

2010

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

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH
AFFAIRS
REPORT NO 4**

REPORT ON ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2008-2009

**Presented by
Mr Jon Stanhope MLA
Chief Minister**

Government Response

Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs Report No 4 – Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2008-2009

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;
- Chief Minister's Department (specifically artsACT);
- Canberra Institute of Technology;
- Cultural Facilities Corporation;
- Department of Education and Training;
- Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (specifically Office for Children, Youth and Family Support and Official Visitor); and
- University of Canberra.

The Committee made 12 recommendations.

Response to Committee Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the impact of reducing average class size on student learning outcomes be reported on in future Department of Education and Training annual reports.

Government Response

Agreed.

The Department of Education and Training continues to monitor average class sizes. Progress associated with this initiative will be addressed in future Annual Reports in respect of supporting quality teaching and improved student outcomes.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training investigate how parents without mobile telephones may achieve the same level of prompt awareness of student absences as those parents with mobile telephones.

Government Response

Agreed.

Schools are able to advise parents by phone and/or email if a student is absent following notification of an absence. These additional notification methods are supplementary to traditional methods of notifying parents of school absences which include direct phone calls and written notification. The Department of Education and Training will continue to examine emerging alternative methods of notifying parents without mobile phones to ensure all parents receive notification of student absences as promptly as possible.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training provide data on the effectiveness of the SMS Notify System on student absenteeism rates in the next annual report.

Government Response

Agreed.

The introduction of the SMS Notify System has been widely used by 18 secondary schools to notify parents of unexplained absences. A study of attendance patterns for selected schools will be undertaken for the ACT Department of Education and Training 2010-11 annual report.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training identify and implement best practice options for recycling used ICT equipment.

Government Response**Agreed.**

The Department uses the whole of government disposal procedures which comply with international standards of environmental management, set by the International Organization for Standardization. ACT Government uses the services of the disposal broker – Capital Easy - to manage the recycling and disposal of ICT hardware. Additionally, InTACT supports the Chief Minister's Computer Re-use scheme. This scheme allows for up to a maximum of 100 end of life computers to be made available for not-for-profit purposes each year. This was used by the Department during the implementation of the National Secondary Schools Computing Fund.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government implement a whole-of-government e-waste strategy with an aim of minimising the environmental impact of ACT Government ICT equipment.

Government Response**Agreed.**

InTACT manages the disposal of IT assets on behalf of DET. InTACT has already implemented an ICT asset disposal process which meets the international standard for environment management systems. Capital Easy is InTACT's broker for undertaking the disposal of these ICT assets. Capital Easy has a comprehensive approach to managing e-waste and minimising the environmental impact of ICT equipment.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that, upon completion of industry consultation, the Minister report to the ACT Legislative Assembly on the ACT Government's proposal to address the weaknesses outlined in the review of the secondary college system.

Government Response**Noted.**

The ACT College Business Plan 2007-2009 addressed those recommendations accepted by the ACT Government from the Atelier Report and enabled all colleges to focus in a coordinated way on targeted areas within the college improvement process.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government quantifies the economic benefits to the ACT community of international students and monitor this benefit carefully against changes in the national higher education sector.

Government Response

Agreed-in-principle.

The ACT Government will continue to monitor international student numbers studying in the Territory and quantify economic benefits in line with accepted industry multipliers.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support investigate, in consultation with staff at the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre, what forms of staff training are required to reduce the incidences of force required to manage the behaviour of detainees.

Government Response

Not agreed.

There are strict statutory obligations under the *Children and Young People Act 2008* in relation to the use of force against young people at Bimberi to safeguard their rights, safety and well-being.

Force is used as an intervention of last resort to protect a young person after all other strategies (such as negotiation and de-escalation techniques) have been used and failed.

Operational staff receive extensive theoretical and practical training in alternatives to the use of force and how to apply force safely when required, both on induction and on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review the resourcing to the Targeted Intervention Program, particularly to the Adolescent Day Unit, to ensure that quality services can be provided to all vulnerable students needing support.

Government Response

Agreed.

Targeted youth support services such as the Adolescent Day Unit and Youth Connection will be reviewed with a strong focus on developing an appropriate model of service delivery for vulnerable and at risk young people in the ACT. Work is also occurring with the Department of Education and Training to ensure vulnerable students are supported in school settings.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government report to the ACT Legislative Assembly on the outcomes of the review of arts organisation governance and the requirements that will be made regarding membership of the boards of arts organisations.

Government Response**Agreed.**

The review concluded that office bearers of boards should be independent of business, management and/or artistic relationships with the organisation, and that a majority of board members should also be independent.

The review also concluded that the onus of managing conflicts of interest issues should be placed onto Key Arts Organisations. However, board or staff members should limit actual or perceived conflicts of interests and ensure that any conflicts do not unfairly disadvantage members of the public.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that where possible the appropriate Community Council is consulted as a part of the selection and siting process for any public artwork.

Government Response**Agreed.**

For future commissions wherever possible Community Councils will be consulted as part of selection and siting processes.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government explore the possibility of extending the Street Theatre premises to include permanent accommodation facilities for the Canberra Symphony Orchestra's administrative functions.

Government Response**Agreed.**

Funding was allocated in the 2010-11 Budget for design of an extension to the Street Theatre. Construction funding will be sought following the design process.