



Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–2024

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Ms Chiaka Barry MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Education and Early Childhood

Redirected to:

Reference: Education Directorate

Hearing: 17 February 2025

In relation to: Resources to deal with racism

Question received: 20/02/2025

Answer Due: 28/02/25

1. Can you advise what resources are available to address racism in schools?
2. Can you advise the process undertaken when an incident of racism occurs in schools?
3. Can you provide data on the number and location of incidents of racism reported across the ACT school network?
4. What processes are in place to identify systemic or structural racism?
5. What proactive strategies are used to address potential racism associated with international conflict or domestic tensions?
6. How do those proactive strategies ensure that responses are kept neutral, so as not to take sides in international or domestic conflicts?

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

1. The Education Directorate's Safe and Supportive Schools Policy provides guidance to schools to ensure they have processes and policies in place to value diversity and promote positive social behaviour within their school and wider community, and to build the capabilities of students to engage in respectful relationships.

Resources are also available to schools on the Education Directorate's Service Portal (internal availability only).

2. Incidents of racism are reported on the Student Administration System. There are expected processes outlined for Safe and Supportive Schools Contact Officers, where it is expected that the incident will be reported and all parties will have an opportunity for follow up, including families.

3. Incidents of harassment are reported through the School Administration System and can be sub-classified as racial by the reporter. In 2024, there were 848 reported racial incidents, and 25 have been recorded year-to-date in 2025.

We acknowledge the need for improved data capture and reporting in this space. System enhancements are being explored to enable more efficient and consistent collection of this information in the future, ensuring better visibility and responsiveness to incidents of racism in schools.

4. ACT Public Schools participate in Racism No Way, which is an initiative led by the Australian Anti-Bullying Collective. The Directorate offers all ACT public schools the opportunity to engage with the Positive Behaviours for Learning (PBL) framework. PBL is an evidence based, multi-tiered system that enables students, staff, families, and the school community to create safe and supportive learning environments for all students. Teachers and school leaders take a proactive and preventative approach to ensure all students understand expected behaviours. Expected behaviours are made explicit and underpinned by teaching with the appropriate level of support. Within the suite of PBL professional learning, schools may opt in for the *Prevention of Bullying* professional learning to further upskill staff.
5. In October 2023, the Education Directorate provided guidance and advice to all staff about wellbeing services and resources available for those affected by distressing events such as the effects of the events happening in the Middle East. In week 4 of term 1 2025, all ACT public schools were provided with a reminder of resources available to respond to incidents of antisemitism and to provide support to students and families impacted by events in the Middle East.

ACT public schools are encouraged to be aware of those students and families with connections to these regions and ensure they have access to appropriate wellbeing supports, including access to their school wellbeing network. This may include the school psychologist, wellbeing coordinator, or a social/youth worker.

The Australian Government also announced in October 2023, the delivery of additional funding for social cohesion wellbeing support. The funding was a one-off payment to Jewish and Islamic schools, or those schools with a high proportion of students of Jewish or Islamic faith. Schools could use the funding flexibly to increase access to psychologists, counsellors or for mental health and wellbeing programs within schools.

In the funded period of 2023-2024, 15 ACT schools (both ACT public schools and non-government schools) received the social cohesion payment. The total funding was \$113,240.47.

6. ACT public schools are delivering the Australian Curriculum. The Australian Curriculum is made up of Learning Areas, General Capabilities and Cross-Curriculum Priorities. The General Capabilities include Intercultural Understanding, Personal and Social Capability and Ethical Understanding. This capability can support teaching and conversations at developmentally appropriate stages.

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Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature:

By the Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Ms Yvette Berry MLA

Date:

27/02/25