

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Monday 3 June 2019 - Estimates Committee A (Rockliff)

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Monday 3 June 2019

MEMBERS

Mr Armstrong
Ms Armitage
Mr Dean
Ms Howlett
Ms Rattray (Chair)
Ms Siejka
Mr Willie

IN ATTENDANCE

Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Deputy Premier; Minister for Education and Training; Minister for Infrastructure; Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries

Department of Education

Tim Bullard, Secretary
Robert Williams, Deputy Secretary, Corporate and Business Services
Jodee Wilson, Deputy Secretary, Support and Development
Jenny Burgess, Deputy Secretary, Strategy and Performance
Trudy Pearce, Deputy Secretary, Learning
Kane Salter, Director, Finance and Business Services
Liz Jack, Director (Libraries Tasmania)
Todd Williams, Director, Facility Services
Shane Frost, Director, Education Performance and Review
Lynne McDougall, Director, Inclusion and Diversity Services
Suzanne Pennicott-Jones, Director, Office of the Secretary

Office of Education Registrar

Katharine O'Donnell, Registrar

Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards & Certification (TASC)

Katrina Beams, Executive Officer

TasTAFE

Jenny Dodd, Chief Executive Officer
Scott Adams, Chief Financial Officer

Department of State Growth

Infrastructure

Kim Evans, Secretary
Gary Swain, Deputy Secretary, Transport Services
Alan Garcia, Chief Executive Officer, Infrastructure Tasmania
Shane Gregory, General Manager, State Roads
James Verrier, Director, Infrastructure Policy
Martin Crane, General Manager, Road User Services
Babette Moate, Acting Director Passenger Transport

Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries

Kim Evans, Secretary
Bob Rutherford, Deputy Secretary, Industry and Business Development
Mark Bowles, General Manager, Business and Trade Tasmania
Lara Hendricks, A/G Director, Advanced Manufacturing & Northern Engagement
Steve Gilmore, Defence Advocate

Skills

Kim Evans, Secretary
Bob Rutherford, Deputy Secretary, Industry and Business Development
Angela Conway, General Manager, Skills Tasmania
Stuart Hollingsworth, Director Policy & Programs - Workforce Development Systems

Business Services

Amanda Russell, Deputy Secretary, Business Services
Glen Dean, Director, Finance

Marine and Safety Tasmania

Lia Morris, CEO MAST

Ministerial Staff

Vanessa Field, Chief of Staff
Vince Taskunas, Principal Adviser - Infrastructure
Anna Jones, Senior Adviser - Education
Adam Foster, Adviser - Infrastructure and Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries
Rosita Gallasch, Adviser - Infrastructure
Geoff Logan, Adviser - Skills, Training and Adult Education

The committee met at 8.58 a.m.

CHAIR (Ms Rattray) - Good morning, minister.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Good morning, Chair. Good morning, members.

CHAIR - And also say good morning to members of the Committee B. We have Robert Armstrong, Jane Howlett, Rosemary Armitage, myself, Tanya Rattray, Ivan Dean, Jo Siejka and Josh Willie. That's our committee for this Estimates process, and we welcome you here. As we have done in the past, minister, we would like to invite you to provide a brief overview. We are obviously starting with Education this morning, which is a key pillar of the state's budget and of what happens in our state.

Minister please introduce your team at the table, and if you have people that come and support you through the course of the process then please identify them and also their position that they hold.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Chair, I do have a brief opening statement which is briefer than last year you'll be pleased to know. I have with me, to my left, the Secretary of the Department of Education, Tim Bullard, and the Deputy Secretary, Strategy and Performance, Jenny Burgess.

CHAIR - Welcome.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you. Education is the single most powerful driver for positive change in Tasmania empowering children, young people and adults to succeed and contribute fully to their communities and the future of our state. As the Minister for Education and Training I have seen first-hand how education transforms lives and creates opportunities, and it's precisely because of this that we have placed a real focus since we have been in government on increasing access and providing educational equity to all, so that no matter what circumstance a learner may come from, and no matter where in Tasmania they live, they have the opportunity to access and enjoy a quality education.

The 2019-20 budget provides a record \$324 million over the next six years for education covering \$145 million in recurrent funding which includes funding for an additional 358 new staff including 250 new teachers, with a real focus on quality teaching practice, and \$179 million in education infrastructure. In December last year our government signed the National School Reform Agreement which means the Tasmanian Government will provide an additional \$340 million to Tasmanian Government schools over the next 10 years. This investment increases support for government schools to further address Tasmania's unique and complex educational circumstances with the aim to achieve equity for all learners.

We are implementing a nation leading needs-based funding model for students with a disability which will deliver an extra \$8 million to students with disability in 2020, increasing to \$11 million by 2022. This is on top of the \$93.3 million already being invested in 2019 for students with disability. Implementing a needs-based funding model will make a huge difference for our students, schools and families by providing resources for what an individual student actually needs, rather than being obliged to conform to a disability diagnosis.

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We know that a strong sense of wellbeing is fundamental to helping students to engage with and succeed in learning at school and throughout their lives. Our 2020 investment provides an additional \$2.7 million to provide a school nurse in every government senior secondary college by 2021. This will increase our government's total investment for school nurses to \$3.8 million in 2020, a total of \$17.4 million over the forward Estimates.

Recognising our school leaders are key to improving learning outcomes and that the health and wellbeing of staff underpins everything we wish to achieve for education in Tasmania. We are committing \$4.9 million over four years to implement the 2019-2021 Principal Wellbeing Action Plan, and this will go far in supporting principals in responding to the concerns raised in the annual Riley Report.

Over the years I have heard from teachers, parents and young people how traumatic experiences can have a devastating impact on students' ability to function in a classroom environment and learn, and this is why we have prioritised funding of \$7.25 million over four years to increase support for children and young people impacted by trauma. We note that school and community partnerships further enhance students learning and wellbeing, and that families are the first and most influential educators of our children. In June last year I requested the Department of Education to review how it engages families in policy development and decision-making at the school at departmental levels to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Our budget investment includes approximately \$800 000 over four years to implement recommendations from the reviews.

In recognition of the importance and value of vocational learning at schools, we are committed to additional funding of \$1.48 million over four years to increase the utilisation of Australian schools-based apprenticeships. We use 10 to 12 students in Tasmanian Government schools. Our government has maintained our focus on ensuring all children in Tasmania get a great start to learning in the early years, regardless of where they live or their family background, resulting in a wide range of initiatives and programs to support this valuable period in a child's life. Importantly, we are committing \$15.5 million over four years from 2020 to commence in construction of six new child and family learning centres in Sorell, Kingborough, Glenorchy, East Tamar, West Ulverstone and Waratah communities. We are also committing \$8 million in 2020 to support the continued implementation of the Working Together for Three Year Olds initiative to provide quality early learning experiences for disadvantaged and vulnerable children in partnership with early childhood education and care sector. Through this initiative we will provide \$10.5 million per annum and support free preschool for those children who are the most disadvantaged or vulnerable.

In closing, Chair, I am extremely proud of our government's strong and continued investment in education, and all our departmental representatives and the teachers and principals and support staff in all our schools for the work they do, for the benefit of all learners and the future prosperity of Tasmania. Education results are improving. However, we must remain focussed on continuing support to provide a quality education in Tasmania for every learner every day. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, minister.

Mr ROCKLIFF - She's always short.

CHAIR - It was brief and to the point and that's what we're looking for -

Mr DEAN - I did have a hand in it, Chair.

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CHAIR - Well done. Mr Willie, I would like to invite you to, if you have any questions on the overview before we start on 1.1 in School Education.

Mr WILLIE - Sure. This may come as a surprise, minister, but I would like to thank you firstly for providing access to schools and access to the department for briefings. It's not a courtesy that's extended as often by some of your colleagues. So I certainly appreciate that, and if we're going to have a debate I think an informed debate is preferable, so I will start by thanking you for that.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE - As I have been visiting schools, a common theme raised by staff is staff recruitment and retainment. You committed to 250 teachers in the election campaign.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes.

Mr WILLIE - I take it now the 95 specialist teachers is off the table. Is that correct? In addition to that 250?

Mr ROCKLIFF - It appears that, we feel, I have had a discussion about where the AEU agreement is at, Mr Willie, and I would hope it's not off the table, but an important part of negotiations where we arrived at enabled us to fund those specialist teachers. So at this present time, given the latest information on Friday, which of course I'm very disappointed with that decision, it appears that that is off the table at this present time.

Mr WILLIE - Okay, so the 250 commitment, you remain committed to that?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Absolutely.

Mr WILLIE - See, in the Treasurer's speech, he spoke of a 0.75 per cent efficiency dividend and he also mentioned vacancy control. Will that affect your department, minister?

Mr ROCKLIFF - It won't affect the frontline. I understand the importance of ensuring we have teachers and support staff in our schools and we are very committed to our policy of 250 more teachers to roll out over the next six years. 197 of those we are expecting to have over the next four years, or be, well, four years from 2018 when we originally made the commitment. I spoke about that last year, so we are committed to that, and we have also, you know, recruitment should not be a problem as the first part of your question because the first tranche of those teachers, we had 70 teachers, or 70 positions and the 70 new teachers in our schools at this present time, and we had 600 applications for that first round of recruitment.

CHAIR - Six hundred?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Six hundred.

Mr WILLIE - What baseline figure are you using to measure the 250 extra teachers?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The baseline figure will be what we're - I'm assuming we will use the figures when we first came into government as well, and when we first came into government we had teachers at a certain level. We have now got 221 more teachers in our school, but the baseline data

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of March each year is determine - the number is in March each year which is I guess in the first term, 31 March.

Mr WILLIE - So what is the baseline figure you're using to measure the 250 extra teachers, if you're going to be transparent about it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - From March 2018, 31 March 2018.

Mr WILLIE - So what's the FTE number?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Of our teachers?

Mr WILLIE - The baseline FTE number you're using to measure the extra 250 teachers, or is it a head count that you're using?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'll get the figure for you. So in March 2018 FTE, we had teaching in our schools, 4345.01 full-time equivalent teachers

Mr WILLIE - And do you have a head count number as well?

Mr ROCKLIFF - A head count, I can probably provide those figures for you. Actual head count would be -

CHAIR - Can we perhaps come back to this -

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, I'll take it on notice.

CHAIR - Can we come back to the head count or is that something that -

Mr WILLIE - Yes minister, you can take that on notice. An extra 250 teachers, is that permanent staff that you've committed to?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, okay. Am I okay to keep going on this line of questioning?

CHAIR - Yes. We have a couple of other people lined up, but if you want to finish yours.

Mr WILLIE - The efficiency dividend of 0.75 per cent. You've ruled out vacancy control on front line staff so no teacher vacancy control.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes. No impact on frontline staff.

Mr WILLIE - Okay. How are you going to achieve that dividend, because over the forward Estimates, you said 2.25 per cent cumulative dividend, and if I've looked at the figures correctly, that's about \$127 million you will have to find in your department. How are you going to achieve that?

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Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, 75 cents in every \$100, the department is now working through how that will be achieved. And it will be well consulted throughout the department and we'll find those efficiencies, that's what we're committed to.

Mr WILLIE - So you don't know how you're going to find them at the moment?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we're working through it. The Budget was released a couple of weeks ago, and we will be working through how we'll find those efficiencies, but that we're charged with finding those efficiencies and we will find them and we found efficiencies over past budgets and the reason that we are able to invest in more services is because we balance and manage our budgets well.

Mr WILLIE - When were you told about the efficiency dividend?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, through the Budget process. The Budget process is quite a lengthy process.

Mr WILLIE - So have you got a date that you were told about the efficiency dividend so you could prepare for when the budget was announced and start to get your own department in order to deliver on the Treasurer's commitment?

Mr ROCKLIFF - No, I haven't got a particular date but it's, you know, we all - the budget process is a process that cabinet are involved with so.

Mr WILLIE - Did you know well in advance that the budget announcement that there would be a 0.75 per cent efficiency dividend?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, the budget is - it's a process, Mr Willie, that we go through as a Cabinet. I am not going to talk about Cabinet processes, but of course, I'm well aware of the task ahead of us in terms of the efficiency dividend. We've done a good job in managing our budget over the course of the last five years and we'll continue because we can - when we manage budgets, we're able to reinvest in essential services such as health education and public safety.

Mr WILLIE - \$127 million is a significant figure over the forward Estimates. I'd just like to understand a little more about how you're going to achieve that. You've ruled out vacancy control on front line staff, so teaching staff. How are you going to achieve that? What's going to be cut?

Mr ROCKLIFF - As I've said, we have a proven record of strong financial management, and you'd be aware that as a government we're faced with a significant number of challenges in terms of reduction in previously estimated GST, conveyance duty receipts and continued funding pressures in key service delivery areas. The Government has therefore included budget savings measures in the 2020 budget year and across the forward Estimates as we've been talking about. We have stated there will be a strong focus on minimising the impact on service delivery and looking to expenditure such as consultants, travel and advertising, together with targeted vacancy control, and natural employee attrition without affecting frontline essential services. We will be reviewing returns from all government businesses, a review of the State Service will be undertaken to identify structural administrative and cultural improvements that will transform current structure services and practices to deliver a more efficient and effective public service. They're the areas that our department will be focusing on.

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Mr WILLIE - So you'll be focused with your vacancy control on backline staff. Departmental staff?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We're protecting the front line. We have a very good record in improving the frontline education with 220 more teachers, and we have, I believe, I stand corrected, around 231 more teacher assistants as well, and we are committed to providing on our election commitments in terms of further rollout of teachers.

Mr WILLIE - If you have vacancy control on departmental staff, are you going to be able to deliver all your infrastructure commitments on time? Those department staff are key to delivering infrastructure and if you're putting vacancy control in place, and let's face it, vacancy control can produce significant savings. There are about 3500 public servants who leave the State Service every year and if you can delay that by three or six months that's significant. That's going to have an impact on your commitments, isn't it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We have a very clear focus. The department has a very clear strategic plan. For the first half of this year the department has looked at priorities within. A focus on school improvement, and of course, we will have a clear strategy for returning required savings as well. I recognise we have a job ahead of us in terms of infrastructure improvements around Tasmania, and that's a good challenge to have and we will deliver on our infrastructure commitments. We recognise there's a need in schools across Tasmania. We've increased the maintenance budget or the funding into maintenance of school infrastructure over the last four or five years. We've put enormous funding into capital developments, both renovations to schools, working on new schools, and so the team in facilities do a very good job. They are working very hard and have done for the last five years, given the work and the funding that they need to get out the door.

Mr WILLIE - So are you saying they will have to bear the brunt of the vacancy control?

Mr ROCKLIFF - No, I'm not saying that. What I'm saying is they work very hard. They'll continue to work very hard and they have a challenge ahead of them because of the funding that is going out the door and what we've committed to, including some \$180 million over the next four years.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr DEAN - I don't want to crossover questions that people might have through the process but just in -

CHAIR - We need to spread it around.

Mr DEAN - Yes, you're right, but a couple on the follow up to Josh's question. Surely the department - and you're going to come back on notice with the head count and so on, but -

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've got that already.

Mr DEAN - The department must have an establishment number within the department of teachers right now. You must have your establishment number that you've currently got and will the 250 extra teachers sit on top of the current establishment numbers?

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Mr ROCKLIFF - I'm advised its March 2018 figures, the 250 teachers will stand on top of that. That's full-time equivalent, is my understanding.

Mr DEAN - Sorry, but the question is, at that time though were the total number of teachers that you had identified for the Education department, or was that less vacancies and so on? Was that the total amount?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The figure I provided to March 2018 was actual teachers full time equivalent, teachers in schools, and the head count incidentally for that, so FTE, the head count's 5184 as I'm advised.

Mr DEAN - It is just difficult getting the numbers from you. The Police department, for instance, has an establishment number. I'm not quite sure what it is now, 1100 and whatever it is. So their additional police will be on top of that establishment number of police. So is that the same for the Education department?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'd like Tim to talk through that.

CHAIR - Thank you. I think that's probably easier. So, we're comfortable with that, minister.

Mr BULLARD - So there are a number of factors which impact on the number of teachers that would make up an establishment. One of the main drivers is the number of students that we have in any particular school and also the attributes of the school in terms of its SES status, students with disabilities, EAL, Aboriginal students, et cetera. So, the other factor is that schools receive a staffing allocation but they also receive a school's resourcing package and schools choose to buy additional teachers with that resourcing package, because they're in charge of how they structure the staff in their school. Because of that, and also, too, Mr Dean, we have a seasonal workforce as you know, so in summer, we have a lot fewer staff and once schools have ramped up, we have a lot more. And that's why we've chosen the 31 March date as the date that we actually count the FTE that we have. And we've chosen that date so that we're not coming to Estimates every year and saying we're going to have to wait until 30 June. For a number of years, we have reported on that 30 March date, so we take that as our FTE.

Mr DEAN - So the resourcing strategy then - a school is able to employ extra teachers?

Mr BULLARD - That's right.

Mr DEAN - And do they have to pick up all of the costs for that? The superannuation and everything else that goes with that? Are they required to pick up all of those costs from their resourcing package? The school? Forever and a day whilst the extra teacher is within that school?

Mr BULLARD - That's right. That's why they get the resourcing package, Mr Dean.

So, we accept that there is a base level of staffing that goes to a school, but we also accept that principals and school leaders are best placed to make decisions about the actual staff that they need. So, it wouldn't work if we allocated staff to schools and said that's your allocation. Schools know their school communities best and they know their students best. So, every day they're making decisions about how to staff their classrooms and how to resource their structures to ensure the best outcomes for learners.

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Mr DEAN - Just one further question and then I'll drop it: 250 extra teachers - can the university push that many teachers through? Over what period is this?

Mr ROCKLIFF - That's over six years; 197 over four. The exact figure, Chair, is 627 applications we received for the first 69 successful applications. We started progressing - it was probably about around 18 months ago now - a round table to look at the challenge, which it is a challenge, in terms of ensuring that we get the highest quality teachers as well as the numbers of teachers we're committed to. Around that table has been sitting - we've met reasonably recently - the University of Tasmania, the Peter Underwood Centre of Educational Attainment, the Australian Education Union, the Teachers Registration Board, and the Tasmanian Principals Association. I think that's most of them.

They sat around the table working on that challenge and to ensure everyone is focused and the department - which, of course, is the Department of Education - and the university are working together on the supply of quality graduates to ensure that commitment is realised. It's a good constructive process. We signed a quality teacher agreement at Bowen Road Primary School 18 months ago. It's very positive. So that strategy is in place and the working group has been meeting reasonably regularly in ensuring that we realise our commitment but also teacher quality is a very important part of that as well.

CHAIR - Minister, do you put a focus on the actual subject areas that are in demand?

Mr ROCKLIFF - There is a workforce development initiative for subject areas. I might get Tim or Jenny to talk about that, and to the Maths and Science stream.

Mr BULLARD - Yes, we're currently doing a workforce audit so that we can understand the skills and teaching areas of our staff. We want to become a lot more effective at how we project our future skills needs so that we can send a really strong signal back to the university about the type of graduate that we need. We've also worked constructively with the uni around courses for teachers in service to upskill, especially around maths and science. So, there's an opportunity for teachers who may not have trained as maths teachers but are teaching maths to go back and get an additional qualification in their specialty area.

CHAIR - We still have an enormous number of teachers who are teaching out of their area of perhaps their field of expertise or what they've been - their focus when they were - when they graduated.

Mr BULLARD - One of the things though, that we do find, is that teachers who have maybe not trained in a specialty area but taught for a number of years and have really good professional learning, are competent in those areas, so that's the thing that we've really got to concentrate on in terms of the workforce development initiatives. It's not good enough just to say 15 years ago, what was your specialty. We actually need to look at the expertise and the experience that you've had since you commenced.

Mr WILLIE - If I may, Chair?

CHAIR - Thank you. On that? And then I'm going down the other end of the table.

Mr WILLIE - The last two estimates I've read through the *Hansard* - there was a review into specialist teaching. Has that been completed now?

Mr ROCKLIFF - No, that's still underway.

Mr WILLIE - It's still underway?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes.

Mr WILLIE - So, that's a long time. What's taking so long?

Mr ROCKLIFF - While that information is being gathered up -

CHAIR - Gathered?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've got some information of the round table. And specific outputs, initiatives prompted by the round table advice include a declaration of purpose that states the shared commitment to quality teaching. The More Teachers/Quality Teaching Action Plan with 10 action areas focused on building a talented education workforce to deliver outstanding teaching and learning outcomes. A national recruitment campaign supported by the round table was announced in September last year and this recruitment drive, as I've said, resulted in over 600 applications and the employment of 69 permanent teachers, some of whom are relocating to Tasmania and planning for -

CHAIR - I hope they're not doing fly in, fly outs.

Mr ROCKLIFF - That would be hard.

CHAIR - That's a positive.

Mr ROCKLIFF - and good initiatives in 2019 of course. A teacher intern program and provide mentoring to early career teachers and promotion of the teaching profession more generally, as well.

CHAIR - Thank you. And the answer to -

Mr BULLARD - So just back on the specialisation, I just wanted to make sure that I was thinking of the right thing. So, the first thing I should say is that the issue of specialisation and understanding data is a national issue and there's actually a national piece of work going on as well through the education counsel and the senior officials about how we gather data on the workforce of Australia. This is probably more pertinent to other states where there's mobility across borders. But we've got a great interest in it. The specialisation is coming back to Ms Rattray's discussion that we had. It is around making sure that we can get good quality data around specialisation that isn't as blunt as what did you study at university. So we've actually commissioned a system which is going to allow people to input not only their specialty that they trained in, but also the experience that they've had to date. So that we can actually see who's teaching where. But that's taken some time because of the workforce and the complexity of getting that done.

Mr WILLIE - Right. So, it wouldn't be that hard a task, would it? Only 4345 teachers to survey.

CHAIR - So that's 4000-whatever emails.

Mr WILLIE - And then you have whole applications and then years of experience in the subject matter that they're teaching?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Right. It's involved.

Mr BULLARD - It's an involved process to get it right. It is one of those things where the quality of the data that we put in will influence the quality of the data that we get out and the other thing is, too, we need to set up a sustainable solution that isn't just a one-off go off and audit everyone. We actually need to build it into our capability system to ensure that we - at all times - can be making the best decisions about where to place staff.

Mr WILLIE - So when is that work expected to be finished?

Mr BULLARD - The work has been commissioned next year?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes.

CHAIR - So 2020.

Mr WILLIE - And next year, the front of the year or the back half of the year?

Mr BULLARD - Estimates next year.

Mr WILLIE - We could be getting the same answer next year.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, it's an important piece of work. I know a few years ago when we launched the Workforce Development Program, we had an imbalance of physical education teachers, the old PE teachers, as I refer them to. We needed to encourage more teaching and science, maths or STEMM subjects. As a result of that, it was quite a successful program I believe. I'm advised, in terms of being able to reasonably quickly but professionally upskill teachers into those specialist areas of need. I hasten to add probably there still is a shortage of maths and science teachers, I'm advised.

CHAIR - All right. We'll move on.

Ms HOWLETT - Minister, could you please advise me how the government is going to continue to prioritise literacy and numeracy in schools?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Literacy is a particular focus. I was at Invermay Primary School on Friday last week, launching the literacy action plan. Literacy and numeracy is identified as one of the four goals to support all learners to succeed in learning, life and work in the 2018-21 department strategic plan. We continue to build teacher capacity and support students' increased achievement in literacy and numeracy through a number of literacy and numeracy initiatives. A 2018 Grattan Institute report notes that after adjusting for levels of a disadvantage, Tasmanian schools on average are doing well in NAPLAN.

A literacy framework has been developed to guide all departments' efforts towards achieving a goal for all learners to develop the schools and confidence to succeed in literacy over the next four years. The release of the literacy framework on 31 May presented a new approach to improving

literacy, building on past successes and providing starting points for change. This framework will provide the necessary professional guidance to schools to implement the effective practice to drive the school improvements. Of course, we have our key aspirational target of 100 per cent functional literacy or literate community and there's been a lot of discussion over a number of years where Tasmania's at in its functional literacy and it's around 50 per cent. Our target's 100 per cent and that's where it should be.

We're committed to just under \$10 million to invest in access to a literacy coach for all schools. This expanded model promotes equity and broadens the sphere of impacts across all schools and colleges. Targeted professional learning and at the shoulder, support for teachers and their students is provided by coaches and supported by six lead coaches. Lead coaches are key to implementing the literacy framework by providing oversight and guidance to support existing literacy initiatives such as Learning in Families Together program. That's the kindergarten to Grade 2 initiative which involves the parental engagement as well, which was launched around 2016. And the 2019 LIFT program has placed greater emphasis of oral language in supporting literacy and numeracy outcomes. And in 2019, literacy coaches and the middle years literacy project coordinators will be working together to improve teaching and learning of literacy across all schools. I commend all those involved in producing the Department of Education Literacy Action Plan for action. This was launched in Invermay Primary School last week on 31 May. A lot of work has gone into this. This was consulted with over a hundred stakeholders across industry, education, the department, teachers, very broad. It was great to have Rosie Martin there as well at the launch and Rosie has of course raised a lot of awareness around literacy in our community and of course supports our hundred per cent aspirational target of a functional literate community. I table that, Chair, for your interest.

CHAIR - Thank you. Provide it to the secretary. We're mindful that we need to get into 1.1. Are there any actual questions of the overview that the minister presented in his brief overview?

Mr WILLIE - If I can ask just one on what he's just said. Minister, there's no doubt that a number of the documents that the department is producing are very good documents, if implemented. My question to you is, I mean this was just a quick 10-minute exercise to get on the website and print out the glossy documents.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You must have a very fast printer.

Mr WILLIE - My question is, what support has been given to staff in classrooms around these documents? We have a resource in the department producing the documents, they're out consulting the stakeholders, but how is it actually changing practice in classrooms and what support is being given to teachers on a literacy action plan, on a numeracy action plan, on a principal wellbeing plan?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I've mentioned literacy coaches. A couple of budgets ago we actually addressed an inequity in the leadership positions in primary schools as well, in terms of that additional investment. That was probably a 2016 budget, from memory, in terms of that imbalance. So, they had more leadership in our primary schools. Would you like to - yes, if you'd like.

Mr BULLARD - So just in terms of why, because that's obviously a question that people might be asking, we have a clear strategic plan which is evidence based and it's guiding absolutely everything that we do and to implement that plan, we need to bring that down to an action plan or implementation level and then we need to actually roll that out on the ground. So, each of the plans

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that you have in front of you does have support for schools and school leavers to change practice, which is going to make a difference for young people. Otherwise there's no use producing them.

The principal wellbeing action plan, for example, in this budget was 10 additional full-time employees to support principals to lead schools for school improvement. You have the literacy coaches for the literacy action plan. Around the child and student wellbeing plan, we obviously have student support teams that are in schools every day, psyches and social workers and speech pathologists are looking after our young people. There is a plan behind each of those about how we roll them out. They aren't just documents that sit on the shelf. They bring alignment within the department of understanding about what evidence-based practice looks like and they guide our work every day.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I know why you've asked the question and it's an essential question -

Mr WILLIE - Well, as a former teacher, I've experienced this.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, I'm sure.

Mr WILLIE - The department produces a glossy document, there's not a lot of support around it and it doesn't change a lot.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You're a teacher. I'm a farmer. I wouldn't pretend to know any more than you about what goes on in a school, Mr Willie. But that's why we've been very committed though to providing more support to our schools in terms of more support staff, speech pathologists, school psychologists, social workers, our nurses, all these key supports do have in my view a very positive impact on the school environment and works to take pressure off teachers in terms of that in class environment. I am particularly proud of our school nurse program and I think we have increased the number of support staff by around 63 FTE over the course of the last five years. I'm sure individual teachers in schools would value increased investment, but it's certainly heading in the right area and with the trauma-related resource coming online next year, that around \$7 million, as I said, and indeed, the new disability funding model should all be about more resource in our classrooms. That will allow a greater focus for a teacher to do the job that they're trained to do.

Mr WILLIE - That's a good point. More resource in the classroom. Intergovernmental funding has been used for these action plans. Is that correct rather than going through the school gate?

Mr ROCKLIFF - You mean like the Department of Education funding more broadly rather than the school resource package?

Mr WILLIE - I mean as in the quality schools funding, or if you want to call it the nickname, the Gonski funding, and it's in 3.0 version now. Some of that funding's being used to resource these action plans?

Mr ROCKLIFF - In terms of the needs-based?

Mr WILLIE - Yes.

Mr ROCKLIFF - In terms of the additional funding, the \$340 million over 10 years, that's going through the school gate.

Mr WILLIE - All of it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - That's the focus of trauma and disability. Yes, that's the bilateral agreement which was signed in around November last year which has good growth funding over the next 10 years. But the needs-based funding model of Gonski more broadly, Gonski 2, is being applied to schools in that needs-based way.

Mr WILLIE - So it's not being skived off for departmental staff and resource to produce these?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I wouldn't have thought so, no.

CHAIR - Okay, and in the interest of, for *Hansard*, I have continued about nine reports that the member brought to the table, just so we have some idea when we read back over the *Hansard*. Now, moving to Ms Armitage.

Ms ARMITAGE - No, was in the next line-up.

CHAIR - All right. Mr Willie, if you don't mind, I'll invite Ms Armitage.

Mr WILLIE - Sure.

CHAIR - So you wish to ask a question in 1.1. We have left the overview, thank you.

Ms ARMITAGE - Okay, thank you. Mine is with regard to early entry for gifted children, and I'm sure the deputy executive is well aware of this and I have had a lot of involvement with this with one particular constituent.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You had correspondence with me on this, haven't you? Is that right?

Ms ARMITAGE - I have corresponded with Jenny. I'm not sure whether I've corresponded with you as well, minister, or not.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I understand.

Ms ARMITAGE - I have spoken to you personally about it.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, that's right. Yes.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes, probably not in writing. That's in the past but this is general now. This isn't about anyone in particular. So, are you able to tell me how many children, or how many applications there were for early entry for gifted children in 2019?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Okay, data for early entry commencing school in the year shown. Number approved in 2015 was three; 2016 was three; 2017 was seven; 2018 was five; and 2019 is eight.

Ms ARMITAGE - How many applications were there? Minister, I'm aware that there were a lot more applications than those approved, and it's very difficult to have it approved.

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Mr ROCKLIFF - And people wanting to start earlier, you say, at school? I understand the irony of your question.

Ms ARMITAGE - There's no irony at all.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, it is because -

Ms ARMITAGE - I'm talking about children starting -

Mr ROCKLIFF - We had a big debate in this state which a lot of -

Ms ARMITAGE - With respect, minister -

Mr ROCKLIFF - organisations, including the Labor Party and the Australian Educators Union fought against -

Ms ARMITAGE - With respect, minister, that's not what I'm asking.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I know what you're asking, Rosemary. I disagree with you.

Ms ARMITAGE - All right, let me explain. What I'm asking is, many of the schools allow children to go to kindergarten, they might be four, and they let them start, whether it be a private school or a public school, and then they get to prep and of course the requirement of a certain age. We do have gifted children, we know, and I've had long discussions or a lot of correspondence with the deputy secretary over this, but many teachers say that gifted students lag significantly behind other states in Tasmania and a lot of the changes you've made to the Education Act, I believe, is to try to help students.

Now, the issue that I have had, and I have spoken to lots of parents, I did have one particular case that came up, as you're well aware of, which eventually, after a long protracted time, was satisfactorily resolved with the parents and the child involved, but what I'm trying to find out is how many applications were there, because I've heard from a lot of parents, the procedure to go through, the stress on the child, the IQ that you list - can you tell me also the IQ that the child has to have to be classed as gifted? So, the IQ and -

Ms BURGESS - They have to be within the top 2 per cent on an approved test and it's usually the WPPSI which I'm not 100 per cent sure of what that means but it's Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence test.

Ms ARMITAGE - There is an IQ number, though, isn't there? So, if you could tell me the IQ number because I know there is one.

Ms BURGESS - It's on or around the 98 percentile, but obviously it's more complex than that because there are a number of sub-tests and some of those sub-tests are more indicative of possible success of a student entering the formal education system.

Ms ARMITAGE - Can you give me the number that applied in those years, please, or the number that were passed?

Ms BURGESS - We'd have to take that on notice.

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CHAIR - Okay. Thank you, madam secretary, you have a question on notice.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Sorry, is that the question on notice on terms of the applications?

CHAIR - And you will receive that in writing, thank you. Is there any other follow up question on that?

Ms ARMITAGE - I have quite a few questions on this, but if you want to go on to Josh and I will list my questions.

CHAIR - Okay. Thank you. There will be some additional questions that will follow on to the one in relation to gifted students if that's all right, thank you, minister.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Sure. Yes.

Ms ARMITAGE - There are quite a few.

CHAIR - Thank you, and before I go to Mr Willie, I'm going to go to Ms Siejka. First question. Thank you.

Ms SIEJKA - Just a question about the Northern Support School. I want to know how much money has been allocated and/or spent on the Northern Support School to create deficiencies in the original build, and whether more storage space has been added to take over bays in the hallways that are no longer used for storage of student equipment?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I visited the Northern Support School in the last year. I might request one of our infrastructure team to provide an update on the Northern Support School, unless I can provide any information to you. I know it's been a significant investment which is good. So, the capital project for the Northern Support School provided for the refurbishment of the Ravenswood site allowing for the Newstead Heights site to be vacated and eventually sold. The consolidation of Northern Support School operations on to one site has brought considerable benefits to students and staff. The principals advise that the students are enjoying the refurbished facilities.

There have been some concerns raised about the facilities and the Department of Education continues to consult with key stakeholders to ensure that concerns were addressed wherever possible. Key disability specialists, including the department of Education and Northern Support School staff, St Giles' key staff, members of the premier's disability advisory council have been involved, and contributed to the project. The buildings comply with and in many cases exceed the minimum building act and disability requirements. A number of issues were identified regarding safe pedestrian and vehicle movements around the site. These issues have now been rectified through the provision of additional parking.

The original budget for the project that was set in 2015 was \$4.6 million. This has been increased to \$10.2 million to meet the additional requirements identified as the project progressed, and the department has made further funding available from uncommitted asset sales to complete the additional works and advise since the relocation of the school. These works are now largely complete and the final works being completed I'm advised in April this year.

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Ms SIEJKA - In regards to the storage space being added - this stakeholder raised the storage space concerns, that they take over bays in the hallways are no longer used for storage of student equipment. So, is more storage space being added? That was the particular concern?

Mr ROCKLIFF - My advice is that there is more storage space being -

Mr WILLIAMS - That's my understanding that the usage that arose -

CHAIR - Hansard won't pick that up, so could we invite -

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes. I invite Todd Williams, Director of Facility Services.

CHAIR - Todd, thank you. So, we can get the answer on *Hansard*.

Mr WILLIAMS - Department of Education, correction.

CHAIR - Thank you. And that little microphone is for a very good reason.

Mr WILLIAMS - Thank you. I generally speak pretty loudly. My understanding is we've worked very closely with the schools and the school community over the last 12 months, and all the issues that have been raised, have been resolved, including the storage issue.

Ms SIEJKA - Okay, thank you.

CHAIR - Okay, thank you. Ms Siejka, any other question there, before I move on? I'm allowing a couple of questions.

Ms SIEJKA - Okay. Why are students with disability being asked to pay for personal care equipment through the NDIS packages when it's always previously been provided by TasEquip? Is the Government trying to cost shift their responsibility to support students with disabilities in schools? What will happen in relation to equipment with a child with a disability who is not an NDIS participant but is NDIS eligible and the students' families unwilling to apply to have their child enrolled as an NDIS participant? Essentially, these kids may end up in limbo because TasEquip won't supply personal care equipment to those who are NDIS eligible, even if they're not participants. I do -

CHAIR - That is a lengthy question.

Ms SIEJKA - Yes, I understand too that that crosses over with disability but for the Southern Support School that is a concern.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We recently visited the Southern Support School with the Secretary of Education. I invite Lynne McDougall, the Director of Inclusion and Diversity Services, to see if we can provide a Department of Education answer to your question. Although I don't know if we can over the whole lot.

Ms McDUGALL - Thank you. In relation to your question around equipment for students with disability, at the moment there is a transitional phase and so some students' equipment is provided through the TasEquip scheme that is run by Communities TAS and for some students where their package, their NDIS package is now in place. Their equipment is provided through that

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scheme. Where a piece of equipment needs to be duplicated for both home and school, there are duplicate pieces of equipment in some instances being provided. But they are being looked at on individual cases.

Ms SIEJKA - Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Dean and then I will go to Mr Willie.

Mr DEAN - That virtually answers the question I had and therefore updating the committee on the implementation of the new disability needs-based funding model.

CHAIR - Just stay with us Lynne. You might be needed.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You might want to talk a bit further about this, of course. There's \$8 million in this budget, it goes up to \$11 million over the course of the next couple of years. The model will see special education funds aligned to the educational adjustments that schools make to teaching and learning programs for students with disability commencing in 2020. I've mentioned the funding before. This is on top of the \$93.3 million already being invested in 2019 for students with special needs, and clearly the biggest investment in disability education that we've seen which I'm very proud of our team for. This level of investment is effectively an additional amount above the Australian government's SRS loading for students with disability and more importantly, combined with the new education adjustment approach, I'm confident we'll see a significant difference that can be made.

This investment is possible due to the state's contribution under the National School Reform Bilateral Agreement which was about the student and the actual adjustments made for their teaching and learning programs. It is not about funding a student based on a label attached to a student's disability that suggests a deficit. This initiative will continue to build on improved access, participation and engagement for students with disability in inclusive school communities. The projections within the new model show that in 2020 approximately a further 2000 students will access disability funding, taking the number of students accessing special needs education funding to around 4500 students in total.

In addition, within the new model, it is projected we will employ additional support teachers working in our schools. We had that discussion before, alongside staff and students in making educational adjustments to meet student needs. The model is underpinned by seven key principles that relate to equity, accountability, promotion of inclusive practice, transparency and simplicity, integrity, transitional fairness and financial sustainability, and the model builds on the work that schools have undertaken since 2013 within the national consistent collection of data on school students with disability with one further step added. A Tasmanian educational adjustment descriptor tool has been developed by the department to provide greater definition of adjustment for students as the substantial and extensive levels of adjustment. The implementation of the model also sees five full-time equivalent disability education adjustment moderators, working with every school in the state to implement the model for 2020 and to ensure the principles of equity and fairness are applied to all students.

This has had extensive consultation and of course, a communication plan on the model that's been undertaken, including documents, face-to-face forums, online forums, website information, Skype sessions have been held to introduce and consult on the model. In addition there were 26 sessions for key stakeholders, parents, community members between April and June 2019.

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Other jurisdictions are looking at Tasmania's national leading model and seeing if they can progress work in their own area. The person to my right, Lynne McDougall, has done a fantastic job with respect to this, and the program rolling out and no one in Tasmania knows any more about it than Lynne. If you would like to ask a question.

Mr DEAN - That covers, it. Josh might have had a question in this area as well.

Mr WILLIE - I've got quite a few.

CHAIR - Ms Siejka also has a question in regard to that, so while we have Lynne at the table, let's get the disability area finished, thank you. It is an important area.

Mr WILLIE - My first question, minister. It was published that there was \$34 million of extra money going into this funding model. Is all of that new money? There was \$15 million in last year's budget for ministerial task force work. Has it been re-profiled in the \$34 million?

Mr ROCKLIFF - No. It's all new money. I'm advised it's all money from the financial planning.

Mr WILLIE - Okay. So, what happened to that other budgeted amount.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The task force funding? I am advised that \$3 million of the task force money is ongoing, and is on top of -

Mr WILLIE - What about the \$15 million that was in last year's budget.

Mr ROCKLIFF - All right. In terms of the \$15 million we'll take that on notice, Mr Willie. Your exact question is?

Mr WILLIE - I'm trying to drill down into whether the \$34 million has been money that was allocated in previous years and been called something different or some of the \$15 million of it.

CHAIR - We can always come back to that question. Mr Willie, put an asterisk against that one, and if we don't get an answer -

Mr BULLARD - My advice is that the \$8 million ongoing is new money, when it goes up to \$11 million, that's \$3 million from the task force.

Mr WILLIE - What about the 15 million that was in last year's budget? So that's including the three, I think, from memory.

Mr BULLARD - I don't know that this is going to add up to \$15 million, so we might still need to take it on notice. My advice is that the taskforce had allocated to it \$3 million a year.

Mr WILLIE - Yes.

Mr BULLARD - That money is a base, so that's not repurposed. There's \$3 million sitting in their taskforce money that's there.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, it goes up to \$11 million.

Mr BULLARD - On top of that, to election commitments there was an additional \$3 million provided to the taskforce in 2022-23 and 2023-24. That money makes up the difference between the \$8 million and the \$11 million in the out years for the initiative that the minister's just spoken to and the base \$8 million is bilateral funds.

Mr WILLIE - All right. Bilateral. How was the new model costed? It's my understanding that schools are still being audited up until August. I'm interested in how you've got to the figures. It's obviously bilateral money being accounted for, but how has the model been costed?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Through the consultation phase. Lynne, would you like to?

Ms McDOUGALL - Yes, the model has been costed at this stage on the projections from the 2018 NCCD data set, the National Consistent Collection of Data on school students with disability data set. At the moment, as you say, all schools are being visited. With a moderation to look at having that 2019 data set which will be used then to model if the funding is required this year. Those figures don't really change a lot in terms of the NCCD percentages here in Tasmania.

Mr WILLIE - There's obviously new categories in the new model. What's the funding allocation for each category?

Ms McDOUGALL - There hasn't been one defined as yet.

Mr WILLIE - It hasn't been defined as yet, but we've ended up with a costing.

Ms McDOUGALL - In terms of [inaudible] bands. It's like, at the moment we're actually working through the extensive and substantial categories, to look at the levels of adjustment and how many in each. At the moment, the data set is extensive more broadly, which is broken down to three levels and substantially is broken down to two, so we need to do that data collection around that.

Mr WILLIE - So if the bands haven't been determined, is that just giving some flexibility to the department to retrofit the funding allocation for each band to fit the budget in there? Is that what's going on?

Mr BULLARD - The work is in progress as Ms McDougall said, but we have put in more money than the NCCD model. So we know that nationally, the work that's been done has provided an allocation and we have funded above that because we do want more funding in the system. I just note if I may, minister, that the National Score Resourcing Board is coming down to look at how we are funding disability. They're very interested in the model that we move into, away from disability label to adjustments and they want to use the information that they can get from us to help them think about nationally whether the model for funding disability is right.

Mr WILLIE - Okay. The minister talked about some of the consultation that's happened around this being out with forums. Children who are currently on the SDR get a staffing allocation and \$25 000 through the school resources package. There is every potential that some of these children will end up with less of a resource around them. Have schools been over catering for those children's needs up until this point, or is the move away going to create winners and losers, minister?

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Mr ROCKLIFF - We're funding students based on need for a particular reason. This is a nation leading investment and program and that is the fairest system based on need rather than, as the secretary put it, a label. Adjustments for learning, of course, means that all students should win with respect to this. It's a very strict criteria before and as you well know, that that meant that some students missed out and we don't want students with a need to miss out. We want to fund to that particular need. That can vary as you well know.

Mr WILLIE - I agree that the previous funding was a blunt instrument and there were children missing out. My question is, some children in the SDR, were they being overcatered for under the previous model, given that some of them may have some of the resource around them dropped back?

Mr ROCKLIFF - What you might find, and Ms McDougall might want to speak more to this through what she's found during the audit, but often or on occasions, schools can be fairly blunt in the adjustment that they provide to a young person. What this actually does is to fund an evidence-based plan for the actual adjustments that's needed, so a teaching assistant might not actually be the best thing for that child. There might be technology that can be purchased. There might be different ways of working in the classroom. All of these things are going to have a more meaningful impact. I don't know if any of you want to talk about that?

Ms McDOUGALL - I guess in terms of what we're seeing in our work with schools in moderating is that schools are looking more broadly at the type of adjustments that they are going to be making, aligned to the teaching and learning practices and good pedagogies to give access to the curriculum on the same basis as other students. And as Tim said, in the past, that's been pretty much an allocation, generally, equals TA hours. What was seen through the adjustment descriptor, too, where we've actually delineated the adjustments that teachers should be making against curriculum, access, dissipation, communication, safety and personal care is a broader range of adjustments. Some of which can be catered for through assisted technologies, through other teaching practices, through school wide programs where small group work can be a better way of engaging a student, rather than isolated with a teacher assisting, for example, on an individualised program.

So, imbedding it back into teaching and learning, moving away from funding a deficit to funding what a child needs to participate in an appropriate teaching and learning program. There will be adjustments around the type of support that is funded, but through the new model, there'll be both teacher support and dollar support to be able to make those adjustments for children.

Mr WILLIE - We certainly support the model of the Labor Party. I'm drilling down here because I know when it's implemented, if you don't do the work with some of the parents and students now, we'll end up with inquiries in our office because of the scenario or the perception that there will be winners and losers.

Mr ROCKLIFF - This is why there's been lengthy consultation to try to avoid what you're talking about to the best of our ability. It's extensive, it's very new and we want as smooth a transition as possible. I expect you know, there may well be some inquiries to your office, but we're trying to avoid - every child that deserves the resource of whatever that looks like in terms of their ability, they should be provided with it.

Mr WILLIE - Just a couple more questions, Chair? I'm after some data.

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CHAIR - These are around disability? We do have to share the questioning.

Mr WILLIE - Yes. What's the current number of SDR funded students?

Ms McDOUGALL - 1063.54 FTE.

Mr WILLIE - What's the current number of 55 to 70?

Ms McDOUGALL - 1562.22 FTE.

Mr WILLIE - What's the projection under the new model? How many kids will be funded?

Ms McDOUGALL - Around 4500.

Mr ROCKLIFF - So an additional 2000 we expect as a result of the new model.

Mr WILLIE - Okay.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms Siejka, any more in regard to disability?

Ms SIEJKA - No.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. Mr Dean, you're good to go?

Mr DEAN - I want to go right into the new area.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Lynne.

Mr DEAN - I want to go into a new area, minister. I want to talk about the schools that really are in the lower socioeconomic group areas and if I can identify the northern suburbs for instance. What I want to know is a breakdown of the kids in primary schools who are not attending schools regularly. I want to know how many are on that list; how often are they not attending school. My information is that we have a number of kids in that area who are just not going to school. In one instance, I'm told one kid was never picked up at all and hadn't been to school for three years. So, I want to know how many and what the department is doing to ensure that these kids are going to school. I'd like to know at primary school, high school and college, years 11 and 12.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Okay. So, the attendance rate in 2018 for students in prep to year 10 was around 89.7 per cent.

Mr DEAN - Can we break that down for the northern suburbs? Can those figures be broken down?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Not here, Mr Dean, no. We haven't got them here.

Mr DEAN - Can we take that on notice then?

Mr ROCKLIFF - We can take that on notice.

Mr DEAN - Thank you. But if I can have those figures.

CHAIR - Thank you. Continue, minister.

Mr DEAN - Can we have -

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes. Yes, northern suburbs of Launceston.

Mr DEAN - Yes. That's on notice, yes. But the question is a general question of the number of -

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes. Sure. Increasing student attendance at school, of course, is a priority because regular attendance at school is a key factor in improving student attainment. Schools in partnership with parents are committed to improving student attendance through a range of strategies and curriculum support. Now, parents, carers and guardians have a legal obligation or parents and guardians have a legal obligation to ensure a child is enrolled in and attending school or is registered at home education. A key finding of the audit report recently noted that processes are in place to identify, monitor, report and analyse student attendance and focus on individual students. The report also found the department involves parents and others in improving student engagement, by providing information to encourage communication between parents, teachers and students. There's more work to be done, as you'd appreciate.

The department has taken the recommendations from the report and is using them to inform ongoing work, aligned to the goals of the strategic plan, and this includes further developing a system-wide approach to improving student engagement, continuing to strengthen system and schools' reporting systems for reviewing student attendance, including by year level, and setting targets towards school improvement in attendance and developing further support for schools to measure, monitor and improve student engagement.

I've some information in terms of attendance rates by year level which might inform the discussion. In kindergarten the attendance is 91.1 per cent; prep to year 6, 91.8 per cent; years 7 to 10, 85.2 per cent; prep to year 10, 89.7 per cent; and years 11 and 12, 78.4 per cent.

Mr DEAN - So what's happening to pick up those kids who aren't attending school? I'm told that the current Education Act - and when we debated it, I said it was a toothless tiger - just doesn't give the capacity or ability to really target these families and these kids. So, what is happening to those kids who are missing school? Do we have any kids in Tasmania who haven't gone to school at all for one, two and three years, as I have been told?

Mr ROCKLIFF - On that last question, I'll seek to have the information for you, potentially on notice. But the Education Act, in my view, is not a toothless tiger. In fact, the issue around this, even though we had a tiger with massive teeth, it wasn't working in terms of -

Mr DEAN - Now they're just not there at all, I'm told.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, non-attendance - previously a parent whose child was not attending school went down a path of prosecution, and that wasn't an effective model of reengaging the child into learning. We've discussed a lot of stuff, a lot of things today and right throughout the theme of that, I hope you can appreciate there's that issue around equity and also trying to reduce barriers to learning. Trauma is a barrier to learning and engagement education. Students with disability,

sometimes how that model's funded can be a barrier to learning if the resources aren't effectively applied.

The Education Act had a significant change in terms of introducing compulsory conciliation conferences whereby again you didn't have the blunt instrument of prosecution, but rather you involved in what I'll call it a community around the table whereby the school, parents, guardian, the student - if appropriate - and other services potentially could assist in finding out the real story behind why a child is disengaged in learning and is not attending school. When you drill down on that, you can put in effective strategies, including wrap-around services, to ensure that student can become an attender at school. We understand - and you understand, Ivan, I know - and I've often spoken about this, that for some kids to actually get to school, even if it's half an hour late, is a cause for celebration, given what some students have to deal with.

Mr DEAN - Put up with.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We have our Education Registrar, Katharine O'Donnell, here. I'm not sure if it's the right time to talk about it, but you've asked the question, so it may well be the time to bring in Katharine. In terms of the compulsory conciliation conferences and the non-attendance of students, we've had the number of referrals by type of school and, of course, this goes across the Education Act, government and non-government schools. In 2017-18 the numbers of referrals in government schools was 48 and in non-government schools, 10: a total of 58. In 2018-19, government schools, 74; non-government schools, 10: a total of 84. That means 142 total referrals have been received in this type of process and it's a more effective way of, I believe, of looking at the real issues and the meaning behind why a child is a non-attender. We can then provide what I call wrap-around support, unless I'm corrected, to ensure the child is supported to reengage in school. I'm not sure if you can give more detail, Katharine, our Education Registrar, who's at the table.

Mr DEAN - I would ask the question on the accuracy of the figures because I'd like to know just what is necessary for a child attending school before they are recorded in this way. I am told the numbers in the northern suburbs, for instance, are high across a number of schools and that's come from a person from Anglicare who works in this area.

CHAIR - I think Katharine can add to that, minister, too, when you ask her.

Mr ROCKLIFF - That's all right. I might just set the scene just in terms of student engagement, reengagement, prior to Katharine talking but –

CHAIR - Before you do, minister, I just want to let everyone know I have asked about the heating in this place. It's quite cool but they're working on it. I'm not sure - hopefully it'll be organised by morning tea. So, apologies for the coolness, and I don't think it's just what we're talking about either. Thank you.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you. So, student access, participation and engagement are one of the four goals of the Department of Education Strategic Plan 2018-2021. Student engagement is directly linked to attendance, retention and educational attainment. We're investing \$4.7 million in this Budget to the re-engagement of students at government schools with \$1 million targeted towards colleges. You've noticed that is 78 per cent lower than the other areas. This is a continuation of the 2017-18 state Budget commitment that provided \$5 million over four years to implement a cohesive strategy for the engagement and re-engagement of students at government schools across the state. The strategy is aimed at building student engagement across the state.

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through strategic development of in-school and outside-of-school re-engagement programs and targeted support. This year 20 extra positions have been created in offsite re-engagement programs that offer flexible learning experiences catering for students who have become disengaged from mainstream schooling.

That's a broad overview of what we're doing outside of the compulsory conciliation conferences in terms of a resource around re-engagement but Katharine would like to say a few words.

Ms O'DONNELL - Thanks, minister. My office receives referrals from schools. Schools are required to go through a process before they refer matters to me

