



**Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory**

Standing Committee on Education and
Community Inclusion

Inquiry into ACT Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021: *Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools*

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

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About the committee

Establishing resolution

The Assembly established the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion on 2 December 2020. The Committee is responsible for examining the following areas:

- Early Childhood Development
- Education
- Youth Affairs
- Skills
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
- Multicultural Affairs
- Disability
- Women (including the Office for Women)
- Seniors
- Veterans
- LGBTIQ+
- Sport and Recreation

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About this inquiry

Under Standing Order 216, a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly may self-initiate an inquiry into any area for which it has responsibility under its establishing resolution. The Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion resolved to conduct an inquiry into the ACT Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021: *Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools*, on 5 October 2021.

The Committee informed the Assembly of its intention to conduct the inquiry on 30 November 2021.

Acronyms

Acronym	Long form
ACER	Australian Council for Education Research
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ACTCOSS	ACT Council of Social Service
AEU	Australian Education Union
Audit Report	ACT Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021: <i>Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools</i>
CPCA	ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations
DSI	Director of School Improvement
ESO	Education Support Office
HALT	Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NESP	New Educator Support Program
NSIT	National School Improvement Tool
PLC	Professional Learning Community
QITER	Quality Initial Teacher Education Review
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TQI	ACT Teacher Quality Institute

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Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government include a definition of ‘teaching quality’ in relevant strategic planning documents, and clearly articulate responsibilities for measures to lift teaching quality in ACT public schools.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate clearly articulate in its response to a *System School Review Report* (Review Report) how it has implemented the recommendations set out in the Review Reports for previous years.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government invest in strategies to support greater engagement between parents and educators.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that all teachers in ACT public schools are provided with appropriate facilities to access time away from classroom teaching responsibilities.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure all teachers and learning support assistants have access to appropriate information technology (IT) equipment.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government incentivise high-performing teachers to pursue Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher certification.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government facilitate professional learning communities across school networks, as well as within individual schools.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government invest additional resources in occupational health and safety for ACT public schools, and ensure that at a minimum:

- all public schools in the ACT have clear, consistent policies for managing occupational violence in school settings and reducing risks to staff and students;
- staff have the capacity to manage risks of violence, including clear strategies for escalation and de-escalation; and
- staff have access to streamlined processes for reporting and recording incidents and are enabled to share experiences in a safe and non-judgmental setting.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government invest additional resources in allied health and social support in ACT public schools, including by:

- increasing the number of allied health professionals and social workers in ACT public schools, based on identified need;
- engaging Community Coordinators and other professionals to coordinate a wraparound approach to service provision;
- providing additional guidance and training on working effectively with allied health professionals and social workers; and
- setting clear policy on which supports are to be provided within schools, and which to be provided externally.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government implement measures to increase awareness of learning programs offered through the Education Support Office.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide additional learning and development opportunities to all educators focused on inclusive education and behaviour management.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that all school leaders are provided with the necessary resources to implement and evaluate Annual Professional Learning Programs.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government implement in full Recommendation 11 of the ACT Auditor General's Report 6 of 2021—*Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools*. This should include close consultation with New Educators, and the provision of clear guidance as to the operation of the New Educator Support Program and associated entitlements.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government expedite development of systems to estimate and address future workforce needs in ACT public schools. The system should capture specialist roles, experienced teachers, and learning support assistants.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide incentives for teachers with relevant expertise to take up specialist teaching roles.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government work with teachers, school leaders and other relevant stakeholders to develop and implement clear policy and guidance on the work

that teachers can reasonably be expected to perform outside of school settings, and the priority that should be assigned to particular activities.

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that educators are never required to supervise classes of a larger size those set out in the Education Directorate's *Class Size Policy*. This should involve:

- more effective oversight and enforcement of the Directorate's *Class Size Policy* and *Class Size Procedures*; and
- consideration of a cap on class sizes in enterprise agreements for teaching staff.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure a more even distribution of teachers across the ACT public school system, including but not limited to consideration of:

- providing incentives for experienced teachers to transfer to schools with a low concentration of experienced teachers—particularly schools in areas of lower socioeconomic advantage; and
- limiting the ability of principals to exempt teachers from the transfer round.

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide more guidance and training to school leaders on performance management and review, including when to initiate formal performance management processes and how those processes should be implemented.

1. Introduction

Referral and decision to inquire

- 1.1. The Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021: *Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools* (Audit Report) was presented in the Legislative Assembly on 23 June 2021.
- 1.2. The Audit Report examined the effectiveness of the Education Directorate's strategies and activities to improve the quality of teaching in ACT public schools, recognising that teaching quality is a defining factor in the success of each child or young person's education.
- 1.3. An overview of the Audit Report, including a background to the audit, audit conclusions, and recommendations, is included in Chapter 2.
- 1.4. On 29 September 2021, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts wrote to the Committee, drawing the Audit Report to the Committee's attention.
- 1.5. On 5 October 2021, the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion (the Committee) resolved to establish an inquiry into the Audit Report. The Terms of Reference for the inquiry are the Audit Report itself.
- 1.6. The Government Response to the Audit Report was presented to the Assembly on 9 November 2021.
- 1.7. On 16 November 2021, the Committee received a briefing from the Auditor-General in relation to the Audit Report.

Conduct of inquiry

- 1.8. In accordance with standard practice, the Committee advertised the inquiry on its website and by media release and called for submissions. Submissions to the inquiry opened on 29 November 2021 and closed on 28 February 2022.
- 1.9. The Committee received five submissions to the inquiry. These are outlined at **Appendix A** and are available on the Committee's website:
<https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/parliamentary-business/in-committees/committees/eci/inquiry-into-the-AG-report-no.-6-of-2021>
- 1.10. The Committee also conducted three public hearings:
 - 15 March 2022 with the ACT Audit Office.
 - 29 March 2022 with the Australian Education Union—ACT Branch.
 - 11 April 2022 with the Minister for Education, Ms Yvette Berry MLA, and officers of the Education Directorate.
- 1.11. Witnesses who appeared at the public hearings are set out in **Appendix B**.
- 1.12. On 19 July 2022 the Committee adopted the Report for presentation to the Legislative Assembly.

Questions taken on notice

- 1.13. A total of three questions were taken on notice during the inquiry.
- 1.14. A list of questions (including the date the question was asked, the intended recipient, and the subject of the question) is set out in **Appendix C**. Also included is the date on which a response was received.

Acknowledgements

- 1.15. The Committee acknowledges those who contributed to its inquiry by making submissions and providing evidence at public hearings. In particular, the Committee thanks the Auditor-General and staff of the ACT Audit Office for appearing before the Committee to clarify aspects of the Audit Report.

2. Audit background and outcomes

Audit background

- 2.1. The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of the Education Directorate's strategies and activities to improve the quality of teaching practices in ACT public schools, recognising that teaching quality is 'a defining factor in the success of each child or young person's education'.¹
- 2.2. The audit focused on the effectiveness of the Education Directorate's actions to:
- Identify and articulate key strategies and supports to improve the quality of teaching practices.
 - Support its teachers to improve the quality of teaching practices in ACT public schools.
 - Monitor, review and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and supports to improve the quality of teaching practices.²
- 2.3. The audit's approach to evaluating these matters consisted of:
- Identifying and reviewing relevant documentation associated with the Education Directorate strategies and activities to improve teaching quality.
 - Interviews and discussion with key staff at the Education Support Office (ESO).
 - Interviews and discussion with representatives from a selection of ACT public schools.
 - Interviews and discussion with peak bodies, including the ACT Teacher Quality Institute, the University of Canberra, the Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, the ACT Principals' Association, and the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Association.
 - Identifying and reviewing relevant information and documentation associated with the implementation of activities and strategies to improve teaching quality.
 - Identifying and reviewing relevant controls and procedures to improve teaching quality practices in ACT public schools.
 - Reviewing data, documentation or reports evaluating the effectiveness of strategies and activities to improve teaching quality in ACT public schools.³
- 2.4. For the purposes of the audit, fieldwork was also conducted in the six public schools outlined in the table below. Selected schools represented a cross-section of primary schools, high schools, and colleges across the four school networks: Belconnen, North/Gungahlin, South/Weston, and Tuggeranong.⁴

¹ ACT Audit Office, *Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools*, Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, pp 23, 27.

² Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p 27.

³ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p 30.

⁴ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p 30.

School	Type	School network	Number of students (FTE)	Number of teaching staff (FTE)
Canberra College	College	South/Weston	1,142.6	74.8
Gungahlin College	College	North/Gungahlin	1,185.9	83.2
Campbell High	High	North/Gungahlin	702.5	60.4
Lanyon High	High	Tuggeranong	372.0	35.0
Aranda Primary	Primary	Belconnen	567.0	34.1
Taylor Primary	Primary	Tuggeranong	312.0	24.6

Source: Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021: *Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools*, p. 31

- 2.5. Fieldwork consisted of interviews with school principals, a focus group of school leaders, a focus group of experienced teachers, and a focus group of New Educators and Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers (HALT). Auditors also reviewed school documentation demonstrating the quality of teaching practices and programs, as well as processes conducted to improve teaching quality.⁵
- 2.6. Ultimately, the audit considered the Education Directorate's most significant investments and efforts to improve the quality of teaching practices in ACT public schools. Audit findings and conclusions are organised around the following four key themes:
- Planning, monitoring and evaluation of system-level strategies and initiatives.
 - School improvement activities.
 - Professional learning.
 - Workforce Management.

Audit conclusions

- 2.7. This section outlines audit conclusions set out in the Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021: *Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools* (Audit Report). Further discussion of the conclusions is included in subsequent chapters, along with evidence from stakeholders and the Committee's comments and recommendations.

Strategies for teaching quality

- 2.8. In relation to the identification and articulation of strategies to improve teaching quality, the Audit Report concluded that the Education Directorate 'recognises the importance of improving teaching quality for the purpose of enhancing student performance'. Moreover, the Directorate 'intentionally aligned' key strategic planning documents, including the

⁵ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p 30.

Future of Education; An ACT education strategy for the next ten years (Future of Education Strategy) and the *Education Directorate 2018–21 Strategic Plan* (ED Strategic Plan).⁶

- 2.9. The Auditor-General's Report also concluded that there is a 'clear structure of performance measures and...reports to demonstrate progress against the [ED] Strategic Plan'. However, the reports did not consistently capture or use baseline data to determine the impact of initiatives to improve teaching quality. Moreover, the reports did not track progress against all priority actions documented in divisional business plans, nor did they provide a balance of quantitative and qualitative analysis of the impact of strategies and activities to improve the quality of teaching at a system level.⁷

School improvement activities

- 2.10. In relation to the Education Directorate's school improvement activities, the Audit Report concluded that the Directorate 'has established a comprehensive school improvement process, which provides effective to school to plan, deliver and evaluate activities that are intended to improve student educational outcomes, including activities to improve teaching quality'. The Audit Report also concluded that there is an effective structure of external reviews to assess the performance of individual schools and the ACT public school system against the *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT).⁸
- 2.11. However, the Audit Report also found that:
- Policies that support the school improvement process do not fully reflect current roles and responsibilities and are not well understood across all public schools.
 - Directors of School Improvement (DSIs) could be better focused to specialise in school sectors. Moreover, HALT teachers currently lack a role, responsibility, and resources for school improvement.
 - School improvement documentation and site visits are not consistently implemented across the schools considered during the audit. Moreover, the ESO does not analyse improvement documentation to better target and improve teaching quality supports.
 - School executives are frequently unaware of supports available through the ESO.⁹

Professional learning and development

- 2.12. In relation to professional learning and development, the Audit Report concluded that while the ESO has developed a range of professional learning programs, there is variability in teachers' and school leaders' awareness of these programs. Monitoring and evaluation

⁶ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p 33.

⁷ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p 33.

⁸ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p 49.

⁹ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, pp 49–50.

of programs is also insufficient to determine whether the programs are having a system-level impact on teaching quality.¹⁰

- 2.13. The Audit Report found that professional learning communities (PLCs) are not consistently used across the school system and concluded that there is a need for more support for all schools to implement the 'Spiral of Inquiry' and 'Multiple Sources of Evidence' models. The Audit Report also found that annual professional learning programs were not consistently implemented in ACT public schools, nor were they used to focus PLCs on improving student educational outcomes.¹¹
- 2.14. The Audit Report also concluded that while the ACT Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) receives 'rich data' on professional learning activities, the Education Directorate has not sought advice from the TQI nor requested data for the purpose of monitoring the impact of such activities on teaching practice.¹²
- 2.15. Finally, the Audit Report concluded that supports under the New Educator Support Program (NESP) 'are not implemented in a way that is accessible for all New Educators'. Moreover, there is 'lack of clarity' associated with common expectations for New Educators' development during the three years of the NESP. The Education Directorate also lacks data and mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of the NESP, and to evaluate whether New Educators are reliably accessing their entitlements.¹³

Teaching workforce management

- 2.16. In relation to management of the teaching workforce (including recruitment, development, and retention of highly effective teachers), the Audit Report found that the *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022* (Enterprise Agreement) 'recognises the importance of teacher experience'.¹⁴
- 2.17. However, the Audit Report concluded that the Directorate does not centrally plan or monitor the distribution of experienced teachers. Moreover, the current operation of the teacher transfer round 'limit[s] the ability of schools to access highly experienced teachers to improve teaching quality'.¹⁵
- 2.18. The Audit Report also concluded that the teacher performance development process is 'not effective in supporting teaching quality'. Among other matters, the Audit Report found that the Education Directorate 'cannot use the process to plan, deliver or evaluate the effectiveness of supports to improve teaching quality across all ACT public schools', and that the process 'does not effectively support teacher appraisals'.¹⁶

¹⁰ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p 87.

¹¹ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p 87.

¹² Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p. 87.

¹³ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p. 88.

¹⁴ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p. 114.

¹⁵ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p 114.

¹⁶ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p 114.

- 2.19. Finally, the Audit Report concluded that the performance management process under the Enterprise Agreement 'is not implemented effectively in ACT public schools', and that the Education Directorate 'does not have an informed understanding of the true level of teacher underperformance'.¹⁷

Audit recommendations

- 2.20. The Audit Report made 14 recommendations to improve the quality of teaching in ACT public schools. Recommendations are included in full at **Appendix D**.
- 2.21. A response to the report by the ACT Government was tabled on 9 November 2021. The ACT Government's position on each Audit recommendation is set out at **Appendix D**.

¹⁷ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, pp 114–115.

3. Strategies for teaching quality

- 3.1. Enhancing the quality of teaching across the ACT public school system will require clearly articulated strategies and actions and—crucially—mechanisms to measure their success in terms of improving the quality of practice and lifting student outcomes.
- 3.2. In 2018, the Education Directorate released *Future of Education: An ACT Education Strategy for the next ten years* (Future of Education Strategy). The strategy ‘outlines the plan for education in the ACT for the next decade’. It is to be implemented in three phases, with each phase supported by implementation plans which set out priorities and actions.¹⁸
- 3.3. In a submission, the ACT Government advised that the Future of Education Strategy provides the direction for public schools and the foundation for a strong system that prioritises learning and places students at the centre of the system.¹⁹ The strategy states:
- The ACT education system of the future will be personalised to each child. It will celebrate the differences that affect needs, abilities, motivations, interests, and aspirations. It will take a holistic view of the people it serves—our children and young people. The Strategy is about developing capable adults who have learnt to learn, live productively in society, think, create, and work in an increasingly digital future. The future of education in the ACT will achieve this through increasingly investing in and empowering teachers.²⁰
- 3.4. The Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021: *Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools* (Audit Report) notes that the Future of Education Strategy is supported by and clearly linked to a ‘series of cascading strategic planning documents’, including the *Education Directorate 2018–21 Strategic Plan* (ED Strategic Plan). The Audit Report also notes that the ED Strategic Plan clearly identifies priority actions, indicators of success, and a framework for reporting progress in six-monthly intervals. The Report states that this represents a ‘positive improvement’ on the approach to strategic planning from 2014 to 2017.²¹
- 3.5. However, the Audit Report noted that baseline data is not consistently captured and used in six-monthly progress reports. Moreover, reports do not track progress against the full range of actions in divisional business plans or provide a balance of quantitative and qualitative data of the impact of activities to improve teaching quality at a system level.²²
- 3.6. This chapter considers evidence received by the Committee in relation to strategies in place or under development to improve the teaching quality across the ACT school system.

¹⁸ ACT Audit Office, *Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools*, Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, p 42. See also ACT Government, Education Directorate, *What’s happening now? Implementing phase two*, <https://www.education.act.gov.au/our-priorities/future-of-education/whats-happening-now-implementing-phase-two>, accessed 5 June 2022.

¹⁹ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, [p 4].

²⁰ ACT Government, Education Directorate, *The Future of Education: An ACT Education Strategy for the Next Ten Years*, p 3.

²¹ Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, p 33.

²² Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, p 47.

Defining and measuring ‘teaching quality’

- 3.7. The ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations (CPCA) observed that the Audit Report states that ‘teaching quality’ is successfully demonstrated:

...when the effectiveness of a teacher’s pedagogical practices (the methods and practices they use to teach) facilitates students’ learning and positively impacts student outcomes.²³

- 3.8. The CPCA emphasised that many factors inhibit the effectiveness of a teacher’s practices. Some may be outside the control of the teacher, school, or Education Directorate.²⁴

- 3.9. The CPCA indicated that there must be recognition of which factors are, and which factors are not, within the control of a teacher or school. The CPCA recommended that ‘teaching quality’ be defined in a measurable way, including defining which constraints on teaching quality are within the control of schools and which are not. The CPCA also recommended that plans be developed to address and overcome those constraints.²⁵

Committee comment

- 3.10. The Committee heard that there may not be sufficient clarity as to the meaning of ‘teaching quality’, and particularly as to which factors impacting the quality of teaching are within the control of the teacher, school, or Education Directorate, and which are not.
- 3.11. The Committee considers that the Education Directorate should define ‘teaching quality’ and related terms in its strategic planning documents. The Committee considers that this would assist the Directorate to develop and implement targeted strategies to lift the quality of teaching across the ACT public school system.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government include a definition of ‘teaching quality’ in relevant strategic planning documents, and clearly articulate responsibilities for measures to lift teaching quality in ACT public schools.

Defining ‘Inclusive Education’

- 3.12. The ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) noted that while the Education Directorate ‘clearly holds Inclusive Education as a priority within the Future of Education Strategy’, at the time of ACTCOSS’ submission the Directorate had not agreed on a definition of ‘Inclusive Education’. The ACTCOSS suggested that this be done as a matter of urgency.²⁶

²³ ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, *Submission 5*, [p. 6]. See also Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, p. 23.

²⁴ ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, *Submission 5*, [p. 6].

²⁵ ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, *Submission 5*, [p. 6].

²⁶ ACT Council of Social Service, *Submission 1*, pp 1–2.

- 3.13. The ACTCOSS noted that it has been guided by the definition of ‘Inclusive Education’ offered by *Imagine More* as an education setting where all students are physically present and participating in the same classroom, in the same playground and at the same time as all children in the school community. The ACTCOSS noted that this definition aligns with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.²⁷
- 3.14. The ACTCOSS emphasised that segregation—including Specialist Schools, Learning Support Units, and withdrawal from mainstream classes—does not constitute Inclusive Education.²⁸
- 3.15. The CPCA noted that the Future of Education Strategy includes a priority to strengthen inclusive education and emphasised that all staff must be provided with meaningful opportunities to develop their capacity to meet the diverse needs of students.²⁹

Committee comment

- 3.16. The Committee is concerned that the ACT Government does not yet appear to have adopted a definition of ‘Inclusive Education’ in the Future of Education Strategy and other strategic planning documents. This is notwithstanding that Inclusive Education appears to be a priority for the ACT Government.
- 3.17. The Committee notes that it recommended during the inquiry into the management of school infrastructure that the ACT Government adopt a definition of ‘inclusion’ consistent with Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and General Comment No. 4 of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the provision of public education in the ACT.³⁰
- 3.18. The Committee encourages the ACT Government to implement this recommendation as soon as possible. The Committee also encourages the ACT Government, in implementing the recommendation, to consider the definition offered by *Imagine More* outlined above.

²⁷ ACT Council of Social Service, *Submission 1*, p 1. The ACTCOSS expressed support for a definition of Inclusive Education outlined by *Imagine More*, noting that this aligns with Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment No. 4. See *Imagine More, Inclusive Education*, <https://imaginemore.org.au/resources/inclusive-education/>, accessed 25 May 2022; Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities *General Comment No. 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education CRPD/C/GC/4*, 25 November 2016, [11].

²⁸ ACT Council of Social Service, *Submission 1*, p 2. See also Children and Young People with Disability Australia, *Towards inclusive education: A necessary process of transformation*, 2019, 9, https://www.cyda.org.au/images/pdf/towards_inclusive_education_a_necessary_transformation.pdf, accessed 25 May 2022.

²⁹ ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, *Submission 5*, [p 6].

³⁰ ACT Legislative Assembly, Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, *Managing ACT School Infrastructure*, May 2022, p viii (**Recommendation 15**).

4. School improvement activities

- 4.1. School improvement refers generally to an ongoing process through which schools plan, deliver and evaluate activities aimed at lifting student educational outcomes.
- 4.2. The *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT) has been the key evaluation instrument for ACT public schools since 2013. The NSIT measures performance against nine domains and assigns performance levels from ‘outstanding’ to ‘low’. This allows schools and education systems to assess performance and inform the design of school improvement activities.³¹
- 4.3. The NSIT is also the key component of the Education Directorate’s integrated school improvement process, which comprises:
- Five-yearly school reviews to evaluate the planning and management of resources.
 - School improvement plans, which set a school’s performance improvement targets over the subsequent five-year period.
 - Annual action plans to guide a school’s processes and resources to achieve the priorities set out in the school improvement plan.
 - School improvement visits conducted by a variety of stakeholders at least once a school year to give support and feedback to a school in implementing its plan.
 - Annual impact reports on the school’s progress on meeting its improvement plan targets and the strategic priorities in the Education Directorate’s Strategic Plan.³²
- 4.4. The integrated school improvement process—including the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders—is set out in the following key documents.
- *People, Practice and Performance: School Improvement in Canberra Public Schools: A Framework for Performance and Accountability* (2016) (People, Practice and Performance framework); and
 - *Evidence and Data Plan for School Improvement* (2019) (Evidence and Data Plan).³³
- 4.5. The Auditor General’s Report No. 6 of 2021: *Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools* (Audit Report) states that the Education Directorate ‘has established a comprehensive school improvement process’, which provides effective support to schools to plan, deliver and evaluate activities to improve teaching quality and lift student outcomes. However, the report also highlighted deficiencies in the school improvement process. These included:
- The documents which support the school improvement process do not fully reflect the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and are not well understood.
 - The roles of Directors of School Improvement (DSIs) and of Highly Accomplished and Leader Teachers (HALT) need clearer articulation.

³¹ ACT Audit Office, *Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools*, Auditor-General Report’s No. 6 of 2021, p 55.

³² Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, p 56

³³ Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, p 57.

- School improvement documentation and site visits are not consistently undertaken.
 - The Education Support Office (ESO) does not formally analyse school improvement documentation to better target and improve teaching quality supports.³⁴
- 4.6. The ACT Government noted that consultation for a stronger model of school improvement and review will be developed in 2022 for implementation in 2023, stating that ‘this...will address the recommendations of the audit and build on the foundations in place to drive improvement and innovation in ACT public schools’.³⁵
- 4.7. This chapter considers evidence in relation to school improvement, with a focus on school reviews, (HALT) teachers, and professional learning communities (PLCs). The chapter also discusses matters not included in the Audit Report, but which are relevant to school improvement and teaching quality. These include infrastructure, information technology (IT) equipment, safety, and allied health and social supports.

School reviews

- 4.8. As part of the Education Directorate’s integrated school improvement process, each ACT public school is reviewed every five years by a panel of experienced educators that is led by a school improvement consultant from the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER). The review is the primary mechanisms used to evaluate the effectiveness of an individual school’s planning and management of its resources.³⁶
- 4.9. After completion of school reviews each year, ACER provides the Education Directorate with a *System School Review Report* (Review Report) which informs overall system performance against the NSIT. Review Reports outline strengths and areas requiring improvement in the school system and makes recommendations to the Directorate. The Directorate then prepares a response to the Review Report.³⁷
- 4.10. The Audit Report noted that the Education Directorate’s responses to Review Reports have not included reference to how prior year recommendations have been implemented. For example, the response to the 2020 Review Report included ‘identical or very similar’ actions to those identified in its response to the 2019 report.³⁸ The ACT Audit Office elaborated on this matter at a public hearing, stating:

Perhaps...there were ongoing actions over those years—larger programs at work—but there was no reflection in terms of the progress that had been made from that first year, if it was a larger program of work.³⁹

³⁴ Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, p 49.

³⁵ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 5.

³⁶ Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, p 62.

³⁷ Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, p 62.

³⁸ Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, pp. 65–66.

³⁹ Mr Matthew Bowden, Senior Director, Performance Audit, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, p 5.

Committee comment

- 4.11. The Committee notes that the Review Report and responses by the Education Directorate are key mechanism by which commitments by the ACT Government to improving the public school system can be made public. Accordingly, the Committee is concerned that responses by the Directorate to Review Reports may not provide clear updates on the progress of implementing prior year recommendations.
- 4.12. The Committee notes that the Audit Report recommended that the Education Directorate review and update its People, Practice, and Performance framework, including to require formal, annual evaluation of all school improvement documentation and require all schools to publish improvement documentation on their website. The ACT Government agreed with those recommendations and has indicated that school improvement documentation includes documentation associated with External School Reviews.
- 4.13. However, the Committee notes that neither recommendations in the Audit Report nor the government response explicitly refers to information on implementing recommendations in Review Reports. The Committee considers that such information should be published as a means of enhancing transparency and accountability on school improvement activities.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate clearly articulate in its response to a *System School Review Report* (Review Report) how it has implemented the recommendations set out in the Review Reports for previous years.

Parental engagement

- 4.14. In its submission to the Committee, the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations (CPCA) stated that teaching quality is enhanced when parents are effective partners in the education of their children, noting that this provides teachers with a better understanding of individual needs and allows them to adjust their practices accordingly.⁴⁰
- 4.15. According to the CPCA, while some parents have the capacity to drive such partnerships themselves, others rely on schools, teachers, and community associations. The CPCA raised concern that this perpetuates inequality, as families with strong support structures in place often have with more time and resources to invest in their children's education.⁴¹
- 4.16. The CPCA stated that the Education Directorate should invest in parental engagement strategies, including resources, staff, partnerships, and professional learning.⁴²

⁴⁰ ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, *Submission 5*, [p 8].

⁴¹ ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, *Submission 5*, [p 8].

⁴² ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, *Submission 5*, [p 8].

Committee comment

- 4.17. The Committee agrees that teaching quality is enhanced when parents are partners in the education of their children. The Committee notes that some parents may lack resources to give effect to such partnerships and is concerned that this may be driving inequalities in educational outcomes. The Committee considers that the Directorate should invest in measures to address these inequalities over the short, medium, and long term.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government invest in strategies to support greater engagement between parents and educators.

School infrastructure

- 4.18. At one of the Committee's hearings, the Australian Education Union—ACT Branch (AEU) observed that 'school facilities are not always fit for purpose', noting accounts of school libraries becoming unavailable because space was used as a classroom, as well as accounts of members teaching in 'modified corridors'. The AEU indicated that this could lead to unfavourable perceptions of the teaching profession.⁴³
- 4.19. The AEU acknowledged that the ACT Government was working to resolve some of these issues, stating that building a few more schools like Throsby School 'would be lovely, and ... of great assistance to attracting and retaining staff.' The AEU noted in this regard that the strength of the Throsby School's infrastructure is that it has appropriate facilities, which have been developed in consultation with members of the teaching profession.⁴⁴
- 4.20. According to the AEU, research and feedback from members indicate that 'what teachers need is space to collaborate'. The AEU stated that private space is needed:

...to be able to report incidents and to process confidential correspondence...[and to have] spaces for staff to go to. [Staff]...need to withdraw from the space around the students; there needs to be non-student spaces in a school.⁴⁵

Committee comment

- 4.21. The Committee heard that school facilities are inadequate in some cases, and that this has led to certain facilities being used for purposes for which they were not intended. The

⁴³ Mr Patrick Judge, Branch Secretary, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 23.

⁴⁴ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 23.

⁴⁵ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 25. The AEU also noted that a lack of appropriate infrastructure may mean school leaders are required to vacate their offices if space is needed for visitors to conduct business, indicating that this may reflect poorly on school leaders and impact the efficient operation of the school.

Committee also heard that this could lead to unfavourable perceptions of the teaching profession, and accordingly to difficulties in attracting and retaining staff.

- 4.22. The Committee heard similar evidence during its recent inquiry into the management of ACT school infrastructure. The Committee recommended as part of that inquiry that the ACT Government invest in additional infrastructure for schools—including outdoor learning spaces and technology classrooms—and ensure there are appropriate amenities in ACT public school staff rooms. The Committee also recommended that the ACT Government implement the recommendations of the Auditor-General's *Report No. 11 of 2019—Maintenance of ACT Government School Infrastructure*.⁴⁶
- 4.23. The Committee strongly encourages the ACT Government to adopt and implement the recommendations of its inquiry into the management of school infrastructure as soon as possible. In addition, the Committee is of the view that the ACT Government should ensure teachers in the ACT school system have access to appropriate facilities for time away from the classroom—to complete administrative work, engage with colleagues, and rest.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that all teachers in ACT public schools are provided with appropriate facilities to access time away from classroom teaching responsibilities.

Access to information technology resources

- 4.24. The AEU noted that access to computer equipment and other information technology (IT) resources is 'increasingly important...to deliver quality learning', as most teachers use digital resources and smart screens as part of their practice. The AEU stated that 'there are not enough devices to...give every staff member a device to perform their work.'⁴⁷
- 4.25. The AEU also highlighted the importance of IT equipment to learning support assistants (LSAs), stating:

LSAs also often find themselves without a device or with an inappropriate device. It is very hard for them to demonstrate something to a student they are working with, if it is about working with the [IT] equipment and building those IT skills, if they do not actually have something to do that with.⁴⁸

- 4.26. According to the AEU, the key driver of this issue is school funding. The AEU noted in this respect that funding is based on a full-time equivalent (FTE) headcount and 'does not

⁴⁶ ACT Legislative Assembly, Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, *Managing ACT School Infrastructure*, May 2022, pp vii–ix (**Recommendation 8, Recommendation 9, Recommendation 23 and Recommendation 26**).

⁴⁷ Ms Angela Burroughs, Branch President, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 25.

⁴⁸ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 24.

provide sufficient devices for the staff at the school, let alone [for] relief teachers.’ According to the AEU, limited funding and resources for IT equipment means that schools have ‘a really difficult decision’ between purchasing IT equipment and other resources:

Do they purchase additional IT resources so that they have got some spares, or do they invest that money in other student-focused resources, whatever the case may be? It is a terrible position for a school leader to be in where they are trying to work out: “Do I dip into the school’s resources to pay for more computers and therefore not buy a new set of textbooks or not replace this carpet that really needs replacing?” or whatever the budgetary decision may be. It is not really one that is fair to be asking them to make.⁴⁹

Committee comment

- 4.27. The Committee agrees that access to IT resources is increasingly important to quality teaching and student educational outcomes. Accordingly, the Committee is concerned that at least some schools lack the resources to ensure each teacher and LSA has access to the equipment needed to perform their role effectively.
- 4.28. In the Committee’s view, this should be addressed as a matter of urgency, including by the ACT Government committing funding to the provision of IT equipment to public schools.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure all teachers and learning support assistants have access to appropriate information technology (IT) equipment.

Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers

- 4.29. The Audit Report notes that HALT certification was established in 2012 to formally recognise exemplary teachers who demonstrate quality practice and leadership. Increasing the numbers of teachers with HALT certification and improving their distribution across public schools was a focus of the Directorate’s *Future of Education: An ACT Education Strategy for the next ten years* (Future of Education Strategy). At the time of the Audit report, 32.9 per cent of public schools had at least one HALT teacher. Some had multiple teachers with HALT certification.⁵⁰
- 4.30. The Audit Report identified several flaws with the framework for certifying and utilising HALT teachers in the ACT public school system. Key concerns included:
- HALT teachers do not have defined roles or responsibilities beyond their classroom teacher band. The *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-*

⁴⁹ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 24.

⁵⁰ See Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, p 85. The Audit Report notes that the Education Directorate established a professional learning community to create a network and sharing space for HALT teachers. However, this was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2022 (Enterprise Agreement) notes that teachers with this certification are expected to model exemplary behaviour and build capacity within the school system. However, there is no guidance as to what these teachers are expected to achieve, and no resourcing identified to achieve these expectations.

- HALT teachers are used 'variably' in public schools, and their impact is limited by a lack of resources and time.
- There is a lack of interest in obtaining a HALT certification due to the associated cost and workload, and to the lack of perceived benefits. Obtaining the certification also does not lead to promotional or enhanced career opportunities.⁵¹

- 4.31. The ACT Audit Office confirmed that the main benefit of obtaining HALT certification is financial. Certification is optional and is not a prerequisite for other roles such as a school leader or executive.⁵²
- 4.32. The ACT Audit Office indicated that the time required to complete the certification, and the amount of work involved relative to perceived benefits, is an impediment to increasing the number of HALT teachers across the school system. However, the Office also noted that the process of obtaining certification is often seen as valuable in itself, as it asks teachers to reflect on their own teaching practice and demonstrate lead-level practice to their peers.⁵³
- 4.33. The AEU observed that another potential barrier to obtaining the certification—and (separately) to seeking promotion to a school leader—is the perception that the higher levels have more administrative responsibilities and less face-to-face teaching time. The AEU noted that some of its members expressed a desire to remain in the classroom, and to have the opportunity to use their expert teaching skills in this context.⁵⁴
- 4.34. Inquiry participants also echoed concerns expressed in the Audit Report that there is no guidance as to how HALT teachers are utilised across the school system. The AEU indicated that this has been an ongoing issue, stating:

We had, for example, Executive Teacher (Professional Practice) a couple of enterprise agreements ago. But what we did not have when we brought that role in was a sufficiently clear definition, so some of those people were very proactive and their schools were very supportive, and they found great value in that role. Others found themselves having been given a pay rise and a slightly reduced teaching load but not the work and the prestige to go along with it that would have enabled them to get the benefit they were seeking when they applied for that job in the first place.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, pp 85–86.

⁵² Mr Bowden, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, p 9.

⁵³ Mr Bowden, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, p 10.

⁵⁴ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 19.

⁵⁵ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 19.

- 4.35. The ACT Audit Office reiterated that while HALT teachers are used in various ways in school communities, responsibilities of such teachers are not defined in enterprise agreements, position statements or other relevant documents.⁵⁶

Committee comment

- 4.36. The Committee notes that there appears to be a lack of interest in obtaining the HALT certification due to lack of perceived benefits relative to cost and workload, and that the roles and responsibilities of HALT teachers are not clearly defined. The Committee is concerned that because of this the ACT public school system may lose out on significant benefits in terms of school improvement, capacity-building and effective leadership.
- 4.37. The Committee notes that the Audit Report recommends that the Education Directorate clearly identify and articulate expectations for HALT teachers and has made suggestions for what those roles might entail. The ACT Government agreed with this recommendation and has stated that it will continue to work with the TQI to better utilise and promote engagement with HALT initiatives. The ACT Government also noted that further work needs to be undertaken to explore how schools can use HALT teachers to support improvement of professional practice.
- 4.38. The Committee supports the recommendation in the Audit Report and encourages the Directorate to continue to progress work in this area. The Committee considers that the Directorate should work closely with HALT teachers—and other members of the teaching profession—when developing a framework for how those teachers should be utilised. This notes that some teachers have expressed a preference to remain in the classroom and have cited additional administrative work as a barrier to pursuing a HALT certification.
- 4.39. Relatedly, the Committee notes that neither the recommendations in the Auditor-General's Report nor the ACT Government's response makes explicit reference to increasing the number of HALT teachers. The Committee considers there would be merit in encouraging high-performing teachers to pursue the certification.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government incentivise high-performing teachers to pursue Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher certification.

Professional learning communities

- 4.40. PLCs are a method of school improvement where groups of teachers meet regularly to work in a structured and collaborative process to improve student outcomes. Teacher and school leader participation in PLCs is a requirement in the Enterprise Agreement.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Mr Bowden, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, p 9.

⁵⁷ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p 104.

- 4.41. The ACT Audit Office confirmed that participation in PLCs may count towards the required 20 hours per year of professional development for an ACT public school teacher. Where a school has been accredited by the TQI, participation in PLCs may also count towards the required 10 hours of TQI-accredited training.⁵⁸
- 4.42. The Audit Report found that there is ‘wide variability’ in the quality and rigour of PLCs across ACT public schools. It also noted that mechanisms for evaluating PLCs were ‘highly variable’, as no formal requirement or guidance is provided by the ESO. While some schools have designed and implemented their own evaluation mechanisms, such mechanisms are not widely known nor shared between schools. The ACT Audit Office elaborated on this matter during a public hearing:
- [T]here does not always seem to be a lot of awareness at the school level of what might be available...through the Education Support Office, which means that schools will frequently do their own thing. Often what they do is very good, but they can save themselves a lot of time and effort if they simply ask the question of the central office: do you have something available that could do this? There does not seem to be that positive interaction before they do their own thing.⁵⁹
- 4.43. The Audit Report also noted that experienced teaching staff had expressed frustration that the PLC model is not facilitated by the Education Directorate to take place across networks of schools. This was of particular concern in high schools, as just one teacher may be responsible for a subject in these settings. Accordingly, collaboration with like teachers within a school may not be possible.⁶⁰
- 4.44. At a public hearing, the ACT Audit Office explained that the audit did not specifically look at PLCs spanning multiple schools or different cohorts. Nevertheless, the ACT Audit Office acknowledged that PLCs of this type would require robust evaluation and systems to enable continuous improvement.⁶¹

Committee comment

- 4.45. The Committee was concerned to hear that there is ‘wide variability’ in the quality of rigour of PLCs in ACT public schools. The Committee was also concerned to hear that there is little if any guidance as to how PLCs are to be implemented and evaluated—leading to inconsistencies across the school system.
- 4.46. The Committee notes that the Audit Report has recommended that the Directorate establish universal professional learning for all school leaders and teachers, with a focus on increasing understanding and consistency of PLCs. The ACT Government has agreed with this recommendation.

⁵⁸ Mr Bowden, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, p 13.

⁵⁹ Mr Michael Harris, ACT Auditor-General, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, p 13.

⁶⁰ Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, p 89.

⁶¹ Mr Bowden, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, pp 12–13. Officers also noted that the audit did not look to the practice of other jurisdictions around the use of PLCs.

- 4.47. The Committee strongly supports the recommendation in the Audit Report and encourages the Directorate to ensure that consistent training and guidance is provided to school leaders and teachers on implementing and evaluating PLCs.
- 4.48. The Committee also notes that the Directorate does not appear to facilitate PLCs across networks of schools—potentially leading to teachers not receiving the full benefit of PLCs if they are unable to engage with others in their specialisation. In the Committee’s view, the ACT Government should take steps to enable PLCs across networks of schools.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government facilitate professional learning communities across school networks, as well as within individual schools.

Work safety concerns

- 4.49. The AEU observed that workplace health and safety and occupational violence remain critical issues in ACT public schools, notwithstanding that the ACT has in place a ‘nation-leading program to reduce workplace violence.’⁶²
- 4.50. The AEU noted that its members have been discouraged from reporting workplace safety incidents—including, in some cases, teachers being told not to report an incident by their direct manager. In addition, the AEU observed that school principals have been:
- Told by the relevant DSI to reduce reporting of occupational violence and advised that high levels of reporting reflect badly on the school.
 - Refused funding for measures identified as being required to ensure workplace safety asked to explain high levels of safety-related expenditure rather than provided with support to address the root causes of the relevant safety issues.⁶³
- 4.51. The AEU indicated that poor policy and planning are often the cause of unacceptable work safety outcomes—including workplace injuries. According to the AEU, there have been:
- ...failure[s] to have in place policies and procedures for confiscating and disposing of weapons...failure[s] to provide appropriate spaces for the inclusion support needs of students and...failure[s] to complete capital works in a timely manner leading to overcrowding.⁶⁴
- 4.52. The AEU also drew attention to other unsafe practices, including requiring staff to continue engagement with abusive parents and returning students to class after they have physically assaulted a staff member, without consulting the staff member involved.⁶⁵

⁶² Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Submission 4*, p 9.

⁶³ Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Submission 4*, p 9.

⁶⁴ Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Submission 4*, p 9.

⁶⁵ Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Submission 4*, p 9.

- 4.53. In addition, the AEU noted that staff are often obliged to spend ‘significant time’ reporting incidents on both work safety and student management platforms. This is a particular concern for specialist schools where incidents can be more common and teaching loads more demanding.⁶⁶
- 4.54. The CPCA also emphasised that safety remains a key concern for school communities (including parents, teachers, and students), stating that safe learning environments must be considered when evaluating teaching quality. The CPCA recommended increasing resourcing to accommodate reasonable adjustments and implementing of the full findings of the inquiry into the management and minimisation of bullying in ACT public schools.⁶⁷

Committee comment

- 4.55. The Committee was concerned to hear that workplace health and safety issues, including occupational violence, are creating unsafe environments for students and teachers, and impacting student learning outcomes.
- 4.56. It appears that many of work safety issues are due—or at least exacerbated by—failures to implement, police and evaluate work health and safety policies in public schools, and to a lack of investment in occupational safety.
- 4.57. Accordingly, the Committee is of the view that the Directorate should conduct a review of how occupational safety policy is implemented in ACT public schools, to ensure that teachers, students, and other members of the school community are not exposed to unsafe work and learning environments. The Directorate should ensure that policies are consistent across the school system and are aligned with best practice for occupational health and safety in education settings, and that there are clear mechanisms in place for teachers and others to report safety incidents.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government invest additional resources in occupational health and safety for ACT public schools, and ensure that at a minimum:

- all public schools in the ACT have clear, consistent policies for managing occupational violence in school settings and reducing risks to staff and students;
- staff have the capacity to manage risks of violence, including clear strategies for escalation and de-escalation; and
- staff have access to streamlined processes for reporting and recording incidents and are enabled to share experiences in a safe and non-judgmental setting.

⁶⁶ Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Submission 4*, p 9.

⁶⁷ ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, *Submission 5*, [p 7].

Allied health and social support for students

- 4.58. The AEU noted that—particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic—ACT public schools have been obliged to assist students and parents with various forms of support, including social welfare support. The AEU raised concern that this work takes up significant time for multiple staff in a school, and that schools are not resourced to meet this demand.⁶⁸
- 4.59. The AEU emphasised that if educators are obliged to provide mental health crisis care without proper training or support, this may result in ‘considerable health impacts’ for the educator. This issue can also compound issues associated with staff shortages.⁶⁹
- 4.60. According to the AEU, there is demand among its members for allied health professionals and social workers in schools, as a means of reducing unreasonable demands on teaching staff and ensuring that students receive effective support.⁷⁰
- 4.61. In response to a question taken on notice, the AEU recommended that the Education Directorate investigate the feasibility of a wraparound co-location model to provide social supports and allied health services in ACT public schools. According to the AEU, the Directorate may gain useful insights by observing the approach taken by the Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation and by Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services. The AEU also indicated that a local approach to supports is key, highlighting the approach taken in the Doveton College in Melbourne.⁷¹
- 4.62. As to supports available in ACT public schools, the AEU recommended that priority be given to interventions in early childhood settings by allied health professionals—especially nurses, speech pathologists, physiotherapists, paediatricians and child psychologists, and National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) partners. For older students with complex socio-economic needs, there may be a need for wraparound service provision at school sites. According to the AEU, older students would also be assisted by being able to access help from social workers.⁷²
- 4.63. The AEU emphasised that a best practice model would see a full-time Community Coordinator employed at each school, to coordinate a wraparound approach to the differentiated support needs of each student and their family. Schools would also have at least one full-time Disability Education Coordination Officer (DECO) to assist the school to meet inclusion needs.⁷³

⁶⁸ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 20. See also Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Submission 4*, p 8.

⁶⁹ Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Submission 4*, p 8. See also ECI QTON 01 ANSWER, [p 1].

⁷⁰ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 21.

⁷¹ ECI QTON 01 ANSWER, [pp 1–2]. The AEU noted that its recommendation draws on conversations with school principals in the ACT as well as on Australian research. The AEU also noted that teachers already use a wraparound approach to supports even where there is limited or no resourcing for service provision. According to the AEU, this demonstrates an ‘intuitive understanding’ of the wraparound approach.

⁷² ECI QTON 01 ANSWER, [p 2].

⁷³ ECI QTON 01 ANSWER, [p 2].

- 4.64. During a public hearing, the AEU also noted that there is a need to clearly define which supports are provided by a school which are provided externally, as well as a need to set clear expectations as to the extent to which teachers are involved in the provision of supports:

[U]nless there is a clear model for how [social workers] will interact with teaching staff and how that relationship will work the results are pretty mixed...We do find that, from time to time, they work at cross-purposes because they will have different views about how a situation should be approached. There can be confusion about whether something is a reasonable expectation, say, from a social worker to a teacher, from a teacher to a social worker.⁷⁴

- 4.65. The AEU further emphasised that there must be time for teachers to work with allied health professionals to maximise the value of the supports provided. The AEU noted in this regard that teachers are struggling to find sufficient time to teach classes, and there is little time to form relationships with other staff who are responsible for student welfare.⁷⁵
- 4.66. The AEU raised concern that there is little if any guidance from the Education Directorate as to how teachers and social workers should interact, and no training occurring in this space. According to the AEU, investing time and resources in supporting teachers to work with social workers and allied health professionals would be ‘immensely valuable’.⁷⁶
- 4.67. The Directorate noted that school funding includes loading for additional needs students may have, adding that ‘there are supports provided by [ESO] and...funding that can go into supporting the needs of particular children.’⁷⁷ The Minister stated that:

The Education Directorate works very closely with Health and other community support organisations, with that in their minds as well. There could be additional allied health staff...that a school takes advantage of, rather than just the teaching workforce.⁷⁸

Committee comment

- 4.68. The Committee has heard that, owing to a lack of access to allied health and social support, teachers have been obliged to provide social welfare support to students. The Committee is concerned that providing individualised supports to students reduces a teacher’s capacity for lesson preparation, professional development and other related activities.
- 4.69. Accordingly, the Committee considers that the ACT Government should invest in additional allied health and social supports in ACT public schools, to ensure that educators are not obliged to provide such supports and can focus on their teaching responsibilities. In the

⁷⁴ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, pp 21–22.

⁷⁵ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 22.

⁷⁶ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 22.

⁷⁷ Mr David Matthews, Executive Group Manager, Business Services, Education Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 11 April 2022, p 37.

⁷⁸ Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 11 April 2022, p 37.

Committee's view, this should include engagement of Community Coordinators and other relevant professionals to coordinate a wraparound approach to service provision.

- 4.70. To maximise the value of supports, the Committee also considers that the ACT Government should provide training and guidance to teachers and other school staff on working with allied health professionals and social workers and should clearly define those supports that are to be provided within schools and those which are provided externally.
- 4.71. The Committee appreciates that the ACT Government has taken steps to help ensure that school communities have access to allied health and social support. However, the Committee is of the view that there should be additional investment in this area. The Committee also notes that effective workforce planning will be necessary to ensure teachers have time available to build relationships with allied health professionals and social workers. Workforce issues are discussed in Chapter 6.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government invest additional resources in allied health and social support in ACT public schools, including by:

- increasing the number of allied health professionals and social workers in ACT public schools, based on identified need;
- engaging Community Coordinators and other professionals to coordinate a wraparound approach to service provision;
- providing additional guidance and training on working effectively with allied health professionals and social workers; and
- setting clear policy on which supports are to be provided within schools, and which to be provided externally.

5. Professional learning and development

- 5.1. Professional learning and development are critical to improving the quality of teaching practice in ACT public schools and improving educational outcomes.
- 5.2. Teachers in ACT public schools must be registered with the Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) and must complete 20 hours of professional development each year.⁷⁹ This must comprise 10 hours of training accredited by the TQI and 10 hours of ‘teacher identified’ training.⁸⁰
- 5.3. Inquiry participants observed that a key barrier to completing professional learning are time and resourcing—noting, for example, that teachers often have difficulty accessing time away from the classroom to complete professional development activities due to a shortage of permanent and relief staff.⁸¹ Issues associated with workforce shortages are discussed in Chapter 6.
- 5.4. Both the Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021: *Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools* (Audit Report) and participants in the present inquiry identified other issues associated with professional development. These included failures to effectively implement annual professional learning programs, issues with the supports provided to New Educators, and potential limits on the value of professional learning communities (PLCs). Stakeholders also identified areas in which professional learning could be improved.
- 5.5. This chapter considers evidence received by the Committee in relation to professional learning and development.

Learning and development programs

- 5.6. The Audit Report notes that since 2018 the Education Support Office (ESO) has been taking an increasing role in development and implementation of professional learning programs and resources available in ACT public schools. Programs developed by the ESO aim to address system-wide needs and improve educational outcomes. They focus on matters such as student wellbeing, future educational needs (such as digital literacy and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education), and cultural integrity.⁸²
- 5.7. In their submission to the inquiry, the ACT Government observed that the Education Directorate and the TQI ‘collaborate extensively’ to ensure that the ongoing professional learning requirements of ACT public school teachers are met, stating:

The Directorate provides TQI-accredited professional learning, designed by expert educators in the Education Support Office, that supports the teaching workforce to improve their professional practice and the delivery of key school improvement

⁷⁹ ACT Audit Office, *Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools*, Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, p 107.

⁸⁰ Mr Matthew Bowden, Senior Director, Performance Audit, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, p 13.

⁸¹ Mr Patrick Judge, Branch Secretary, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, pp 22–23.

⁸² Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, p 99.

priorities. ACT teachers are also able to source professional learning that is facilitated by external providers that may be TQI accredited.⁸³

- 5.8. The ACT Government also explained that all public schools have a professional learning plan that closely aligns with their school improvement journey, with a focus on ongoing improvement at the system, school, and individual teacher levels.⁸⁴
- 5.9. Regarding access to professional learning programs, the ACT Government stated that such programs are:
- ...available through the Directorate's Service Portal (intranet)...[which] provides a central access point to approved resources, work instructions, service contact points and links to other ACT Education Directorate platforms...in addition to other external approved teacher resources.⁸⁵
- 5.10. The Audit Report indicated satisfaction among teachers in relation to programs offered by the ESO. Programs that include resources to be used in classes and programs that include mentoring or coaching were most valued. However, there was lower awareness of newer programs and of resources offered through the Education Directorate's Service Portal.⁸⁶
- 5.11. The Audit Report also noted that while data on teachers' professional development is captured by the TQI, the Education Directorate does not have access to a consolidated view of this data to identify trends in professional learning or to inform how professional learning impacts on student outcomes.⁸⁷
- 5.12. Some stakeholders identified areas in which professional learning could be improved. For example, the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations (CPCA) noted that the diversity of ACT public school students (in terms of cultural or linguistic background, disability, or learning needs) requires a tailored approach to teaching. The CPCA recommended that all educators have access to 'targeted, useful, and strategic' professional learning to identify and meet the needs of all students, as well as professional learning to develop and implement quality individual learning plans.⁸⁸
- 5.13. In addition, the CPCA stated that all teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) would benefit from professional learning in behaviour management including escalation and de-escalation strategies, understanding behaviour as a form of communication, and strategies to support students with disability and diverse learning needs.⁸⁹

⁸³ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, [p 5].

⁸⁴ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, [p 5].

⁸⁵ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, [p 6].

⁸⁶ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p 99

⁸⁷ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p 107.

⁸⁸ ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, *Submission 5*, [p 6].

⁸⁹ ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, *Submission 5*, [p 7].

Committee comment

- 5.14. The Committee notes that there appear to be relatively high levels of satisfaction among teachers with the professional learning programs offered by the ESO, with support for programs that include resources to be used in class and programs that include mentoring and coaching. However, the Committee is concerned that there may be lower levels of awareness about some of the newer programs—especially those offered through the Directorate’s Service Portal.
- 5.15. The Committee also agrees with stakeholders that teachers may benefit from additional development in some areas, with a focus on ensuring that all students have access to equitable learning opportunities. Noting that safety for teachers associated with student behaviour has also been raised in evidence, the Committee considers that all educators—including LSAs—would benefit from additional training in behaviour management.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government implement measures to increase awareness of learning programs offered through the Education Support Office.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide additional learning and development opportunities to all educators focused on inclusive education and behaviour management.

Implementation of Annual Professional Learning Programs

- 5.16. The *ACT Public Sector Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022* (Enterprise Agreement) requires principals to develop an annual professional learning program for school leaders and teaching staff. The program must integrate professional learning community programs and school-led professional learning activities.⁹⁰
- 5.17. The Audit Report notes that none of the six schools that participated in the audit were able to provide evidence that they had consistently implemented annual professional learning programs between 2014 and 2020. A review of the programs also showed variability in the quality and comprehensiveness of the programs and their implementation.⁹¹
- 5.18. These concerns were reflected in evidence given by inquiry participants. For example, the CPCA noted a perception that teachers are not provided with adequate professional development opportunities, stating that annual learning programs should address this issue if implemented consistently across the system. The CPCA stated that while resources

⁹⁰ Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, p 101.

⁹¹ Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, p 101.

appear to be available for schools to implement such programs, the programs are not implemented consistently or effectively.⁹²

- 5.19. According to the CPCA, the Education Directorate should consider whether school leaders have adequate support and resources. Further professional learning for school leaders may also be required. The CPCA recommended that implementation of professional learning programs be linked to school improvement processes, and that additional investment and support for school leaders be provided to ensure that leaders have the capacity to implement, review, and measure such programs.⁹³

Committee comment

- 5.20. The Committee was concerned to hear that none of the schools that participated in the audit were able to demonstrate participation in annual professional learning programs. The views of stakeholders appear to confirm that failure to implement effective programs is an issue affecting the wider school system.
- 5.21. The Committee notes that the Audit Report recommends that the Directorate develop a practice for the ESO to oversee the completion of schools' professional learning programs, as well as the development of annual learning programs as part of the school improvement process. The ACT Government agreed with the recommendation, stating that the Directorate will strengthen central oversight of the annual professional learning program following delivery of the Learning Management System (LMS) platform.
- 5.22. The Committee strongly supports the recommendation in the Audit Report and considers that the ACT Government should ensure school leaders have all necessary resources to implement and evaluate professional learning programs for their school.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that all school leaders are provided with the necessary resources to implement and evaluate Annual Professional Learning Programs.

Implementation of the New Educator Support Program

- 5.23. In ACT public schools, graduate teachers are considered 'New Educators' for their first three years of teaching. According to the Audit Report, the Directorate has demonstrated a commitment to the development of New Educators in the Enterprise Agreement through the New Educator Support Program (NESP), which includes the following supports:
- five-day centralised induction prior to the commencement of the school year.
 - reduced face-to-face teaching hours allow mentoring to occur.

⁹² ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, *Submission 5*, [p 7].

⁹³ ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, *Submission 5*, [p 7].

- six New Educator Support Days to facilitate professional learning and development.
 - provision of coaching and mentorship from experienced teaching colleagues.⁹⁴
- 5.24. These supports and high-level suggestions for New Educator development activities for schools to provide are documented in the *New Educator Support Guidelines*.⁹⁵
- 5.25. During one of the Committee’s hearings, the ACT Audit Office explained that principals are responsible for ensuring that New Educators receive the support to which they are entitled—as it is principals who administer enterprise agreements at the school level.⁹⁶ Schools must also document whether entitlements have been applied through the annual completion of a *School Annual Implementation Plan* checklist, which is co-signed by a delegate of the Australian Education Union (AEU).⁹⁷
- 5.26. The Audit report identified several concerns with the NESP, including:
- There is no visibility over whether New Educators are receiving their entitlements, and whether the entitlements are being used effectively across the Education Directorate.
 - The five-day induction program would be more effective if it took place after the school year has started, to permit teachers to identify where improvements to their practice may be needed.
 - Time provided to New Educators to access training and development is often used—of necessity—to catch up on administrative tasks. The additional time allowance is also not allocated in a consistent manner across the school system.
 - There is limited understanding of the exact allocation of classroom release days and the circumstances in which the days can be used.
 - The combination of supports provided under the NESP are not evaluated to determine whether they are effective in developing expected pedagogical competencies.⁹⁸
- 5.27. The ACT Audit Office discussed the NESP with the Committee at a public hearing. Key issues included difficulties faced by New Educators in accessing time away from the classroom for professional development activities and in scheduling time with more experienced teachers for mentoring purposes. Both issues were closely connected to the shortage of teaching staff in ACT public schools—including relief staff.⁹⁹
- 5.28. The ACT Audit Office also noted that New Educators—and teachers more generally—are reluctant to take time out for their own professional development if this means putting colleagues under additional stress. The Office also noted that when a teacher attends

⁹⁴ Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, p 111.

⁹⁵ Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, p 111.

⁹⁶ Mr Bowden, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, p 8.

⁹⁷ See Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, pp 112–113.

⁹⁸ Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, pp 113–116.

⁹⁹ Mr Bowden, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, p 8.

training, the school may need to pay both that teacher's salary and the costs of engaging a relief teacher. This raises budgetary concerns.¹⁰⁰

- 5.29. The AEU noted that several entitlements set out in the Enterprise Agreement—including supports for New Educators and professional development for teachers generally—were not sufficiently implemented due to a lack of resources. The AEU indicated that many of the existing concerns could be explained by staff shortages across the school system.¹⁰¹
- 5.30. The Education Directorate stated that it has 'very much taken on board' the feedback from the Auditor-General about ensuring that New Educators have time to access learning and development activities. The Directorate also noted that a revised three-year induction program for this cohort will commence in 2022:

[There will be a] shift from only focusing on induction, and only focusing on the first year of teaching, to understanding that the early phase of a teacher's career goes for...at least three years and focusing on support across those three years...

[T]o successfully establish and launch as a highly skilled professional, there [must be] support and professional learning for the first three years. That includes mentoring at the school level and, as I said earlier, additional time to undertake professional learning. That is the redesigned program.¹⁰²

- 5.31. The Education Directorate observed that it has conducted an evaluation of each induction program under the current NESP, stating that the redesigned program (outlined above) will consider feedback from participants that professional development should be 'spaced out' and that training sessions should capture lived experiences of New Educators.
- 5.32. In relation to the provision, for New Educators, of additional time away from the classroom, in order to access training and development, the Directorate stated that 'a lot of the training...occurs before commencement of the school year', and that the Directorate has a 'strong commitment to give those teachers the best possible start'.¹⁰³

Committee comment

- 5.33. The Committee is concerned that New Educators may not be receiving the full benefit of the NESP, variously due to an inability to access time away from the classroom, a lack of understanding across the school system about how the NESP operates, and a failure to properly evaluate the NESP to determine whether it is effective in supporting New Educators to develop specific pedagogical competencies.

¹⁰⁰ Mr Bowden, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, pp. 8–9.

¹⁰¹ Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Submission 4*, [p. 4].

¹⁰² Ms Katy Haire, Director-General, Education Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 11 April 2022, p. 45. See also ACT Government, *Submission 2*, [p. 6]. According to the ACT Government, the revised program will include guidance on roles and responsibilities; mechanisms to measure pedagogical competencies; additional learning opportunities; structured mentoring programs; and coaching support to assist New Educators to progress from the 'Graduate' to the 'Proficient' level.

¹⁰³ Mr David Matthews, Executive Group Manager, Business Services, Education Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 11 April 2022, p. 46.

- 5.34. It appears to the Committee that several of the challenges in implementing the NESP owe to a lack of human and financial resources. This is closely connected to workforce planning, which is discussed in Chapter 6.
- 5.35. The Committee notes that the Audit Report recommends that the NESP be reviewed and designed. According to the recommendation, the program should focus on greater, more centralised oversight, support, and resourcing for New Educators; clarifying the pedagogical competencies that a New Educator should acquire; centralised, scaffolded professional development activities; clear guidelines for coaching and mentoring; and annual monitoring and evaluation.
- 5.36. The ACT Government has accepted this recommendation in principle, stating that the Directorate will strengthen central oversight of the implementation of New Educator supports following the development of the LMS. The government's response notes that this system will strengthen the government's capacity to identify, monitor and evaluate learning opportunities for early career educators.
- 5.37. The Committee also notes that the Directorate proposes to introduce a revised three-year induction program for New Educators, with a greater focus on professional development across the first three years of an early career educator's tenure.
- 5.38. The Committee is pleased that the Education Directorate is taking steps to enhance the supports available to New Educators and appears to have a focus on longer-term support for this cohort. However, the Committee remains of the view that the recommendation in the Audit Report should be implemented in full. The Committee considers that, as part of implementing this recommendation, the Directorate should consult closely with New Educators, and should provide additional guidance to New Educators on the operation of the NESP and their entitlements under that program.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government implement in full Recommendation 11 of the ACT Auditor General's Report 6 of 2021—*Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools*. This should include close consultation with New Educators, and the provision of clear guidance as to the operation of the New Educator Support Program and associated entitlements.

6. Teaching workforce management

- 6.1. The recruitment, development, and retention of highly effective teachers is a critical component of achieving improved educational outcomes for students.
- 6.2. The Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021: *Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools* (Audit Report) highlighted several concerns relating to the management of the teaching workforce, including an uneven distribution of experienced teachers and ineffective performance management process to support teaching quality.¹⁰⁴
- 6.3. Views in the Audit Report were echoed by inquiry participants. Stakeholders also expressed general concerns related to shortages of teaching and relief staff, with one stakeholder (the Australian Education Union—ACT Branch (AEU)) asserting that teacher shortages represent 'the greatest risk to quality teaching' in the ACT.¹⁰⁵
- 6.4. In its submission, the ACT Government informed that Committee that its *Workforce Strategy 2021-2023: delivering the workforce of the future of education* (Workforce Strategy) aims to 'attract and retain teachers by building a strong performance culture'. The Workforce Strategy is supported by performance development frameworks for teachers and school leaders. The Directorate also stated that it will 'continue to strengthen its engagement' across schools in terms of performance management and review.¹⁰⁶
- 6.5. This chapter outlines evidence received by the Committee in relation to the management of the teaching workforce.

Workforce planning

- 6.6. Effective workforce planning requires access to reliable data on the current and projected numbers of teaching and other staff in the ACT school system, as well as an understanding of why teachers join and ultimately leave the profession. Also critical to teaching quality is ensuring that there are sufficient relief staff to ensure that teachers may take time to access learning and development activities. These issues are discussed below.

Workforce projections

- 6.7. According to Education Directorate data, there has been an annual growth rate of 2.5 per cent in the number of students attending ACT public schools and a 4 per cent turnover rate in the teaching workforce. Based on teaching workforce at the time the audit was conducted, the Audit Report estimated that 'approximately 264 additional teachers' are needed annually to fill vacancies in ACT public school classrooms.¹⁰⁷
- 6.8. The AEU expressed similar views, emphasising the need for future staff projections:

¹⁰⁴ ACT Audit Office, *Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools*, Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, pp 119–120.

¹⁰⁵ Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Submission 4*, p 5.

¹⁰⁶ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, p 6.

¹⁰⁷ Auditor General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p 131.

We do have projections of enrolments, and that is nice. It is a mystery to the AEU as to why we do not have projections for what number of teaching staff we need and in what specialisations we need them. We should be able to work that out on the basis of the same demographic data we have for students.¹⁰⁸

- 6.9. The AEU added that the Directorate is ‘building a system to be able to capture’ workforce planning data, noting that the Directorate has indicated that the building of the system is ‘slightly ahead of schedule’ with completion expected towards the end of 2022.¹⁰⁹
- 6.10. On a related matter, the ACT Audit Office raised concerns that if there is ‘a large turnover at the younger age, our teaching workforce is simply ageing at a much faster rate than is desirable, acceptable or manageable in the long term.’¹¹⁰

Teacher separations

- 6.11. According to the Audit Report, Education Directorate data demonstrates that most teachers that resign do so in the first seven years of service’¹¹¹ The ACT Audit Office confirmed this during one of the committee’s hearings, stating:

... by the time you get to about seven years, that is the time when you are getting to your peak performance. You have a lot of experience. That is when teachers are really experienced and know their stuff...So we are investing a lot of money in recruitment and training, but we are not keeping them until they get to their optimum training or experience position.¹¹²

- 6.12. The AEU expressed similar concerns, emphasising the importance of understanding why teachers are leaving the profession and of obtaining reliable projections of future workforce need. The AEU noted that some measures have already been implemented to better understand the reasons for separation, including exit surveys for teaching staff.¹¹³

Availability of relief staff

- 6.13. The Audit Report noted that inability to secure relief staff ‘impacted the ability of teachers and school leaders at that school to attend professional learning programs.’¹¹⁴ The ACT Audit Office elaborated on this at one of the Committee’s hearings, stating that teachers:

... do not want to take time for their own personal development if that means they are putting their colleagues under additional stress because of a lack of

¹⁰⁸ Mr Patrick Judge, Branch Secretary, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 19.

¹⁰⁹ Ms Angela Burroughs, Branch President, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 30.

¹¹⁰ Mr Michael Harris, ACT Auditor-General, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, p 12.

¹¹¹ Auditor-General’s Report 6 of 2021, p 132.

¹¹² Mr Harris, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, pp 11–12.

¹¹³ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 18.

¹¹⁴ Auditor-General’s Report No. 6 of 2021, p 110.

suitable relief teachers being available, or an inability to get them at a time that suits everybody, even if they are available.¹¹⁵

- 6.14. The Education Directorate noted that in 2022 it established a centralised relief pool consisting of 30 self-selected staff members from the casual relief register. The Directorate stated that staff in the centralised relief pool are viewed as temporary contractors who have been ‘offered a guaranteed amount of work over a set period.’ The Directorate added that its ‘strong intent’ is to secure a workforce to meet staffing needs.¹¹⁶

Shortages of qualified staff

- 6.15. The AEU noted that there is no plan at the Education Directorate level to provide training to staff who are already engaged by ACT public schools and who wish to transition to areas of greatest need—for example Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). The AEU noted that many of these positions are filled by teachers without specialist skills or knowledge, stating:

If there was a program to incentivise people to move into those roles, and to train them to make that transition, that could deliver benefits, particularly in the efficiency of those staff when they are in those roles.¹¹⁷

Committee comment

- 6.16. The Committee is pleased to hear that the ACT Government is taking steps to better understand and manage its workforce needs, including by identifying the reasons for teacher separation and establishing a centralised pool of relief staff.
- 6.17. The Committee also welcomes the steps the ACT Government has taken to build a new system to estimate workforce needs. The Committee encourages the ACT Government to expedite development of the system, and to ensure the system captures specific workforce needs including specialist roles, learning support assistants and experienced teachers.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government expedite development of systems to estimate and address future workforce needs in ACT public schools. The system should capture specialist roles, experienced teachers, and learning support assistants.

- 6.18. The Committee also heard that many specialist teachings roles, especially in STEM subjects, are filled by teachers without specialised skills or knowledge. The Committee is concerned

¹¹⁵ Mr Harris, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, p 8. The ACT Audit Office observed that while this concern had worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic, even before the pandemic schools were facing staffing pressures and were unable to release teaching staff to undertake professional development.

¹¹⁶ Mr David Matthews, Executive Group Manager, Business Services, Education Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 11 April 2022, pp 35–36.

¹¹⁷ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 17.

that there is no Directorate-level plan to train staff engaged by the ACT public school system to transition to these roles.

- 6.19. The Committee considers that the ACT Government should provide incentives for teachers with relevant expertise to take up specialist teaching roles. This may include incentives for educators to retrain and develop expertise in areas of identified need (for example, in STEM subjects). The Committee also considers that, as an interim measure, the ACT Government should provide training for non-specialist teachers who are obliged to teach in areas outside of their areas of expertise.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide incentives for teachers with relevant expertise to take up specialist teaching roles.

Workplace conditions

- 6.20. The ability to attract capable individuals into the teaching profession and retain highly effective teachers was highlighted as another key aspect of managing teaching quality in the ACT public school system. Given that it may take many years for a teacher to become highly effective, retention is particularly important for teacher development and realisation of associated benefits related to quality teaching.
- 6.21. The AEU identified that one way to attract and retain teaching staff is by creating more favourable workplace conditions. Referring to the concerns raised in the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review (QITER), the AEU indicated that current working conditions—particularly teaching workloads and lower pay—may be reducing the attractiveness of teaching as a career.¹¹⁸

Teacher salaries and workloads

- 6.22. According to the AEU, surveys have found that higher salaries are the single most significant factor that would attract more people to teaching. The AEU stated that a substantial improvement in pay would help to attract and retain sufficient teaching staff.¹¹⁹
- 6.23. The AEU went on to explain that while pay in the ACT public school system is slightly above that offered in other jurisdictions, other factors—such as the speed with which a person can progress through salary classifications—also impacts on whether pay is sufficient to attract high-performing individuals to the sector. In this respect, the AEU noted that teachers in the catholic system ‘have an incentive to move through...salary classifications more rapidly’, which allows them to ‘achieve higher pay sooner in their career’.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Submission 4*, p 5.

¹¹⁹ Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Submission 4*, pp 5–6. The AEU stated that research undertaken has indicated that lifting pay levels to \$130,000 per year for teaching staff at the higher bands would be the most effective means of attracting young high achievers and mid-career professionals to teaching.

¹²⁰ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, pp 17–18.

- 6.24. The AEU further noted that while teachers in primary and secondary schools are required, respectively, to have 21 and 19 hours of face-to-face contact with students per week, the remaining hours for which teachers are paid are ‘not sufficiently defined’—that is:

[There is no] clear sense of intent or purpose around how teachers spend the time that they are not in the classroom, what they should prioritise and what should be a lower priority. As a result...all things receive equal priority and our members end up trying to do far too much.¹²¹

Larger class sizes

- 6.25. The AEU observed that due to staff shortages classes have been split and collapsed, and there have been instances of single teachers being obliged to deal with 50 or 60 students at a time. The AEU stated that in these situations there may be significant safety concerns, also noting that such large class sizes can make quality teaching ‘impossible’.¹²²
- 6.26. The AEU noted that there is information in the *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2021–2022* (Enterprise Agreement) and Directorate policy about maximum class sizes and how and when size limits may be exceeded. According to the policy, class sizes should only be exceeded after discussion between the principal and relevant teaching staff.¹²³
- 6.27. However, according to the AEU it is a ‘day to day proposition’ as to whether there will be sufficient staff to ensure class sizes are manageable, and whether consultation on collapsing or splitting a class (in accordance with Directorate policy) is possible. The AEU indicated that this issue is exacerbated by the lack of a cap on class sizes in the Enterprise Agreement.¹²⁴

Committee comment

- 6.28. Attracting highly capable individuals and retaining highly effective teachers is a key aspect of maintaining quality teaching practices in ACT public schools. The Committee understands that creating favourable working conditions, including teacher salaries and workloads, may assist in attracting and retaining public school teaching staff. As such, the

¹²¹ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, pp 19–20. The AEU noted that teachers often spend a significant amount of time outside of class hours on administrative work, reaching out to stakeholders, or implementing new Education Directorate programs.

¹²² Mr Judge, Australian Education Union, ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, pp 26–27.

¹²³ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 26. The Enterprise Agreement does not appear to set an explicit cap on class sizes. However, the Directorate’s *Class Size Policy* provides that classes for specific year levels should not exceed set numbers of students. The Directorate’s *Class Size Procedures* also set out the procedures for a principal to deviate from the policy by increasing class sizes when circumstances justify, including organising additional resources for educators. ACT Government, Education Directorate, *Class Size Policy*, https://www.education.act.gov.au/publications_and_policies/School-and-Corporate-Policies/school-administration-and-management/school-management/class-sizes/class-size-policy; *Class Size Procedures*, https://www.education.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0014/1620023/Class-Size-Procedures.PDF, accessed 28 June 2022.

¹²⁴ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 26.

Committee encourages the Education Directorates to consult further with teaching staff and the AEU on matters related to managing staff turnover.

- 6.29. The Committee is also concerned that the responsibilities of teachers outside the classroom are not clearly defined, noting that this lack of definition may lead to increases in teacher workloads and negative perceptions of the profession. The Committee is of the view that steps should be taken to address this concern.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government work with teachers, school leaders and other relevant stakeholders to develop and implement clear policy and guidance on the work that teachers can reasonably be expected to perform outside of school settings, and the priority that should be assigned to particular activities.

- 6.30. In addition, the Committee is concerned that, due to staff shortages, individual teachers have had the responsibility of managing a classroom of 50 or 60 students at a time. The Committee notes that this may impact student learning outcomes and elevate work health and safety concerns for educators and other school staff.
- 6.31. The Committee notes that the Education Directorate's *Class Size Policy* and *Class Size Procedures* specify the maximum number of students per class of particular year levels and set out the procedures to be followed when this maximum number is to be exceeded. However, the Committee is concerned that the applicable policy and procedures has not been followed in several cases. The Committee notes that this issue may be exacerbated by the lack of an explicit cap on class sizes in the Enterprise Agreement.
- 6.32. While acknowledging that failures to observe policy and procedure may owe to staff shortages and the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee considers that the ACT Government should take steps to ensure that teachers are not obliged to supervise classes of a significantly larger size than those set out in the *Class Size Policy*. This is to help optimise teaching quality and avoid safety risks for educators.

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that educators are never required to supervise classes of a larger size those set out in the Education Directorate's *Class Size Policy*. This should involve:

- more effective oversight and enforcement of the Directorate's *Class Size Policy* and *Class Size Procedures*; and
- consideration of a cap on class sizes in enterprise agreements for teaching staff.

Distribution of Experienced Teachers

- 6.33. The Audit Report notes that research confirms that the more a student is exposed to a teacher of better quality, the better the outcome. Research also confirms that the earlier a student is exposed to high-quality teaching (for example in primary school), the greater the impact. An 'Experienced Teacher' is a teacher with more than seven years' experience (that is, a teacher at the 'Experienced Teacher 2' level).¹²⁵
- 6.34. The Audit Report concluded that while the Enterprise Agreement recognises the importance of experience (for example, through salary bands), the Directorate does not centrally plan or monitor the distribution of experienced teachers across the ACT public school system.¹²⁶
- 6.35. Through an analysis of the distribution of 'Experienced Teacher 2' staff against the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of schools, the Audit Report found that 'eight of the schools with the lowest ICSEA ratings in the ACT were among the schools with the lowest proportion of Experienced Teacher 2 staff'.¹²⁷ The ACT Audit Office noted in this regard that 'there is an inequity or an inequality' in the ACT public school system, stating:
- [There is] a large proportion of inexperienced teachers in a lot of schools with low socio-economic ratings. If you wanted to get a more even outcome across the system, you would do something about a better distribution of the quality teachers across the system and, of course, also improve the quality of all teachers in the system.¹²⁸
- 6.36. The ACT Audit Office identified the operation of the transfer round as a possible reason for the current distribution of experienced teachers.¹²⁹
- 6.37. The AEU attributed the uneven distribution of experienced teachers across the public school system to a historic lack of workforce planning, noting that there is no mechanism to ensure experienced teachers are sent to places where they are most needed.¹³⁰

Transfer rounds

- 6.38. Under the Enterprise Agreement teachers permanently employed by the Education Directorate are placed at a school for an initial five-year term. At the end of this five-year period teachers are expected to apply for transfer to another ACT public school through an

¹²⁵ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p 120. Education Directorate policy requires teachers at this level to mentor New Educators and to contribute to student learning outcomes. According to the Report, where 50 per cent or less of a school's workforce is made up of teachers at this level, the school may struggle to support its early career teachers and may overload experienced teachers with mentoring responsibilities.

¹²⁶ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p 4.

¹²⁷ Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, p 127.

¹²⁸ Mr Harris, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, p 4.

¹²⁹ Mr Harris, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, p 1.

¹³⁰ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 16.

annual process known as the transfer round. The Directorate stated that the purpose of the transfer round is to facilitate the movement of teachers between schools.¹³¹

- 6.39. The ACT Audit Office observed that the transfer round is not a system that is controlled or mandated by the Directorate, stating:

Both principals and teachers have choices in relation to transfer. A principal can exclude a teacher from a transfer round if they choose to do so—experienced or otherwise, it makes no difference. Equally, as I understand it ... unless a teacher asks to be transferred to a particular school, they will not be transferred.¹³²

- 6.40. The ACT Audit Office also noted that if there is no match between the available posts and a teacher's preference, then the teacher remains at their existing school. Accordingly, it is 'very difficult' for the Education Directorate to direct and determine where staff should go to ensure the best outcomes for teaching quality and for equity reasons.¹³³

- 6.41. The AEU believed that through the now centralised process of the transfer rounds, the proportion of experienced teachers across the ACT public school system should equalise, as the panel considers experience when assigning placements.¹³⁴ The AEU added that 'it will take some years' before the transfer rounds rectifies the distribution of teacher experience. As a result, and if there is a need to resolve this issue more quickly, the AEU stated that providing incentives 'may be one solution'. According to the AEU, it is worth considering how harder-to-staff roles are incentivised and how training is provided for staff in those roles.¹³⁵

- 6.42. According to the AEU, there may also be scope to require or at least encourage teachers to transfer to schools with greater need—including via discussion with otherwise 'unplaced' teachers about a transfer to a school that the teacher has not nominated.¹³⁶

- 6.43. The Education Directorate stated that it is 'trying to actively incentivise ... [a more even distribution of experienced teachers] through cultural approaches. The Education Directorate also emphasised the complicated nature of staffing schools, observing that:

One of the factors, of course, is the experience level of the teachers. There are also a lot of specialist roles that exist across the system. Depending on the qualifications and the specialisation of the teachers, there is a smaller number of schools that they may be suitable to work in. We also have teachers with

¹³¹ Mr Matthews, Education Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 11 April 2022, p 31.

¹³² Mr Harris, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, p 3. By way of example, the ACT Audit Office pointed to one teacher who had been extended for 20 years in one school, as successive principals 'excluded them from a number of transfer rounds over the years.'

¹³³ Mr Harris, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, p 3.

¹³⁴ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 16.

¹³⁵ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, pp 16–17.

¹³⁶ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 16.

specialist early childhood experience and others that are more experienced in the senior secondary setting.¹³⁷

- 6.44. The Education Directorate further stated that ‘in certain specialisations there is less mobility and ... less supply of teachers.’ Moreover, schools are encouraged to have a balanced staffing profile through the way they are funded.¹³⁸

Committee comment

- 6.45. Noting the positive impact that experienced teachers have on student learning outcomes and the wider school community, the Committee is concerned by the Audit Report finding that the teachers at the Experienced Teacher 2 level are unevenly distributed across the ACT public school system, with the lowest concentration of experienced teachers in schools with lower levels of socio-economic advantage.
- 6.46. The Committee heard that transfer rounds may be contributing to the uneven distribution of experienced teachers. The Committee notes in this respect that teachers and principals have choices around whether a teacher is part of a transfer round. Accordingly, there is a risk that a teacher will elect not to be transferred to a school with higher needs, or that a principal will elect to keep a higher performing teacher in their current school.
- 6.47. The Committee was pleased to hear that improvements have been made to the existing transfer round—for example by making the process more centralised. The Committee also appreciates that it may be difficult for the Directorate to direct experienced staff according to school need, given the high level of discretion exercised by teachers and school leaders.
- 6.48. However, noting that it may take some time for the centralised transfer process to remedy the uneven distribution of experienced teachers and that there is a current need for more experienced teachers in certain schools, the Committee believes that the Directorate should take further steps to ensure that this matter is addressed as soon as practicable.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure a more even distribution of teachers across the ACT public school system, including but not limited to consideration of:

- providing incentives for experienced teachers to transfer to schools with a low concentration of experienced teachers—particularly schools in areas of lower socioeconomic advantage; and
- limiting the ability of principals to exempt teachers from the transfer round.

¹³⁷ Mr Matthews, Education Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 11 April 2022, p 32.

¹³⁸ Mr Matthews, Education Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 11 April 2022, pp 32–33.

Performance management and review

- 6.49. The Audit Report concluded that the performance management process in the Enterprise Agreement ‘is not implemented effectively in ACT public schools’, noting that just one of the ACT public school system’s 4,000 teachers had been formally performance managed in the 2019–20 financial year.¹³⁹
- 6.50. In the six schools considered in the audit, five principals reflected that they managed performance concerns informally within the school setting and avoided escalating concerns beyond this stage due to the complex and time-consuming nature of formal proceedings. Deputy principals and school executives, who are responsible for the daily management of teachers, expressed similar views.¹⁴⁰
- 6.51. The AEU explained that this finding may indicate that a lot of informal processes are ‘very successful’, stating:
- It is appropriate...if we are talking about a process that can end with the dismissal of an employee, that that process is rigorous and that it requires significant effort on behalf of the employer, as well as the employee, to get through it.¹⁴¹
- 6.52. The Directorate similarly advised that across a range of different government agencies, standard practice is to resolve performance issues informally. Accordingly, it is not necessarily a failure of the formal process if it is not used. The Directorate continued:
- [T]he formal...process is part of a suite of performance development and performance support processes...The annual cycle of all of our staff being involved in a performance development discussion is where, ideally, if the system is working really well, teachers and others are given feedback on how to improve, and that is built into their plan and worked on with them over the year.¹⁴²
- 6.53. The Directorate noted that in schools there is ‘a continuous cycle of [performance] feedback’, including via annual performance discussions and professional learning communities (PLCs).¹⁴³ The Directorate stated that it is committed to ‘supporting staff and schools in the...management of performance and underperformance’, adding that it:
- ...continues to work closely with the Australian Education Union in the implementation of...the...Enterprise Agreements to ensure staff [are] represented in underperformance processes and appropriate supports are in place.¹⁴⁴
- 6.54. The AEU acknowledged that ‘there could be more improved guidance around...the informal stage of the process’. The AEU also suggested additional training for principals, ‘who may

¹³⁹ Auditor-General’s Report 6 of 2021, p 119.

¹⁴⁰ Auditor-General’s Report 6 of 2021, p 140.

¹⁴¹ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, p 28.

¹⁴² Ms Haire, Education Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 11 April 2022, p 42.

¹⁴³ Mr Matthews, Education Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 11 April 2022, p 41.

¹⁴⁴ ACT Government, *Submission 2*, [p 7].

be uncertain about conducting these processes', and more support for lower-level school leaders 'to be upskilled and to have these sorts of conversations might help'.¹⁴⁵

- 6.55. The Audit Report indicated that the performance management process may be impacted by the teacher transfer round, noting that school leaders have indicated that formalising performance management proceedings prevent the transfer of the underperforming staff member to another school.¹⁴⁶ The ACT Audit Office added that:

[I]f you then have a system that is not adequately performance managing staff who require it and waiting for the transfer system to move the problem somewhere else, then you are potentially exacerbating a set of circumstances that concentrates good teachers in some places and...underperforming teachers in other places. And that does not seem to us to be a very good system.¹⁴⁷

- 6.56. The Education Directorate stated that it was unaware of this matter, but confirmed that when a formal performance management process is instigated:

...the employee does stay in the role that they are currently occupying because, essentially, that is the benchmark that performance can be assessed against ... The objective is to monitor and measure the performance of the individual in the role that they are familiar with.¹⁴⁸

Committee Comment

- 6.57. The Committee notes that most performance management in ACT public schools is informal, with a focus on addressing concerns before a teacher progresses to a formal performance management process and on building teacher capacity. The Committee appreciates that it is appropriate for formal performance management to be rigorous, given that the process can result in dismissal. The Committee also notes that an informal approach to performance management is used in many government agencies.
- 6.58. However, the Committee is concerned that formal performance management is seen as complex and time-consuming, and that this may lead to principals and school leaders not undertaking formal performance management even where this would be appropriate. In this respect, the Committee notes the finding in the Audit Report that performance management in ACT public schools is not implemented effectively.
- 6.59. It appears to the Committee that failures to effectively implement of formal performance management may be driven by a lack of clear guidance and targeted training on when formal processes should be initiated and how they should be managed. The Committee considers that this issue should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

¹⁴⁵ Mr Judge, Australian Education Union—ACT Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 29 March 2022, pp 28–29.

¹⁴⁶ Auditor-General's Report 6 of 2021, p 140.

¹⁴⁷ Mr Harris, ACT Audit Office, *Committee Hansard*, 15 March 2022, p 11.

¹⁴⁸ Mr Matthews, Education Directorate, *Committee Hansard*, 11 April 2022, p 43.

- 6.60. Noting views that the transfer round may lead to a school transferring an underperforming staff member rather than addressing the underperformance, the Committee considers that guidance and training should require school leaders to address underperformance before a teacher is moved to another school. The Committee is of the view that measures to encourage a more even distribution of experienced teachers (discussed above) will also help to address this issue.

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide more guidance and training to school leaders on performance management and review, including when to initiate formal performance management processes and how those processes should be implemented.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The Committee is of the view that the Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021: *Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools* (Audit Report) was important in articulating strengths and weaknesses in the ACT public school system and in identifying measures to improve teaching quality and lift student educational outcomes. The Committee endorses the recommendations set out in the Audit Report.
- 7.2. The Committee made 19 recommendations in its inquiry into the Audit Report. These are intended to complement findings and recommendations in the Audit Report and to reflect additional evidence provided by stakeholders.

Mr Michael Pettersson MLA
Chair, Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion
July 2022

Appendix A: Submissions

No.	Submission by	Received	Published
1	ACT Council of Social Service	25/05/2022	30/03/2022
2	ACT Government	28/03/2022	30/03/2022
3	<i>Confidential</i>	28/02/2022	N/A
4	Australian Education Union—ACT Branch	01/03/2022	30/03/2022
5	ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations	18/03/2022	30/03/2022

Appendix B: Witnesses

15 March 2022

ACT Audit Office

Mr Michael Harris, ACT Auditor-General

Mr Brett Stanton, Assistant Auditor-General, Performance Audit

Mr Matthew Bowden, Senior Director, Performance Audit

29 March 2022

Australian Education Union—ACT Branch

Ms Angela Burroughs, Branch President

Mr Patrick Judge, Branch Secretary

Ms Bianca Hennessy, Policy and Research Officer

11 April 2022

Executive

Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs

Education Directorate

Ms Katy Haire, Director-General

Ms Jane Simmons, Deputy Director-General

Mr David Matthews, Executive Group Manager, Business Services

Teacher Quality Institute

Ms Coralie McAlister, Chief Executive Officer

Appendix C: Questions taken on notice

No.	Date	Asked of	Subject	Response received
1	04/04/2022	Australian Education Union—ACT Branch	Need for additional co-located services	28/06/2022
2	11/04/2022	Education Directorate	Seeking a progress report on the six focus areas of the workforce strategy	Not received
3	11/04/2022	Education Directorate	Comparison of the number of relief teaching staff over one, five and ten years.	15/07/2022

Appendix D: Audit recommendations and government responses

The table below sets out in full the recommendations made in the Auditor-General's Report. The right column indicates the position the ACT Government in relation to each recommendation.

Audit Report Recommendation ¹⁴⁹	Government position ¹⁵⁰
Recommendation 1—Future of Education The Education Directorate should, as a matter of priority develop and publish the implementation plan for the second phase of the Future of Education	Agree
Recommendation 2—Strategic Planning and Reporting The Education Directorate should improve its strategic planning reporting framework by consistently and specifically reporting on progress towards its planned actions in its six-monthly review reports. Reported progress should include quantitative and qualitative analysis for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) all priority actions identified in its Strategic Plan b) all indicators of success for each Strategic Plan goal; and c) the completion of activities committed to in annual divisional business plans 	Agree in principle
Recommendation 3—People, Practice and Performance Framework The Education Directorate should review and update the People, Practice and Performance framework to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) reflect the revised structure of the Education Support Office, including the roles of Directors of School Improvement and Instructional Mentors and their role to support and maintain accountability for school principals; b) reflect the requirements of the Evidence and Data Plan for School Improvement (2019); and c) require all schools to participate in school improvement activities as well as complete and publish all required school improvement documentation on their website. 	Agree

¹⁴⁹ ACT Audit Office, *Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools*, Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021, pp 18–20.

¹⁵⁰ *Government response*, tabled 9 November 2021, [pp 4–8].

Recommendation 4—Evaluation of School Improvement Documentation

As part of Recommendation 3, the Education Support Office should review and revise the People, Practice and Performance framework to require the formal evaluation of school improvement documentation on an annual basis.

The evaluation should involve consideration of school improvement plans, action plans, school visits feedback and impact reports as a method of gaining specific, actionable, and timely information about ACT public schools' progress in improving student educational outcomes. The evaluation should then be used to assess and review Education Support Office supports for teaching quality to determine any refinements or additional assistance required to support schools achieve this outcome.

Agree in principle

Recommendation 5—Directors of School Improvement

The Education Directorate should review the role of Directors of School Improvement and in doing so:

- a) consider whether individual directors should specialise in sector-specific oversight and support (such as roles focusing on colleges, high schools, primary schools) to better target the implementation of supports for improving teaching quality; and
- b) determine if the directors' span of control allows them to fulfil the requirements of the People, Practice and Performance framework.

Agree

Recommendation 6—School Executive Development Program

The Education Directorate should establish a development program for new school executives (School Leader C staff) that upskills these staff on the instructional leadership practices of the Empowered Learning Professional Leadership Plan during the initial years of their appointment.

Agree

Recommendation 7—Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers

The Education Directorate should clearly identify and articulate its expectations for the role and responsibilities of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in ACT public schools. The role could include working with principals and Education Support Office to support school improvement activities, and better using the school network model to connect with other professionals to promote better teaching practice in their school settings.

Agree

Recommendation 8—Annual Professional Learning Programs

The Education Directorate should develop a practice for the Education Support Office to oversee:

- a) the completion of each school's annual professional learning program; and
- b) the development of a school's annual professional learning program as part of the school improvement process. The program should identify the development needs of teaching staff in connection with school improvement goals, and the expected impacts on student outcomes.

Agree

Recommendation 9—Professional Learning Communities

The Education Directorate should establish universal professional learning for all school leaders and teachers on the Spiral of Inquiry Model and Multiple Sources of Evidence approach in order to support school leaders to facilitate these activities. This support should focus on increasing understanding and consistency in the quality and impact of professional learning communities for the purpose of improving the quality of teaching practices in all ACT public schools.

Agree**Recommendation 10—ACT Teacher Quality Institute Learning**

The Education Directorate should work with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute to:

- a) receive and analyse data to use for evaluating the quality of Education Directorate professional learning activities, and identifying trends and insights from its teachers' professional learning to help determine the impact this has on improving student outcomes; and
- b) design methods and practices to recognise key professional learning supports, including professional learning communities, as accredited learning that meets the requirements of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

Agree**Recommendation 11—New Educator Support Program**

The New Education Support Program should be reviewed and redesigned. The program should:

- a) be facilitated by the Education Support Office to provide centralise oversight of all Enterprise Agreement provisions, centralised support and resourcing to New Educators in ACT public schools;
- b) document a core set of highly-effective pedagogical competencies that New Educators are expected to acquire within the first three years of their teaching careers;
- c) include a series of centralised, scaffolded professional development activities to build New Educators' capabilities over the course of the three years of the program;
- d) provide schools with clear guidelines and expectations to facilitate experienced teacher coaching and mentoring for New Educators; and
- e) establish an annual monitoring and evaluation process for the program, which incorporates feedback from New Educators, experienced teacher mentors and school leaders.

Agree in principle**Recommendation 12—Classroom Teaching Workforce Management**

The Education Directorate should review and revise the mechanisms that support the distribution and monitoring of the teaching workforce across ACT public schools by:

- a) monitoring the distribution of experienced teachers across ACT public schools to ensure it aligns with Education Directorate priorities under the Future of Education; and
- b) developing processes to monitor and review principal decisions to extend teacher placements to ensure schools have appropriate and equitable access to experienced teachers.

Agree in principle

Recommendation 13—Teacher Workforce Separation

The Education Directorate should develop and analyse data associated with teaching workforce separations by implementing exit surveys and conducting analysis on the reasons teachers resign from ACT public schools

Agree

Recommendation 14—Performance Development and Management

The Education Directorate should:

- a) develop policies and guidelines and support for school leaders that enable regular, development-focussed teacher appraisals aligned with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. These should be modelled and encouraged through the Empowered Learning Professionals Leadership Plan and aligned with the professional learning requirements of the ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act 2010 to gain additional benefit from these activities;
- b) systematise the performance development process to improve efficiency and make teacher professional development data available for central oversight and management to improve teaching quality; and
- c) develop supports for school leaders to manage underperformance for poor teaching practices. These supports should emphasise the need to quickly address performance issues, identify ways to successfully improve performance, and connect underperforming teachers with practical supports to improve their practice.

Agree in principle