

2020

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND YOUTH AFFAIRS
REPORT NO 8**

REPORT ON ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2018-2019

**Presented by
Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Chief Minister**

Introduction

On Thursday, 24 October 2019, the 2018-19 Annual and Financial reports of all ACT Government agencies were referred to the relevant Standing Committees of the Assembly for inquiry and reporting.

The following annual reports, or sections of annual reports, were referred to the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs (the Committee):

- ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority;
- ACT Long Service Leave Authority;
- Canberra Institute of Technology (2018);
- Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate;
- Education Directorate;
- University of Canberra; and
- Worksafe Commissioner.

Response to Committee Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Government update the Assembly by the end of first term 2020 with the number of three-year-old students who were offered placements in an ACT government school in a preschool program and how many three-year-old students were enrolled.

Government Response – Agreed in principle.

The Education Directorate will include the number of children who were offered placements and the number of children who are enrolled in the three year old preschool program in the 2019-2020 Annual Report.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Government report to the Assembly by the end of first term 2020 on the ACT schools that are accepting placements for three-year-olds in 2020 and 2021.

Government Response – Agreed in principle.

The three year old preschool program is initially being delivered by non-government early childhood education and care services rather than schools.

The Education Directorate will include the early childhood education and care services that are participating in the three year old preschool program in the 2019-2020 Annual Report.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate collect centrally and include in its Annual Report details of the flexible learning and alternative education options on offer to ACT students including the number of students; range of school years; and, number of teachers.

Government Response – Agreed.

Information about the students, range of school years and number of teachers engaged in flexible learning and alternative education options will be published in the Education Directorate's 2019-2020 Annual Report, noting that publishing will need to be in line with the *Information Privacy Act 2014*.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Government report to the Assembly by the last sitting day of June 2020, what curriculum programme is being used in flexible learning classes.

Government Response – Agreed in principle.

The Flexible Education unit utilises the Australian Curriculum to co-construct personalised learning plans with young people based on their interests and passions. Project based learning is used as an effective student engagement pedagogical strategy.

Information about the curriculum program for flexible learning classes will be published in the Education Directorate's 2019-2020 Annual Report.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the Government report to the Assembly by the last sitting day of June 2020, on additional training and qualifications provided to or required by teachers engaged in flexible learning education settings in the ACT.

Government Response – Agreed in principle.

Teachers involved in the Flexible Education settings are qualified educators with experience working with students with complex and challenging needs. No additional qualifications are required; however, trauma informed background is valued, and all staff have experience in this field.

Further details will be published in the Education Directorate's 2019-2020 Annual Report.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Government report to the Assembly by the last sitting day of June 2020 on how many schools are now using the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) module and how many teachers have received training in PBL.

Government Response – Agreed in principle.

The Positive Behaviour for Learning framework continues to be rolled out across school communities in the ACT.

The number of schools using Positive Behaviour for Learning will be published in the Education Directorate's 2019-2020 Annual Report.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate work to ensure that schools have access to youth workers, social workers and chaplains, as well as psychologists, if requested by students or staff.

Government Response – Agreed in principle.

ACT public school students have access to a broad range of support services to assist with their wellbeing, including youth workers, social workers, school psychologists, allied health professionals and wellbeing support workers (who have replaced religious chaplains).

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Government report to the Assembly by the last sitting day of June 2020 on progress in adopting the recommendations outlined in the Committee Report into the Management and Minimisation of Bullying and Violence in ACT schools.

Government Response – Agreed in principle.

The Education Directorate will include the progress of the recommendations outlined in the Committee Report into the Management and Minimisation of Bullying and Violence in ACT schools in the 2019-2020 Annual Report.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate Annual Report should, in future, include some measure of learning gain for colleges.

Government Response – Noted.

The Education Directorate will carefully consider how measures of learning gain for colleges can be implemented and sustained. This is more complex to achieve in colleges where every student has a different combination of courses or units comprising their ‘package’ however colleges are keen to actively pursue something that is both meaningful and sustainable.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate continue to roll out the University of Canberra Affiliated Schools Program.

Government Response – Agreed in principle.

The Affiliated Schools Program continues to be implemented in partnership between the ACT Government and the University of Canberra (UC).

The Affiliated Schools Program is the first program of its kind nationally and reflects a significant investment by the ACT Government in the professional learning and capability of ACT public school teachers. There are currently 26 schools directly involved, including 10 full program schools.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continues to provide flexible and secure employment options for workers.

Government Response – Agreed in principle.

The Education Directorate has developed a 12-month work program to implement the *ACTPS Policy on Taskforce Conversion to Secure Forms of Employment* which provides the framework to conversion of long term temporary and casual employees to permanency.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support the expansion of the higher education sector and University of Canberra.

Government Response – Agreed.

The ACT Government is committed to sustainably growing the Territory’s tertiary education sector. This includes improving pathways for local and regional students to study desirable and

in-demand course offerings, improving attraction of interstate students to Canberra, and expanding offshore markets. These are all areas where UC has opportunities to grow, and which will be critical to its recovery following COVID-19. Prior to COVID-19, UC was already working with the ACT Government on expanding offshore markets, and we look forward to those efforts resuming. The ACT Government will support UC to make the most of these and other opportunities as they arise.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government explore further options to collaborate with the University of Canberra.

Government Response – Agreed.

The ACT Government values its long-standing relationship with UC, and regularly explores opportunities for collaboration. UC is already a vital partner in training the Territory's allied health and education workforce, and it has been integral in the response to COVID-19 – this is in addition to our ongoing partnership through UC Public Hospital, the Sporting Commons and various business and innovation hubs. The ACT Government continues to explore further opportunities for collaboration with UC that will benefit the wider ACT region, meet the ACT Government's objectives for sustainably growing the tertiary education sector, and support the university's ongoing operations.