

2015

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS
REPORT NO 3**

REPORT ON ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2013-2014

**Presented by
Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Chief Minister**

Government Response

Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs Report No 3 – Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2013-2014

Introduction

The Annual Reports of All ACT Government agencies are referred to the Standing Committees of the ACT Legislative Assembly for examination and report.

The Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs reviewed annual reports for:

- ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority
- Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) – for calendar year 2013
- Community Services Directorate (Arts Policy, Advice and Programs; including Arts ACT)
- Community Services Directorate (Children Youth and Family Services - youth services)
- Cultural Facilities Corporation
- Education and Training Directorate
- The University of Canberra

The Committee made 20 recommendations.

Response to Committee Recommendations

Recommendation 1

2.7 The Committee recommends that, in addition to providing detailed updates and profile of the expected demands and performance requirements of the ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority, that the Authority continue to give an updated account of the challenges facing its client industries, particularly in a time of changing building, construction and engineering activities.

Government Response - Noted

The ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority (the Authority) determines the training priorities required by industry in relation to each of the five program areas funded by the Authority, through its annual Training Plan, developed through extensive consultation with industry stakeholders.

The scope of the Authority's activities may also change in conjunction with the demands from the various sectors. Any key challenges related to training faced by the various stakeholder groups are accommodated within the annual Training Plan and captured within the consultation and reporting process used by the ACT Construction Industry Training Council and the ACT Electrotechnology and Energy Advisory Board, both of whom are engaged by the Authority.

Recommendation 2

3.11 That CIT management continue to place a high priority on improving workplace culture through appropriate staff training and that all senior management commit to regular training that develops additional skills in people management.

Government Response - Noted

CIT has implemented annual compulsory training for all CIT staff on workplace culture. This includes Diversity in the Workplace, Bullying and Harassment Awareness Training, and Workplace Health and Safety Training, with specific modules for managers.

Recommendation 3

3.12 The Committee recommends that CIT take particular care to ensure that all claims of bullying and harassment by staff and students are dealt with promptly and thoroughly to demonstrate that CIT does recognise the seriousness and importance of addressing all bullying and harassment issues in a timely and professional manner.

Government Response - Noted

CIT takes all allegations of bullying and harassment seriously and deals with all matters raised in a timely manner. The CIT Resolving Workplace Issues Policy and CIT Students Complaints Policy outline the steps in managing these matters and the timeframes for completion.

Recommendation 4

3.16 That CIT work more closely with the disability community in determining the future training needs of those seeking professional skills in Auslan interpreting in order to avoid what appears to be the current stop/start approach to the availability and delivery of such courses in the ACT. Additionally the Committee recommends that CIT promote and market the availability of certified courses in Auslan to ensure continuing student enrolment and financial viability of courses.

Government Response - Noted

CIT works with Disability ACT and has commenced discussions with the Manager of the Deaf Education Network from the Deaf Society of NSW, a registered training organisation (RTO), for delivering accredited Auslan courses to students in the ACT. ACT residents can also complete introductory units to Auslan with CIT Solutions, which are offered on a regular basis.

CIT does not routinely promote individual courses across its 400 programs offerings. However, in December 2014 and January 2015 CIT spent \$2,292.93 advertising Auslan certificate courses in print media. All current CIT courses are promoted on the CIT website.

Disability ACT is committed to implementing the *National Disability Strategy* through the *ACT Disability Inclusion Statement 2015-2017*.

To assist in developing the disability services market ACT NDIS Business Investment Packages are available. Priority consideration will be given to organisations seeking to provide or extend services for which the ACT has a demonstrated market shortfall, which includes hearing translation and interpreting services. Disability ACT would support the promotion of Auslan courses.

Recommendation 5

3.17 The Committee also recommends that analysis of the future demand for Auslan interpreters in the ACT is conducted to ensure that the possibility of future shortage of interpreters is avoided.

Government Response - Noted

To date, around 15 National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants in the ACT have received Auslan services as a part of their funded supports. The supply of Auslan interpreters is to be considered by the National Disability Insurance Agency as it rolls out the NDIS in the ACT.

Recommendation 6

4.7 The Committee recommends that current School Satisfaction Surveys be used to continually assess current issues and inform future delivery of ACT education programs. The Committee recommends that reports of the survey results continue to be collated and published with ETD annual reports.

Government Response - Agreed

The School Satisfaction Survey is one element of data used for school improvement purposes. The instrument provides quantitative data indicating the perceptions of staff, students and parents about their experiences at the school. The survey results are used by schools to enable the Principal to guide school improvement in relation to their school plans. They are also used by School Network Leaders to inform their work with Principals. It is the intention of ETD to continue publishing results in its Annual Report and on its website.

Recommendation 7

4.8 The Committee recommends that in cases where student and parent survey results relating to safety in schools diverge, or differ; that these results be subject of close scrutiny by the ETD, and that the Directorate work with those schools where survey responses of students and parents significantly diverge, to ensure that steps are taken to understand and positively address the issues raised. The Committee considers improved parental engagement may help to address and resolve these issues.

Government Response - Agreed

The instrument provides quantitative data indicating the perceptions of students and parents. As part of the core work of School Network Leaders, the survey will continue to be used as a key element to interrogate school improvement with school Principals.

Recommendation 8

4.16 The Committee recommends that the program for parental engagement continue and that ETD report progress on its implementation. The Committee also recommends that the experience and strategies developed in the course of the program for assisting and providing support to parents from vulnerable backgrounds be part of the Directorate's reporting process.

Government Response - Noted

The Directorate is continuing to work in partnership with the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) on the Progressing Parental Engagement Project. The project commenced in 2014 and will be completed in December 2015, with three key deliverables.

In February 2015 the Minister for Education and Training, Joy Burch MLA launched a suite of resources designed to help parents and carers as well as schools and teachers to understand what parental engagement is, why it matters, how it works and how best to foster it. The resources include two publications - *Education Capital: Progressing Parental Engagement* and *Education Capital: Defining Parental Engagement Report* and Parent and Teacher fact sheets.

Parental engagement fact sheets will be available for parents and schools. The Fact sheets will cover a range of topics based on best practice in parent engagement.

The recommended strategies developed in the program will be focussed on ensuring inclusion of all parents including those from vulnerable backgrounds. The second half of 2015 will see the development and testing of a parental engagement survey for teachers and parents to measure parental engagement. This tool will be piloted across four ACT schools including two public schools, one Catholic and one independent school and will be completed by December 2015. The ACT has also committed to participate in the Australian Government Parental Engagement project.

Recommendation 9

5.9 The Committee recommends that the Community Services Directorate continue to develop and report on strategies to reduce the recidivism rate of the Bimberi Detention Centre.

Government Response - Agreed

Recidivism rates are improving. Strategies to reduce reoffending (recidivism) by young people who are held in Bimberi are reported in the Annual Progress Report on the *Blueprint for Youth Justice in the ACT 2012-22*. This includes reporting on initiatives that support young people to prepare for a successful transition into the community.

Recommendation 10

5.11 That the ACT Government continue to evaluate the Parents as Teachers Program especially with respect to outcomes from the additional expenditure, ongoing evaluation of the program, and of outcomes for parents and families.

Government Response - Noted

Parents as Teachers Program (PaT) was evaluated by the University of Canberra in 2012. PaT will be evaluated as part of the outcomes framework evaluation of the broad suite of intensive parenting programs in the Strengthening High Risk families element of *A Step Up for Our Kids* (the Out of Home Care Strategy).

Recommendation 11

5.16 That the ACT Government continue to seek to improve outcomes in each of the five 'development domains' for children in the first year of schooling, especially physical health and wellbeing.

Government Response - Noted

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) reflects the environments and experiences children are exposed to from pre-birth to school age.

The AEDC measures how children have developed before starting full time school, across five key areas of development. The AEDC data helps schools, communities and governments

pinpoint and tailor their services, resources and support to help young children and their families.

The ACT Government will continue to utilise the AEDC data to bring about positive outcomes for children by supporting and informing early childhood development policy and practice. In addition the AEDC data will support partnerships across education, health and community services.

Recommendation 12

5.17 That the ACT Government consider appropriate research on child physical health and wellbeing to examine possible initiatives which could be adopted in the ACT and which could also draw on experience and strategies developed in other States and Territories.

Government Response - Noted

The Directorate uses current evidence based research to support the health and wellbeing of students. The Directorate also has a wide range of initiatives and programs including partnerships in this area.

Working relationships have been developed with ACT universities that support ongoing access to current research and development of best practice. A current collaboration is supporting teachers to embed evidence based teaching strategies into the classroom, to mitigate the impact of trauma and adversity.

The Directorate is an active member of the National Safe and Supportive Schools committee. This committee works together to coordinate and promote the 'National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence'.

The ACT Government has a range of mechanisms through which it collects health data of ACT school students. ACT school students' health and fitness status is reported biennially in the Chief Health Officer's report. Annual statistics are available.

The Epidemiology Section of ACT Health collects and reports on the health and fitness status of primary and secondary school aged students in the ACT through several surveys including the ACT General Health Survey (GHS), the ACT Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey (ACTPANS), and the Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug Survey (ASSAD). The GHS is conducted annually, while the ASSAD and ACTPANS are conducted every three years.

The Education and Training Directorate is working in partnership across ACT Government agencies to develop and implement programs that enhance children's health and fitness.

The ACT Public School Food and Drink Policy was released in 2015. The policy applies the National Healthy School Canteen Guidelines to the broader school environment. The National

Healthy School Canteen Guidelines are based on the Australian Dietary Guidelines. Food and nutrition education in Canberra's schools is taught as part of the curriculum.

Schools are also engaged with programs to improve the physical health and wellbeing of children such as the Walk and Ride to School Program, It's Your Move, Kids at Play and Fresh Tastes.

Recommendation 13

5.20 The Committee recommends that the Community Services Directorate (CSD) continue to report in detail on youth justice issues, particularly the Blueprint for Youth Justice and ensure appropriate intervention and support programs continue to be developed and implemented by CSD.

Government Response - Agreed

The Annual Progress Report on the *Blueprint for Youth Justice in the ACT 2012-22* reports on the outcomes of supports and interventions to address youth justice issues in the ACT. Two progress reports have been released and are available on CSD's website. The reports present the progress in implementing the Blueprint and demonstrate how outcomes are being met through key indicators for youth justice.

Recommendation 14

6.7 The Committee recommends that the Minister provide details of the ACT Arts Policy Framework review, e.g., its timeframe, objectives, cost, and expected date of completion.

Government Response - Agreed

Review commenced within artsACT in 2014. External review commenced with appointment of Reference Group in February 2015 and concluded community consultation in May 2015. Consultation process completed within existing resources. The 2015 ACT Arts Policy was announced on 30 June.

Recommendation 15

6.8 The Committee recommends that the Minister provide the Assembly with a report on the progress of the ACT Arts Policy Framework and its implementation.

Government Response - Agreed

Statement to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly in August 2015.

Recommendation 16

6.9 the Committee recommends that the Minister provide details to the Assembly of new program and policy initiatives since the development of the ACT Arts Policy Framework.

Government Response - Agreed

Statement to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly in August 2015.

Recommendation 17

6.13 The Committee recommends that, in its next annual report, artsACT provide a report of the progress achieved in building the second stage of the Belconnen Arts Centre.

Government Response - Agreed

artsACT will provide a report on the progress of Stage 2 Belconnen Arts Centre in the 2014-15 Annual Report. Advanced preliminary sketch plans have been completed for Belconnen Arts Centre Stage 2 and Development Approval was gained on 28 January 2015.

Recommendation 18

6.16 The Committee notes the significant ongoing support provided to the Canberra Area Theatre (CAT) Awards by the NSW Government in recognition of the valuable role that these awards play in encouraging artistic achievement in the ACT and regional NSW, and recommends that the ACT Government make a reasonable ongoing commitment to ensure financial certainty to the CAT Awards.

Government Response - Noted

artsACT to coordinate a meeting of relevant government program areas and the CAT Awards Committee in order to outline where support from existing programs is available.

Recommendation 19

6.17 The Committee also recommends that the ACT Minister for the Arts and the NSW Minister responsible for the Arts engage in discussions regularly in the future regarding support for the CAT awards in 2016 and following years.

Government Response - Noted

The ACT Minister for the Arts to write to the NSW Minister for the Arts advising of the support available from the ACT Government for activities such as the CAT Awards and seeking the support of the NSW Government to support artists and arts activity in the Canberra Region. This is consistent with the ACT Arts Fund being available to Canberra Region artists based in NSW if they can satisfy criteria that identifies they have an ACT based arts practice.

Recommendation 20

6.19 The Committee recommends that artsACT include in future annual reports details of school programs under the Artist-in-Schools scheme in ACT schools, and also include an account of continuing work and achievements resulting from the legacy individual schools develop from involvement with Artist-in-Schools program.

Government Response - Agreed