



Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2022-2023 **ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

Asked by Ms Jo Clay MLA:

Reference: Hearing on 16 November 2023, Annual Report of the ACT Education Directorate
In relation to: Inclusion strategy and supports for students with disability in ACT public schools

- (1) When will the Inclusion Strategy be released?
- (2) Following the release of the Auditor General's performance report on Supports for students with disability in ACT public schools, what steps are the Education Directorate taking to review the supports provided for students in ACT schools with disability?
- (3) When will changes be made?
- (4) Given the Directorate's criteria for eligibility for specialist education programs and supports relies on having a medical diagnosis, what supports does Education provide parents, carers, and students to undertake a medical diagnosis for their child?
- (5) Given the criticism of the deficit model focus of the Student-Centred Appraisal of Need (SCAN) process, will you be reviewing the SCAN process?
- (6) What supports can be provided to students with disability if they are experiencing learning difficulties but do not have or are unable to obtain a medical diagnosis due to long waitlists and or the high cost of private diagnosis?
- (7) Following the commitment from the last budget for qualified teachers to support disability and inclusion in the Tuggeranong network, have the inclusion coaches been active yet?

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

- (1) The Inclusive Education: A Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools 2024-2034 was released on 5 December 2023.
- (2) The ACT Government welcomes the Auditor-General's report and is considering its recommendations. A formal written response will be provided within four months of the report date (February 2024).

The ACT Government has been undertaking extensive work reviewing the supports provided to school students with disability through the development of an Inclusive Education Strategy which has included an international and national evidence review and extensive community engagement.

(3) The Inclusive Education: A Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools 2024-2034 is accompanied by a First Action Plan which commits to a series of actions in the first two years of the Strategy. The Directorate also continues to build on its offerings to schools to support students with disability through inclusive education professional learning, additional social workers and youth workers in schools, and curriculum resources such as the Everyone Everyday Program.

(4) Educators and allied health staff, including school psychologists may assist families seeking a medical diagnosis with medical practitioners. With consent, this can include sharing information about a student's functioning in an educational context, including but not limited to academic performance, behaviour, observations, and assessment results. The School Psychology Service can diagnose an intellectual disability.

ACT public schools also provide adjustments to all students who require them to access their education, regardless of whether they have a disability diagnosis. This is evidenced through data whereby 20 percent of students are reported as receiving adjustments under the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD).

(5) The Inclusive Education: A Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools 2024-2034 – First Action Plan outlines the development of a new needs-based funding model for students with disability. This will include a review of the SCAN process.

(6) All students who require adjustments receive them, regardless of whether they have a diagnosis of a disability or learning difficulty. Schools use a three-tier response to intervention framework where students receive quality teaching, small group supplementary instruction, and/or more intensive individualised instruction as required, moving between tiers based on progress.

(7) Consistent with the budget announcement, Inclusion Coaches are scheduled to commence in the 2024 school year. Recruitment is currently underway, and it is anticipated that Inclusion Coaches will be active in early 2024.

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

Signature:



Date: 06/12/23

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