



Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2021-2022

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Milligan:

Reference: Hearing on 31 October 2022, Annual Report of ACT Education Directorate

In relation to: Disability Education

1. P. 34 Disability education reference group – how often does this group meet?
 - a) On what areas has this group provided advice in the past year?
 - b) What has been their input on the management of students living with a disability and accessing digital infrastructure during the pandemic
2. P. 50 (Output 1.4 Disability Education in ACT Public Schools). Can you explain personal care support in ACT public schools
 - a) How many staff are involved in this support?
 - b) What was the financial cost of this?
3. P. 103 there is significant community concern around the lack of specific LSUs for students with Autism. Following recommendations by the Standing Committee Reports on Appropriation Bill 2021-2022 and Appropriation what is being done to address these concerns?
4. P. 143 why is the proportion of people working with a disability still at 2.4% below even that of the rest of the ACT PS?
5. P. 149 We note that you did not list how many people completed the “Disability Standards for Education” training. It states that it is mandatory, does this mean all employees of the department have completed this training? Teachers? Department Staff?
 - a) Who is this training directed at?
 - b) And how often? Annually? More often or less often?

Minister Yvette Berry: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

1. The Disability Education Reference Group meets once each school term.
 - a) The areas the group has provided advice on during the past year are summarised in Communiqués that are published on the ACT Education Directorate website after each meeting. Refer https://www.education.act.gov.au/support-for-our-students/students-with-disability/disability_education_reference_group
 - b) During the pandemic, members were provided with information about support in ACT public schools for students with remote learning and had the opportunity to raise related issues. No specific input was provided by the group on digital infrastructure.
2. Personal care support in ACT Public Schools includes supervision or assistance with:
 - toileting,
 - meal times for health and safety reasons,
 - showering,
 - moving around the school environment due to mobility difficulties; and
 - assistance or support with the oral intake of food or drink and to manage medical conditions such as blood glucose level monitoring, and management of Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy (PEG) or Nasogastric Tubes (NG tube).
 - a) Data regarding the number of staff providing this support is not centrally collected as personal care support in schools is not provided by specific dedicated staff. The type and extent of personal care support provided varies by student and will be mostly provided by Learning Support Assistants, Healthcare Access At School and Allied Health staff. However, if this assistance is not available and a student needs personal support a teacher will also assist.

Personal care support is defined as low (1.5 hours per week); medium (4 hours per week); high (8 hours per week); or very high (25 hours per week). Most students requiring personal support fall into the medium category. The Directorate calculates the in-kind contribution based on the prescribed hours per level of care multiplied by the number of students per category. This equates to approximately 110 FTE.
 - b) Personal care support in schools is an in-kind support provided to the National Disability Insurance Scheme by the ACT Government. The estimated in-kind contribution for 2022-23 is \$11.3 million relating to approximately 650 students.
3. Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other disabilities are welcomed and supported at all ACT public schools. Families of eligible students can choose between the Inclusion Support Program, which resources reasonable adjustments in a mainstream classroom, a Disability Education Program (Small Group Program) or a Specialist School for students with a medium to severe intellectual disability.

All schools are obliged, under the Disability Standards for Education, to make reasonable adjustments for students with disability, including students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, in collaboration with families. These adjustments are individualised to meet the needs of the student. If a family believes the adjustments provided for their child are not meeting their needs they are encouraged to meet with their school in the first instance. If family concerns are not resolved they can make contact with the Education Directorate's Feedback and Complaints team.

Public schools are supported to meet the individual needs of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder through the Student Engagement Allied Health team, the school psychology service and professional learning and networks provided by the Directorate.

4. The figure of 2.4% represents the proportion of employees who voluntarily self-identify with disability in the Education Directorate's HR information system. The Education Directorate continues to encourage all employees to self-identify their diversity information to ensure their needs are being met in line with their employment arrangements.
5. The Disability Standards for Education online training module is mandatory for all school-based employees, Allied Health professionals and the Flexible Education Team, and must be completed every two years. As at 28 October 2022, a total of 63% of applicable staff had completed the training. The Education Directorate is currently developing improved reporting tools to support school leaders to monitor staff completion of mandatory training and anticipated to be rolled out in term 1, 2023.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

Signature:

Date: 07/12/22

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister Yvette Berry