to possibilities. I'm open to taking it to the next Education Ministers Meeting, for sure.

**The CHAIR:** When we were looking at bringing in that fund in the last term of Parliament, I do recall reading the Government's own report that it had commissioned that was talking about how privatisation of the sector is largely to blame for a lot of the inadequate services. However, the previous Government's plan off the back of that was, basically, to double down rather than to be funding those local council-run centres. I know that the local government sector is calling for more funding to allow it to offer those vital services. Is that something that your Government will be looking into?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I am absolutely open to looking at that. There's absolutely no doubt that that is a glaring need. I preface the comments about the myriad of providers in early childhood education and care with this: You're not going to find a Minister in this Government that's going to defend privatisation. But we do really have a complex set of circumstances when it comes to the delivery of preschool and early learning in New South Wales where we have really—I'm just going to call it for what it is—a hodgepodge of services delivered by community, by private providers, by not-for-profit providers and by the Government. Somehow we have to try to make that work. For example, with our provision of public preschools, we are forensically going through identifying where we are going to deliver them so we don't cannibalise existing services but increase the provision of public free services, because we know that fees are really an inhibitor for families going into early learning.

**The CHAIR:** This new Government has commissioned consultants to run a number of different programs in relation to early childhood. I'm just looking at, for example, just over \$822,000 going to PricewaterhouseCoopers. The actual contract duration runs from May, so definitely during your term, and it's looking at "ECO Commissioning Framework and Commissioning Products". Then there's another \$700,000 for Deloitte to look into the lived experience of people in those families in that year before school. What are they about? What's that expenditure going to return for us?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes, so the Committee gets the right answer, I would have to pass to Mr Barraket for what the answer is in terms of what those contracts were delivering for the department.

**MARK BARRAKET:** Thank you, Deputy Premier. I'm not aware of these, so can I get the names of these reports, please?

**The CHAIR:** This is from the eTender site. We have a contract award notice—and I can give you the details, if useful, but you should be able to find them on eTender. This is a contract to PricewaterhouseCoopers for a contract duration of 10 May to 30 November 2023 for \$822,779.50, and it just says, "Department of Education/ECO Commissioning Framework and Commissioning Products". That's all it says, so it's not telling us very much, and that was done through limited tender.

**MARK BARRAKET:** I think this predates my time in Early Childhood Outcomes. I'm happy to take that on notice and see what information I can get for you.

**The CHAIR:** That would be useful. Similarly, the one in relation to "Putting families at the center of UPK design", contract duration from March 2023 to October 2024. That one was to Deloitte for just over \$713,000.

**MARK BARRAKET:** I will also take that on notice and see what I can get for you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, that would be incredibly useful. While we're on contracts, just a curious one, because I can't help myself; as you know, I'm very interested in consultants and contractor spend. There's one here for disposing of hand sanitiser: \$536,000 to Cleanaway. That was entered into from 21 August 2023. What is that? What are we spending half a million dollars on?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I would have to seek advice from Mr Manning, who looks like he has the answer, which is a great delight to me.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** I do, indeed. Hand sanitiser that was distributed during COVID has an expiry date. Also, if enough of it is in one place, it is a hazardous material because of the contents that are in hand sanitiser, so it needs to be disposed of appropriately. So the contract is for the collection and disposal. Because

**CORRECTED**

it's an ethanol product, if you get enough of it in one place, categorised under the EPA, it becomes a hazardous material, and so we have to manage it as a hazardous material.

**The CHAIR:** If we're spending half a million dollars taking hand sanitiser out of schools that has expired, is a similar thing happening across government departments? Are we doing this in Health and other areas as well? How much are we spending, do you think?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** I can't speak to other agencies, but certainly the advice that we have had is that it has an expiry date. A lot of it has been sitting in schools and would need to be managed under the EP&A Act as a hazardous material, and we're disposing of it that way.

**The CHAIR:** Do you know if the previous Government had a plan around that expiry and some sort of looking at what the average expiry was so that we didn't end having to spend half a million dollars on this?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** No, I think at a point in time the hand sanitiser was being consumed at a great rate. As it has obviously dropped off, stocks have still existed at schools, who took as much as they could get their hands on at a point in time. We just had to cross that bridge as we get to it, and I'm sure other agencies, if they have stocks, would have had to dealt with it in the same sort of way. But I think schools would be relatively unique in terms of the way that they were supplied and the demand that happened and how that has fallen off. We would have to talk to other agencies, particularly Health, to understand if they have a different model. We did look at the ability to recycle it, but, because under the EP&A Act it is considered hazardous material, if the quantity is at a certain level and it's not a great volume, we've got to deal with it as a hazardous material.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Minister how many primary schools are there in New South Wales?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We have 2,200 schools across New South Wales. We have—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** How many of those are in Sydney?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We have 1,600 primary schools—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** So there are 2,200 or 1,600?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** So 2,200 primary and high schools, altogether, public schools. Are you talking about public schools?

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** No, I just wanted to know primary public—yes.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It's 1,600.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** How many NESAs primary school inspectors are there for the 1,600 primary schools?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That's a really good question. I was scared the question was going to be about my honeymoon or something, but that's a good question about NESAs inspectors.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** No, I don't want to know anything about your honeymoon. I have lived through your honeymoon in the past; I'm not going back there again.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I really hope the Committee will give me the indulgence of asking Mr Martin, who is heading up NESAs, how many inspectors there are for those 1,600 primary schools.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** It's just a simple question: How many NESAs primary school inspectors for the 1,600 schools?

**PAUL MARTIN:** There are NESAs inspectors that inspect schools for registration purposes across independent, government and public schools.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes, they cover all the sectors.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** No, I just want to know the public primary schools in terms of inspecting curriculum.

**PAUL MARTIN:** There is a NESAs-specific inspector for public primary schools in relation to registration. We rely on the systems of the sectors themselves, particularly the Catholic and government sector, to do the registration processes, which we oversight. As far as a ratio of NESAs inspectors to public primary schools, that's not an answer that I can give.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I have had concerns raised from people within the education system that this biggest pay deal, this big union pay deal, that the Minister oversaw—Minister, can I just confirm that there



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**CORRECTED**

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has been nothing compromised in relation to the number of inspectors, particularly around investigations of predatory behaviour at schools.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** So nothing in that area? There are no job cuts? As a result of the pay deal there will be no less investigations of predatory behaviour, for example?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** You're confident in that?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Can I also just confirm, with the primary school inspectors and indeed the high school inspectors—Minister, you might put it on notice. How much role does the department have in inspecting beyond the public schools then, so the independent schools and indeed the Catholic schools, in terms of curriculum?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** In terms of curriculum which, as you rightly say, is the domain of the standards authority, NESAs, which, for the benefit of the Committee, is separate to the department—it's a separate budget. It's a completely separate entity. I think in Mr Martin's previous answer it was made quite clear there aren't "primary school" and "high school" inspectors. They are inspectors that work across the system. One of the actual benefits of NESAs and one of the things that's different about NESAs with respect to the department is it actually works very clearly across all three sectors. So, yes, it does work—the inspectors work across all three sectors. Is that right, Mr Martin?

**PAUL MARTIN:** That's 100 per cent correct. The budgets of the department in relation to wages have no relationship at all to the inspectorate of NESAs.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It's completely separate.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I'll put some questions in the afternoon about that, but can I just go back, because I didn't complete my questions around the cybersecurity. It might be something, Minister, that you'll put on notice. In relation to those third-party apps, because I have had a number of parents raise concerns around breaches of data, I just want to confirm again—and you can put it on notice; it's up to you—how many breaches the department is aware of in 2023 and 2022 and how many investigations have happened. I also want to ask, potentially, whether any parents specifically and students have had to be compensated as a result of any data breaches.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That's a very detailed question, which is very important, about the actual privacy of children's details. If parents are concerned about the privacy, the cybersecurity of their children as a result of using Reading Eggs or Mathletics or whatever it might be, that would be of great concern to me as Minister. I will ask Mr Dizdar, who may take it on notice, that we would need to get the specific details of how many breaches may have been reported to the department back to yourself.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes, we took that on notice earlier, so our people will be at that. I want to make sure I come back with an accurate answer for you.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I might ask another one on notice. Have any parents sought reimbursement or compensation for a data breach in which their personal data was compromised? That specific question—if you could answer that, that would be good.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We will do those two together.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Because I understand previously in 2021 there were 327 breaches of data, of which 84 were resolved. I'm not sure why they weren't all resolved.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'm not sure where you're quoting those figures from, but we'll make sure we go back.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** You can double-check that for me—how many breaches there were, perhaps, in 2023, 2022 and 2021. The figure I have is 327 data breaches specifically that had to be investigated in 2021, of which only 84 were resolved.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We'll do our best for 2021, 2022 and 2023.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I just want to see for the benefit of the Committee if it's becoming a worse situation, given that there's such a huge reliance on third-party apps.

**CORRECTED**

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**MURAT DIZDAR:** I hear you.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Has anyone accessed the employee assistance program as a result of the Voice referendum to the best of your knowledge?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** When you say "has anyone", do you mean members of staff?

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Well, they were given access. Department staff, I understand—an email was sent out post the referendum.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Do you mean teachers, support staff, corporate staff?

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Mr Dizdar might know. There was an email sent out asking staff if they wanted to access or needed some particular counselling post the Voice referendum—

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes, I sent an email out to our 2,200 schools reminding them of the difficult space we were going to traverse with the referendum and reminding them that we're politically neutral, pointing them to resources. I did point out support mechanisms available there because we have, as you know, classroom teachers, school principals, support staff inside schools.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** So there are counselling services specifically for that purpose or it's just generally?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** No, it's one and the same. The employee assistance program is available to all our staff. The email I sent was to the school gates and my chief people officer, Shaun Ruming, sent one to our support staff within the corporate space and we reminded them of that. I'm happy to take on notice the number that availed themselves of that service—unless Mr Ruming has got that?

**SHAUN RUMING:** I can take that on notice. But what I can say is from 1 January to 31 July we had 2,925 staff access EAP, which is good.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** But that's not specific to the Voice.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Yes, I want to know since the Voice because you sent a further email.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We're happy to take it specific to the Voice and come back.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Because the email that I'm referring to is post Voice referendum.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Sure.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** How long is that opportunity for staff to access that program? It's ongoing, I assume. Or is there a specific allocation of funds or support specifically—

**MURAT DIZDAR:** The Employee Assistance Program, EAP, is a 365-day-a-year service for our staff.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Is there a waiting list for school psychologists as we speak? What's the process in relation to children accessing psychologists? What I want specifically to know, Minister—and you can take it on notice—is whether the waiting list is higher in Western Sydney, south-western Sydney or indeed regional New South Wales as opposed to eastern suburbs and the inner city.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The demand for services to help students with their wellbeing—and this speaks to a question asked of me by the Chair previously—is very high. I'm sure that Mr Dizdar or one of his deputy secretaries will have the detail on this, but I can assure the Committee that this is of highest priority to the Government and there are serious problems left to us by the previous Government with school counsellors and school psychologists, because we have children that seriously need help that aren't able to access it. And I'm sorry for sounding like a broken record, but it comes back to the workforce challenge. If we do not have school counsellors and school psychologists, we cannot provide that life-changing wellbeing support for our children.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Did you fund more school psychologists in this budget?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** What we're doing is we're committed to actually increasing the number of school counsellors and school psychologists and we're working hard on that commitment.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** But did you fund that in this budget?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We're working hard on that commitment. Mr Dizdar?

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** But you missed this budget.

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**CORRECTED**

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**MURAT DIZDAR:** Can I say what a massive valued resource school counsellors and school psychologists are in schools. Unfortunately, to the Committee, just like we've been talking about the teacher shortage and wanting to attract and retain more teachers, we find ourselves in a situation—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I don't think there's a shortage of psychologists. You couldn't be seriously saying that.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** In schools? In schools there definitely is.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Because you're not funding them. That's why I asked about the budget.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Did you want me to finish that answer, Chair, or did you want me to let it go?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, it's my time.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** There are lots of statements going forward.

**The CHAIR:** Go ahead. That's fine. Can we have a short response and then we'll go to the Opposition.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I was just saying unfortunately we have shortages for school counsellors and school psychologists as well.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We do.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We're working our way through the Government's commitment on having an additional 250 school counsellors and psychologists. I know school counsellors have had a welcome significant uplift in pay as well, but we do have shortages in both of those workforces—those workforces are really highly valued, do a fantastic job and we need to break the back of that shortage.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Just quickly following on from that, was there any money for those new counsellor positions allocated in the budget, Deputy Premier? Any specific amount?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The counsellor positions?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes. You said you were going to bring in more. I'm just wondering if there was a money allocation attached to it.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I know I'm sounding like I'm saying the same thing in response to every question but it literally is a massive part of the solution for every challenge. Part of getting more school counsellors is actually a significant pay rise. That's what we've delivered and that's in the budget.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So there's no additional money?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No, there is in the budget.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** How much? Could I have a dollar figure?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It's part of the pay deal that we have reached.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So the pay deal is the solution. There's not like a pipeline for scholarships or ways to attract more school counsellors and psychologists into schools.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The way to attract them—and you well know we have scholarship programs.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, we did. But do you? Are you continuing them? Is there money for them?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell, you well know that we have scholarship programs for counsellors that aren't taken up. You well know that.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, did you put money in this year's budget or not?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The way to fix this is teachers' and school counsellors' pay.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you. The answer is no. Did school psychologists get a pay rise?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The pay deal for teachers and school counsellors included—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, school psychologists, Deputy Premier.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —the school counsellors that are dual qualified.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm aware of that.

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**CORRECTED**

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**The CHAIR:** Order! Can we let the Minister answer.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We'll be working with the school psychologists and their representatives.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I want to ask—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Can I just say, further to that question, is that the offer for school psychologists under the central Government if you like, for want of a better term, included a 4½ per cent pay rise.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, but they didn't get the other rise.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No, but they did get a pay rise.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Can I ask you to confirm a pretty simple question about the \$5 billion Childcare and Economic Opportunity Fund. Can you confirm for us under oath that your Government will deliver that in full and that you're not planning to make any amendments to that Act during this term of Parliament?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It is funded in the budget.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, but over the term of Parliament. You're delivering it in full; that's your plan?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It is funded in the budget. I'm going to say this really clearly under oath, as I've said in response to many questions from the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly: someone is looking for something that does not exist. We have funded the fund.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** For this year, so we look forward to seeing that money flow in future years as well without any changes. I want to take you to the Murwillumbah Education Campus again now. This is a very genuine question. I have had many, many parents talk to me about their concerns about the decision to demerge. I have put a number of questions to you on the record and I know many parents have written to you. With all due respect, Deputy Premier, they haven't really got detailed answers in relation to some of their questions. I am asking again—I will put them on notice after today—can you give a guarantee to those parents, because some are watching, that you will respond question by question to some of the things that they're asking about? Because they're just not getting that information.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We will respond.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I will respond.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That would be great.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Can I just say on Murwillumbah, I know there are a variety of views, but we made it very clear—and I respect everyone's view. I'm sorry, Ms Mitchell, but you are the one that put us in this mess by merging these schools into one mega-school.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, there are parents who are watching this morning who have been trying to get information.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You put them in this position, Ms Mitchell.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** There are parents watching today who have been supportive of what this was going to offer their children and who are disappointed with your decision.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Were they consulted before you announced the merger?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, they have put a series of questions to me that I have put to you that you did not answer. You have just said you'll answer on notice.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I will.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I appreciate that and I'll let those parents know. I also want to ask you about Rankins Springs. You visited the P&C out there and met with them on 6 June. What did you discuss?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I met with some of the parents from Rankins Springs and the member for Murray at the member for Murray's electorate office about some of the concerns that they had about the school.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Following on from that, once again, I've had several members of that community contact me who are particularly concerned about how staff in that school are coping and managing. I understand there have been reviews. I understand that the ED is in town today. Once again, I have some quite

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**CORRECTED**

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detailed, specific questions from members of the community who are very concerned about staff morale and staff turnover, and the lack of support coming from the department and yourself in relation to the staff.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'll follow that up.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If I can put those on notice for you, that would be great. Again, answering those questions in full I'm sure would be appreciated by those locals.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I will answer the questions in full because staff morale—I think the Committee will realise—is a priority of mine. You can be sure that that is front and centre. I will answer those questions. I welcome your newfound appreciation of teaching staff morale in New South Wales.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, that is not quite true, but what we will say is thank you for answering that genuinely, and I look forward to your answers.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Deputy Premier, is the Labor Government committed to ensuring special religious education is available at Government schools?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Deputy Premier, can you rule out any changes to the Education Act?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** In relation to what, Ms Merton?

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** In relation to special religious education being available at Government schools?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Can I rule out changes to the Education Act in regard to SRE?

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Yes.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** I acknowledge we're not in Victoria.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That's good. We're not.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** I also note that your colleagues down there shifted these lessons to lunchtime and out-of-school hours. Can we rule out this occurring here?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I acknowledge that you acknowledged that I'm not the Minister for Victorian schools. That's a good starting point. Can I rule out changes to SRE in line with the Victorian changes?

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Yes.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Deputy Premier, I note in a media release in May that you promoted the Every Day Matters campaign.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** The media release showed that public school attendance rates are recovering from COVID-19, and stated that "Families can help students reach their attendance goals by ensuring they attend school every day unless they are unwell." Not including co-curricular activities, would being unwell be the only good reason for a student missing school?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** What your question goes to is that I've instructed the department to make a serious effort to make sure that students attend school unless they are seriously unwell or physically—there is a myriad of reasons, but what we are trying to say is that if you are not in a classroom with your teacher, you cannot benefit from the expert practice of that teacher teaching your child. We need children at school to get the benefits of a first-class education. Yes, we make no apologies for encouraging children to go to school.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Does striking for climate action count as a good reason not to attend school?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We encourage children to go to school. We acknowledge that a lot of our teenagers in particular, in high schools, will have views. They want to participate in democracy, but we would prefer them to be at school.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Should students be attending strikes during school hours?

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**CORRECTED**

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**Ms PRUE CAR:** They should be at school.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Deputy Premier, I also note as Minister the importance of consultation with parents and students, and visiting classrooms. I draw your attention to the diary disclosure arrangements that Ministers uphold here. I have counted 11 meetings or events that you have held, or been involved with, with the teachers union in the first three months of your tenure. In contrast, Deputy Premier, the disclosure shows that you have met with NESAs once and the P&C Federation once in that same time.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Is there a question?

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Where do P&Cs and parents really stand when it comes to your time and consultation?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** My disclosures are publicly available, so well done on going through the public disclosures. I will say to you that I am in constant communication, as we've established, with teacher representatives. I am also in constant communication with parents. Can I just say, yes, I do speak to the P&C Federation. I have involved the P&C—to be honest, like never before—in the statement of intent that we have pursued as a new Government with the department, the various unions, the primary principals, the secondary principals and the ACG. The P&C were involved in that. We've been working very closely with the newly elected president of the P&C Federation, in fact. Can I just say, involvement with parents goes beyond just the peak bodies, and I don't say this in any way other than to elaborate on this answer. I have been involved in many, many campaigns with the parents of various suburbs throughout New South Wales that have needed schools. I point to the families of Gregory Hills, where the previous Minister refused to listen to any parents—

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Thank you, I acknowledge that. My question was specifically—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —the parents of Marsden Park and the parents of Jordan Springs.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I am in constant communication with the parents of New South Wales about the needs of their children.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I want to take you back to the budget papers—*Budget Paper No.01*, page A5-4. There's a dot point that states, "Redirection of 'Local Schools, Local Decisions' discretionary funds". Can you tell me what that means?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell, I'm not sure if you have come to this Committee in an attempt to defend Local Schools, Local Decisions—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I haven't. I just wanted to know what it means.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —which I'm pretty sure you said you were going to remove, but in essence was never removed. So no, we have dismantled Local Schools, Local Decisions and we make no apologies for that.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It states, "Redirection of 'Local Schools, Local Decisions' discretionary funds". Again, that is code for Gonski money coming out of schools and going back into the department, is it not?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell, our election commitment was to increase the SRS—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Then what does this mean?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —and you well know that.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I want you to tell me what it means.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We are in negotiations presently with the Commonwealth Government to increase the resourcing standard.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's fine.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** This is not a Government that will be taking money away from schools.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's fine. But you're saying here—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We have dismantled—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Then why are you redirecting discretionary funds?

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Madam Chair, I am attempting to answer the question.

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**CORRECTED**

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**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Where is it being redirected to?

**The CHAIR:** Order! We were going okay, but that is not possible for Hansard to record. We will allow the Minister to respond.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** For the benefit of the Committee, I know that many members well know the torrid and horrible history of Local Schools, Local Decisions. But the whole premise of Local Schools, Local Decisions was it gave all the responsibility and all the onerous tasks right to principals and took no responsibility as a system. You know what? I'm proudly here to say we're getting rid of that because—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you, Deputy Premier.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —we're building up a system to support our schools.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It was replaced by School Success Model, as you would well know. But my question to you is it says here in the budget—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The School Success Model that the OECD said was a complete disaster?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, the OECD also said Rewarding Excellence in Teaching was a good program; you got rid of that, didn't you? You pick and choose what you like from the OECD.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Are you undermining the OECD?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You are. You're not doing Rewarding Excellence in Teaching. The OECD said it was a good program and should continue.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Sorry, was the question about Rewarding Excellence or was it about Local Schools, Local Decisions?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You've prompted me with your question.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I don't believe in picking a few teachers and rewarding them. I believe in rewarding all teachers for their expert practice.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Okay, so you don't agree with the OECD's position on Rewarding Excellence, then? You like some of what they say but not everything; you pick and choose for your policies. Is that right?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Hang on. The OECD said, Ms Mitchell—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Point of order: There were at least three questions in that.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —that the School Success Model—

**The CHAIR:** Order! Apologies, Minister, I need to hear the—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —was an absolute disaster—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, it didn't.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes, it did.

**The CHAIR:** Order! Once a point of order is taken I need to stop proceedings to hear it.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** My point of order is that there were at least three questions in the submission from the Hon. Sarah Mitchell. She needs to limit her questions to one at a time; the Minister can answer her questions one at a time. That's an orderly way to proceed.

**The CHAIR:** I uphold the point of order. I ask that we not talk over each other.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thanks, Chair. Minister, you are redirecting discretionary funds from schools, though. Is that correct?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We are getting rid of Local Schools, Local Decisions.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, you are redirecting discretionary funds from schools. It's written in your budget papers. I'm just asking you to confirm that under oath.

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**CORRECTED**

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**Ms PRUE CAR:** What we are doing is making sure that the funds that the taxpayer pays for us to deliver schools, pay for teachers and deliver a world-class education system are actually spent on things that are going to make a difference inside the school gates.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Right. So is every school having the same amount taken out of their budget with this redirection of discretionary funds?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell, I do not accept the premise of your question. You are trying to get me—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It's in your budget papers, with respect.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —on something that is not the case. You are trying to suggest—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, why is it in your budget papers?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —that we are taking money away from schools, which we are not.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Again, with respect, Deputy Premier—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We are actually committed to putting more public money into schools.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, Deputy Premier, your very own budget papers have a line that says "redirection of discretionary funds". What is that if it's not moving money?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Within the education system.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, but that's money that was going to schools—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You're suggesting that we're taking funding away from schools.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So every school is not going to have any cut off the top of their budget with that decision?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Look, I can't actually say this in any other way than what I've said it. I will ask Mr Dizdar to say it, because maybe if someone else says it—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I'm asking you. I want to ask Mr Dizdar later this afternoon.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —maybe you'll believe it.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will go back to the issue of casual vacancies. You said earlier—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Please.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** —that you'll do that census once a year, which, given you've said it's what keeps you going, it's quite extraordinary that you think checking every 12 months is fine. How long will it take to see pay rises, as you claim, have an impact on those casual vacancies? Would you expect to see that improve next term, the beginning of next year? What's your time frame?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You well know it takes several years to train a teacher.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I would make the point, for the benefit of the Committee, that the previous Minister well knows it takes several years to train a teacher. But the most important, immediate metric that I sincerely hope will start to improve is resignations.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Right. So—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** They were outstripping retirements on your watch.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Okay, thank you, Deputy Premier—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** And can I just say about the census—I'm sorry, but I have to call you out, Ms Mitchell. If you are to come in here and say that we should be doing this census more often, when you were asked to do it and you refused to do it—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Your hypocrisy is getting worse as the hearing goes on.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, Deputy Premier, you have said on the record that this is your biggest issue. But you've also told the Committee today you won't do a census more often than annually. You won't commit to a figure—



**CORRECTED**

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**Ms PRUE CAR:** Are you suggesting that a workforce—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm just asking you a question—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —that is under crippling workload pressure should be doing this every term?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You aren't making sense. You're contradicting yourself, with respect.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No, you aren't making sense.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You have said this is important. You have said teachers were crying out to give you this data.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** They were.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Why wouldn't you collect it every term?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm sorry, but the balance is we do it every year so we can actually do a like-for-like comparison.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Okay, that's fine. If you want to do a like-for-like comparison—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You refused to do it. This is actually laughable, Ms Mitchell. It's laughable, I'm sorry. It would be laughable if it wasn't affecting children.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, Deputy Premier, you are now the Minister. You are in charge. You are now telling the Committee that we won't know for a full 12 months whether there's any improved data in relation to casuals.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You have no credibility on this and you know it.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, are you telling us you won't make that data available any sooner than 12 months' time?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The data you refused to collect?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You've got no target for how many vacancies there should be in terms of permanent. You can't tell me how long the time frame will be to see a positive impact of your wages policy. What you're saying to the Committee is "We'll come back to you in 12 months and let you know how it's going." How is there any accountability or transparency in that for your Government? If this is your biggest issue, why are you not happy to provide updated data—to this Committee, the Parliament or anyone who asks for it—on a regular basis? What are you hiding?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm sorry, Ms Mitchell. I have said we will collect the data. You refused—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But not for another 12 months.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —to collect the data. Where's the accountability? The accountability is this Committee when I come to budget estimates. The accountability is the Parliament. The accountability is the teachers of New South Wales.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's great, Deputy Premier, but you've also just confirmed you will not be providing this data to anyone in the community again for 12 months. Why won't you do it more often—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Ms Mitchell, you refused to do it, full stop.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** —if you're not afraid of accountability? Why are you concerned?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I actually don't know how to answer this any more.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, clearly.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You actually refused to do it and now suddenly you care about a census.

**The CHAIR:** Order! A point of order has been taken and I need to hear it.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** This is just absolutely insane stuff.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The question has been asked and answered many times now. I think it's quite clear that this is now just badgering the witness.

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**CORRECTED**

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**The CHAIR:** In relation to the point of order, there is more discretion given when we have a Minister before the Committee than for other witnesses. To the point of it being repetitious, it is up to the member as to whether they want to hear the same answer over and over. Perhaps we can move on.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, if I put a question on notice to you every month asking what the vacancy rates are in schools and what the casual rates are, do you guarantee that you will provide that up-to-date information?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I will answer every question that you put on notice, just as you answered every question I put on notice.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I did. We were quite transparent, yes.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Transparent?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** In terms of data of vacancies.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You didn't collect the data.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, thank you for confirming—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm sorry, but someone from the previous Government actually pretending that they were transparent is actually laughable at this point.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I look forward to receiving that data, Deputy Premier, each month and certainly watching closely the impact—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Please do.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** —of your wages policy because—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Please do.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** —you're not really offering anything until a year's time—probably on the day of budget estimates again.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Point of order—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, I just want to take you to—

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I have very limited time, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** I know, but I need to hear a point of order when it is taken. Go ahead, Mr Nanva.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** I don't know that we should be taking statements during this hearing. I don't know if that was a statement or a question.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I'm getting to a question.

**The CHAIR:** Go ahead.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thanks, Chair. Deputy Premier, I want to take you back to your hundred preschools that you've committed to. Ten preschools, you announced in the budget, all part of new school builds. I think the Premier even wrote a little social media post stating, "Congratulations, families, you'll be amongst the first to benefit."

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm sure he did. It's great news.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** When will those preschools actually open for children?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Those preschools will open at various points. If I search my memory, as I can see out of the corner of my eye Mr Manning making his way to the table—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, they're all new builds and most of them don't have land, so they're several years away; that is the truth.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Hang on, I'm actually answering this. The preschools will be delivered in line with the delivery of the public primary schools. I'm sure there is a time line of delivery for these public preschools as it is a key deliverable for School Infrastructure, because it is a key election commitment of the Government. I'll ask Mr Manning.

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**CORRECTED**

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**ANTHONY MANNING:** The 100 preschools are on track to be delivered ready for the beginning of 2027.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** And the 10 specific ones that were funded in this year's budget? I know that one of the schools is due to open soon because we started building it, but others like Lennox Head and Albury are some time away, aren't they, Mr Manning?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** No, again, we expect them to be available at the beginning of 2027. As you know, Lennox Head is a project that we're working on and it will be ready ahead of 2027.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The Premier said, "Congratulations, families, you're amongst the first", but he probably should have included a line that said, "But you won't get it until 2027".

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You would say that, but they weren't going to get them at all under you.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, it's just been confirmed, Deputy Premier. Thank you for confirming that.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Minister, further to the questions you were asked about the SRE, obviously you've committed that the Minns Government will remain supportive of SRE. Can I just ask—and you may take this on notice—what are the numbers for ethics instruction, the take-up around ethics instruction, and specifically which areas, whether it's taken up in the inner city, in Western Sydney or in regional New South Wales? I wouldn't mind some data around the take-up of ethics instruction.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Just on the SRE, right now the Government's considering gay conversion legislation. Obviously, abhorrent, dangerous and damaging conversion practices do rightly need to be banned in New South Wales. I am interested, though, because there's been some concern from a number of religious and multicultural organisations that what's being proposed—potentially either by the Greenwich bill or, indeed, the Government bill—will step into the area of religious prayer and instruction. Minister, is that something that either your office or indeed the department has thought of down the track, that there may be some impact in relation to what is being proposed in that legislation on the delivery of SRE?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** So, on the first lot of questions, Ms Mihailuk, as you well know your question goes to the fact that an alternative for SRE in school settings, of course, is ethics instruction. I have been working very closely with many community organisations—Better Balanced Futures, and a lot of the organisations involved in special religious education—to get a better idea of just what is the picture in schools, how many schools are doing this, what are they actually getting the SRE instruction in, as well as what schools are actually participating in the ethics, where is it taken up. I would have to ask Mr Dizdar for what are the actual numbers, but I'm keen to get that data as well, so we can have a more accurate sense of where it is available, where it has been taken up and where it has not been taken up.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes. Ms Mihailuk, we'll have to come back to you on notice, if that's okay, to give you the exact number.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** In terms of the two bills that are potentially before the Parliament, I will participate in the Cabinet discussions. I will get advice from my department. We have to treat all these issues, as I'm sure you will be well aware and well versed in, with extreme care. We're talking about people that have very deeply held religious views and also people for whom these are very sensitive issues. I really need to make sure that I manage these issues sensitively on behalf of the education system, but I'll be participating in those Cabinet discussions, absolutely, with advice from my department.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Thank you, Minister. Have you had any approaches by Canterbury-Bankstown Council or, indeed, any lobbyists around the site of Bankstown Senior College being potentially used as a future hospital?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Not that I'm aware of.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Have you ever had any meetings with your ministerial staff? Mr Dizdar?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Not that I'm aware of. I haven't had any meetings. Would this be Mr Manning's area?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Certainly. We have had conversations with Health in the past, but from recollection I don't think during this current term of government have we had any conversation with Health on that issue.

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**CORRECTED**

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**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** There have been no further discussions about Bankstown Senior College?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes, that's right.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** What were the discussions previously about Bankstown Senior College?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** They were really looking at the site as a potential hospital expansion site, and I know that Health were looking at a number of sites and they looked at that site in particular.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Okay, And there is nothing more on that from the new Labor Government?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** No.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** They've stopped considering that site?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We haven't had conversations with Health on that matter.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** On the previous question I asked about the land audits, I want to seek some clarification, if I can ask. It may be for you, Mr Manning. Minister, I will ask you first, though. You have said that the Premier has asked every department to assess any vacant land.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Have you well and truly finished that assessment now, or are you still in the process?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** This is definitely one for Mr Manning, yes.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We finished that assessment and provided that information to government.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** You provided information how much land is available?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We've provided how much land is vacant, and we will provide advice in terms of the reason why it might be vacant. Some land will be vacant because it is held for future school capacity should we need it, or future expansion should we need it. And there may be some land that is being used for other purposes but we still own, so we might have tenants on them or other agencies might be using the land but it still sits in our ownership.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I can only ask what we possibly can here. Were you asked to provide a full assessment of whether that land could actually be potentially used for housing?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** No. We haven't done an assessment around what it could be used for in the future, merely look at the land that we own and whether it's vacant or not.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** And you've already provided that?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** As with every other agency, yes.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Will that be made publicly available?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That would be a whole-of-government question that we would need to take on notice.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I have a couple of questions that people have asked me to ask. Michael Kable's conviction, obviously, was quashed. Will he be reinstated?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'd have to ask Mr Dizdar to answer this question, please.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We'll take the specifics on notice, but what happens is—and if I've got the right case as well, Ms Mihailuk—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** It was just reported yesterday.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes, that's the one.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** A Maitland teacher.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Thanks for the clarification. The police have completed their work. The conviction has been quashed. I have asked for the question overnight and our Professional and Ethical Standards directorate will now undertake their assessment separate to the police and criminal process and then work out if there's any sanctions that he needs to face or if there's ongoing employment et cetera. We always allow any criminal proceedings, police proceedings, to occur first before we can undertake our own processes.

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**CORRECTED**

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**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** In light of what actually occurred to Mr Kable, and the fact that his conviction was quashed, will there be a re-evaluation of how teachers who are subjected to violence in the class are treated by the department? Because he was really hung out to dry and quite clearly that conviction has completely been quashed and overturned. I put that to you because there are obviously issues of violence from time to time in classrooms. It is a problem that everybody faces, whether a Coalition government or a Labour government. I remember in my time, when I was young in Bankstown, seeing teachers subjected to extreme violence. Is the department or the Minister keen to re-visit how you manage issues as what happened here with Mr Kable?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I think Mr Dizdar will have more detailed knowledge of what can be done in terms of the operationalising of the way we deal with it. But I will say, violence in schools is something that is of increasing concern to myself personally and it is related, I have to say, with decisions of government and the decisions government takes in terms of policy when it comes to behaviour and giving principals, in particular, the authority to deal with behaviour and behavioural problems and be able to actually deal with persistent misbehaviour. I'm not saying that's going to get rid of kids that are going to muck up in classrooms, and there's plenty of teachers sitting around me who would say that's a tale as old as time. But we have to, as a government, take responsibility in terms of the policies that we give schools to deal with challenging behaviour in the classroom. Mr Dizdar?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I was only going to add, again, Ms Mihailuk, a national call-out with the Teacher Education Expert Panel review, which was chaired by Mr Scott. That called out that initial teacher education courses must have a quality-assured, mandated behaviour management component. As you would respect and appreciate, when you are especially beginning your career, classroom management, behaviour management is complex and we have got to make sure that our people are well supported in the classroom. I would reiterate what the Deputy Premier said: Schools, when you attended, when I attended, to this day, zero tolerance around violence in schools—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Sorry. Thank you, Mr Dizdar. I just want to quickly ask one more question. Would you say, Minister—and perhaps to you, Mr Dizdar—that it's more likely that casual teachers are being impacted by these sorts of violent outbursts? My concern is that casual teachers are in a difficult predicament because they may not have the same sort of respect in the class—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** And relationship with the kids, yes.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Is there some data around that, that it is more likely that it's casual teachers, rather than permanent teachers?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I don't know if there's data. Mr Dizdar would know, but anecdotally I can see—I will pass to you, Mr Dizdar.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I think we are working on better supporting our casual teaching workforce—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** —particularly around professional learning and accreditation. I actually did two days of casual teaching last year in two different schools, so I know—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** And no-one tried to hit you? No?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** No. I was at Cabramatta High School and also Jamison High School. But I know that it can be tough when you enter—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** It's awful. I think what happened to him was awful. But there are real example of that.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I know that it can be tough when you start off in a school because you're new to the school and new to the students, and I know that in talking to a number of casuals in my career that they are looking for better support from us and that's why we are looking at professional learning and accreditation mechanisms. I am proud that with the teacher award, they were on two steps of pay and we've introduced a third step of pay to make it more attractive, because we were talking about the casual teacher shortage earlier. So there are things that we are looking at to better support them. I was only out at Riverside Girls High School last week. It's a beautiful school and I spoke to two casuals there that are happy to turn up at that school each and every day, given how orderly, how structured the school is, how well they are supported by the school. We need to achieve that everywhere to make it more attractive for our casuals to be able to go everywhere.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, the plan for NSW Public Education that was released yesterday—I did a quick control-F and I couldn't find any reference to children with disability in here. There are definitely some statements around inclusion and diversity but I couldn't see anything in relation to disability. Why is that?

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**CORRECTED**

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**Ms PRUE CAR:** That's a really fair question and it is an increasing challenge, if I can say, for our schools to deal with. I will say a few comments before I pass onto Mr Dizdar because this plan has really been a bottom-up approach. We have consulted widely with the profession in schools, so this is really what has come up in terms of what the profession needs from the system to support them in delivering public education. It goes without saying that teachers are focused on delivering the best quality education to every student in the classroom, and that includes children with disabilities and children with complex needs. We do face a particular challenge where we have more and more children presenting with complexities and with disabilities in mainstream settings.

We know that we have wonderful schools for specific purposes that deliver an incredible high-quality education for students particularly with high needs in terms of disability, but 85 per cent of our students with disabilities are at our mainstream schools. It sort of goes without saying that this is a focus of the profession in our schools. But I'm going to say—I know that it sounds like a broken record but one of the best ways we can actually support our students with disabilities is ensuring that we have the adequate workforce, because I tell you what, even as a Minister, as a local member, one of the biggest challenges I'm faced with is people asking me about support places. What can we do about support places if we don't have the workforce to fund more support classes, to teach more support classes?

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, just because of the limited time I do want to just drill down into this a little bit. The previous Government frustrated me no end because there seemed to be this culture of, in the context of a lack of resources where teachers were doing it incredibly tough, whenever I asked about children with disability, I had basically teachers' needs being pitted against the needs of children with disability, which I'm sure you will acknowledge is a completely false debate. But it took the attention off of government from providing the resources needed to allow all children to thrive in our schools. You have released a plan just yesterday that does not mention children with disability despite them being at least 18 per cent of kids in our schools.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Why?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes, you're right. It's actually an increasing challenge, but I would argue it goes without saying that this is what we were doing. I just can only give assurances to the Committee that every school I go to, there is a question raised with me. Every local member I speak to, there is a question raised with me about support places. But if we drill down to ground zero, I have no way of actually using the State government lever to create more support classes if we don't have the adequate number of teachers, and that is the priority of this plan for public education. The more teachers we get in the system, the more support classes we can have. Put on top of that, the work we're doing at a national level to actually say, "We need to do better in initial teacher education in terms of training of our student teachers, our baby teachers, in terms of supporting children with disability—

**The CHAIR:** I appreciate that, but there's more to it than that, isn't there?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes, there is more to it.

**The CHAIR:** There are LSOs. There's a whole bunch.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Where is the plan for supporting children with disability in our schools?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** This is a huge challenge. I'll ask Mr Dizdar to speak about what we're doing.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** It's a really good point you make because one in five of our students require an adjustment for disability. There are six pillars that we're zoomed in on in the plan for public education in New South Wales. Pillar one goes to what you're talking to and it goes to tackling the equity challenge.

**The CHAIR:** But it doesn't explicitly talk about children with disability or have any plan for them. Why was such an oversight made? This is a plan that was released yesterday just after the royal commission really focused on this issue. Why is there no plan?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes, I'd like to address your question, Chair. It's far from an oversight. In that pillar one, we wanted to stay high level. I think you're referring to the one-pager. In the one-pager—

**The CHAIR:** No, I'm referring to entire plan. Sorry, however many pages this is, it does not mention once the word "disability".

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I don't think that's correct because in pillar one on the equity challenge, the equity cuts in our system are quite clear. Our results for students with disability need vast improvement. Our results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students need vast improvement. We addressed earlier for regional, remote,

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**CORRECTED**

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need considerable improvement, as well as for new arrivals, refugee students. On our equity cuts, which we look at for students with disability, our outcomes need increasing—

**The CHAIR:** I'm not taking away from any of the other children who also have the need for particular resources to lift their standards.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** But I am very focused on that cohort that is continuously overlooked and was continuously overlooked by the previous Government. What is your plan for children with disability in our schools?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I think Mr Dizdar's answer is going to the fact that the plan is quite high level, and I think the plan does not call out particular cohorts in that respect.

**The CHAIR:** No.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I suppose, with respect, you're right to call out that this is a huge challenge for the education system, particularly the public education system. But the fact that cohorts, particularly the cohorts that we need to do better in terms of an equity standpoint, are not called out does not mean that there is not a focus on them from the New South Wales Government, but you're right to call out.

**The CHAIR:** And there isn't a plan though. So, again, I would hope that we can in this new Government work together—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** —to have something that acknowledges children with disability and doesn't pit them against teachers because it's not teachers' fault.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No. It would break teachers' hearts to hear that.

**The CHAIR:** We have a situation that needs to be fixed. Have you read the royal commission report in relation to inclusive education and the recommendations around education?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I have read the recommendations.

**The CHAIR:** Do you have a plan to implement those?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We certainly are digesting the recommendations of the report as a whole-of-government approach. Of course, it's not just about education, but we are seriously looking at the recommendations around education. We face significant challenges where we know that, as Mr Dizdar said, we have to do so much better when it comes to children with disabilities. I am intimately involved in the whole-of-government response, which we have committed to responding to by March next year. One of the best ways we can actually address the issues that we face as a society in terms of our responsibility to people with disabilities is through education. Of course you would think of that from the education Minister, but that is one of the best ways. There are lots of recommendations; there are over 200 recommendations and we'll be working specifically on the education ones.

**The CHAIR:** One of the key findings of the disability royal commission was around the inappropriate use of exclusionary discipline on students with disability and how it keeps them from their classrooms and peers and really sets back that equity work. In particular there was a lot of discussion about suspensions. Will you be looking at your suspension policy in light of the recommendations from the disability royal commission?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Yes, it's really important because in the past we have most certainly seen children with disabilities over-represented in the suspension statistics. I'll preface what I'm going to say about the behaviour policy with this: I don't want to speak on behalf of principals and deputy principals but I'm fairly sure that none of them want to actually give out suspensions.

**The CHAIR:** Of course.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It's a last case resort. But we must work sensitively, and I know that principals do this but they do need more support from us. They absolutely need more support from us to be able to deal with children with disabilities and their particular needs within the policy. But the idea of the policy and the review of the policy was always to make sure that principals, teachers, deputy principals, APs, can actually deal with consistent misbehaviour. It's not about children with disabilities.

**The CHAIR:** I just want to be very clear because I don't want us to fall into the old narrative that we had in the previous Government when we are advocating for children with disability. No-one I know of is criticising teachers or principals or the schools themselves. We're looking at additional resources to be provided to actually

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**CORRECTED**

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cater for children with disability. I understand that there was very limited consultation with disability groups in relation to that suspension policy. Has that been corrected and are you consulting with them now?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm not sure about the premise of that question. I acknowledge what you're saying, Madam Chair, about not pitting teachers against students, because that would be to deny the complexity of this issue. Teachers are crying out for more support to deal with students with disability because what keeps a teacher in a classroom, especially in the last few years, is a desire to give every child, regardless of ability, a life-changing education. But I believe we have consulted with people with disability and with families of children with disability on the new policy. I will ask Mr Dizdar to elucidate on that.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes, we did consult far and wide. Chair, you may or may not know, but we're about to undertake a training package this term with our schools that we've never undertaken before around suspension and expulsion so that we can make sure and reinforce what supports are available when a student has been suspended, and hopefully prior to suspension.

**The CHAIR:** Because of the time, I will come back to you this afternoon, Mr Dizdar, to continue this.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Sure. It's really important.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Deputy Premier, can you confirm clearly that individual schools will have a phonics target going forward?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm going to be very clear and I'm going to ask Mr Dizdar to—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I'm asking you.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No, I'm doing this so it's very clear.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm asking you.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The phonics scare campaign is untrue. Mr Dizdar?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Will they have a target going forward, Deputy Premier—yes or no?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'm asking Mr Dizdar.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I think I was quoted yesterday—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It was in the paper yesterday that you said the phonics targets were going? I'm just not sure if that's clear.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I would like to talk to that. The phonics assessment is a mandatory assessment for year 1 students. It has been mandatory since 2021. We won't be altering that; it's mandatory. As every good educator knows, the phonics is a diagnostic tool. It's a short five- to six-minute assessment to make sure a student is at level on phonemic awareness. We do give the school their overall result. It's an instantaneous feedback mechanism, because what's important to the year 1 teacher instantly is is that student at level or not.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you, Secretary. I'm aware of that. I was the Minister. You know I'm aware of that.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** What we've done since 2021 is we've published the State data. We'll be doing that again this year.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But you would also be aware that under the previous Government's School Success Model, the intention was for every school to have a phonics target to see improvements in relation to that. My question is, is that going to continue. Because yesterday the story in *The Sydney Morning Herald* indicated that under the new plan you're not having HSC targets, you're not having top two NAPLAN band targets or you're not having phonics targets anymore. I want to know if that's correct.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I would really welcome the opportunity to unpack what I said and what we're working on.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Exactly.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It's a pretty simple question to you, Deputy Premier.

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

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Mr Dizdar, I'm happy to talk about it this afternoon.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I would be delighted to, because there's been a lot of work going into that.



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**CORRECTED**

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**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Are phonics targets for every school going to continue?

**The CHAIR:** Order! A point of order has been taken.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Mr Dizdar is trying to answer the question. He should be afforded the opportunity to give a comprehensive answer to the question that was asked.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It shouldn't be hard. I just would like to know if there's going to be a target.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** You asked the question. He is trying to give the answer. You should allow him to give the answer.

**The CHAIR:** Please continue. We've only got 38 seconds.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** For phonics, we'll be having every school still undertaking the mandated assessment.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Will they have a target to improve, though, Secretary?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'm trying to answer.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It's a pretty simple question.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** He's actually answering your question about phonics.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I understand the check is continuing, and that's great. We brought it in. I understand you will make statewide data available. That's great—tick!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** You're so sensitive about your record.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** My third question is will every school have a target to see improvements in terms of those phonic outcomes? Will you be looking at a school and saying, "This is where you were. This is where we'd like you to be."

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We will be working with every school on their targets.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** At individualised school targets, Deputy Premier?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** That is what I'd like to answer.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We will be working with every school on their targets.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** To have a specific phonics target?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We will be working with every school on their targets.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So there's no specific phonics target. That's what you've just confirmed.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** That's not what we've confirmed.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That's not what we said.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We were trying to answer the question.

**The CHAIR:** Go ahead and answer the question.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** There'll be the statewide figures and we'll give the school their figure, but what schools and teachers want is the individual student, and that's what we'll keep doing and keep giving to them. I indicated that we're working on school improvement measures because the ones that are in play are coming to an end in 2023, so we'll have a new set of measures around reading, around numeracy, around attendance, around pathways and around wellbeing. We're at work on those and we're starting to work with our schools from week four. We're in week three of the term. From week four this term and also from term 1 there will be new improvement measures.

Of course, the Committee would respect and appreciate that we've also got new NAPLAN reporting that's gone from 10 scales to four scales, so it's a fallacy that we're dropping top two bands. What we are working on are new measures. Given the break in time series with NAPLAN, we are not reconciling away from reading, from numeracy, from attendance, from wellbeing and from pathway as measures. Chair, I would also add that the OECD report is well worth reading. It says—and we've taken heed—this time around to do these in a much better way by working bottom up then top down, and that's what we intend to do.

**The CHAIR:** The timing has gone a bit screwy now. The crossbench was entitled to a little extra time. Ms Mihailuk, do you have one final question?

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**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I will ask a quick question in relation to COVID and the teachers who were impacted by having to leave school as a result of not being vaccinated. Where's that up to? Maybe to Mr Dizdar, have they all been reinstated? Have they all been given an opportunity to come back?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I think I clarified this this morning on 2GB. Mr Dizdar can confirm this, but we have given the teachers an opportunity to return.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** So they've been formally written to, everyone who left in that period?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** When the vaccination mandate was lifted—and the last of that lifting just happened earlier this term in our special schools—we made it clear that they can re-engage and apply for employment. I'll get the specific data for you, if you want.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Yes. If you can get me the data of how many teachers left in the first instance as a result of not being vaccinated and how many now are taking the opportunity to come back, that would be great.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Let me do that, because it's a little bit of a vexed area.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** That's fine.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Some resigned, some had disciplinary proceedings on different fronts, some were purely just the vaccinations.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Of course.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We can take it on notice.

**The CHAIR:** In the interests of the efficient running of the hearing, I will cede my time and pass over to the Government for them to close us out.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** Deputy Premier, can I ask about this Government's efforts to lift the status of the profession and value of teachers? Since you've been Minister, what have teachers told you about how they have been treated over the past 12 years?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I suppose this question goes to a number of significant reforms that this Government is—that's everything you need to know about the previous Government.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Point of order: I need to put that on the record. It's extraordinary that you're using Government time for the first time in years, but I'm going to the bathroom, Deputy Premier. Please don't reflect on me leaving the Committee to go to the bathroom. Can you retract what you said?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Okay, I will retract what I said. A lot of it is in jest. I'd love for you to retract half of what you've said today. I can tell you, I had a principal as recently as last week say to me—it does sound dramatic but it comes out of their own mouths. I will repeat to this Committee that many principals and teachers will tell me they felt like they were being gaslit by the previous Government. They kept saying, "There is a shortage. There is a shortage", and the previous Minister says, "There is not a shortage." They say, "There is a shortage. There is a shortage." "What shortage are you talking about?" From time to time the previous Minister would say to me, "You're constantly talking about the teacher shortage and being negative about it." I'm not sure what was positive about it, but that remains to be seen.

What your question speaks to, Ms Suvaal, is really clear. Not only are we valuing teachers with pay. It has to be acknowledged—and I don't shy away from this—that pay is a function of respect. The very first chance I had to speak to all of the staff on day one, term 2 of their staff development day, I said very clearly that pay is a function of respect, and we've come good on that commitment. We had a few bumps on the way, but we came good on that commitment to pay teachers as a function of this society's—through their government—respect of them. The other thing is how we talk about teachers. It would shock the Committee to know that teachers are very well informed about every single word that is said about them in the public discourse. It speaks to just how much they are well informed about their profession.

So I choose all of my words very carefully when I speak about the profession that educates our children and about how they are valued, and I listen to their expert advice. Every single announcement that we have as a government we will inform the profession to start with so they are not hearing about their own workplace through *The Daily Telegraph*—which was a constant piece of feedback as soon as I became a Minister. We are actually listening to expert practice. It's sort of a novel concept in education. You wouldn't ever take advice on how to run a health system by not talking to doctors and nurses, but when it comes to education that was severely lacking.

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**CORRECTED**

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When I became Minister there was a line of experts from the public system and the Catholic system and the independent system saying to me, "We love the new curriculum, but slow it down because we can't deliver it in the middle of a teacher shortage." So we did that. I was happy to work with NESA to do that. I am working with NESA and I have given them their statement of expectations about really nailing down on the workload question and making sure that it's easier to maintain accreditation and all these things that were previously denied of teachers. That is one of the many ways that we are working towards valuing the profession in a way that they feel valued enough to stay.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** We have also heard repeated attacks by Liberal and National Party MPs on the significant pay rise that you mentioned that this Government has delivered for teachers. The member for Port Macquarie called this a teacher wage grab. The member for Vaucluse said that the Government made a bad choice. The member for Wahroonga said that teachers haven't demonstrated improvements to justify a pay rise. What impact do these types of comments have on teachers and the teaching workforce?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The impact is pretty severe. I have to say that, further to my previous comment about how teachers are so well versed in every word that is said about their profession in the public discourse, they listen to all this. I would hazard a guess that, for any profession that is constantly run-down, it has a serious impact on them. We are working day and night to restore the trust in the profession because it is the right thing to do and because we have young people listening, and because we want to encourage young people to become educators in our systems to then train the next generation. Restoring the trust in the teaching profession is seriously one of the most important things that is a priority of this Government.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** Have you received any support from the Liberals and Nationals for the Government's decision to properly pay teachers and make salaries competitive?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No, that's been pretty clear that they still oppose this. I welcome support from any quarters for paying teachers. The fact that we still have an Opposition in New South Wales that wants to dig in and deny teachers the pay rise they deserve says a lot about what got us in this position to begin with.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** To be clear, have you had any support from the former education Minister or are you aware if the former Minister has defended teachers against the attacks from her colleagues?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No. I would take that silence as maybe the previous Minister, who is the shadow Minister, agreeing—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Point of order—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —with members of The Nationals or the Liberals attacking teachers.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** This is Government question time and I respect that. It's the first time it's been used in years in budget estimates. But I'm still entitled to the same rules of the House to be reflected on. You have said that I'm sitting here silently but I'm actually respecting the courtesy of the Committee and not interjecting on your own Dixers that you've given to your Government. Is this really what you think the Minister for Education and Early Learning should be using her time to do? Is this the best you've got?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I tell you what the Minister for Education—

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** She has asked me a question, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** I will rule on the point of order first. I uphold the point of order in relation to the adverse reflection. Having now been asked a question, the Minister will respond.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I am very clear about what I think the responsibility of the Minister for Education and Early Learning is, even if previous education Ministers were not as clear. My clear commitment is to deliver an education system that has enough teachers to deliver the life-changing opportunity of learning. I will shout that from the rooftops at every available opportunity.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Minister, my question is about workload. The former Government has claimed that they saved teachers about an hour a week on admin work. What have teachers told you about whether they have experienced any saved time on admin workload?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** They are stilling look for that hour that the previous Government claimed they saved them. Members of the Committee will be well aware that we made a commitment to significantly decrease workload. This is a joint responsibility of both the Department of Education and NESA. Don't get me wrong, there

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is a lot of workload responsibility on the department and an unending amount of policies that we have paused and stopped and streamlined so that teachers can—novel idea—focus on teaching. A lot of it is also the responsibility of NESA when it comes to accreditation requirements. That is a way that we can impact on the workload impost of teachers in all of our sectors, not just the public education sector.

When I go to Catholic and independent schools, I do get a lot of questions about workload that are related to the regulator or to NESA. We are working very clearly. I gave a statement of expectations to the NESA board last week and much of that was focused on workload and how we can actively look at making accreditation easier. We want the best quality educators in front of our children. To constantly keep proving their efficiency every five years and having to document that over and over again in the middle of a shortage when we're 3,000 casual teachers short is absolutely ludicrous. I've been met with a lot of welcome feedback about that accreditation piece from NESA. We are working really hard on the workload.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Are we behind other jurisdictions on that front in terms of the accreditation work?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I'll get Mr Martin to comment on this as well but I think we are the last State or Territory to come to the party in terms of teacher accreditation in this respect. We are working very hard. I am working with the chair of the board and the CEO very diligently in getting on top of this accreditation workload issue.

**PAUL MARTIN:** Thank you very much for the question. Accreditation is managed differently in different States and Territories. They all share a requirement of around 100 hours of professional learning over a five-year period. At the end of that five years, some States and Territories require additional generally low-level explanations of the fact that they are still maintaining. New South Wales had requirements about a decade ago that involved a statement of meeting—a teacher had to write a statement that they were continuing to meet the standards. We have moved away from that.

We attempted to merge the five-year maintenance with performance and development frameworks, which meant that teachers in different schools experience very different maintenance requirements, some quite onerous and some not so onerous. The best thing we could do was to reflect. As the Deputy Premier has just said, teachers meet the standards every single day in their classrooms. They don't need to do it again for some purpose at the end of five years. We are in line now with most other States and Territories. I couldn't absolutely tell you where the others are at this point.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I might just ask Mr Dizdar about the line-by-line audit. Can you provide a bit more detail on the line-by-line audit on workloads and workload reduction?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We have an A-Z policy library. We had it when I started my teaching career. Teachers and leaders report to us that there has been a proliferation of policy over time. In fact, when I started at Ashcroft High School in 1997, there were 57 policies on the library. Now our people have been looking at that work and there are roughly 200 on the library. They have discovered another 156 or thereabouts policies and procedures that schools have to wrestle with that don't sit in the library. So they are anywhere near 350, and that's way too many. In the last seven months that I've been leading the agency we have looked at which are those policies that teachers really use and—the Committee would know this one—the excursion policy. The excursion policy is one that teachers use because they want to organise experiential learning opportunities for their students.

We have looked at the data on which ones are used more. We have looked at the data on those that are never open and have become superfluous over time. We are hard at work. We want to go back to the Deputy Premier later this term—that was our commitment—to say, of the 350 or thereabouts, how many are no longer needed? Who are they? What are they? They can just be removed and there will be zero impact. For the ones that are going to remain, we are making them a lot more accessible. The excursion policy, for example, is 18 pages. If you are running hard on your classroom duties day in and day out, you don't have time to wrestle with 18 pages. We are bringing that down to a page, maximum two pages, and making them more accessible. I do have to be realistic here. That won't be the panacea; reducing policy and improving policy won't be the panacea, but it'll be very welcomed, given the proliferation over time and given the simplicity that we're looking at. We're looking forward to taking that to the Deputy Premier soon.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Minister, are there any further comments that you would like to make to the Committee?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I think that we have canvassed some serious issues in today's hearing. I look forward to watching the afternoon session and getting back to work to fill the chronic teacher shortage for our students in our public schools, in particular. It's an honour to be the Minister for Education and Early Learning.

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**The CHAIR:** That brings us to time. Thank you very much, Deputy Premier, for attending this hearing, your first budget estimates hearing with us. We are finished with your questioning today. The Committee will break for lunch and return at 2.00 p.m. for further questioning with everyone else.

**(The Minister withdrew.)**

**(Luncheon adjournment)**

**Mr JOSHUA ROBERTS**, Former Acting Chief Information Officer, NSW Department of Education, affirmed and examined

**Ms SARAH HURCOMBE**, Executive Director, Service Excellence, Early Childhood Outcomes, NSW Department of Education, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Welcome back. We have two new witnesses joining us this afternoon. Mr Roberts and Ms Hurcombe will be with us between 2.00 p.m. and 3.00 p.m. only. We will start with the Opposition.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you to the two additional witnesses for coming in. I am going to start with some questions to you, Mr Roberts. I understand that you are not in the role anymore, but you have come anyway to assist the Committee, and I really appreciate that. I'm just wondering whether you could provide a little more information in terms of the role when you were the CIO. Did you work particularly with Mr Ruming around things like teacher supply, having data systems set up so you could really track what was happening in that space? Was that part of what you did?

**JOSHUA ROBERTS:** I think the systems we look after are related to HR and the People Group. But as far as it's directly related to teacher supply, no, we weren't engaged with Mr Ruming on those matters.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** How do you use the systems that you did have around HR? Human capital management is what I'm interested in as well. Was that something that your section looks after?

**JOSHUA ROBERTS:** Well, I don't think we look after it; that's probably not the right terminology. But we do look after the systems that manage HR, and we are involved as a supplier of technology for the department, including HR systems.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm happy for either you or Mr Ruming to answer this. Just in relation to those data collection processes that have been established, obviously the Minister has spoken today about the CESE survey. I'm just trying to clarify whether there has been any more investment in IT systems and ways to better track which teachers are at which schools, where the gaps are in terms of vacancies in particular subject areas. Was there any money for that? Have there been discussions about how you can do that better?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'm happy to help here, because the responsibility doesn't lie in the IT area. We have a number of HR systems. Our view is that there are too many and a lot are historic, so it makes it difficult to attain one single view around what the workforce on the ground looks like. That led to the Deputy Premier requesting that we conduct the survey on alternate supervision arrangements in schools, because—the Committee may or may not know—we don't have one dataset to be able to capture that by way of how many classes are out there and whether they're able to be covered on a daily basis, so we did have to conduct that three-week survey. The human capital management system, which Mr Ruming can talk to, is designed so that we can work towards a single holistic view of the workforce.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Can I ask you to add, Mr Dizdar or Mr Ruming? I guess that's my point. I'm well aware of the challenges in terms of tracking that data and the history of the resources available. Given that the Government has made it very clear that their priority is looking at these issues around teacher workforce, I'm just trying to ascertain whether there was any new money, any direction given in relation to how you can have better systems. Was there any sort of direction, as I said, in terms of tracking that data beyond having CESE do an annual report?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** What we have done in the seven months with the new Government is brief them on the existence of the systems as they stand—like I said, the multiplicity that exists out there. Then we gave them a rundown of the work to date on human capital management, because human capital management had a rightful pause to delay appropriate health check, a whole-of-government due diligence across it. So we have updated the Government and our Deputy Premier about where that work is up to and why that work is of importance to complete. I can certainly say that in my 27 years in the organisation we haven't had the modern data system that we need so that we don't keep going to our schools to be able to give this data for a variety of reasons.

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**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Was there any money for updating those data systems in the budget? Was there anything new? You said you had discussions with the Government over the last several months. Was there anything that has come in in that space that will fix that?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** There's some internal budgetary commitment that we've got.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Can you provide on notice how much that is?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Sure, I can.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Back to you, Mr Roberts. The removal of duplicative digital learning communication and change management platforms as listed in the budget papers is, I guess, a savings measure. Are you able to provide us with a bit of—do you know what that is about? What is being changed or removed in that space?

**JOSHUA ROBERTS:** At the moment we're just looking through any opportunities for efficiencies around duplication of systems. I probably can't provide anything further than that, but I'm happy to pass to Ms Sally Blackadder.

**SALLY BLACKADDER:** As we're looking at the savings measures that we've got to do so that we can reinvest in our teaching workforce and the salary deal, we're looking overall at a range of measures. We are doing that across the board. We are looking in each area—line-by-line budget reviews in each area—and then taking the outcome of that to Government for decisions so then we can finalise what those things looking like. That's still at play. Our internal budget will be finalised in the coming weeks after some decisions of Government.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Just to be really clear, the Deputy Premier said that prior to the budget there was \$1.4 billion in savings that had been found. But, as I understand from what you just said—and I'm happy to be corrected if I'm wrong, Ms Blackadder—you're still going through the process to determine exactly what's going as part of that. Is that right?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I can help to answer that because, as secretary, I'm responsible for those savings. The department's contribution, which, as secretary, I indicated would be important to deliver, was a further \$1.4 billion across four years—the exact figure is \$1.448 billion over four years—for the teacher's salary. Again, I think I made comments this morning that I stand by that, as a former teacher, that we've been able to—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's fine. I mean, that's a decision of Government, so that's probably not your view as a bureaucrat.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'm delighted, as secretary, to be able to have a structural reset of teachers' salaries that can help me in both attraction and retention for teachers in the public education system, because principals and teachers were speaking to me repeatedly, both in my former role and current role.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's fine, Mr Dizdar. As I said, the Government sets the policy, not the department; the Government has put that policy in place. You've been tasked to find that \$1.4 billion of savings, which the Minister said you had found. What I'm interested in is where those savings are coming from—what areas of the department are going to be cut? I'm particularly interested in the flipside of that, which is why I have asked Mr Roberts to be here. If this has all been put in place to improve teacher outcomes, teacher vacancy rates, where is the infrastructure in terms of the IT and the data tracking in order to ensure that that budget decision is having the desired impact beyond a CESE evaluation every 12 months on casual teachers? I just want to make sure that if you are looking at this as a Government priority, is there money going into really understanding, from an HR perspective, what's going on? That's the nub of what I'm trying to get to.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** When the Government struck the agreement with the NSW Teachers Federation, what I gave the Government were broad parameters on where I believed I could deliver those savings. Then I commenced detailed work. That's what Ms Blackadder alluded to. That detailed work is ongoing. I'm due back to ERC very soon to give to Government that detailed work and for the Government to make a decision on accepting that detailed work around the \$1.448 billion.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Just to come back to the point in the budget where it talks about the removal of duplicative digital learning, communication and change management platforms, that's something that you're looking to see where you can find savings. That hasn't actually been landed on yet, but it's in the budget as something that is happening. I'm just not clear.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** What I can let you and the Committee know is that in every single area that we nominated, there's work that's ongoing. Like I indicated, we're due back to ERC soon to give that detailed work. What I would say about duplication is that I've been looking at and working across that time period around duplication per se across the organisation, not just in IT, because there's duplication of governance arrangements,

**CORRECTED**

there's duplication of service provision that could be better aligned so that it's more meaningful and impactful for schools. We're a very large organisation, as you fully understand and respect.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm aware, yes.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** So there are opportunities to make our resources at the centre a lot more streamlined to deliver on the—in fairness, there wasn't a public education plan. There is one now that is for the next four years, so we're at work to make sure that duplication across the organisation is dealt with so that it can be better for schools to access our services and supports. It's more of a one-stop area. I mean, you might want to know an example. You might say to me, "What's—"

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, that's fine, Secretary. As I said, I'm just trying to ascertain whether, particularly in that human capital management space, there's any more money. But you said you'd provide that on notice so I appreciate that. I want to talk about the data in relation to school vacancies. I think earlier today the Chief People Officer said 2,240 was the vacancy rate in September.

**SHAUN RUMING:** It is 2,247.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Would you be able to provide the Committee with a breakdown of that per school? I know that that's happened in the past. Is that something you could take on notice, please?

**SHAUN RUMING:** Yes, we can take that on notice.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** How often do you collate that data?

**SHAUN RUMING:** Every fortnight we get a report.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I did mention this when the Minister was here this morning. If I was to ask a question on notice to say I'd like it from a particular point in time, that is available within the department every fortnight if that's requested by members?

**SHAUN RUMING:** We have that information, yes.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** The only comment I'd make, which may help you and the Committee, is that data refers to FTE vacancy.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm aware of that.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** So there are other vacancies that schools experience—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm aware of that, thank you.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** —including what was the alternative supervision survey, because we don't have that central capture.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I understand that. That's why I asked this morning whether that would be more often, but I think it's only coming every 12 months. I'm just interested in that full-time database.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'm just trying to indicate to the Committee the full picture.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, Mr Dizdar, you know that I'm well aware of what that data provides.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes. But I think this is quite pertinent to the question, though. When you're asking for school by school, which you're entitled to ask—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Of course I am.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I think what I'm trying to get to, so the Committee can appreciate, is that the full picture of what a school experiences, that data we give you will be one component of that picture. There are two other components of that picture.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm aware of that. Thank you for also clarifying that that data is available for every fortnight, because we'll certainly be availing the resources of the upper House to ask for those questions to be answered in full and in a timely manner. I want to move on now, because I'm also conscious that we don't have Ms Hurcombe for very long. Nice to see you. Thank you for coming. In relation to universal pre-kindergarten, I asked earlier in the day in terms of the time frame for delivery and I've been told before 2030 but not with a specific date. Have there been any discussions between the department and the Minister's office about what your deadline should be around the UPK provision?

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**MARK BARRAKET:** I might start off and then maybe Ms Hurcombe can add to that if she has anything further. The Government did outline its first steps towards universal preschool, which includes the provision of 100 public preschools and also for the redevelopment of or new preschools in the independent and Catholic school system and also some funding available for the not-for-profit system. That is the first steps that we are taking towards universal preschool. Then there's a body of work, which we are currently constructing, which we'll present to the Government around the path to universal preschool. There are a lot of things for us to consider in that. There are a range of trials that we currently have underway in regard to the models around preschooling and there are a number of significant reports that have recently been released, such as the royal commission in South Australia. On Friday there was the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal report into early childhood education in New South Wales. So we want to consider all of these pieces so that we can construct a research- and evidence-based pathway to universal preschool within the time frame that has been indicated by government. Ms Hurcombe can provide more detail about those initiatives that we have in place, those pilots to help us understand what universal preschool might look like as well.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Ms Hurcombe, specifically in relation to those 100 preschool sites, my understanding is that you're leading the work in relation to that.

**SARAH HURCOMBE:** Yes, alongside that work—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Is there an independent adviser who has been brought in to work as well on that?

**SARAH HURCOMBE:** As part of the due diligence work that we're doing to ensure that site selection is based on the best data we have available to us alongside local insights and evidence from the field, we're talking to principals, we're talking to ECE services. That work will all—alongside the work that our colleagues in School Infrastructure are doing around infrastructure assessment—be provided to an assessment panel and that is being supported both by probity advisers but also an independent expert reviewer.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** How long has that independent expert reviewer been contracted for, do you know? You can take it on notice.

**SARAH HURCOMBE:** I'll need to check my notes because I know I do have that with me.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Is it possible also to get on notice what the cost is for that contract if appropriate?

**SARAH HURCOMBE:** Very happy to give that to you. It is not a significant contract.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's alright. I'm just curious about why someone independent came in.

**SARAH HURCOMBE:** Let me just double-check because I do have those details somewhere in my notes and my team will be going, "You've got it there." I will need to get the specific pieces, but I believe she was appointed in August and will be concluding that work in December. But I can just double-check and confirm that for you.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** In relation to the role for community preschool providers, obviously the Government has said that the 100 will all be department run. That's correct, isn't it?

**SARAH HURCOMBE:** That's correct.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Where will be the involvement of community preschool providers, given that I think there are about 100 community-run preschool sites on school sites as it is? I've had some concerns from that part of the sector that they're not actually part of that and they're concerned about the impact on their viability. In the work that you're doing, what's that engagement like and what's the role there?

**MARK BARRAKET:** I'm happy to start. As part of the selection for 100 public preschools, we are consulting quite closely with the sector, particularly where there are services close by to schools that have expressed interest in participating in this program, to make sure that we minimise any impact on those services. We've got a robust model that we've been using to look at supply and demand. Because the idea behind the 100 public preschools is to ensure that these sites are placed in the areas where children need them the most. We're working really closely with those providers that are close by to make sure that there is appropriate supply before we make any decisions around where these preschools will be located.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With the trials, when did they start? I think there were 71 locations that had been earmarked. Just a start date would be good.

**MARK BARRAKET:** I might get Ms Hurcombe to answer that question for you.



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**SARAH HURCOMBE:** We're doing a number of pieces of work with ECE services and department preschools. The work with those services kicked off in July.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I want to turn now to the workforce for early childhood education. I may come back to this because I don't have enough time now. There was a \$280 million allocation by the former Government over the four-year period from then in relation to support for the workforce. The budget papers under this Government have talked about \$28.5 million over five years. I just want to understand where the rest of that \$280 million has gone or what the overall workforce package is looking like over the next four-year period.

**MARK BARRAKET:** Certainly. The budget only calls out those key initiatives that the Government has committed to. It doesn't detail the complete package of work that we're putting in place to support workforce. I think the budget papers talk to scholarships, professional development for ECE workforce, and research around delivery models and attracting workforce into the sector. We have a range of other initiatives that will be funded from the department's internal budget, and the number that we've been talking about is \$265 million. It is likely to be more than that, however, because the Childcare and Economic Opportunity Fund also has scope to provide workforce initiatives, and we are looking at those initiatives now. There are also funds available through fee-free TAFE for the workforce to participate in programs through the TAFE system. So there's quite a significant amount of work that we are putting in place to support the ECEC workforce.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That \$260-odd million that is coming internally—what's the source for that funding, then? Is that part of the \$280 million that was given by the previous Government?

**MARK BARRAKET:** It's part of the ECO. It's part of the Department of Education's Early Childhood Outcomes Division's base funding.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That is continuing the money that was put in place previously?

**MARK BARRAKET:** That's my understanding, yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You just mentioned scholarships, Mr Barraket. I'm curious because it is probably a fairly main component when it comes to training up the workforce that you need to deliver Pre-K and the childcare fund. I'm happy if you need to do this on notice, but can you break down, of that \$28.5 million over five years—it does call out in the budget papers, I think it was \$9 million, then a release came out a few days later that said, I think, it was \$11 million or \$12 million, so extra money was found—

**MARK BARRAKET:** Yes, I think we put additional funds towards that.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What's the total? Is it \$12 million for scholarships over four years? I'm happy if you need to take it on notice.

**MARK BARRAKET:** I'm happy to take that on notice and give you the breakdown by year.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you. That would be really handy. I have one final question before I have to give up time to someone else: Can you advise whether the board has presented the Minister with a strategic plan for investments from the fund yet, as the Act requires?

**MARK BARRAKET:** The strategic investment plan that is required of the board is due to be delivered in 2024. I think it's around the middle of the year. I'm happy to confirm the exact date for you.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** In terms of the decisions that were made in this year's budget to allocate that \$100 million, was there advice from the board to the Government about those spending priorities?

**MARK BARRAKET:** The Deputy Premier did write to the board outlining her priorities for the board, and that will be considered as part of the strategic investment plan.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'll have to come back to that next time because we have run out of time, but thank you.

**SHAUN RUMING:** Sorry, Chair. Before you move on, can I just add a point of clarification? In terms of our vacancy reports we get every two weeks, right now that's a macro figure, Ms Mitchell, as well as the top 20 or worst 20 schools that we look at. To actually get 2,200 schools in a report like that, I'd have to get some advice and take that on notice.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But you could give the overall statewide figure every two weeks?

**SHAUN RUMING:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Okay, thank you.

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**CORRECTED**

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**The CHAIR:** I'm just going to hop around a little bit. I wanted to come back to the measures statement that was being referred to earlier on page A5-4 of *Budget Paper No.01*. There's a reference there to a reduction of spend currently supporting 200 contractors and consultants. Can you give us detail around that, particularly what the total savings amount is and who those 200 contractors and consultants are?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** The Government, Chair, has given all agencies a commitment to reduce contractor and consultant spend upwards of 25 per cent. So we're at work to deliver on that.

**The CHAIR:** So how much is that particular item responsible for?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** By way of contributing to—

**The CHAIR:** Yes. What would the savings be?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I can get you the exact figure that we're looking at.

**The CHAIR:** And then if you can tell me what positions those 200 contractors and consultants were or are filling.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Sure. It's a whole-of-government commitment that every agency will look at a 25 per cent reduction, but I'm happy to get you the specific numbers.

**The CHAIR:** That would be very useful, because I think you're the only department—everyone else refers to portfolio savings as a result of the expenditure review, yadda yadda. Within the Department of Education it doesn't say that; it just talks explicitly about those contractors and consultants.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Being a large organisation, there's been a growth in contingent labour over time. I've been working with my deputy secretary colleagues around the table to look at reducing that and converting some of that to ongoing roles, taking those who are no longer required off contract, and having repeatable expertise inside the organisation. I'm happy to give you the exact figures and what it looks like.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, and how that 200 was—you talk about the 25 per cent reduction, but was that 200 plucked out of the air? Where has that 200 come from?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** No, not plucked out of the air—it was based upon the size of our contractors and consultants by way of dollar expenditure and number. Let me come back to you with the specifics.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. That would be very useful. Can I ask a little bit about consent education? As you know, in the past few years there's been increased focus on consent education in our schools. I understand that the policy platform has not really been updated since 2020. Can you give us an update on what is happening with the rollout of consent education?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes. I'll get Mr Martin to help with where it lies in the curriculum. Like I referenced at the end of our morning session, we're at work on the A to Z policy library by way of improving. That policy would be caught up there, and Mr Martin might talk to where it sits in the curriculum specific to the curriculum review as well.

**PAUL MARTIN:** Thank you, Secretary. We had consent education in the syllabuses prior to the work of Chanel Contos and the changes to the Australian curriculum. The work that she led and that the Australian curriculum took on was in the middle of our processes to renew the New South Wales syllabus materials. We now have the K-6 and 7-10 PDHPE syllabuses out for consultation. They're in the public domain and will be in the public domain again for a second phase. They include an increased amount of content on consent education, beginning with very abstract notions or, I suppose, to some degree, age-appropriate notions of consent for kindy, year one and year two students, going right up to the much more complex arguments that year nine and year ten students would face, and going older. I think we've gone a bit further than the Australian curriculum. I think it matches the expectations of the community around that issue, as was described in the last few years. As I said, it's out for consultation, and I'm very keen to hear people's views.

**The CHAIR:** How is the department tracking the outcomes of consent education in schools, or how does it plan to?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We do that just like we do with any curriculum delivery. So, one, we upskill. There's a familiarisation process when NESA lands a new syllabus, a changed syllabus or an additional syllabus. There's a time for familiarisation for the workforce and there is professional learning that we offer organisationally. Often we team up with our NESA colleagues on that as well. We go to the intent of those changes and what we're trying to deliver by way of those changes, then we give space and time for our teachers to develop appropriate scope and sequences and teaching lessons. If I've got it right, Mr Martin, this one's in the PDHPE area so it cuts across K-10.

**CORRECTED**

We often develop central resources to make available, and we often run professional learning across the State so that our people are well prepared to deliver on the new curriculum.

**The CHAIR:** What's the interaction between the consent education piece and the Life Ready program? I know that the Life Ready program does afford considerable discretion to schools as to how they implement it. How are we making sure that the appropriate consent education is included in that program?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** That's a very, very good question. The consent education, like Mr Martin said, is in the K-10 syllabus through PDHPE. The Life Ready course, Chair, is specifically a year 11 course. It used to be—our school folk knew it as Crossroads, and then we revamped and modernised that as well. That goes to all things like drink-driving and the dangers of alcohol. Consent is covered as part of Life Ready as well. It builds off the education our children have had in K-10 into a specific year 11 course. Often our schools run it over one to two weeks intensively in year 11, and some do it more broadly than that. Where was I last where I saw this? It was at Riverside Girls High School that I saw that occurring. In the lesson I saw they were looking at driver education, safety on the road, the impacts of drink driving and the impacts of speeding et cetera as part of the Life Ready course.

**The CHAIR:** Just because I have no idea, when someone is deciding how to implement that within their school, are there modules they can choose? Are there things they could choose? You would expect consent education to follow some sort of standard.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Definitely. I'll get Ms Nixon to add to this, but there is great guidance that we provide centrally. There are modules and resources that we have developed on the ground over time. Like I said, we built it off our Crossroads course and modernised it and made additions. It's not a "make up your own on the ground"; it's great support that is provided centrally. Ms Nixon might give you some more detail.

**LEANNE NIXON:** I think the secretary describes it well. We provide resources, support and PL for the implementation of the Life Ready course. It includes things like respect, respectful relationships and consent.

**The CHAIR:** How do you ensure that that part of the Life Ready program adheres to the principles that have been outlined in the sexual consent—more general education from K-12? Is there a way to ensure that those principles of affirmative consent are actually being taught at that point?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** When it's K-10 as part of the PDHPE syllabus, it is quite specific syllabus dot points that our PDHPE teachers have to teach that are stage and age appropriate. Mr Martin might want to confirm that.

**PAUL MARTIN:** The syllabus has to be taught; that's why it's there. It's a compulsory syllabus from K-10. The manner in which it's taught and the particular types of lessons are much more at the discretion of schools and individual teachers, but not content. In relation to ascertaining where the schools are teaching the syllabus, we have an inspection process at NESAs that goes to individual independent schools and then we also observe the processes that occur in the Catholic sector and in the department. The Department of Education has its own processes for making sure that schools are teaching scope and sequence in the syllabuses. We observe their processes to make sure that they're meeting our needs. That way, we get assurance that the students are learning what's in the syllabuses.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** And, Chair, so we can meet the NESAs requirements, we use a curriculum-monitoring process on the ground, where we work with schools around a cycle so we can grow their capacity to make sure they're implementing the curriculum with the required due diligence.

**The CHAIR:** Is the Chief Behaviour Advisor, which was established by the former Government, still a feature of this Government? Do you still have that person in place?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes, they are. I'll get Mr Martin to comment because they're employed through NESAs. It's a cross-sectoral resource and a cross-sectoral expertise. The Deputy Premier has given some specific guidance of areas that she would like the Chief Behaviour Advisor to help the sectors with. But I'll get Mr Martin to comment on that.

**PAUL MARTIN:** The behaviour adviser was announced by the previous Government towards the end of its term. There was an interview process where we identified a suitable candidate to take up that role. I think sometimes people misunderstand the idea of "behaviour adviser" as a sort of an oversight of discipline, when in fact the behaviour adviser who has been employed is much more focused on student welfare and discipline as a much more holistic enterprise. The secretary is correct: At the moment the behaviour adviser is looking specifically at the mobile phone issue and, I think, some of the cyberbullying issues in the government sector.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Correct.

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**CORRECTED**

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**PAUL MARTIN:** But they are also working with the independents and Catholics on some projects for them.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Secretary, I'm just trying to understand why NESAs have established another review of the curriculum. What differences are there between the current curriculum review and the Masters review? I thought the Masters review only finished in 2020. Is that right?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'm happy to cover this, and Mr Martin will add to it if I leave any gaps. There is no other review happening. The Masters review was a very comprehensive review that we respect. It was a once in a— I'm going to say two decades, if I've got it right—review of the curriculum and it had a number of recommendations. Paul Martin, as head of NESAs, and his team are responsible for the delivery of the changes to the curriculum. What our incoming Government has done is, with the sectors' agreement—all sectors—extended the time line for the implementation of the Masters review—sorry, the curriculum one—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I thought they were building a bit of an independent evaluation of it as well?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I don't believe that's the case; I'll get Mr Martin to comment. The Government gave an extended runway on the implementation of the curriculum. There are something like 200-plus syllabuses to roll out. It's a lot on teachers, so I know the announcement was well received that we will continue with the syllabus revamp and improvement but that there will be a longer runway. I'll get Mr Martin to confirm all of that.

**PAUL MARTIN:** Thank you, Secretary. The Masters review reviewed not just all of the issues in relation to syllabuses and curriculum design but was also around senior secondary and connections between and across syllabuses, going from kindergarten to year 10, and then the elective syllabuses of years 11 and 12. The former Government gave a response to that Masters review and agreed with some of the recommendations and not with others. But as part of that process, we are using the Masters review as a guide to renew every single syllabus in New South Wales over a period of time. K-2 English and maths were done first; years 3 to 10 English and maths second, being the two main parts of the syllabus—probably the pieces of architecture that every student requires. We have put out for consultation four of the mandatory primary syllabuses and four of the mandatory secondary syllabuses. Yesterday, I think, or earlier this week we put out for consultation English, maths and history, senior secondary.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Sorry, Mr Martin, I'm just not understanding why there—it still seems to me like a slightly separate process, because you had that review. Are there more costs being incurred as a result of this separate evaluation?

**PAUL MARTIN:** It's not an evaluation; it's putting into effect the recommendations of Masters. Masters said to renew the syllabuses—to do this work—and that's what this syllabus-by-syllabus review is doing. We are taking and putting into effect the recommendations of the Masters review. It's not an evaluation; it's the actual process of the work that Masters asked us to do and that the former Government agreed to.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Which started in 2018—is that right?

**PAUL MARTIN:** Yes, 2018-19. We started just at the point where—2019 I think was the beginning of the process. We received money under the former Government—\$200 million—to put out and renew all of the syllabuses. As the secretary has indicated, the new Deputy Premier, and new Minister, has given us a longer time frame for roll-out.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** And additional money for that? Or it's all covered by that \$200 million?

**PAUL MARTIN:** The original money that we were given for the renewal of those syllabuses—some \$205 million, from memory—is sufficient. It was based around renewal of all those syllabuses.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** We mentioned earlier about cost-of-living support for families. Does the Department of Education track the number of appeals for student assistance in relation to the costs of education?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** No, we don't centrally do that, Ms Mihailuk. What we do is, through our annual budget allocation to our schools, it's called the School Budget Allocation Report. We give equity loadings for complexity and we make sure that our schools can offer student assistance for those students and families that may need it.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** And that's entirely decided by the principal and the school rather than—

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**MURAT DIZDAR:** We do have guidance around student assistance and how to apply for it that we provide centrally. But we allow schools to make those decisions with their families. They utilise their whole school budget for that purpose.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** But is the department privy to any parents appealing those decisions? When a parent, for example, might not agree with the decision of the school, what's their next step?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes, that's a really good question. The parents are well entitled to appeal because it will be a principal decision in that case, so they would appeal to our director on the ground that supervises those schools. I don't have data on how many times that happens, but we would provide that detail to the parents so they can make their representation and it can be assessed independently. I've got to say, Ms Mihailuk, that in my experience I haven't seen it come into play on many occasions. What I often see is schools doing their darnedest to make sure they can provide the full curriculum opportunity and learning opportunity.

I'll give you an example of that. I came across an example this year of a camp. I won't name the school, but this school is going to run a year 6 camp to Canberra. There were only six students in the 30 that could pay for it, so the school made the decision to waive the cost for all families—otherwise they were going to run it with six kids—and actually wrote back to the whole cohort of 30 and said, "We're centrally going to pay for it."

Our policy is really clear: You cannot exclude any student or family on financial grounds from partaking in the learning at the school, the extracurricular activities that are required. I have to say, principals in the schools and teachers are quite remarkable in making sure that we know that there are families in financial complexity or difficulty and that we support them in that process. It even goes to voluntary contributions, which, as you know, are totally voluntary. You cannot demand that those payments be made.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** But there is pressure on some parents with the voluntary payments. I don't know whether the department has ever done any evaluation on this, but there must be some real differences with some schools in terms of the types of fees they expect of parents. Particularly selective schools are a good example of that. There are plenty of schools that will be very forthright in expecting those payments, even though they are deemed voluntary. Let's be honest; particularly I note some parents from south-west Sydney, Western Sydney where they almost feel embarrassed if they are not paying that payment. So they do try to pay. I feel that what I am hearing back from a lot of parents and in my experience as a previous lower House MP, really it's—I'm not sure if the department is looking closer. Because you've got a system where the principals are managing all this really on the ground—whether it's consistent across all schools. I would have thought there would be a bigger policy coming from the department on how parents could appeal from these decisions, for example.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I think it's a fair point you raise, Ms Mihailuk. We are very clear on the voluntary fee payment. We've got a policy around that. We do send out an annual reminder around it to all our schools as well, stressing the importance of that. I would tell you also that you are not allowed to just raise what that looks like, from this level to this level. We actually mandate what our CPI increase would be and often schools, I know through the COVID years, didn't implement that. I'm not going to deny that it doesn't happen from time to time. From time to time we come across a case where a school might be insistent on that contribution and we certainly work to rectify that. I'd encourage any parent who's concerned about that to reach out to us. We're happy to look into it. The vast majority of the system does it really, really well and complies with our policy. But if there's anyone that is not doing that, I'm happy to look into it. I'd say to every parent watching out there, this is a free, secular system. No-one should feel they've got to make a contribution if they're not in a position to do that.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I just wanted to ask, previously it has been reported about—and I think it is in the NESA's annual report—independent schools manipulating HSC disability provision applications. It has been reported previously in the media. Did the department undertake any sort of separate evaluation of those schools or those particular applications? Obviously, that is coming from NESA. You've got HSC disability applications where we saw kids from really well-to-do schools—large numbers of those children—applying for those disability provisions. Then a school like Punchbowl Boys', for example, in 2021—not one applicant.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Great school, great school.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Yes, I know. You were there.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** It's even gone on to bigger and better things since I left there. I think it's a really good point you raise. I think you're talking to special provisions for HSC exams. I've got to give real credit to Mr Martin and his team here, because I certainly was a loud voice on this when I was principal. I know that Mr Martin and NESA and his team have made improvements to the process so that it's not a barrier, an inhibitor by way of paperwork. But I might get Mr Martin to talk to that if you like.

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**PAUL MARTIN:** Disability provisions are run for the HSC exams in every State and Territory in a different way. We require, for students who have a long history of particular types of disabilities that are well documented, a relatively truncated process, as it should be. For students who are applying for disability provisions as they come into the HSC exams, we expect some level of school certification, doctor certification, specialists et cetera. It is the same process for every school, irrespective of sector—Catholic, independent or government. But there are different numbers that apply, depending on the sector. We've spent a lot of time over the years working with the department to try and make sure that there aren't any impediments to the application process, from the government sector in particular.

That means running information evenings, simplifying the documentation and, in the period of COVID, reducing the requirements for specialist verification, because it was very difficult for people to get those doctor appointments. We've had two sets of consultancies over the last decade providing us with advice on how best to modify our processes so that the applications are roughly proportionate to the sectors and we're still working on that. I think there'll be more work to come over time. But our processes are fair—they're completely fair—and they are sector blind but, depending on the school, they may have less capacity to get either doctors' certification or even application processes. I might add that some parents are reluctant to apply because they think there is a stigma attached to disability provisions for the HSC and others are encouraged to use our processes as best they can. It's a long education process, but it's not a biased process. It doesn't discriminate, but sometimes the fairness affects different schools in different ways.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Just coming back to the early childhood space, Mr Barraket, I am wondering if maybe on notice you could provide that 265 million for workforce—just a bit of a breakdown of that over the four years and what areas it's going to? That would be really useful. I'm not sure if I covered that in the last session.

**MARK BARRAKET:** Certainly. I'm happy to take that on notice and provide that to you.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** In terms of the universal pre-kindergarten policy, obviously there are the 100 preschools that the Government is committed to in this term of government, but what work have you been doing to really drill down to how many preschool places you are going to need to deliver it for every family five days a week? Where's that work up to and will that be made public so that we can be aware of that?

**MARK BARRAKET:** I might pass to Ms Hurcombe in a moment to talk about any modelling that we are undertaking—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That would be great.

**MARK BARRAKET:** —around universal preschool. I just want to point out that with the 100 public preschools, we are looking at putting those in the areas that need them most. There is also those additional pieces in place for the not-for-profit sector, and for Catholic and independent schools too, so that we're making sure that they can be placed in the areas of need. I will pass to Ms Hurcombe around the modelling that we're undertaking.

**SARAH HURCOMBE:** In addition to the initial investment announced in the budget, which Mr Barraket has run through, we are also undertaking a wide range of research trial and consultation work to inform those policy decisions ahead. Mr Barraket has mentioned the trial work. It's really important in this complex reform space that we listen directly to educators, teachers, families and communities across New South Wales. There are diverse needs around what is expected from a massive reform like this. This work will be informing economic modelling work that we are undertaking in the department to ensure that that complexity across the State is factored into those decisions ahead. This reform requires capital investment, but it's also really important investment in quality uplift, workforce, diverse and a range of service models and flexibility within that delivery.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What's the time frame for that analysis that you're doing? When would you expect to go back to government?

**SARAH HURCOMBE:** We are in the middle of it at the moment. I am working very hard to provide advice to the Government on that towards the end of this year, early next year.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The 100 preschools that are being delivered—whether it's you or Mr Manning who answers this—what size are they going to be built at? What will be the average? How many places will they be?

**SARAH HURCOMBE:** I am very happy to just flag, before handing to Mr Manning, that the work is being informed by that local need and analysis. We are working very closely with communities, schools and ECE services to fit that—the right fit to what that community need is. But I will hand over to Mr Manning to talk about specifics.

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**ANTHONY MANNING:** In terms of building configuration, we are looking at 20-, 40- and 60-place options, noting that the buildings are modular and could be expanded, as they might need to be.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The 10 preschools that were announced in this budget which are being incorporated into the new build—can you provide the list of the 10 and how many places will be built as part of that, or what you are looking at? I am happy for you to do it on notice.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes, sure, happy to.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That'd be great. I'll just hand over to my colleague, and I think, Mr Manning, you should get ready to keep answering because we've got a few capital ones for you. Thank you, Ms Hurcombe, for your contribution.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Thank you, Mr Manning. Has land been secured for the new high school at Leppington and Denham Court?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We have identified a preferred site and we are in negotiations with the owners of that site.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Is it the same site that had been chosen by the previous Government for the selective high school?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** No, it's not.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Would we have an indicative time frame on the delivery of the announced school?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We're working our way through that at the moment. I would expect sort of towards the end of the year or very early next year we'll be able to confirm that.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Mr Manning, just a further question on time frame concerning the delivery of the six schools that are planning only that are listed in the budget papers. I'm happy to read through them.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We've committed to undertake the planning phase. That will then inform future budget decisions, so moving those through into delivery. We're working through those details to produce that planning now.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** So the time frame on the planning stage is?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We're working through that. We'd expect to have that completed within the next nine to 12 months.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Sorry, the planning will take 12 months?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** For each of those six school projects?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes. It's quite complex.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, I know. I'm well aware of it. I just want to ask again to you, Mr Manning, a few more questions about Murwillumbah, particularly Murwillumbah High School. Was that school effectively ready to be demolished prior to the election? Was it pretty close to being able to be—

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes, it was.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You just mentioned earlier the \$12.5 million that's there in this year's budget across the four schools, but I'm just curious to know how much is it going to cost to get that school back up to a level of where students can actually go back in? Because a lot of the parents are telling me that it's fairly dilapidated, or it was, because it was about to be knocked down.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We're still working on the kind of final dollars in that sense, but we've got a comprehensive list of works that we're going to carry out. The only thing I missed off the list earlier this morning was new furniture—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Well, that's probably pretty important.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** —throughout the school, and there was some planned maintenance work that had been held over pending the demolition that'll also work its way through as well. So we'll finalise that over the next few months.

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**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But is \$12.5 million going to be enough to do that?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** The 12.5 is what has been allocated in this financial year, so, yes, I think it will be enough. As you know, if we need to draw on additional funds, we'll work through the Deputy Premier's office to make sure we've got that because the commitment is to be operational for day one, term 1, 2025 and that's obviously halfway through another budget cycle.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Sure. You said earlier that the initial funding for the project under the previous Government was a hundred and—

**ANTHONY MANNING:** About 150.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** —fifty million?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** A bit, I think.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So there's obviously leftover money. There was \$150 million allocated. It's not going to cost that much to get it back up to, presumably, just what it was before.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** No.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Where has the rest of that money gone? Has that just gone back into your capital budget? Will that be split amongst the four schools?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** I think that was articulated in the Parliamentary Budget Office estimates at the time the commitment was made. So I assume it has gone back into that whole pot in terms of funding—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But that—

**ANTHONY MANNING:** There's not an ability to kind of track where exactly that money went, but obviously it was part of that overall calculation of money being identified for election commitments.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Sure, but the \$150 million that was earmarked for Murwillumbah will not be \$150 million spent in that community. It's going to be less, isn't it, across the four schools?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes, and that's identified in the PBO costs.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes. I just wanted some clarity on that. I want to take you to another school that I know you're well familiar with, which is Bungendore High School.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm just interested in where that's up to in terms of that capital build. Obviously the students are on the pop-up site on the primary school, but, again, locals are telling me that there really hasn't been much in terms of capital work begin for the better part of this year. Has there been a stop-work order issued for that site?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** No, there hasn't. As you're aware, there's a local community group that have disputed the validity of the SSDA.

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

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We're working through that process and expect to have a decision very soon, but we've held off the demolition and the works until we get the resolution of that as an issue.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The decision to hold off on that work, was that coming through the Minister's office or—

**ANTHONY MANNING:** No, that was a department decision.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Right. So why did you decide to hold off on that?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Apart from the fact that, actually, if the judgement is that we don't have a valid SSDA, then there could be a whole bunch of abortive costs that we then have to work through what we do in terms of the next phase for Bungendore.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Okay. Was there any discussion with the Minister, her office, about that decision?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We talked the Minister, the Deputy Premier, through that decision, but, yes, that was our advice.



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**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Okay, so there hasn't been a stop-work order issued formally but you've decided to pause until the legal action's finalised.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes, wait till that's resolved and then—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Is that what you would normally do?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes, it is. We wouldn't normally push on regardless.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Okay, thank you. Just back to Medowie now as well—I think, again, you said earlier that you've almost completed the expression of interest for the site.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We've got a couple of sites we're looking at. We have a preferred option and we have been talking to the owner of that preferred option.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Was there a site that the department already owned there, though?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes, there was a potential site.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But you're not using that one?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** It's not usable.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Why is it not usable?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Environmental reasons. It's a woodland with all of the associated creatures that go with it.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, well, there are often lots of creatures in the woodlands.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Koalas, particularly.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Can you just clarify when you expect to have that site secured? What's your time frame you're working on?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Pretty soon. We would like to have as many of them cleared out end of this year, early next year as we possibly can.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** And will you make that public when that land is secured?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** I'm sure the Deputy Premier will.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Taking you to the Tamworth area now, has there been any requests from the Government to look for land in the Moore Creek area for a potential school, given that there's a lot of growth in that community?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Not that I'm specifically aware of, no.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Do you want to maybe just take it on notice and see whether there has been any—

**ANTHONY MANNING:** I can take that on notice, but it has not come across my desk as yet.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That would be great. I'll have a very grateful local member if you're able to do that, so thank you very much. I want to now ask Mr Martin a few questions about the curriculum rollout. My understanding from announcements made by the Minister is that the full curriculum implementation has been delayed from the previous Government's time frame. So not everything will be implemented and being taught this term of government, will it? It has been stretched out beyond that. Is that correct?

**PAUL MARTIN:** The last syllabuses, I think, will be introduced into schools into year 11 in 2027, to be taught in 2028.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Okay, so it's still a few years away from a full implementation. Then in terms of the extra money that the previous Government did allocate, which Ms Mihailuk asked about before, you said that that's enough to continue that allocation but obviously staff are going to have to be working for longer on that. So can you just break down how there won't be a budgetary impact by the delay?

**PAUL MARTIN:** We have had to re-sequence the syllabus delivery a little. We had to anyway, to some degree, because there were changes over the COVID period where we had difficulty getting writers for syllabuses et cetera. So we had always some flexibility in the writing and delivery process. We will have to get agreement from Treasury to hold over some of the funds into the next years, but we have enough, as far as this moment, to

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deliver on the syllabuses and the time line that has been previously announced and then changed with the Deputy Premier's decision earlier this year.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Because additional staff were brought in to help you with that, how is that going to work?

**PAUL MARTIN:** Many of the staff can be repurposed into doing other types of work. So HSIE, for example, has both history and geography teachers. Some of them, we've extended them and are able to have them doing other parts of the curriculum delivery process. It takes up to—sometimes more than—10 people to write a single syllabus. That's the writers themselves, the support staff, then there's delivery through digital technology et cetera, et cetera. So we repurpose and make sure people can move from parts of the organisation to others. Some of them we've delayed. We've delayed the secondments. We've got schools that are slightly reluctant to release their best teachers, so we've said, "If not this year, then next." We're in constant conversation with the independents, the Catholics and the department about staffing secondments. But it is slightly juggling, but I think it's a better outcome in that teachers will have more of an opportunity to both fill in consultation processes, go through consultation processes, and also prepare to deliver.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I want to ask you about highly accomplished and lead teachers. Do you have any updated data on how many there are?

**PAUL MARTIN:** We actually have a ceremony on Friday of this week, but I think it's roughly the same 300. I will take that on notice. I'll get you the exact number.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Are you able to provide on notice any data about how many teachers are undertaking the process? Obviously, there were some changes in terms of that, but how much do you expect to come through?

**PAUL MARTIN:** We've had an increase in applications. We've also modified the modular process as part of the national teacher expert advisory panel and a national agreement. So, yes, I'm happy to take on notice all of the additional applications.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That would be good. In terms of the target that the previous Government had to see that increase quite significantly—I think we wanted 2,500 by 2025, a bold and ambitious target I know—has that been continued by the Deputy Premier? Have there been discussions around that?

**PAUL MARTIN:** That target hasn't changed, as far as I know. To some degree it's been overtaken by the EMM, Education Ministers Meeting, national targets, which are quite ambitious. So our proportion of that would be roughly what the previous target was.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's great. Thank you. I want to ask you some questions now in relation to the tutoring program. I think \$278.4 million over four years has been allocated in the budget. I'm not sure which dep sec that falls under—hello, Ms Nixon. In relation to the breakdown over the four years of that money, how much is it per annum? Is it just a straight four-year split? How much is going to be going to schools?

**LEANNE NIXON:** No, it's not a four-year straight split. We will continue to develop the resources and the support for schools to build on the work that they've done previously under the COVID ILSP tutoring.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm happy for you to take it on notice, but is there any sort of breakdown as to how much will go, maybe this financial year or the next, or anything you can provide?

**LEANNE NIXON:** I can give you that on notice.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Perfect. In terms of the criteria for students who are going to access the support, is it similar to the previously ILSP, in that every school will get a certain amount? How is it going to be divided up between school communities?

**LEANNE NIXON:** That is currently being finalised.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Do you anticipate that every school will get some money, or not necessarily?

**LEANNE NIXON:** That's currently being finalised.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Is any of that intended to go towards some of the low fee-paying non-government schools, as the previous ILSP did, or is it all for government schools?

**LEANNE NIXON:** Currently, it's all for government schools.

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**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Is there any data in relation to how many students are anticipated to take part in that program and what kind of benchmarks or numbers of kids you would like to be reaching with that?

**LEANNE NIXON:** That's part of the process being finalised. We have the options and once that's decided that will be made public.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm assuming you would expect that by the end of the year so that schools know what they're getting next year?

**LEANNE NIXON:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Okay, great. The staffing of those particular tuition programs as well—again, in the past there have been retired teachers, uni students et cetera. We've heard a lot today about concerns about staffing challenges from the Deputy Premier. Again, I am curious in terms of who will be running those programs and what the intention is for that?

**LEANNE NIXON:** Our understanding is that in most schools they will continue with the staff who have been running those. As you know, we have run an online model of those. We've been using late-in-their-degree teachers and teachers who have previously retired to do that. So there's been a strong collection, as you know, over many years of staff suitable to do that. Use of non-teaching staff who are trained has been pointed through the Grattan Institute and AERO's advice on small-group tutoring. So we're certainly looking at how we might support that as we go forward.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will go back to departmental decisions around budget savings. Mr Dizdar, are there going to be any cuts to the Professional and Ethical Standards directorate?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We have looked at an efficiency dividend for every single division. So myself, with every dep sec who leads a division, we have looked at an efficiency dividend. I have left it with dep secs to look at how to best apply that in their area. I've been cognisant that we wouldn't want to take away things that are highly valued and well taken up by schools. That's been my written instruction to our dep secs around that. I won't have the specifics for PES in front of me.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If you could take it on notice, because obviously I'm wanting to ensure that you've got a strong professional ethical standards area, where you can have that accountability if there are concerns raised about any particular practice. Obviously that's important, so it would be good to know if there are cuts foreshadowed. Then also in relation to the employee performance management as well, if there are staff roles going there. Those who are there to help support particularly maybe early-career teachers who need that, I'm wondering if you can provide on notice if there are going to be any cuts to those staffing areas as well?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I fully understood the PES one. I'm not sure I understood the second one that you went to when you said "employee performance", because Professional and Ethical Standards directorate covers employee performance.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I've had some concerns raised with me about staff going in areas that look particularly at performance management of staff but also, again, those who are in place through PES to investigate issues around teacher behavioural concern. The Chair talked about the disability royal commission as well. It's been raised with me and I would like some clarity around whether that will be a part of the department, that you will see staff go. That's what I'm trying to find out from you.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes, sure. I'll take the PES area holistically.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That would be great.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'll reinforce that we've been looking at those resources that are highly valued with high uptake by schools being important. We're looking at growing our curriculum and wellbeing resources, whereas there are other areas that I'm looking at streamlining that I can make improvements to, but I'll come back to you on PES.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That would be good. Thank you. I appreciate that.

**The CHAIR:** Before I go to Ms Mihailuk, we are happy to let Mr Roberts and Ms Hurcombe leave. Thank you very much for spending the time with us.

**(Joshua Roberts and Sarah Hurcombe withdrew.)**

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**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I will go back to my previous questions relating to the land audit. I want to get the exact—I think there was previously a specification for the exact amount of land that you have earmarked as being vacant. Is that right?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We have approximately 300 hectares of what we consider to be vacant land.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** With that, did you undertake a market evaluation of that land prior to providing—

**ANTHONY MANNING:** No. All we've been asked to do is go through the portfolio and identify land that is vacant.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Should the Government or the Cabinet—I'm not quite sure what the process would be—come back to you and indeed earmark some of that land for potential housing, which I assume could be community or private housing or mixed development housing, would you then undertake an actual proper market evaluation of that land?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Government policy is that land that transfers between agencies is at a valuation point. I would presume that Property NSW would then do that work. We will work with them in terms of whatever the outcome looks like, but government policy is that land transfers between agencies at market value.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I want to ask a couple of quick questions before I wrap up. The unvaccinated teachers who are now being invited back into the system, will there be a process to provide them some sort of support, not just career progression assistance but perhaps also just wellbeing assistance, given that many of them had worked for decades within the department and suddenly lost their livelihood and their careers? Are there any plans in that regard?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Ms Mihailuk, I would welcome back anyone with what the new requirements are, that you don't need the vaccination. I would just put this rider over it: as long as there weren't any disciplinary issues that led to their exit. We spoke about a teacher shortage this morning with the Deputy Premier, so we would welcome them with their expertise. There was a line of questioning around casual teachers and how we can better support them. We can certainly have them in that bracket if they need any—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** But some of them, Mr Dizdar, with all due respect, were teachers who had worked with decades within the system.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** That's right.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** You could only imagine the trauma that they experienced by suddenly being told that's it, they're not allowed back on site.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** That's right.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I'm proposing that perhaps there should be some consideration into providing some additional supports.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I believe we wrote to them, if I've got it right, under my predecessor and would've offered what supports are there. Like I said, if there's no obstacle to them returning by way of any disciplinary procedures, we would welcome them back and provide the necessary support. We can do it with more experienced teachers. Things like mandatory training et cetera, we would help them to meet those requirements and have them back in classrooms.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I was originally asking some questions about the curriculum—the HSIE and the history curriculum—now having a larger content, which has obviously already been reported in your consultation process in relation to having more content around Aboriginal customs and traditions. I want to ask how long there has been an opportunity to study Aboriginal language. I understand that it is at least a couple of years. How long has that been available?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I will get Mr Martin to also add here, but I know that Aboriginal studies has been part of the HSC—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** No, specifically language. Is the language taught?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We have had language and culture nests in our system to grow the learning of First Nations language, culturally appropriate, in different geographies. If you are asking me how long, I would have to take how long on notice. But I know that it's a very important area to keep the First Nations language strong and thriving. There are, as you would appreciate, schools that have large numbers of Aboriginal students and concentrations of First Nations students.

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**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I understand that in 2021 four kids undertook the Aboriginal language as part of the HSC for year 12.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I would have to defer to Mr Martin.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** And I think it was 13 for year 11.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Aboriginal studies, I think, has a much stronger candidature. I will defer to Mr Martin. I'm not sure if he has any data on that.

**PAUL MARTIN:** I would have to take on notice the numbers of students who do Aboriginal languages in the HSC. I might point out that many of the languages have very small candidatures. We run 60-plus—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** As small as four?

**PAUL MARTIN:** Yes. We run so many languages mostly for cultural maintenance. There is a process if the numbers of students become too small that the language may become discontinued. Aboriginal languages have an important place, though, as a growing language and cultural connection for many students in New South Wales. We are increasing the number of Aboriginal languages as soon as we can to make sure that students in various language groups in New South Wales have access to their culture and traditions. But we do have very small numbers.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Can you provide me with how many are currently doing the Aboriginal language for year 12 for this year in 2023 and then last year in 2022? We have the 2021 figure; it's four.

**PAUL MARTIN:** Of course. On notice, I will get you those numbers, Aboriginal languages, though, are not just taught in year 11 and year 12. They are taught in primary school and in high school. Students might not choose them for the HSC but they do Aboriginal languages right through school.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Chair, this week is Aboriginal Languages Week right across New South Wales. It was remiss of me not to call that out.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** Can I also find out which schools those students go to?

**PAUL MARTIN:** As long as we don't identify individual students. Sometimes the numbers are—

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** No, I don't want to identify the students, just the schools. It might be easier to go by the region.

**PAUL MARTIN:** I will provide the information that we can on notice.

**The CHAIR:** I come back to the chief behaviour adviser and the conversation we were having around that. I think we were talking about the appointment. Is that Donna Cross?

**PAUL MARTIN:** Professor Donna Cross, yes.

**The CHAIR:** Can you tell us the current salary?

**PAUL MARTIN:** I would have to take that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** You were about to talk about the behaviour adviser's involvement in the mobile phone ban issue.

**PAUL MARTIN:** Before I pass over to the secretary, the behaviour adviser is a cross-sectoral appointment. She works with the Deputy Premier and the three sector heads in relation to processes and programs and focuses that they may have. She reports through the school's advisory council, called the SAC. She is doing work currently for the Deputy Premier, I understand, through the secretary in relation to mobile phones and cyberbullying. I will leave that. But she has been asked to do reviews of behaviour processes within the other sectors and is slowly building up the work that she is doing cross-sectorally in New South Wales.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Mr Martin has been spot-on. All of the sector heads—Catholic, independent and myself for the government system—have raised the concern around the growth of cyberbullying. Could she lend her expertise—a highly regarded eminent expert—to look at giving us guidance in that space. I must say, Chair, the mobile phone ban is only three weeks in within secondary schools and we are already getting reports from secondary principals that are really pleasing to say that they have seen a drop in incidences of cyberbullying. So it's an area we want to get her expertise on, her focus on, her lens on to give us good guidance about things we may or may not need to do in that space.

**The CHAIR:** How does that interact with the IT safety commissioner? Is there advice coming in from her as well?

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**MURAT DIZDAR:** We do work with the eSafety Commissioner.

**The CHAIR:** That's the one I'm thinking about.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We have a great working relationship where we, unfortunately, have to report where young people have come unstuck on cyber and have become victims of cyberbullying et cetera. We have had great help there. Ms Nixon might have some detail. We have also worked with the eSafety Commissioner around resources that we can provide to schools that are age and stage appropriate. One that comes to mind is the Cybermarvel module that we have made available so that young people from primary school onwards can be really au fait with what are the risks of using technology that they need to be careful with, from what a digital footprint looks like for an individual to just clicking on random sites et cetera. I'm not sure if Ms Nixon has more detail.

**The CHAIR:** This is only anecdotal but for the children at schools that I have spoken to, this is one of the issues that they thought adults were out of touch on. The feedback that I got was that no-one cyberbullies during school hours and cyberbullying was occurring outside of school hours. They worry that this is not really dealing with the issue. I'm curious as to how you will be able to assess the levels of cyberbullying and whether the mobile phone ban will have any impact on that and how you intend to work out that impact.

**LEANNE NIXON:** It's an interesting question. Cyberbullying is pervasive. That's why it is so challenging, inside and outside of school. The phone ban provides an opportunity to focus on teaching and learning in classrooms. If we are talking about cyberbullying, that actually relates to all devices and it does relate to inside of school and outside of school. As the secretary talked about, the Cybermarvel program is a joint initiative between New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia and the Northern Territory with the eSafety Commissioner to support schools, and to support students and to support families in terms of how they report social media bullying, what are the parameters they can put in place and a whole range of things to support kids to understand how they can look after themselves in that space.

**The CHAIR:** I understand it was an election commitment rather than a policy developed by the department, but what is your understanding of the primary objective of the mobile phone ban? Is it around cyberbullying or is it around distraction? What is it?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'm happy to talk to that. We had already banned them in primary schools, as the Chair and Committee would know.

**The CHAIR:** Public.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We have had a lot of feedback from parents and teachers, indicating that it's a distraction. So the thinking was to restore the primacy of the classroom to get teachers and students focused on teaching and learning. We are concerned about screen addiction. In fact, one of the Government's commitments is for us to undertake research not just alongside the mobile phone ban but also into the impacts of screen addiction. I know that that concerns me as a father of three children in the system as well. So it was to restore the primacy of the classroom. It's a great distracter for teachers when you are having to confiscate phones and get phones put away.

Also, we took some lessons from schools that are already down the track. Chester Hill High School is an example that has had this policy in play for 16 years. In talking to Susie Mobayed, the principal of the school, she is quite strong on the fact that it has removed distractions. Playgrounds are for socialisation. Bullying instances are quite rare in her school—in the school context; granted what Ms Nixon says outside of the school context. I know we are only three weeks down the runway here, but we have had some fantastic feedback that is saying to us, "You've left it to us"—in a context-specific way, either in lockers or front office or Yondr pouches—"and they've really responded."

When we were at Ashfield Boys—which the Deputy Premier referenced, is really respecting student voice—we heard from students in the senior years who said, "We were sceptical about this. We thought you imposing this was short-sighted, but we can now see the benefits of it, and we did contribute to the solution of how we wanted that implemented." As a former principal in the system, I wish I implemented it way back. I was forever trying to get students put that away—phones lost, phones are a distractor. This is not to say we don't embrace technology and learning, but we are trying to remove distraction and trying to make the focus for students and teachers on the core operation. What parent out there doesn't want socialisation rather than texting at arm's length in the playground, actually playing and getting on with being a kid and growing up in the playground?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, maybe some parents with children who aren't your neurotypical child. We could both have arguments about our own discussions with various schools and children, and I'm sure we could disagree. What I would like to do is come to where the evidence base is. When this Committee investigated the mobile

**CORRECTED**

phone ban in February, we actually found that we didn't think that it was evidence based. We had the person who had been touted as apparently being the academic responsible for suggesting the mobile phone ban actually saying that it isn't what she said at all. My question to you is what are the stated objectives of the ban and how are you going to actually monitor it in a scientific way so that we're not sitting here having a battle of who heard what from who?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** One, like I said, we need to deliver on a Government commitment that requires us as an organisation to evaluate it, alongside screen addiction. There's a \$2.5 million commitment over five years into that research, so we intend to undertake this. I'd note, Chair, that it was not a light-hearted decision. We made it in consultation with SPC, PPA, federation, P&C, PSA. I acknowledge—

**The CHAIR:** It's not something that the Teachers Federation was calling for, for instance.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We have consulted far and wide. I acknowledge it's a contested space, but I'd also acknowledge that every jurisdiction in the country has banned the mobile phone in schools for secondary schools. It's not a unilateral decision that New South Wales has also made.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, but back to my question—

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I indicate that the whole country has taken that path.

**The CHAIR:** The whole country also doesn't take into account the diversity of children in our schools. I would like to just know the answer to my question, though, which is what the objectives are. You can't review something unless you know what the objectives are.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Point of order: I feel that your line of questioning is traversing issues that are policy questions that are not appropriately dealt by public sector—

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. In relation to the point of order, what I'm asking for is a very explicit statement about how the department is—not a policy thing. What I'm trying to avoid is the policy. I want to find out what the objectives for the review are and how we intend to measure it. That is very much a department question.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'm happy to answer that, Chair. When we go through the process of getting that expertise on board for the five-year review, like I said, into the use and also screen addiction, it goes to simple primacy of can we remove distractions from teaching and learning in the classroom? Can we lower the incidences of cyberbullying in schools that parents and students and teachers are reporting to us? I think you'll find that they are going to be central tenets of that review into impact of the policy. Of course, the policy also allows the use of the mobile phone for valid teaching and learning purposes, so the classroom teacher may make that decision in an instance. Then we've also got students that we need to make adjustments for on health grounds and on learning grounds that the policy allows them to have the mobile phone.

**The CHAIR:** I appreciate all of that. I still don't feel that my question has been answered. How are you going to collect the data? Are you saying that it would be based on a review of anecdotal evidence from parents and teachers, or will we be actually looking at hard data as to incidences of cyberbullying et cetera?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'm not trying to be coy around it, Chair. We haven't developed that evaluation procedure for that to go out and employ the experts with us, but I'm indicating to you—

**The CHAIR:** That's fine. That's the answer.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'm indicating to you that we will look at hard data, like instances of bullying with the use of the mobile phone. We'll want some quantitative data, alongside what qualitative data looks like, in case studies and surveys, perhaps. We do also have the Tell Them From Me survey that has been available for our schools. So we'll look at how we can weave that in there as well. There's work to be done on the evaluation framework that we are going to use.

**The CHAIR:** I will ask you a question that I will be asking pretty much every department: What is your approach to actually consulting on implementation of all of these policies with representatives of people with disability?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I think the Deputy Premier has been quite clear with us that she wants us to consult with all partners in education.

**The CHAIR:** But explicitly in relation to disability?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes, I'll get Ms Nixon to talk about how we do work with different disability groups and advocates on a range of matters. But I think the overarching premise here is—and it's called out in the OECD report—that if you want to land good policy and good reform, you have to consult, you have to work with the

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**CORRECTED**

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partners, and that has been the overriding marker for us. I might get Ms Nixon specifically to talk to disability, if you would like.

**LEANNE NIXON:** Thank you for the question. We work extensively with our partners. Since we began working on the inclusive education policy and the disability strategy, we've had a disability reference group in place. We continue to meet with them. We meet with the Advocate for Children and Young People constantly. We meet with the disability reference group, as I said, in an ongoing manner.

**The CHAIR:** Who is on the disability reference group?

**LEANNE NIXON:** Dr Roy is on the disability group. Can I take this on notice and provide that for you?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, I'm interested in the peak bodies and the advocacy groups, in particular.

**LEANNE NIXON:** I will provide that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I think we will have a break a little bit early. We will break now and be back at 3.41 p.m.

**(Short adjournment)**

**The CHAIR:** We are back. I will go to the Hon. Rachel Merton.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** My question concerns behaviour specialists. How many behaviour specialists are currently employed by the department?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'll get Ms Nixon to look for the exact figure for you. They're a really important expertise and resource in the system, with a team around the school that helps our schools around both individual matters and holistic wellbeing and behaviour in a school context. I don't have the figure at my disposal. But Ms Nixon is just looking for it and we'll be able to give you what that looks like.

**CATHY BRENNAN:** I can assist, if that's helpful.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** I can continue.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Well, we've got the number here. Ms Brennan can give it.

**CATHY BRENNAN:** I can assist there. Thank you, Secretary. We currently have 94 behaviour specialists. In 2024 the total number of positions will increase to 137.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** I note in the budget papers there was an indication that there would be 250 additional school counsellors.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** How much new money has been allocated for these 250 additional school counsellors?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'll get Ms Nixon to add anything here. But this is an election commitment that we're looking at delivering for the Government. So we've got work underway. We've got the school counsellor workforce and the school psychologist workforce that was referenced earlier this morning, and so we're looking at what the runway and breakdown of that across the years will look like. I believe we're going to be utilising the Education Future Fund to be able to finance the rollout of this across what I believe is four years, but Ms Nixon will correct—

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** I was questioning as to new money that has been allocated for the announced 250 additional school counsellors.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** There's been \$400 million allocated to the Education Future Fund, and this election commitment will come from there.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Will they be placed in primary schools or high schools? How will the schools be selected, given the number of schools we have and the 250 additional school counsellors?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** It's a really good question. I'll get Ms Nixon to talk to that. The rollout is going to start soon and we're looking right across the system, across the 2,200 schools. I think we're at work on that. Ms Nixon, do you have any detail on that?

**LEANNE NIXON:** Yes, it's 250 full-time equivalent positions by 2027. So they will begin the next financial year. What we're doing at the moment is working through how we ensure that that allocation provides



**CORRECTED**

the service that we need to provide across the State, adding that to our current 1,249. It's really important that we take the time to consider how we would do that. It's not just a simple ratio of student to counsellor, because, for example, our schools with special needs would have smaller numbers. So we really need to consider the need in this as we reconsider the allocation model with the additional 250.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Ms Nixon, just to confirm, the 250 additional school counsellors will be in place by day one, term 1 of 2027?

**LEANNE NIXON:** It'll be completed by 2027.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** The 2027 school year, Chair—that we'll be looking for the full rollout to occur.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Will scholarships be available to support these positions being filled?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We do have scholarships currently in play and we're looking at getting better uptake, because some years we don't get the full uptake. While we do the work, if we need to add to that, that's something we'll consider. But that's all part of the work and methodology that we're examining.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** How many school counsellor vacancies are there today across the schools?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'll get Ms Nixon and Mr Ruming to help here, because they'll have it. But we oscillate somewhere between 5 per cent to 10 per cent vacancy, which is a cause for concern. Because, again, it's a workforce just like the teaching workforce. You want to have as low a vacancy rate as possible. I'm just looking at Mr Ruming and Ms Nixon, if they've got the figure. It's around that area.

**SHAUN RUMING:** Yes, so it's 77 counselling vacancies, which is 5.82 per cent.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Mr Martin, I think you said before you've got the HALT data—if you wanted to just provide that.

**PAUL MARTIN:** Yes, thank you, Ms Mitchell. There are currently 337 HALTs and 808 have applied—so are in the process. We have 8,000 who have indicated an interest in the orientation program. They're good numbers.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I can add the government school numbers, if you want.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's for all of them. Is this a bragging opportunity, Mr Dizdar, to say that there's a bit more from the government school numbers—

**MURAT DIZDAR:** No, we're really proud of our people getting the accreditation and the expertise.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You should be proud. I'm happy with the overall number, but thank you. Mr Manning, you said before that the Medowie land that the Government or the department has got isn't suitable for a school, so what's going to happen to that site now?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We need to have a look at what we think the future is for that site. It is an environmental issue raised at the site. We'll need to have a look at—it may be useful for environmental credits, so we'll talk to the department of planning and see where the use of that land could be. But our view is it's not developable land because of the environmental issues sitting on that site.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Then for a new high school at Googong, there'd been some land that had been identified by the former Government, as you would know. Where's the process up to with some land for that school?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** So that VPA is either with us or about to be with us imminently. We are actively planning on that site for the high school.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So that's the same site that had been identified before?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes, I think it's the seven-hectare site. Yes, absolutely. It was earmarked for a high school and a primary school, I think.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Some time ago?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I want to move now to some of the teacher supply initiatives. Particularly, there's a \$20 million Innovative Teacher Training Fund. I just want to understand the correlation between that and the previous Teacher Supply Strategy. I'm not sure if that's still continuing and that money is

**CORRECTED**

there. But in relation to that teacher training fund, what is the targeted number of new teachers to be brought in for that \$20 million? What's the plan around that? I'm not sure who is best placed to answer that.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'll get Mr Ruming to answer that. But, again, that was an election commitment that we're just working our way through and unpacking alongside 70 election commitments that we've got. But I'll get Mr Ruming to give you any detail of where we're up to there.

**SHAUN RUMING:** We've got a number of BAU hiring initiatives that we continue to work through. We've filled 6,311 positions this year, which is about 20 per cent up on this time last year. So a lot of those programs continue: Grow Your Own, Rural and Remote et cetera. The \$20 million Innovative Teacher Training Fund—we're getting to work at the moment on that in terms of what will be part of that fund. Some initial thinking is our early career academy to serve as a centre of excellence for classroom teachers as well as classroom career pathways. We are just getting going with those discussions and what that could look like. I will have to come back on those in terms of what our expectations would be in terms of delivery of teachers.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With the previous Teacher Supply Strategy—I was on the website yesterday and it still listed that the Government has walked away from some of the initiatives under that. Which ones are continuing? Is Grow Your Own continuing, the one for SLSOs to upskill? Is that still happening?

**SHAUN RUMING:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I am happy for you to take on notice how many participants there are in that this year, if possible. It would be great to get that data. The mid-career initiative—is that still continuing, the one that was started under the former Government?

**SHAUN RUMING:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Would you be able to provide, again on notice, how many participants?

**SHAUN RUMING:** Sure.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I want to ask about what I assume is the next iteration of Grow Your Own that was announced recently, the Local Teacher Pipeline. The media release talked about having 75 participants for that program. Is that just for this year, or next year—I think it starts next year? Is it 75, and over what time period?

**SHAUN RUMING:** Yes, 75 over two years, so a total of 150.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Right, so 150 all up in the two years. Then beyond that, are you not sure—just depending on how the take-up is?

**SHAUN RUMING:** We actually have two streams of Grow Your Own now. We have currently 187 participants as of 19 September, and then an additional 150 places for 2024-25, which is a total of 337.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Are they people who are currently learning support officers? Is that that one, or is this new?

**SHAUN RUMING:** In the first cohort of 187, that's the program you're referring to.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** And in the second cohort—I'm sorry, you just said—how many in that?

**SHAUN RUMING:** It is 150 over two years.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** And they come from external community people? They are not currently working in schools?

**SHAUN RUMING:** No, they're not currently working in schools.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The other thing that I was asking, and it might be for Ms Blackadder, I'm not sure—the quality time initiative, is that work continuing?

**SALLY BLACKADDER:** What the Government has committed to is a five-hour reduction in teacher workload during this term of government. There's a suite of initiatives underway to deliver that program of work.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The Quality Time Action Plan specifically was referenced by the OECD in their recent report, but that particular initiative is not continuing as it was. Is that correct?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** There are elements of that that are still in play. For example, under the former Government there were about 200 schools where there was additional SAS support put in. That was under the quality time initiative. That has expanded under the current Government to 414 schools. That has been a well-received program, so that one's continuing. It's been a broader platform and direction we've been given

**CORRECTED**

around reducing workload. Some of the things we have happening in that space include the A-Z policy review that I unpacked earlier today. Since term 2, 70 BAU items—a number of pilots that were all paused and ceased so that the run rate of change for schools was a lot more respectful of the complexity and challenge that schools were facing. The rate of change has been minimised. That has been a body of work alongside the temp-to-perm work, the curriculum rollout extension and other pieces of work we have in play, like the re-examination of external validation and re-examination of our curriculum monitoring processes—where can we streamline things that reduce paperwork and compliance requirements?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What metric are you going to be using to measure how you have saved that five hours per teacher in every school across the State? What's the metric?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Ms Blackadder indicated that this Government's election commitment was we would reduce five hours—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I know that, but I want to know how you are measuring it. That's what I'm getting to.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** —of admin time. I'll get Ms Blackadder to add to that. We got a lot of criticism from the ground when we tried to put minutes and time onto those items. The ground was indicating to us that they wanted to see sizeable differences of things that we had removed—to not lead with the measurement item, but to lead with what can you discernibly make a difference on, and then try to capture that. We will need to quantify it. I guess I am just calling out the challenge of the learnt experience in trying to quantify that.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** With respect, Secretary, I don't have a lot of time. In terms of being able to track that election commitment from the Government—as you said, wanting to quantify when that five hours of time saved per week will be delivered—how you are going to measure it? That is what I am keen to know, so if Ms Blackadder can answer that, that would be very useful.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** It is across the four years as an election commitment—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So it's going to take four years to save the five hours?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We will need to deliver it within that period.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What about the quantification of the metrics?

**SALLY BLACKADDER:** At the moment we are at work determining how they'll be measured. We're looking for a holistic approach to measurement that'll look at three things particularly. First will be studying the time saved by the elimination or improvement of teachers' activities, so time in motion. The second will be about the feedback from staff to see whether the workload reduction is meaningfully felt. I think we have all experienced where we have saved teachers minutes but it hasn't really been felt, so a more qualitative measure around that. We are also looking to see how we can use the PMES survey to provide insights around that. So we are at work to determine those specific measures and the timing of those over the four years.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I assume that's the work that will inform the strategy that's mentioned in the budget papers to reduce that admin workload. Will that strategy be made public or will that be something that the Committee can see?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We are happy to report to the Committee on our progress as we come to the Committee—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Great. That would be good.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** —by way of what workload improvements we have been able to make and the impact on that. We are really happy to report that.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I want to go to the org chart of the department. The copy that was provided to the Committee prior to today's hearing shows that there are a lot of people in acting roles. I think a number of you here today are in acting positions. There are some vacant positions as well. I'm just curious about that instability. I know you said before, Secretary, that you are going through a period of looking at restructure, so I'm assuming there will be an updated org chart at some point in the near future.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I am really proud of that org chart. I'm not sure what version you have in front of you—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It's the one that the Committee requested, so I'm assuming it's relatively recent.

**CORRECTED**

**MURAT DIZDAR:** What I did with that org chart was tip it upside down, and the secretary is at the bottom of the org chart.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's fine, but that's semantics.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I don't believe so. Because the primacy is the 800,000 students and the 2,200 schools. We put them at the top of the chart and that hasn't been the case.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's fine. My point, Secretary, is that clearly the Government has foreshadowed that they're finding savings within Education for their budget commitment. Clearly that is going to have to translate to some of these positions and staff positions not being available. You said that you're looking at efficiencies across all of the department. That's going to mean that some people will not be in their roles anymore. That's the very nature of what you're trying to do. I am trying to understand how quickly we will know, for instance, if there is still going to be an executive director who looks after transformation, reform programs, and the student and parent experience directorate. I would be really keen to know when that process of the cuts that will come in terms of the org chart, the staffing areas and the department staff will be clear to the public and members of the Committee?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** As I lead the reprioritisation of the organisation and the refocusing of the organisation around the public education plan, I will update that chart regularly. It will be on the website for everyone to avail themselves of.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Are you looking at having less executive staff—less deputy secretaries and less EDs?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I already have less deputy secretaries.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Is that going to go down again?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Let me answer your first question. Am I going to have less deputy secretaries? I said I already do, because my predecessor had a group secretary role. The group deputy secretary has moved to another role in government and I haven't replaced that role. I've articulated to the organisation that, as secretary, I'll operate with a flatter structure. There was a job share in our education skills reform area. I have made adjustments to that area so that there's only one dep sec in that area. I've already made some changes, and I'll keep looking at what changes are required to best structure the organisation.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** When should we expect to see an updated org chart from the one that the Committee had that will really give a bit of an indication as to any roles that have been condensed or any areas that have been cut?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'm not sure I agree with how you characterise that. I said that I'm looking at re-profiling or reorganising the organisation so that it best fits the education plan. As I make each of those moves, I'll update it.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We'll keep an eye on that. How many staff do you have in your office, Mr Dizdar?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'll have to take it on notice, but since I've become secretary I've moved a number of areas into my office. The Connected Communities directorate has become a direct report to my office. The Aboriginal Outcomes and Partnerships directorate has become a direct report to my office. Those two areas were not direct reports to the former secretary.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's fine. I'm keen for a number, so if you can take that on notice that's fine. Do you have a full-time social media officer?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I have a role that is undertaken by an individual who has worked with me in different roles. That individual coordinates my school visits, accompanies me on a number of school visits and allows me to have follow-up and follow-through. It's not a social media officer.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Is there a role description for that person? Could you provide that to the Committee?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** There is, yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Could we get that on notice?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Sure.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Do they drive you to school visits?

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**CORRECTED**

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**MURAT DIZDAR:** They have at times, yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Is that within their role description?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'd have to check the role description. But for speed, efficiency and accuracy of where we've been, at times I've driven, at times they've driven and at times we've gone by taxi.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If you could provide that role description on notice, that would be great.

**The CHAIR:** Can we talk a bit about the Northern Rivers floods and the impacts on the schools up there? Do you have a number of how many public school students in the Northern Rivers were forced to relocate from their schools after the floods in 2022?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I would have what the impact looked like, but let me find that. While I'm doing that, Ms Brennan might have some information.

**CATHY BRENNAN:** I would need to take that on notice, Chair, for the exact number of students.

**The CHAIR:** I'm interested in how many were disrupted and had to relocate but also how many of them never re-enrolled. Do you have that sort of information?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** How many have—

**The CHAIR:** Not re-enrolled.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Not re-enrolled. Let's chase up the exact figures. There was a significant impact. There were schools that went into temporary locations that we've been working on. I know that our ED and DEL out there with Ms Brennan have been doing all they can. We have a recovery package that we offered there as well. But by way of impact on enrolments and attendance, let's come back to you on that.

**The CHAIR:** Do you know how many public school teachers in the Northern Rivers are working at worksites that aren't their assigned school site because of those floods? Do you have that data?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** How many teachers are not at their assigned school site?

**The CHAIR:** Yes. They're currently at a different school site or they're at a temporary school site.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I know it certainly came into play temporarily with the floods, where there were access issues and people who were personally impacted, but longer term I'm not sure. We'll have to take it on notice and have a look for you.

**CATHY BRENNAN:** There are currently five schools. Is that correct, Mr Manning?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Just going through our details, Broadwater Public School is being hosted at Evans River; Empire Vale Public School is being hosted at Southern Cross public; Condong is at Murwillumbah South; and Richmond River is at the Lismore High School campus. Of course, Cabbage Tree Island Public School is being hosted in Wardell. There are five that are still not back at their original location.

**The CHAIR:** Let's look at that, then. A number of school rebuilds were scheduled. Does that mean that the Wardell Public School is now complete with its rebuild?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** No. There were nine that required rebuilds. In many cases we put a pop-up school back on their original site pending the work to rebuild their existing school.

**The CHAIR:** Do you have to hand the expected completion dates for the rebuilds at each of those schools? We will start with Wardell.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** I do. They are all in progress. We're working with the NSW Reconstruction Authority around the statutory approval pathways. There is still quite a bit of work going on in terms of determining maximum flood heights in some of these locations. We are still working through what we think the final development looks like in order then to go either for a DA or whether actually there could be exempt or complying developments. We are working pretty hard. I know we had set ourselves a target, I think—just having a look through the notes—of 2025.

**The CHAIR:** Beginning of or end of?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** I think 2025 is as far as we got to. Again, in most cases, I think with the exception of Richmond River High School, we have some firm plans in terms of using modular construction so we can speed that process up once we get through the planning approval. I think Richmond River High School is the only one where we are working with the community about where the preferred location is for the new school.

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That will take a little bit of time to work its way through. I can try to provide you some information on notice of exact dates around those nine.

**The CHAIR:** That would be good. That's Wardell, Empire Vale, Rivers Secondary College, Richmond River high, Lismore South public, Broadwater public, Blakebrook, Condong and Tumbulgum. Yes, that's nine.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes, that sounds right.

**The CHAIR:** Excellent. Is the rebuild cost budgeted for?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** It's funded through the insurance provisions of icare, so yes.

**The CHAIR:** Good. In relation to the Cabbage Tree Island school, is the plan for it to be rebuilt on Cabbage Tree Island or for it to be moved somewhere else?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** I think that's one of the schools where we are still waiting for finalisation of flood reports and advice and for community consultation about where we think that school should be long term.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, so we don't know yet.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** It is also a site where the local Aboriginal land council has announced that it will not rebuild residential housing on the island as well. I think we need to work carefully with community and government agencies around what that looks like.

**The CHAIR:** Then there was a bunch of schools—I think there are eight of them—that had major repair works that needed to be done. Lismore Public School—

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Seven.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Uralla, Mullumbimby high and Mullumbimby public, Crabbes Creek public, Main Arm Upper public and Maclean.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** What's the status of those major repair works? When do we expect them to be—

**ANTHONY MANNING:** According to my records, all but Maclean and Mullumbimby are complete. Mullumbimby is due for beginning of '24 to be complete; Maclean is towards the back end of 2024.

**The CHAIR:** Excellent, thank you. I come back to this issue of out-of-pocket costs for parents that was being canvassed by Ms Mihailuk earlier. How exactly does the department communicate with parents to ensure that they know that those general contributions are voluntary and not compulsory?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We've got a policy that we provide to schools. Each school provides their communication out to their school community. We send an annual reminder to our schools to comply with that policy.

**The CHAIR:** Are there translations into different community languages available for that policy through the department or is that left to each school?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We certainly can assist if the school reaches out to us, but generally it's undertaken at the school level. They generally know their community groupings and have established mechanisms that they utilise. But if they need our help, they reach out to us.

**The CHAIR:** Understood, thank you. One of the positive things that the last Government did was implement the free period products across schools.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you, Abigail!

**The CHAIR:** Well, we lobbied on it for a long time but, yes, you did do that. Is that still happening? What's the status of it? Is it in all of our public schools now?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'll get Mr Manning to add to my coverage—I don't want to get it wrong—but it is still continuing. We've moved all of the options that are available for schools onto our EdBuy system, which is really well known, and they can access it there on a needs basis. We've rolled out a large number of dispensers that have been installed and then we've gone to making pads, tampons and period underwear available in all our context there. But I'll get Mr Manning to add to any detail I've left out, but it is an ongoing program.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** The only detail I can add is that 4,600 dispensers have been installed.

**The CHAIR:** Excellent. Are they in toilets?

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**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** In toilet blocks, not within admin offices. Excellent, thank you. During the Public Accountability and Works Committee hearings into the use of consultants, I did raise a number of times that there was a program being run by School Infrastructure that was basically a program for graduates and cadets in infrastructure that some of the other infrastructure arms of government were also using. In the old details for that, under the previous Government, there was a line that said that you would be placed with a consultant for six months. I can't see that now in the latest update from August. Can you confirm whether or not we are still placing students within consulting firms?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes, I can. We are. The whole point was it was an infrastructure traineeship, so it was to get experience of the three sides of infrastructure delivery: building contractor; consultants, being architects, engineers, project managers; but also government side. The idea was every eight months they switched so they got the full gamut of infrastructure. The view was whether they end up in a government agency or they end up an architect or an engineer or building contractor, they're still delivering the things that government needs to have delivered. It was to give them as rounded a view of infrastructure, as opposed to just the public sector side of delivery. It is still part of the program and will continue, because it's about that rounded experience of where they might choose to end up in infrastructure.

**The CHAIR:** Has there been any consideration to getting some sort of compensation or payment from those consulting firms? They get eight months of an intern that otherwise they would have to, presumably, fill with someone else.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** No. We did look at it at the beginning of the process, yes, we did. The reality is we are their employer throughout all stages of the process, whether they are with a consultant or with a contractor. The view is we get value from them and, to be frank, if the consultant was paying them, the consultant would probably charge us for their time, so we are not paying for any work they might do. In fact, the students themselves may not be working on government-centred contracts. So, no, in the end we decided it was easier and cleaner that we were their employer, we would continue to pay them and we would get the benefit of the fact that they are experiencing the other parts of the sector during that skills and expertise bank.

**The CHAIR:** I absolutely appreciate that not all consulting firms are created equal; however, in the infrastructure world the big four do dominate in terms of the Government's use of consultants. We've seen a huge number with PwC, for instance, and Deloitte.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** In their project management—in project management arms. I would argue we would probably spend more money with architects and engineers than we would do with any of the big four, given the number of projects that are delivered across government, yes. It wouldn't just be the big four that they would go to, and if they did it would only be in a project management or an engineering division. It wouldn't be in a management consultancy provision, because that wouldn't be experience of infrastructure.

**The CHAIR:** I have two questions, then. The first one is are you able to provide me with a breakdown of the percentage of who goes where?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Sure.

**The CHAIR:** I am interested in how much there is with the big four.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** But the other aspect of that is, obviously, from a consultant's perspective, getting access to or having built relationships with people who then go on to work in government departments can be quite profitable. Have you given thought, on the back of the recent revelations and the way that we now know that these consulting firms operate, to perhaps changing that program around?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** I mean, to be honest, we haven't given that any thought. It would be a very long-term play, because these are trainees; these aren't even cadets. It would be a very long-term play to think that in 20 years' time they might be chief executive of School Infrastructure. But I am happy to have a look at it. My sense is that they mainly are architects and engineering disciplines that they go to, rather than to the big four. So, no, we haven't given it—but happy to have a look at it in the context of giving you some data about where they end up.

**The CHAIR:** I think that would be useful. Once we have the data we can work out if there is a significant problem.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We've got to the end of—this is a two-year program. We may also be able to look at the data of where they end up after the two years, because we have actually now established a cadetship

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across government so that as the trainees finish the traineeship, there is an opportunity for them, if they decide the government side is where they want to be, to come into a cadetship as part of that process. Some of them will go on to uni, some of them have joined contractors, construction firms and some of them are looking at, and we have encouraged some of our engineering and architectural practices to run similar cadetships. So, again, they can bring them in, rather than simply graduates as the alternative. I am happy if that data would be useful as well, as to where they end up. Yes, happy to do that.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. That would be very useful. While we are on consultants, obviously the audited numbers won't come out for a while, but are you able to give us any insight into the trend in the department's consulting spend over the last financial year?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** I'd have to take that on notice. But over the last few years it's fallen. I think last year \$3.7 million was spent on consultancy expenditure. The year before was \$10.7 million. So, it's been consistently falling and we have been putting some early substantial process around divisions that might want to engage consultancies to support their work.

**The CHAIR:** If you could perhaps provide consultant plus contractor spend when it comes to major consulting firms? As you know, there is that—

**ANTHONY MANNING:** The major suppliers list.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. There's a definitional issue—

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** —where a lot of money or contracts with consulting firms are not being recorded necessarily as consulting spend and occasionally for good reason, but sometimes not. I searched through e-Tendering last night and I could come up with at least \$3 million easy in spend on big consultants from the department over the last 12 months. So perhaps there is an issue there with the way it has been—perhaps if you could come back with both of those numbers?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Sure. And we have, in the last period of time, strengthened the rigour around what is consultancy and what isn't consultancy, and the chief procurement officer has the ultimate say as to whether it is or isn't consultancy, rather than necessarily individual divisions within the organisation. So we have applied a lot more rigour to that definition.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. The plan that was released yesterday, did that have input from external consultants or other firms?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** No.

**The CHAIR:** No? That's refreshing. Thank you. I will stop there for this round and go back to the Opposition.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Back to phonics—the year 1 phonics check, the data. We had a debate on this in the upper House last week and I think the Government confirmed that the data would be released by the end of the year. Is there a date when we expect to see that data available?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Hopefully very soon, because the assessment was undertaken mid term 3, so we are just collating it. We are in week 3, so it should be within a matter of weeks.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So, definitely before the end of the school year?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** That's the plan, yes. I will check in with my CESE colleagues, but it's definitely planned for before the end of the year.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If you could on notice maybe provide a date if possible, that would be great. I want to ask about Ambassador Schools. Is that program still continuing?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I want to thank the schools involved in the Ambassador Schools program because the evaluation, the research piece has been completed. It was always set that they will be able to have a sunset period where they could exit. That was the request of those principals. I'm going to get the number wrong—someone here might have it—but I think it was originally 12 schools that we had in that important research piece. That has been completed. They have wrapped up their involvement.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You are saying all those schools asked to not be part of it any more. Is that what you are saying?



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**MURAT DIZDAR:** Again, Ms Nixon might have some more detail. But certainly in my discussion with several of those principals, in my visits, in my discussions with the ED that leads that, there was always our intent to not have them as ambassadors for ever and a day, to partner with them, to learn from them, to share that learning across the system. And a number made representation to say, "When the research piece ends, we'd also like to end our involvement."

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So, with the research—

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Is that the case, Ms Nixon?

**LEANNE NIXON:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Did you want to add anything?

**LEANNE NIXON:** It was valuable research. It was always planned to end at the end of 2022. The evidence that came out of that supported the evidence base we have in what works best and has been incorporated into the School Excellence Framework Version 3, which will be used for case studies to support that through CESE. But the decision was made not to do the next stage of that, given that it was reinforcing the evidence we already have.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Was that decision made by the new Government or by the department not to do further?

**LEANNE NIXON:** The decision was made by the department.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** In terms of the research piece that was done, is that something that the Committee could have a copy of, or is that going to be made public? Are we able to see what the findings were?

**LEANNE NIXON:** As you'd be aware, there was never a commitment to make the research public, but a summary of that has been provided to all of the participating schools and the work has been included.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Could you take on notice whether—and I appreciate you can't speak for the Minister, but it would be really great to see what that process showed, if it's possible.

**LEANNE NIXON:** I'll take that on notice.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Is there any sort of intention to look at further programs of this type where you collaborate with universities and do some research pieces around what is working well, how you can share best practice across schools, particularly, I guess, with the new plan launched yesterday? Is there any intention to continue on in this sort of space?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I can add to that. We're always looking for those schools that are punching above their weight with school improvement measures compared to similar contexts. We have always done a number of CESE case studies. We're always testing the robustness of what Ms Nixon said by way of what works best—is what we're seeing in those contexts still stacking up with the evidence of what works best—and, like Ms Nixon said, the next round of modification to the School Excellence Framework. We'll be looking for opportunities to continue to learn from those sites that are punching above their weight, both low SES, high SES—the full range of context.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, and the Ambassador Schools had different contexts, as you know. What date was the advice given to the department not to continue with the Rewarding Excellence in Teaching program from the new Government? When was that one cut? I'm happy for you to take it on notice if you don't have it.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes, I'd have to take it on notice.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's fine.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** But it's what Mr Ruming alluded to earlier. We're undertaking a classroom career pathway.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's what I want to get to now. Has there been any specific funding allocated to that classroom career pathway program?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Not at this stage. It's embryonic work that we will then work with partners on. It is part of our new awards settlement with the federation that will work with the industrial arm of the organisation as well—the profession.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The work that was done previously by Professor Hattie in the Rewarding Excellence team, what has happened to that? Has that just been moved on? Is that going to be part of

**CORRECTED**

what you look at in classroom career pathway? I'm just trying to understand. How is classroom career pathway different to Rewarding Excellence in Teaching other than, as you said, that industrial element with the union? How does it look? What's the difference?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** It's an excellent question. The two people that were leading that are still going to lead the classroom career pathway work because we don't want to lose all the valuable information we gained from the enormous amount of round tables that we conducted. I'm going to get the percentage wrong, but there was quite a strong percentage of the workforce that said they'd like to see this come into play.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm very aware of that.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** But one of the major rub points that came from the ground through those round tables was what we were looking at by way of possible remuneration. It was butting up against what executive-level remuneration in a school looks like. So the re-pivot here is what system roles can we look at that keep people in the classroom still with a classroom load but can play a broader role? And how can we create a trajectory for them that doesn't butt up against the executive trajectory?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Are you looking at additional salary for people who take part in that classroom career pathway, or is it more like a mentoring to try to move them into an executive role? Is there more money if you're part of that, like there would have been in Rewarding Excellence?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Like I said, really embryonic, no firm decisions, but we definitely need to look at remuneration, we definitely need to look at what classroom load release looks like and we definitely need to look at how it avoids competing against the AP role, the head teacher role, the DP role within schools because we still need that leadership role.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You're saying, Secretary, that it's very embryonic, to use your terminology.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** When is it planned to commence, that classroom career pathway program? Next school year? The year after? What is the current thinking?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I can't put a definitive date on it for you. It's going to have to be done really well. It's a significant body of work, but what I can say is that given it's part of the new award settlement on the teachers' pay, we'll begin work with the NSW Teachers Federation as soon as we can on that.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So the union will be contributing to what that will look like in practice. That's part of the negotiations. Is that correct?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** They will be because the teacher pay scales, the executive pay scales—like I said, one of those factors that we need to take into account. But we'll partner with the partners in education. We'll use all the learnings we grab because there was fantastic feedback there.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But you can't say yet when it will start and there's no additional money for it at this point either?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I can't say. We've got to do the work really well, but I'm happy to update the Committee as we come along here to where we're up to with the work.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You might find I'll put some questions on notice in relation to that to the Minister. If there's some more information over the course of the next few months, that would be helpful. I will hand to my colleague to ask a few questions as well now.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** I refer to the launch on Monday of the public education report and notice it's a good-looking glossy brochure with some fabulous photos. I also pick up on my colleague Ms Abigail Boyd's pick-up about the absence of any reference to disability in the public education plan. I read through the document and on page 5 I read about:

... holding ourselves accountable

...

We will use success measures to monitor our progress...

To the parents, what is the reassurance or what's accountable or how do we measure this? It all sounds good and it all looks good, but just in terms of accountability and follow-through and knowing that this uptake is actually happening in the local school, I'm just wondering what do we say?

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**MURAT DIZDAR:** That's an excellent question. What we're working on with each school starting next week and all the way through to the end of term 1 next year are school improvement measures that will be in every school plan for the 2,200 schools, and it will be on their website. That's where plans are published and made available to everyone, including people on the Committee but to their school community. And like I was indicating earlier this morning, the areas that we're looking at in setting improvement measures that are context specific, respecting the OECD report and doing it bottom-up rather than top-down, we're looking at reading, we're looking at numeracy, we're looking at attendance, we're looking at pathways and to do that in a very respectful way with schools to look at what their trajectory of improvement looks like, what similar context looks like and to set aspirations in those areas with those school communities.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** How will the parents be able to be across this in terms of how the local school's tracking on some of these important outcomes mentioned in the brochure?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** My two boys are in a government public school. The principal will make the school plan available to all parents, and I'll be able to read the improvement measures that have been set for that school.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** So each school will be reporting to the parent body their results?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Correct, through the school plan, and in an annual process through an annual school report, they will report on their progress across those improvement measures.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Another issue, if I could just raise, in terms of accountability and how schools are performing and where students are performing, in terms of knowing how the schools are tracking and how individual students are tracking within that school, is there anything more that we could be doing in this space or is it just a teacher conversation?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** That's a really good question. There are a number of good things in play. There's the annual NAPLAN report. NAPLAN next year will be the second year round with the new reporting on the four scales. That'll give parents information. We have check-in assessments. The best way for me to describe those are mini NAPLANs that are well received by our school communities that allow teachers to assess where students are at. That's not a report that goes to parents. It's a tool for teachers to use so they can make interventions, accelerate learning for students. Of course, every school has got to give a student report, out twice a year at the half-yearly mark and the end-of-year mark, so there are so many points of feedback. We've got the phonics check that we referred to earlier and we've got the Best Start Kindergarten Assessment, so there are a number of assessment tools that are available to our people so that they can communicate with parents around the progress of an individual child.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I want to go to some of the programs that the new Government has decided not to continue with, and Recruitment Beyond NSW is one of them. It's correct that in the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan there is some work being done looking at bringing in teachers from overseas jurisdictions. I think Victoria is still doing that. I'd be keen to know how many applicants were still being processed or were being looked at at the time the Government decided to cancel that particular initiative? How many potential teachers were going through that process? Is there any data on that?

**SHAUN RUMING:** I can take that question. In terms of teacher numbers, we've had 24 teachers who have commenced in Recruitment Beyond NSW. An additional one started in term 4 and 13 will commence in 2024. If my maths is right, that's 38 teachers who have come through that program.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So not six. I think that's what was said before. So it's 38.

**SHAUN RUMING:** Yes, 38. We are still processing 400 applications, even though the Government cancelled the program, but obviously we wanted to honour the people who have gone through the process.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Sure. Are all of those 400 qualified teachers?

**SHAUN RUMING:** We're going through that process to validate that.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What will be the process? How long will that take, do you think?

**SHAUN RUMING:** I would have to take that on notice. My understanding from the team was that they were through about 250 of the 400, but I can give you some further detail when we follow up.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you, because it would be really good to see how that actually translates into people who are ready to go in the classroom now. There are issues with vacancies, so I'm not sure why you would turn away anyone who is qualified and keen. Secretary, in terms of staff movements within the department, are you able to provide—and I'm happy if you would like to do it on notice—how much has been paid out in redundancies since March for department staff who have left the department?

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**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'm happy to do, if you would like, during my time as secretary—from when I've been secretary?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's fine. I'd also like to capture the redundancy of the former secretary as well in that. I'd like to know how many have left since the new Government has come in.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Sure. Let me take that on notice and I'll give you prior to myself and then the numbers—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** And the number of positions and the redundancy packages that were paid out, that would be great.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Sure.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Regarding the plan to reduce the number of contractors and consultants—and I'll have to make sure the Chair doesn't cut me off here, knowing her views—and the reduction of spend currently supporting 200 contractors and consultants, are there going to be any costs associated? Are there going to be contracts that are cut now or is it just you're not fulfilling anymore? Can you unpack how that will work in practice?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes. I'm working through that with the deputy secretaries. A number have—coming up—end dates or dates where the consultant or the contractor was going to be reassessed, so we're using those natural junctures to work out if that resource is needed.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What sort of work are they doing at the moment? What's going to be finishing up that those contractors and consultants might doing?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I think you'll find that they're right across the organisation. There's not a division where we haven't had some of that workforce employed. I've been working with every single dep sec around that. I repeat that it's a whole-of-government requirement for me to do so, so we're working through that naturally. When I'm looking at that, we're discussing particular roles that may be required and saying, "Well, is that a role that we could take off the contractor list when it's coming up for assessment, and turn that into an ongoing role in the organisation so that we can have the ongoing expertise and avoid some of the higher costs that you could incur at a contractor level"? In other cases, we're making decisions that that resource will no longer be required and we're ending that resource at that juncture. I think I'm correct in saying that we haven't looked at early cessation in any way. We've started there, knowing that we've got a little bit of time to do that work.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The number of 200 is in the budget papers and it was in media done by the Deputy Premier. While you might say you're working through that, you've got an idea of what's going to go because you've had to come up with that 200 figure from somewhere. What are some of the examples in that 200 that you will look to cease? I'm after a couple of examples.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Earlier this morning I think someone said we plucked that figure out of the air. We looked at that figure as opposed to the total figure that we've got in the organisation and thought that that was a sensible level, given that we've got to deliver on a 25 per cent cut. I'm really mindful that I'm still working through this space and that I haven't communicated to every single area where I'm making adjustments, so I would like to do that first as secretary.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's fine, but my point to that is the Government has said it will find these savings. They are listed in the budget paper, but it sounds like a lot of that detail is still being worked through in terms of what the actual impact will be.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'm happy for Mr Manning to give you some more detail, because that's been an area that we've moved a little quicker on, in infrastructure.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** In school infrastructure? Okay.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Do you want that example?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Sure. One example would be great.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** From our perspective, we've been talking to the contingent workforce about permanent roles. We've already moved 36 contingent workers into permanent roles, and there's a further 25 who we're talking to as part of that process.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What kind of roles are they?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** They'll be project officers or project directors in delivery of projects. We've also been through and had a look at projects that are coming to an end in the next 12 months.

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**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** As in building projects?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes. And where we don't need those resources anymore, looking to recruit the resources we do need through a permanent space. At the moment, certainly from our perspective, there are more than 60 that we're looking at converting across as part of our commitment for that.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But you had those presumably brought on before because they were there to deliver projects. Is that right?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes. We couldn't get permanent employees, so we got hold of contingent workers. We're now saying, "Actually, these contingent workers can convert across to be permanent employees," because they're sitting against roles that exist, but they will no longer be performed by consultants or contractors.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** More broadly, in terms of the dividends—I suspect you might just tell me that you're still working through this, Mr Dizdar—I think \$328 million is going to be saved over four years and that every corporate division is going to be looked at. That's a lot of uncertainty for department staff, I would think, who would not be sure if their job is going to be there or not. When will you have that work done? You said you're going to the ERC soon. But I'm really keen to know for clarity when we'll understand what roles don't exist anymore and what the priorities are that the Government has made in terms of the positions that have gone or the savings that have been applied. What's the time frame on that?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Like I said, I've already made some decisions, like not replacing the group deputy secretary role, removing that function and the roles that existed there. That's already a known move. There are others that I'm very close to and communicating. There are others that are at a consultation point, because there are consultation processes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So by the end of the year? What's your time frame?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I have to deliver savings this financial year and then in ongoing financial years. I would like to start the new school year—1 February or thereabouts—with the first lot of changes that I'd like to make. We're all underway with those.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I have a quick one back to Mr Barraket. Start Strong Capital Works for community pre-schools—obviously I know we've moved from the rounds, but how much money is going to be allocated for that?

**MARK BARRAKET:** Let me just check this for you. I might take that on notice and come back to you.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's alright. No worries.

**The CHAIR:** Back to that 200 contractor number, I asked whether it had been plucked out of the air because it is a lovely round number. If we're talking about a 25 per cent cut, does that imply that before that 200 number was devised, we looked and saw that we had about 800 contractors working within the Department of Education?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I don't want to get it wrong, Chair. I took it on notice earlier. Please let me come back with the exact numbers. I don't want to get it wrong and mislead the Committee.

**The CHAIR:** Sure. That would be very useful. Also, you would be aware, no doubt, that when the Public Accountability and Works Committee asked these questions of Transport, it turned out that a lot of these contractors had been working for a very long time on rolling contracts within the Department of Education. Perhaps you could take it on notice, to come back to us with a breakdown of how many have been with the department for one year, two years, three years, five years or 10 years or more—we had one who had been working for 12 years—and what their average pay is as well? That would be very useful.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I am happy to provide whatever I've got that's available.

**The CHAIR:** I asked before about the spend on the big four in particular. I asked for the contractor and consultant spend. Could you let me know on notice how much has been spent in the last financial year on PwC, KPMG, EY and Deloitte? Could you also tell me how much the department has spent on McKinsey and Boston over the last three years, particularly how many projects they have worked on, the scope of those works and if there is anything that you could provide us on notice in terms of details?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I am happy to, Chair. They are quite specific, so let me come back on those.

**The CHAIR:** Could you also let us know how many projects or contracts with contractors are coming in at just under \$150,000? We are looking at between the \$140,000 and \$150,000 mark. Again, in other departments, we have seen quite a few coming in at \$149,000, so it's just interesting to see. Can you tell me what conflict of

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interest checks there are in relation to contractors and consultants basically using their position to recruit additional people into the organisation?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes. Mr Manning can talk to the conflict of interest processes. We have also put in enhanced mechanisms here. I am hopefully going to get the figure right, Mr Manning, but I have to sign off on any engagement that's above \$100,000 as secretary.

**The CHAIR:** That's the new process that's been put in?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** That's the new process we put in to be even more diligent in this area. Given the size of our portfolio and budget at \$26.1 million, we have really brought down what that threshold looks like to \$100,000. If I'm going to reduce contractor and consultant expenditure, then I obviously want to be working with my dep secs. There will be occasions where that's needed and I want to be working with them to make sure I can support them. But, as secretary, I ultimately own those decisions. There might be times where I say, "We're not going to go down that path. We can use this expertise that we've got." I have tried to put in a stronger due diligence requirement there. Is it the \$100,000 mark, Mr Manning?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** I think it is, yes.

**The CHAIR:** Again, one of the themes from the other inquiry has been that, although there are conflict of interest rules and procedures put in place, there is no real check on those or any kind of independent check. Has anything changed with the department in the last six months?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I know that in all our recruitment practices panels have to declare conflicts of interest. There are established protocols and procedures. I know that as senior executives we have to declare conflicts of interest.

**The CHAIR:** But are there any checks or enforcement processes or is it just trusting each individual?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** For contingent workers we have a mechanism where we do an annual conflict of interest, which is a self identification of any areas that might be conflicts of interest. And then, to the secretary's point, for any procurement process at the point of assembling the tender evaluation team, they would also sign individual conflicts of interest that pertain to the tender lists and a whole range of other things. So we do a general check to understand what we think the conflicts of interest might be, even if they are not necessarily firms that we have a lot of dealings with, and then in the procurement process we'll be specific with individuals to make sure they have no conflicts of interest with the tender lists that we are going through.

**The CHAIR:** Again, unfortunately it's a theme we have seen across different government departments. For example, if somebody has previously worked at a particular consulting or contracting firm, is it sufficient that they just declare that interest or are they actively excluded from recruitment panels and procurement panels where their old firm is involved?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** I think we manage conflicts depending on whether they are current or previous. If it was a previous employer, I'm not sure that we would see those as conflicts because they are now employed by us, not by anyone else. I think there are current conflicts and there may be a perception of conflict from previous employment. We would actively manage actual conflicts of interest, as opposed to whether they might have worked for one of the big four at some point in their career.

**The CHAIR:** Are you aware of the ICAC guidance that talks about perceived conflicts of interest and how important it is that we manage perceived conflicts of interest in a similar way to ensure the perception of integrity and accountability as well?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We are. The chief procurement officer makes sure we are compliant with ICAC's rules and regulations. I'm yet to see some specific advice about how long somebody would have needed to have left the big four and become a permanent employee before we would consider their conflict of interest period at an end. Certainly we manage the difference between actual conflicts versus perceived.

**The CHAIR:** We are delving into other systemic issues, which I will go back to the other committee on. I will go back to more specific education questions. I think this one is back to infrastructure. I understand that there is a new high school slated for Pottsville.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Part of the election commitment was planning for a new high school for Pottsville, yes.

**The CHAIR:** When is that due to be completed, do you know?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** The planning is underway. Planning normally takes 12 months.

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**The CHAIR:** So maybe 2025?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes, that would be fair.

**The CHAIR:** What was the total dollar cost of the maintenance backlog across the entire public school system in New South Wales at the end of the 2023 financial year?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Let me get this right. At the end of the 2023 financial year, I think it was in the order of \$600 million.

**The CHAIR:** How many demountable classrooms were being used across the entire public school system, as of the latest data you have available?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** I might have to come back to you on notice in terms of that. Hang on. The last date I've got is May 2023 and 6,509 demountable buildings, of which 4,833 are used for teaching spaces.

**The CHAIR:** Can you come back on notice with how many of those are in flood-affected zones?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** About 135. Do you mean in terms of the response to the North Coast flood? Yes, about 135.

**The CHAIR:** Do you have the current number of school counsellors employed across the public school system?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** I think we used a figure of roughly 1,200 earlier. We'll just see if we can find that accurately for you.

**The CHAIR:** I'm interested in that ratio of school counsellors to students across the system.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** While Mr Ruming is looking for that, I'll just indicate that, as you know, Chair, there are school counsellors that we employ as well as school psychologists. We might get you both numbers because the entire counselling workforce comprises of both—so that you've got those numbers.

**The CHAIR:** That would be useful.

**LEANNE NIXON:** We have 1,249 FTE counsellors currently in 2023. In terms of the ratio to students, as I was saying earlier, we need to consider the fact that our schools for special purposes will have a different ratio to different types of schools. So it gets a little challenging just to talk about ratios because need does come into that.

**The CHAIR:** Are you able to come back on notice with the two different ratios?

**LEANNE NIXON:** I can provide you with the allocation model for how we do the allocation.

**The CHAIR:** That would be useful.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** When we come back on that, Chair, let's also give you the school psychologist number. They are part of that allocation as well.

**The CHAIR:** Do you have to hand the numbers of before-school care programs and after-school care programs operating in public schools?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** There are approximately 1,873 before- and after-school care services in New South Wales.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Sorry, can you just repeat that number?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Sure. There are approximately 1,873 before- and after-school care services in New South Wales and 981 of those operate on public school sites.

**The CHAIR:** Are they all before and after or are some of them just before or just after?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I don't have that. I'll have to come back on that.

**The CHAIR:** How many school canteens in New South Wales are being run by for-profit providers?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** School canteens can be P&C run, school run. It can go out to tender and be commercially run. I'm just looking at my good colleague Anthony Manning to see if we've got that. We'll have to take it on notice and come back to you.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** We will have to take that on notice.

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**The CHAIR:** That would be really useful. It would be nice to also have a list of the schools that run the for-profit canteens.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Let's see what we can provide you with.

**The CHAIR:** Just coming back to the Cooler Classrooms Program—and, apologies, I know you covered this before, to an extent—I just wanted to get the figures. How many schools did receive funding under that program, in total?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** I'm just going through this. I think 431 schools did that have a mean maximum temperature of 30 degrees and above and 244 that were below. So there's about six hundred and—yes. A total of 988 schools were evaluated—some had systems already—as part of that. Nearly 8,500 learning spaces were provided with Cooler Classroom systems.

**The CHAIR:** How much money was that in total?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** That was the \$500 million program.

**The CHAIR:** Is there any left over from that program?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** No.

**The CHAIR:** Excellent. I've got in my notes here "if any"; I hope it is none. How much money was spent by the Department of Education in the last financial year on infrastructure for private and independent schools?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I will see if Ms Blackadder has got the figure for you. Just repeat—

**The CHAIR:** I'm interested in the money spent by the New South Wales Government in the 2022-23 financial year on infrastructure for private and independent schools.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** On infrastructure. Ms Blackadder, do you have that figure?

**SALLY BLACKADDER:** I can comment. We have a building grant assistance scheme, which is administered by the two block grant authorities: the AIS, the Association of Independent Schools, and Catholic Schools NSW. That is to support the construction and refurbishment of existing school buildings or building new school buildings. The guidelines for that I would need to take on notice, whether it includes any infrastructure, and take on notice the quantum of funds.

**The CHAIR:** Very useful. Do you have data on the number of students suspended across New South Wales, either by school or by region?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We certainly have global data. We collect suspension data twice a year across different semesters. I'll just see if Ms Nixon has got it at her fingertips to give to you; otherwise, we can certainly come back on notice. Are you after a particular school year?

**The CHAIR:** No, I'm happy for you to come back on notice. I'm interested in the number of students suspended and then looking at how many of those students have a disability to see the percentage. I have seen that aggregated in some reports, but—

**MURAT DIZDAR:** We've got some data to share with you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**LEANNE NIXON:** I have data for 2022 suspension data, but if you're wanting it specifically broken down to students with disability, we can provide that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** That would be very useful. Do you record that in a disaggregated way for different types of disability or is that just recorded—

**LEANNE NIXON:** I'd have to take that on notice. My belief is no, but I do need to check that.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Are all schools required to report whether or not a child has disability when they are suspended? Does that information come through?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes, that's how we do collect the data.

**The CHAIR:** Very good. Are there any plans to get some better data in relation to children with disability in New South Wales schools? Have you got sort of—

**LEANNE NIXON:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** It has historically not been very good. Is there—



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**LEANNE NIXON:** It historically hasn't been very good, but I would speak to the work we have been doing to ensure that we have better visibility of that data. We do know that students with disabilities are overrepresented in our suspension data. Our commitment to inclusive education is very fulsome, and part of that is ensuring that we have the right data so that we can ensure that we are moving things in the right direction. We have developed a very complete view of disability data—better than it has been before—and we'll be able to use that to ensure that the support we are providing to schools is the right support to turn those figures around.

**The CHAIR:** Are you able to give any insight into how the suspension, exclusion and expulsion policy came about? Was there a process of consultation, who was consulted with—that sort of thing? Also, I understand that's it's in draft and will be finalised. When will the final version—or are you going to tell me it's already finalised?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes, it doesn't commence until term 1, day one, next year. Like I said earlier, Chair, we're going to run a training package that kicks off next week for principals, because principals are the ones that have the ultimate responsibility for enacting a suspension or expulsion. What we want to do through that training is to get greater consistency and understanding of how to implement the policy, because one of the criticisms we fielded over time—and rightfully so—is that you might have the policy enacted very stringently in one context and in another context the same sort of issue is not provided a suspension with, so we want to get greater consistency. What we have done is not deviated from the duration that we reduced—so K-2, maximum five days; beyond that, in the other year groups, maximum 10 days. As you know, Chair, our previous policy was a maximum of up to 20 days. We haven't deviated from that.

Why do we do this? Because we had enormous feedback from our school communities, saying they wanted greater clarity around what the things are that they should consider for suspension, what does the support look like for a child prior to, hopefully, suspension but, if suspended, what does the support look like at the more chronic end of students who might be repeat suspensions. So that's what we've tried to work with the partners and the stakeholders on. Our overarching behaviour policy does not alter. What we have tried to do is just provide these as specific procedures around suspension and expulsion. The intent of reducing the duration is there.

The intent of bringing down those groups that are over-represented by way of disability—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, non-English-speaking background students—is still the primacy of the overarching policy, so we want to unpack this in the training. When I was a principal in the system, Chair, I had no training around suspension and expulsion. There I was, leading a school context, doing my best with the policy. This is designed to avoid that and to get greater consistency and understanding, to unpack scenarios and to say, "When a child has done the wrong thing in a particular category and it's the first time and it's out of character, do you have to enact a suspension? Probably not. You can probably unpack it in a better way and produce a better outcome for that child." It's that sort of thing that we want to unpack in the training.

**The CHAIR:** I'm just curious. You talk there about the length of time, the five days for K-2. But the maximum total in a school year—my understanding is that kindergarten to year 2 can be 30 school days, and years 3 to 12 can be 45 school days, which is effectively an entire school term, in effect. That is compared to every other jurisdiction I could see in Australia: in the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory and Queensland, it's 20 days; South Australia, 15; Tasmania, 10; Victoria, 15; Western Australia, 10; and we've got 45. Why have we gone so radically different to the rest of Australia?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** It has been a positive move to reduce the maximum duration of a single suspension. You know, when a child is suspended on more than one occasion, there should be an alarm bell that rings at our schools around—normally calls in an at-risk situation for that child with their engagement in learning. What we're trying to bed down and nail is to avoid 30 or 45. I'll get Ms Nixon to comment on it—to get better support. What schools need from us at the centre is better support to avoid that student or students who go to multiple suspensions. In my experience they're at-risk kids on a variety of factors. So we've got to intervene earlier, help the family, help the individual, help the school. But let me get Ms Nixon to comment on the support plus the duration.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, I understand and I'm interested in the support, but my specific question was why we had 45 days compared to the highest anywhere else, which was 20 days. That's a significant difference. What accounts for that difference in our New South Wales policy?

**LEANNE NIXON:** Ms Boyd, can I speak to what we're going to do about the first suspension for a K-12 child? What's different for our jurisdiction compared to other jurisdictions with that length is we will—immediately, there is a suspension for a K-2 student—intervene and ask the school, "What support do you need?" So we will have a flag in our system. We discussed earlier about having better data. We'll have an immediate flag and we'll have an immediate flag for the time a child gets suspended multiple times so that we proactively work with the school from there, because the goal is not to reach the 30 or 45 days. What we're doing here is ensuring

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that we have the right intervention and the right support in a proactive manner to support schools, to support the child and to support the family so that the suspension—that we resolve and provide the right support so there aren't further suspensions.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I want to ask about the Childcare and Economic Opportunity Fund. Obviously in the legislation there are requirements for the members of the board, but I'm just wondering who the current members are in terms of departmental representatives in particular and also whether the two previous appointments of the former Government are still on the board.

**MARK BARRAKET:** In terms of the board, previous members of the department are no longer on the board. The secretary, or their delegate, is the chair of that. And I have recently assumed the chair of that role as the delegate for Mr Dizdar.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Congratulations.

**MARK BARRAKET:** Thank you. There is the Secretary of Treasury, Mr Michael Coutts-Trotter, who is on the board.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So Mr Coutts-Trotter is on the board? Or his appointee?

**MARK BARRAKET:** That's the information that I have, that at this point he is on the board. There is an appointed member from the Department of Education and that's currently vacant. We're in the process of working through the appointment for that position. Once that's confirmed, we'll be able to share that. We've also got Julia Davison, the founding CEO of Goodstart, and Megan Mitchell, the former Federal and New South Wales children's commissioner.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** They were the previous appointments, so they've stayed?

**MARK BARRAKET:** They were the previous and they remain on the board.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Will you be able to let us know, or will it be made public, who the other department official is when the time comes?

**MARK BARRAKET:** Once that has been confirmed, we can notify you of that.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'll ask a question on notice about that in due course. The \$100 million coming out of the fund from this year—that's legislated that there will be \$100 million allocated. I am after a breakdown of exactly how that is going to be spent, because it's a little bit unclear from some of the media coming from the Government. I know that they're talking about \$500 vouchers for three-year-olds—\$64 million. But I believe that's over two years. There was \$22 million for workforce highlighted but that's over five years. Flexible initiatives—I think that was \$20 million. But then subsequent media has said that's also over two years. How will the \$89.5 million, as the budget papers say, be available for grants and subsidies in the financial year? What's the actual breakdown of that? How is that money going out?

**MARK BARRAKET:** These are test and trial programs in place until we get the strategic plan approved, so I'm happy to take on notice the breakdown of those programs and provide that to you over the time frame that you've requested.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Is it the intention that that full \$89.5 million that's listed in the budget papers for grants and subsidies will be spent this financial year?

**MARK BARRAKET:** My understanding is that is the intention, yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But you'll provide on notice the specific breakdown?

**MARK BARRAKET:** Yes, I'll confirm that for you.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** In relation to the capital funds out of that program—I think it's \$20 million—that is only for not-for-profit providers. Is that correct?

**MARK BARRAKET:** Correct.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Is there going to be any support at all for the small business run, single-operator entities, who often are a large part of the market, where there are supply issues for them to access any government support, to expand when they've got waiting lists?

**MARK BARRAKET:** I'll take that part on notice.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** In relation to Start Strong funding more broadly, the budget allocations for next calendar year, has that information gone out to services? I understand as recently as last week that it was

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imminent so that preschools would know what their funding allocation is going to be for the year ahead, but has that been finalised yet?

**MARK BARRAKET:** We are in the process of updating the guidelines. The release of that is imminent, but I'll get the date for the release of funding for you as well.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Obviously you would know this, so I probably don't have to say it but, given those services are probably pretty keen to work out what they can do around fees and the like and we're already almost at the end of October, obviously the sooner the better. So is it the next couple of weeks or what kind of period?

**MARK BARRAKET:** My understanding is it's imminent.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It would be great if you could provide that maybe on notice and by then we'll have the response. I want to ask about AI in schools and some of the challenges around ChatGPT. What advice has gone out to school communities in relation to the use of that? My understanding, Minister, is at the start of the year we put a pause on students using that. I know there's been discussions at the national meeting of education Ministers about it. But what advice has been provided to teachers, particularly in terms of using those programs in the last six months?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I'll get Ms Read to give further detail. She represents us at the national level on these discussions. New South Wales led the education framework for AI in schools, which was just accepted at the last Hobart education Ministers meeting—good work from New South Wales. But I'll get Ms Read to give you some of those details.

**CHLOE READ:** Thanks, Secretary. We've been involved in leading a piece of work across States and Territories, also in collaboration with the Commonwealth Department of Education and some of the agencies, on what a national AI framework looks like for schools. That framework, obviously being a national piece, you'd understand, looks to facilitate national consistency and support, the provision of good advice to schools, while also retaining local flexibility. So 22 principals with a shared ethical basis for jurisdictions to then develop their own specific guidelines and advice to schools. There are six core elements in that framework, which are teaching, learning, fairness, accountability, privacy and security, human and social wellbeing, and transparency. Then within New South Wales, as you've said, we've provided some advice to schools already on the things that we're doing in this space. We have a working group set up with the principals association, the Teachers Federation and then Ms Nixon might want to give more information on professional learning—

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The advice that's gone out to schools, is it possible to get a copy of that? Could you take that on notice?

**CHLOE READ:** The framework?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The advice that's gone to schools about how you manage it. I'd just be interested.

**CHLOE READ:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** One of the things that I've heard anecdotally is that there are some teachers who are using things like ChatGPT to help with school reports. But what are the risks to student privacy and data in terms of who owns that information? Has there been any specific advice about what you need to do if—can you use it for reporting? How do you put those safety or privacy measures in place?

**CHLOE READ:** We haven't blocked ChatGPT access for teachers, because we understand that they will need to get to grips with that technology. They'll need to understand how to use it. But whether we've provided specific advice on its use in reporting, we'll have to probably take on notice.

**LEANNE NIXON:** We've provided advice about keeping everyone safe, but I can't speak to whether it's specifically on reporting.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I would only add that—this might be useful information—at that Hobart meeting of education Ministers, ESA, Education Services Australia, was commissioned by all the jurisdictions in the Commonwealth. While we've got the education framework, all of these providers out there who need to be meeting all of these requirements like privacy, like security so that our workforce is supported, they're going to undertake a body of work to give the guidance to providers that you can only work in our educational context if you've got these things in place. What I call the technical framework, which is needed, has been commissioned by the Commonwealth and the States. That's going to be an important body of work, because as you know—

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**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What's the time frame of that? These sites and technology move so quickly. I think that piece particularly around privacy and student data—I'll add that, as a parent of a child at a public school, like a lot of people at this table, I guess you want that certainty that your child's data is going to be protected.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Yes, definitely.

**CHLOE READ:** I think the other thing we have to remember that would apply here is the existing guidelines about technologies in schools that are run by ITD—they're fairly well established. Really similar privacy considerations around where is the data hosted, how is it used and how might it be shared apply to AI tools as they do to those more basic, for want of a better term, third-party applications. We already have policy and frameworks in place that will give teachers good advice about how to use technology in a general sense. As I said, some of those privacy and security concerns are kind of identical across those things.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** While that work is happening through the working party, we have to make sure we capture how we can give ongoing advice and support to schools. While ChatGPT is blocked for students in New South Wales in school time, like Chloe said, still our staff—we don't want any staff exposed. No staff member would want to be exposed. It's a really important piece around that national framework and that technical framework, and then every jurisdiction wrestling with this to make sure we can get it right from the ground.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The issue about vaping in schools—I know that there's a roundtable coming up next month. My understanding is that there was an eTender, or an expression of interest, for the purchasing of vape detectors in schools. Is there an update on that? Is that happening? Have any been purchased?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I will get Mr Manning to give us details. We wanted to test the market—was there this capacity, what could it look like. In fact, and hopefully I'll get the number right, we also found six to eight schools of ours—Mr Manning will know—where they have installed this without us. We went to those sites to see the learnings that they had in play and what impact it had had. We are considering all that information to see if this is a viable path to go down. I have to say, experts say to us that if you put detectors there, they move it over here. It's not necessarily going to stop it. It's not the answer to it. We're considering all that information, but Mr Manning might have some more info on it.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** To the secretary's point, we thought we would test the market in terms of the variety of vape detectors and availability of vape detectors. We're still going through an assessment of that process at the moment. Obviously, as you say, there is a roundtable to look at the effectiveness of vape detectors as part of that process too. We have certainly done the assessment of the market in terms of what it could provide to us. You won't be surprised, but there's quite a variety of products that might be available to us of various levels of sophistication. We'll finish that work as part of looking at the round table and the effectiveness of what they could be used for.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Has any money been allocated to purchase any of those detectors, or not at this point?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Not at this point.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Just while you are answering, Mr Manning, I want to ask about a slightly separate issue. I know in the past there used to be—I think it was called a snapshot. I think it was in August. It was a snapshot that you would do in terms of looking at the number of demountables, which used to be provided to me as Minister. I think we have even referenced it in Parliament before. I think you said before you don't have any demountable data from any earlier than May, but I think infrastructure used to do a snapshot in terms of assets.

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Certainly from the notes I've got here, the latest information is May. I'm not aware of a monthly—I know before we roll into the end of the school year in preparation for day one, term 1, we look at what additional demand for demountables there might be, as part of that process.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If there was a question on notice in terms of how many demountables are on school sites, how often can you provide that data. Is it just the start of term, or is it once a year? What's the availability of that data?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** Certainly we do it once a year as part of that rolling out day one, term 1, and then the entitlement process. It's rare but not unheard of for a demountable to be brought in midway through the school year, depending on how enrolments go, but it doesn't happen very often. It's usually as a consequence of a flood or fire event.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So the best data is at the start of the school year.

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**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes, definitely.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I know that the Government has said that they want to decrease the number of demountables and have no more than 50 per cent of students learning in demountables. That was a pre-election commitment. Have they asked you to do any work on that one?

**ANTHONY MANNING:** No. I haven't seen anything as yet on that one.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We'll keep watching that. In the 50 seconds that I have left, I was wondering whether there's any update on the review of section 83C, and what is happening in that space for clarity for schools?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** I can help with that. The Deputy Premier announced the other day that Tom Alegounarias had been commissioned to undertake the review of section 83C.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But there had been work that was started by the former Government as well to provide updated guidelines to schools so that they were clearer—shorter time frames for the investigations et cetera. What's happened with that?

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Chloe might have detail on that.

**CHLOE READ:** The guidelines, as you mentioned, have been under development. They are out for consultation with the sectors, I think, for about a month. They came out last week, or this week.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** And then updated advice—that will be available publicly?

**CHLOE READ:** Yes. They are on our website currently, with a consultation page that seeks feedback on those. There's a draft regulatory framework and then a set of guidelines for not-for-profit operations in non-government schools.

**MURAT DIZDAR:** Chair, can I just correct something for the record? It would be very remiss of me. I mentioned Susie Mobayed—she is an outstanding principal—and I said that she was the principal of Chester Hill High School. She will not forgive me if I get it wrong. She is the principal of Condell Park High School. I said Chester Hill.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** She wouldn't forgive you. You're right.

**MARK BARRAKET:** Can I correct one thing as well? You asked about the \$89 million and whether it would be expended in this financial year. For programs launched this financial year, the expenditure may be carried forward across multiple years to match the specific needs of that program. But it will be committed.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** I acknowledge that the Deputy Premier has already been asked along these lines today, but perhaps Mr Barraket could answer further. In rural New South Wales, many early childhood centres are under stress due to staff shortages. Are there any plans to better remunerate these positions so that the early childhood centres can stay open?

**MARK BARRAKET:** It is a good question. I am very aware of the challenges that many of our services in regional, rural and remote settings face. We run a program called ECE Connect. That is an initiative that runs right across New South Wales, including in regional and rural towns, where we go out and listen to the workforce in those settings. I had the opportunity to attend a session in Dubbo, where there were about 40 people from the local area that came together. There was an information session that we provided for them around the work we're doing to support them, and also to listen to their concerns. I've got firsthand experience of some of the issues they have flagged. There are a range of things that we do have in place to support that workforce. There are the scholarships which are available statewide, and we are actively encouraging uptake in triple-R communities.

We've also got a program of work for professional development that we are looking at, and we have based that on feedback that we have received from regional, rural and remote communities about the need for that professional development to be face to face. We'll be building that work into the program that we are developing. There's also an accelerated degree pathway with the University of Wollongong which is available for triple-R communities to participate in, which reduces the time frame for the degree to two years. Most importantly, recently the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal released an interim report into early childhood education and care. That provides some real insights into how we can better support the workforce in triple-R communities. We are going to be considering the recommendations of that final report. That will be helping to shape the future work of ECE within the department.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** Mr Manning, I note your earlier reflections on the average cost of schools. Can I confirm you are confident the department can deliver the new primary schools and high schools committed at the election within the funding provided in the budget?

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**CORRECTED**

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**ANTHONY MANNING:** Yes, I can. The figures I used were actually maximum sizes of schools, so 2,000 and 1,000. The \$767 million that's been allocated—of the 14 schools, six are to undertake the planning only for the schools. Then of the high schools, four are 1,000-place high schools. The rest are 500 or 600 place, both high schools and primary schools, all documented in the PBO costs. We are very comfortable with the allocation to be able to deliver those projects.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you to all of you for your attendance today. The Committee secretariat will be in touch in the near future regarding any questions taken on notice, of which there were many, and supplementary questions, of which there may also be many. That concludes our hearing for today.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**The Committee proceeded to deliberate.**