



Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–2024

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Mr Shane Rattenbury MLA

Addressed to: Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education and Early Childhood

In relation to: Climate Adaption Plans

Hearing: 17 February 2025

Uncorrected Proof Transcript p 40

Transcript provided: 20 February 2025

Answer Due: 27 February 2025, 05:00 PM

Minister Berry took on notice the following question(s):

MR RATTENBURY: Can I just ask, are you developing or do you have climate adaptation plans for our schools?

Ms Berry: Mr Rattenbury, we need another witness for that question.

MR HANSON: Just go with a yes/no on that.

Ms Berry: Look, we will just take it on notice. It is probably a bit to talk about in that space.

MR RATTENBURY: Yes. I would be interested to understand both, I guess, the physical school buildings and the air conditioning issues that we know about as part of that, but then also the broader environment of the school in terms of tree planting and the like, so thinking, I guess, comprehensively about how our schools will adapt to particularly hotter conditions in the summer months that their students are there.

Ms Berry: We did do a lot of work during COVID around passive cooling across schools, shade sails and tree plantings and the like. I will just take it on notice. There is a bit to say in that space.

MR RATTENBURY: All right, thank you.

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

The Education Directorate is undertaking a range of measures to support ACT public schools to increase resilience to a changing climate and be adaptable to environmental conditions, including:

- All new schools are designed and constructed as all-electric facilities with rigorous efficiency performance standards.
- Asset Renewal Program sustainability initiatives such as adding shade structures, external learning environments and roof replacements, which substantially enhance thermal insulation.

- Expanding the tree canopy coverage at ACT public school sites as part of the ACT Government's '*Shade our Play*' Program. Over 1,317 new trees have been planted on ACT public school sites since June 2024.
- Improved data and reporting systems to understand and improve tree canopy coverage in ACT public schools. The Directorate has 13,910 trees recorded on the AcrGIS platform.
- The Directorate has integrated minimum performance specification standards into capital works upgrades at existing schools, including double glazing, insulation, LED and the electrification of heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC).
- A *Building Management Systems and Data Analytics* pilot to optimise energy efficiency and thermal conditions in classrooms by providing real-time and centralised measurement, monitoring and control of HVAC systems.

Efforts that support progress towards the emission reduction targets set out in the ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019–2025, including:

- Delivery of the *Energy Efficiency Heating Renewal* program to upgrade existing Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems. This includes mechanical cooling as the standard for all upgrades.
- Transition of existing gas infrastructure in ACT public schools to replace gas with electric energy efficient alternatives, through the Electrification of Government Gas Assets (EoGGA) program (led by Infrastructure Canberra). All HVAC conversions delivered by this program are planned to deliver mechanical cooling to all learning spaces.

Policy and strategy efforts including

- Development of an *Indoor Air Quality Strategy* to improve health and cognitive performance, while also mitigating the effects of extreme temperatures in all learning spaces.
- Development of a *Living Infrastructure Strategy* to provide a strategic framework to enhance the coverage, utilisation and cultural awareness of living infrastructure on ACT public school sites.
- Development of an *Education Directorate Climate Adaptation Strategy* in 2025 to enhance the Directorate's climate resilience by identifying steps to be taken in ACT public schools to reduce the impact of climate change and extreme weather events on the learning environment.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature:

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

Date:

4/03/25