2001-2002 draft budget initiatives and capital works program for the Department of Education and Community Services

Report Number 8

Standing Committee on Education, Community Services and Recreation

March 2001

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Committee membership

Ms Kerrie Tucker MLA, Chair

Mr Wayne Berry MLA, Deputy Chair

Mrs Jacqui Burke MLA

Secretary: Ms Judith Henderson

Administration: Ms Judy Moutia

Resolution of appointment

> The following general purpose standing committees be established to inquire into and report on matters referred to it by the Assembly or matters that are considered by the committee to be of concern to the community:
>
> …a Standing Committee on Education, Community Services and Recreation to examine education, schooling, training services, children's, youth and family services and sport and recreation and any other related matter.[1]

Terms of reference

Inquire into and report on 2001-2002 draft budget initiatives and capital works program for the Department of Education and Community Services with either:

(a) recommendations that maintain or improve the operating result: or

(b) a conclusion that the committee will not proceed with draft budget initiatives and the 2001-2002 draft Capital Works Program.[2]

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[1] *Minutes of Proceedings,* No 2, 28 April 1998, pp 15-19. Amended 25 November 1999

[2] Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory, *Proof minutes of Proceedings No 113*, p 1178.

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1. Introduction

The 2001-2002 draft budget process

1.1. On 15 February 2001 the Assembly referred to the relevant general purpose standing committees, the 2001-2002 draft budget initiatives and capital works program for inquiry and report. Standing committees were asked to report with either:

- recommendations that improve or maintain the operating result; or
- a conclusion that the committee will not proceed with consideration of the 2001-2002 draft budget initiatives and the draft capital works program.

1.2. Committees were required to report by 23 March 2001, allowing only five weeks for consideration of such an important matter.

1.3. On 16 February 2001, the Treasurer provided the Chair with the relevant draft budget documents. For the draft budget initiatives the information comprised a summary of the financial impact and a short description of each initiative. The draft budget initiatives total $6.12 million. Information on the draft capital works program comprised a summary of financial impact and a list of capital works proposed for the following areas—Government School Education, Vocational Education and Training Services (VET), Children's, Youth and Family Services, and Sport and Recreation. The capital works proposed total $19.31 million. A copy of this information is at Appendix 3.

1.4. The information provided was significantly less detailed than the draft budget initiative for the previous year, when a full draft budget was provided.

1.5. Two weeks after the commencement of the inquiry, on 1 March 2001, the Treasurer advised the Chair that the ACT is likely to receive an ongoing net increase of $4.6 million, as a result of recent findings contained in the Commonwealth Grants Commission's *Report on State Revenue Sharing Relativities 2001 Update.* As a result, the Treasurer invited the committee to suggest additional initiatives up to a limit of $1.692 million.

1.6. There are different views in the committee about the Government's responsibilities in relation to the development of the budget. One member is of the view that it is totally the responsibility of the Government to consult with the community and develop the budget. Others could see some benefits with the draft budget process.

1.7. Overall the process, which changed significantly from the previous year, has not been satisfactory. The timeframe was very short and the information was inadequate, and according to the community sector, the changed process was not well communicated to the community. The short timeframe created problems for the community, the Department of Education and Community Services and the committee.

1.8. Answers to questions taken on notice by the Ministers and officials on 5 March 2001 were not received in time for the committee to consider them fully. The answers to the questions on notice taken by the Minister for Education were not received until 12 noon on 21 March 2001 and those from the Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services were not received at all. The committee found this situation most unsatisfactory. When Ministers fail to provide the committee with information promised in time for full consideration the ability of the committee to report is severely compromised.

1.9. The short timeframe presented a number of problems for community groups, who found it extremely difficult to adequately engage with and consult members and stakeholders.[3]

1.10. There is still some confusion in the community about the committee's role. The committee does not see as one of its roles assessing individual applications for funding. Also the fact that half way through the process the community was asked to consider expenditure of an additional $1.692 million created further confusion.

1.11. Despite these difficulties, the Standing Committee on Education, Community Services and Recreation decided to proceed with an inquiry.

The committee's report

1.12. This report

- outlines issues raised by the community in relation to the initiatives proposed by the Government;
- outlines additional suggestions for funding;
- sets out the committee's conclusions on funding priorities; and
- comments on some of the capital works proposals and recommends additional capital works.

1.13. The report does not include a detailed analysis of need in relation to the funding suggestions made as the committee did not have adequate information to undertake such a task.

1.14. However, over the last three years during its work on various inquiries, the committee has identified a number of areas of need. In addition, some common areas of need emerged during this inquiry. The committee has therefore made some recommendations about broad areas for consideration for funding.

1.15. The committee provided all the submissions to the Minister for Education for consideration by the Department of Education and Community Services and the Treasury in the final formulation of the 2001-2002 budget.

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[3] For example Submission 2, ACTCOSS; Submission 7 Youth Coalition of the ACT; Submission 14, Autism Association of the ACT.

Conduct of the inquiry

1.16. The committee advertised the inquiry in *The Canberra Times* on Saturday 24 February 2001 and in *The Chronicle* the following week.

1.17. In addition, letters inviting input were sent to organisations expected to have an interest in the inquiry. Submissions were requested by 8 March 2001.

1.18. Following receipt of the Treasurer’s letter of 1 March 2001 advising of the possible availability of an additional $1.692 million for new initiatives for the Department of Education and Community Services and related agencies, the committee wrote again to organisations expected to have an interest in the inquiry advising them of the additional money.

1.19. A total of 17 submissions were received. A list of submissions is at Appendix 1.

1.20. The committee conducted two public hearings. The first was held from 11 am to 12.30 pm on 5 March 2001 at which the Minister for Education, Mr Stefaniak MLA, the Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services, Mr Michael Moore MLA, and officials from the Department of Education and Community Services appeared.

1.21. The second was held from 15 March 2001 when a number of community groups gave evidence. Details of those who appeared are at Appendix 2.

1.22. The committee wishes to thank all those who participated in this inquiry.

2. Draft budget initiatives

Context

2.1. The information available to the committee and the community was restricted to the lists of draft budget initiatives and capital works. Both the committee and the community[4] found this frustrating.

2.2. ACTCOSS reflected the views of many when it stated:

> The Council's ability to comment on the Government's draft measures has been limited by a lack of information. Without the publication of an entire draft budget, it is not possible to determine whether these measures represent new initiatives, whether they are merely existing initiatives re-named, or whether they are Commonwealth programs being implemented by the ACT. In addition the Council does not know which programs have been cut to fund these new initiatives. This is a critical issue which severely compromises the Council's ability to evaluate these measures.[5]

2.3. The committee raised some of these matters with the Minister for Education at the public hearing and was provided with some additional information. The Minister advised that the total budget for 2001-2002 for the Department of Education and Community Services at stage 2 of the budget process was $417.6 million in Government payment for outputs (GPO), $21.4 million in capital injection, and total expenditure of $466.7 million. In addition there is territorial revenue and expenditure.[6]

2.4. This compares with the 2000-2001 budget when GPO was $404.7 million, capital injection of $23.43 million and expenditure of $451 million.[7]

2.5. The committee also requested a draft budget for the Department of Education and Community Services which would show where changes had been made and the level of funding proposed for each output class. Although the committee was told at the public hearing of 5 March 2001, that that information would be made available to the committee if Treasury agreed, the committee did not receive a draft budget. In his letter of 21 March 2001 the Minister stated:

> I provide the following comment in relation to the question on additional budget information. The information released in the draft 2001-2002 budget process differs from that provided in the 2000-01 draft budget. This difference results from the two phase process used

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[4] For example Submission 2, ACTCOSS; Submission 5, Belconnen Community Service, Submission 7 Youth Coalition of the ACT.
[5] Submission 2, ACTCOSS, p1.
[6] Uncorrected Proof Transcript, 5 March 2001, p 2.
[7] Uncorrected Proof Transcript, 5 March 2001, p 2. 2000-2001 Budget Paper No 4, p 253.

> in 2001-2002. The Government's intention of the two phase process was to allow the Assembly to focus on:
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> - the current financial estimates and mix of outputs in Phase I, through the Select Committee on the 2001-2002 Budget; and
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> - the Government's proposed changes to spending priorities in Phase II, through the five portfolio standing committees.
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> As a result, the Phase II packages are limited to agencies' draft budget initiatives and capital works program, ie those aspects of agencies operations that are proposed to change in the 2001-2002 budget[8].

2.6. The Minister also stated the following as reasons for not providing additional budget material:

> The Government's aim is to reduce the Portfolio Standing Committees' workload and minimise any duplication with the work undertaken by the Select Committee on the 2001-2002 Budget in Phase I.[9]

2.7. On the contrary, the committee considers that the additional information requested was necessary to inform its work.

2.8. Further, the committee notes that the Select Committee on the 2001-2002 Budget was not satisfied with the process in Phase I.

2.9. The Minister for Education advised that there will be no reductions in funding for existing programs. The only negative changes are related to technical adjustments such as a variation in superannuation liability. All the initiatives will be funded by additional GPO.[10]

2.10. The initiatives proposed for the Department of Education and Community Services and the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) total $6.12 million.

Examination of the initiatives

2.11. Overall the initiatives were welcomed. The community response to the initiatives indicated no disagreement with the proposed measures. Certainly in some areas the community suggested expansion.

2.12. At the public hearing on 5 March 2001, the committee sought additional information from the Minister for Education and the Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services on the proposed initiatives. However as already mentioned what information that was provided was received so late in the process that the committee was unable to consider it fully. Some information promised was not received at all.

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[8] Minister for Education, correspondence dated 21 March 2001.
[9] ibid
[10] Uncorrected Proof Transcript, 5 March 2001, p 3, 4.

2.13. The initiatives cover some aspects of the Government’s key themes of addressing poverty, early intervention and innovation. However as ACTCOSS pointed out, there are few measures in the Education and Community Services’ draft budget initiatives that specifically respond to the reports of the ACT Poverty Task Group. [11]

2.14. Comments were also made about the implementation of some of the initiatives. ACTCOSS stressed that the implementation of the CIT Virtual Campus must not result in a diminution of non-IT initiatives in the ACT.[12] ACTCOSS also raised the need to ensure that in implementing the IT School Grants initiative children without home or previous experience with computers are given adequate and appropriate training and support.

2.15. One issue the committee explored was how some of the initiatives would meet the level of assessed need. For example, ‘CIT scholarships for disadvantages students’ and ‘support for students at risk’.

2.16. The CIT scholarships for disadvantaged students initiative will provide 50 scholarships, each worth $2,000, per year for new and continuing students. The scholarships will be awarded based on previous academic performance to students within the target group, that is, those who demonstrate disadvantage. The committee was interested to know the size of the target group, that is, how many students would qualify. The Minister advised that the best available indicator of financial disadvantage is the number of students who are provided with student fee concessions each year. In 2000, 3,243 students received fee concessions.[13] The scholarship initiative will therefore only provide assistance to a very small proportion of eligible students.

2.17. The support for students at risk initiative provides for the establishment and operation of a program to support students at risk of early school leaving. An amount of $206,000 has been allocated. This money will cover the costs of employment of a co-ordinator and three case mangers, who will work with students, parents, schools and the community. A number of organisations suggested that this amount is inadequate.[14]

2.18. The proposed allocation of funding for IT school grants was also seen as inadequate. The Council of P&Cs pointed out that this amounts to less than $13,000 per government school.[15]

2.19. The Catholic Education Commission expressed concern that none of the proposals it made to the Select Committee on the 2001-2002 Budget were included in

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[11] Submission 2, ACTCOSS.
[12] Submission 2, ACTCOSS, p 16.
[13] Minister for Education, correspondence dated 21 March 2001.
[14] For example Submission 8 Australian Education Union; Submission 12 ACT Council of P&Cs; Submission 7, Youth Coalition of the ACT.
[15] Submission 12, ACT Council of P&Cs Inc.

the new initiatives proposed by the Government.[16] All submissions from that inquiry were made available to the Treasurer.

2.20. The Catholic Education Commission, while welcoming the fact that the Government proposes to fund the common assessment process for literacy and numeracy expressed concern regarding its conditional nature and timeline. According to the Catholic Education Commission funding is dependent on non-government schools using the Educational Testing Centre (ETC) instrument, which has been largely developed without consultation with the non-government sector.

[16] Submission 4, Catholic Education Commission.

3. Additional initiatives

3.1. As mentioned earlier in this report the Treasurer advised the committee that there could be up to $1.692 million available in the 2001-2002 budget for further initiatives in education, community services and recreation.

3.2. The community suggested a range of additional programs requiring funding. This chapter outlines the additional initiatives suggested.

3.3. In proposing additional initiatives several organisations argued strongly for additional funds, above the proposed $1.692m, to be provided for public education rather than making tax cuts.[17]

3.4. Some organisations provided detailed information on the need for particular programs to assist students at risk of not achieving satisfactory educational outcomes.[18] The committee will examine these proposals when finalising its inquiry into adolescents and young adults at risk of not achieving satisfactory education and training outcomes.

Increased funding for initiatives proposed

3.5. Many organisations suggested expansion of several of the initiatives proposed by the Government.

Government school sector

3.6. Within the government school sector additional funding was proposed for the following initiatives:

- the information technology grants program
- support for students at risk
- early intervention student management program.

3.7. Both the Council of P&Cs and the Australian Education Union (AEU) argued strongly for additional funds for information technology in schools. The AEU pointed out that the information technology grants program does not provide for an improved capacity to deliver maintenance support in schools or systemic curriculum leadership in information technology.[19]

3.8. Maintenance support is critical.

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[17] For example Submissions 2, 8, 12.

[18] For example Submissions 7, 13.

[19] Submission 8, Australian Education Union.

3.9. Without some systemic support schools must find it extremely difficult to make decisions about how to invest their resources in information technology in a way that ensures best practice, pedagogical appropriateness and value for money.

Non-government school sector

3.10. Representatives of non-government school organisations proposed increased funding for ‘early childhood support- non-government schools’. The Catholic Education Commission argued that since non-government schools have 32.8 per cent of the total enrolments in kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 2 in the Territory, they should receive a more equitable share of additional funding. Under the current proposal non-government schools would receive 5.4 per cent of the total funding for this initiative. The Catholic Education Commission claimed that an equitable distribution would see non-government schools receiving 25 per cent of the Government per capita rate for this initiative, amounting to $2.659m. This estimate is based on acceptance that the ACT Government has a shared responsibility with the Commonwealth and with parents, together with the ACT Government’s promised move to relativity with New South Wales.

3.11. The Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools (APFACTS) calculated that at least $246,000 is needed in 2001-2002 and $3.726m over the four year period to assist in the reduction of early childhood class sizes. [20]

Suggestions for additional initiatives

Government school sector

3.12. A number of suggestions for additional initiatives to be funded in the government school sector were made.

3.13. The Australian Education Union suggested the following.[21]

- Additional funds of $100,000 should be provided across primary schools in 2001 to compensate schools for the cost of the trial of testing of kindergarten students.

- Special schools need increased and different resourcing—a significant proportion of costs of special education should be borne by the Health portfolio as they relate to medical services rather than education programs.

3.14. ACTCOSS recommended that both teachers and students – particularly those without home IT access – be given adequate and appropriate training and support as IT equipment is introduced into schools.[22]

3.15. The ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations Inc suggested the following.[23]

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[20] Submission 15, Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools.
[21] Submission 8, Australian Education Union.
[22] Submission 2, ACTCOSS.

- The introduction of new initiatives in support of parent participation, such as the provision of additional staffing resources to facilitate better home/school communication and the promotion of home/school links and the provision of information to parents to help their children's learning. This proposal is expected to cost approximately $2m.

- Additional funds to address literacy and numeracy and behavioural problems in upper primary school be allocated. According to the Council of P&CS approximately $5m is required.

- An additional $8.5m be allocated to support high school development and staffing.

3.16. The Autism Association of the ACT claimed that additional funding is required to address the existing levels of unmet need and plan for the increasing and emerging levels of need for children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders.[24]

Canberra Institute of Technology

3.17. The Australian Education Union reported that substantial unmet student demand and quality staff retention are issues for the CIT.[25]

Non-government school sector

3.18. Additional initiatives proposed for the non-government school sector are as follows.

- Both the Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Parents and Friends of Non-Government Schools of the ACT (APFACTS) argued for the Government to honour its election promise to increase the per capita grant pool for non-government schools to achieve relativity with NSW.

- Both these organisations also argued for an increase in funding to non-government schools for students with disabilities. The Catholic Education Commission requested that the Government continue to provide $100,000 per year while APFACTS saw a need for a total of an additional $300,000 in the 2001-2002 budget to meet the needs of the increasing number of students with disabilities enrolling in non-government schools. APFACTS claimed that students with disabilities are moving from the government to the non-government sector.[26]

3.19. The new SES funding arrangements put in place by the Federal Government are creating uncertainty for non-government schools. APFACTS told the committee,

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[23] Submission15, ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations Inc.
[24] Submission 14, Autism Association of the ACT.
[25] Submission 8.
[26] Uncorrected Proof Transcript, 15 March 2001, p 80.

it is seeking an indication from the ACT Government as to what it is prepared to do to make sure the funding system remains stable.[27]

3.20. The Australian International Christian School requested funding for an alternative program for students at risk.[28]

Youth services

3.21. The Youth Coalition of the ACT raised the following.[29]

- Youth services should receive an adequate level of funding to ensure that occupational health and safety (OH&S) obligations can be met.
- Resources be provided for additional 'identified positions' in youth services, for indigenous workers and workers from non-English speaking background.
- The Youth Services Program allocation be increased by 30 per cent to fund extra service delivery to meet increased demands from schools.
- The need for a Youth Night Shelter be researched.

Care and protection

3.22. The Youth Coalition of the ACT made the following suggestions.[30]

- Additional resources be provided to Marlow cottage for upgrading and ongoing upkeep of basic facilities.
- A review be undertaken to investigate the effectiveness of current 'out of home' care options and successful alternative models for young people in the care and protection system.
- The ACT Government consider the need to research, develop and resource best practice model services and/or facilities for those on therapeutic protection orders.
- The Government establish an 'after care' service for those who have been in care until at least age 25.
- Funding be increased for CREATE to allow the employment of two full time workers

Community sector

3.23. ACTCOSS and the Youth Coalition of the ACT proposed the following.[31]

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[27] Uncorrected Proof Transcript, 15 March 2001, p 76.
[28] Submission 11, Australian International Christian School.
[29] Submission 7, Youth Coalition of the ACT.
[30] Submission 7, Youth Coalition of the ACT.
[31] Submissions 2 and 7.

- Funds be provided in 2001-02 for an assessment of the OH&S requirements of community sector organisations. Following this, additional funding be provided to community organisations in the out years to ensure ongoing compliance with OH&S legislation and to address any issues identified in the OH&S assessment process.

- The standard service purchasing contract be amended to provide for automatic adjustment to fund award pay increases and automatic adjustments under the Superannuation Guarantee Act.

- The Government increase all service purchasing contracts to allow for organisations to meet all GST requirements without having to reduce outputs.

- The Government ensure that community agencies are funded sufficiently to comply with the terms and conditions of the SACS award.

- The Government allocate resources in the 2001-2002 budget to conduct a feasibility study into the establishment of a standard common insurance policy arrangement for the ACT, based on the scheme operating in Victoria.

3.24. ACTCOSS proposed the following. [32]

- The Government provide funding for the administration costs of the ACT's No Interest Loans Scheme.

- The Government set aside funds to address the recommendations of the Gambling and Racing Commission's research into problem gambling in the ACT.

- Funding be set aside in the 2001-02 budget to resource needs identified in the review of services for child survivors of sexual assault.

- Funds be allocated to work towards cooperative policy development processes in the ACT.

3.25. The Youth Coalition of the ACT suggested the following.[33]

- Funds be allocated to indigenous agencies to resource preventative and early intervention programs aimed at supporting indigenous families.

3.26. The Tuggeranong and Belconnen Community Services proposed the following.[34]

- Additional funds be allocated for family support programs where children have high risk behaviour; these funds should be given to support the seven programs currently in operation in the community services. Since the introduction of Parentlink and other such programs providing information and referral, the

[32] Submission2
[33] Submission 7, Youth Coalition of the ACT.
[34] Submission 6.

community services have experienced a large increase in referrals to family support services.[35]

- Additional funds be allocated for community access and participation programs for young people, people on low incomes and people with a disability.

- A monitoring service for aged persons who are socially isolated be introduced and operated by the regional community services.

3.27. The Smith Family suggested additional funding for its Learning for Life program and a computer club.[36]

3.28. Galilee proposed additional funding for its day program and educational services to enable it to maintain its basic services, sustain its basic education program, expunge its deficit and improve its infrastructure.[37]

Recommendations of Poverty Task Group

3.29. The establishment of an implementation group, comprising key stakeholders, in government, the community and business to develop and implement the recommendations of the Poverty Task Group is seen by ACTCOSS and the Youth Coalition of the ACT as critical for ensuring that the work of the Task Group is built upon.[38] ACTCOSS suggested that part of the work of such a group must include a comprehensive needs analysis and the subsequent development of community services plans to address unmet need and the critical access to resources issues identified by the Poverty Task Group.

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[35] Uncorrected Proof Transcript, 15 March 2001, p 99.
[36] Submission 16, The Smith Family.
[37] Submission 17, Galilee.
[38] Submissions 2 and 7.

4. The committee's conclusions on funding priorities

4.1. The Treasurer advised the committee that an additional $1.692m could be made available to the Education and Community Services portfolio. This amount was determined by dividing the additional funds of $4.6m among the five portfolio areas based on their proportion of the total ACT budget. Because the Education and Community Services portfolio has the largest budget it received the largest proportion of the additional funds. The committee rejects this arbitrary and simplistic way of allocating fund.

4.2. The committee is not in a position to make detailed recommendations about the amount of funding required for particular programs as it has not been provided with sufficient information to enable it to assess relative need, neither has it been given the full draft budget to see the context. Further, the committee does not believe that its role is to undertake such a task.

4.3. The committee is in a position however, to make broad recommendations about areas of need identified during this inquiry as well as in other inquiries.

4.4. During the last three years and in the Third Assembly a number of inquiries were undertaken by the Standing Committee on Education, Community Services and Recreation and the former Standing Committee on Social Policy, which identified significant gaps in services and areas of need in education and community services. The Government accepted most of the recommendations made. However, many have not been implemented. The committee considers that it is time for a stocktake of the implementation status of these recommendations. Those that have been accepted by Government and not implemented should be considered for funding in the 2001-2002 budget.

Recommendation 1

4.5. The committee recommends that the Government provide the committee with details of the implementation status of all recommendations accepted by Government relating to education and community services made by the Standing Committee on Education, Community Services and Recreation and the Standing Committee on Social Policy of the Third Assembly.

4.6. Broad areas of need identified by this committee include:

- programs for students at risk of not achieving satisfactory education outcomes;
- family support;
- student welfare and behaviour management, including counselling support and mental health services for students and young people;

- information technology support, both infrastructure maintenance support and system level curriculum support;
- special education (in the government and non-government sectors);
- adequate resourcing for community organisations to enable them to meet award, occupational health and safety, and GST requirements;
- commitment to an integrated approach to the delivery of support services;
- implementation of the Poverty Task Group recommendations.

4.7. In relation to funding for students with disabilities in both the government and non-government sectors, the committee is concerned that this matter has not been satisfactorily resolved. In regards the non-government sector there are claims that students with disabilities are moving from the government to the non-government sector and more students with disabilities are enrolling in non-government schools. The committee considers that the Government needs to ascertain the level of need for funding for this program.

4.8. The committee will be completing its report on the inquiry into adolescents and young adults at risk of not achieving satisfactory education and training outcomes before the beginning of the 2001-2002 financial year and asks that the Government consider the recommendations of that report when making final decisions on funding allocations.

4.9. As already stated, the committee is concerned that decisions regarding expenditure are based on a fragmented understanding of social need and a superficial way of allocating proposed additional funds. This point has been made in various reports over this and the last Assembly where recommendations have been made to develop a social plan. The current method leaves the committee concerned that those groups who are not politically adept will not attract the attention of decision makers and many worthy projects may not be funded. There needs to be a comprehensive and objective analysis of need that is not dependent on political strength. The Government needs to resource the development of a social plan to provide a context for determining funding priorities.

Recommendation 2

4.10. The committee recommends that the Government resource the development of a social plan to assist in determining funding priorities.

Recommendation 3

4.11. The committee recommends that when finalising the 2001-2002 budget, the Government consider the views expressed in this inquiry (through submissions and the report) about funding priorities.

4.12. The committee is concerned that there is a perception in the community that subject levies requested in government schools are compulsory and that participation in a particular course is dependent on payment of that course's levy. The committee requests the Department of Education and Community Services to ensure that parents are fully aware that subject levies are voluntary.

5. Capital works program

5.1. A number of matters relating to the capital works program were raised in submissions and at public hearings.

5.2. The committee sought clarification from the Minister for Education in relation to the relocation of the O'Connell Centre and the building of the Belconnen pool.

Relocation of the O'Connell Centre

5.3. In relation to the relocation of the O'Connell Centre from Griffith, the committee was advised that the Government has announced that it is looking at other plans for the site, and therefore the centre needs to move. To operate from the Griffith site for the long term, the centre would require significant maintenance and minor new works, amounting to approximately $1.4 million. The planning process for the move is underway.[39]

5.4. The committee received a submission from a Griffith resident expressing strong opposition to the proposal to the redevelopment of Section 78 Griffith and the relocation of the O'Connell Centre.[40]

5.5. The question of the redevelopment of Section 78 in Griffith is not a matter for this committee. The committee notes the Government's rationale for the relocation of the O'Connell Centre but has not had an opportunity to investigate this issue in depth.

Belconnen pool

5.6. In relation to the Belconnnen pool, no additional funds were allocated for 2001-2002. However an amount of approximately $10 million has already been appropriated, but not spent.[41]

5.7. The committee heard from two members of the community who expressed extreme frustration and disappointment with the consultation process relating to the Belconnen pool. They felt that question of public benefit has not been adequately addressed during the consultation and planning process.[42]

5.8. The committee notes that the issue of the Belconnen pool has been the subject of two past election promises by the Government and is sympathetic to the level of frustration and anger felt in the community because of the failure of the construction to begin.

[39] Uncorrected Proof Transcript, 5 March 2001 p 19.
[40] Submission 3.
[41] Uncorrected Proof Transcript, 5 March 2001, p 19.
[42] Uncorrected Proof Transcript, 15 March 2001 pp 56-58, Ms Flint and Mr Short.

Car parking at Gold Creek School

5.9. The need for additional car parking at Gold Creek School was raised by the Gold Creek School Parents and Citizens Association. The association claims that another 50 car park spaces are required to meet the needs at the school. From the evidence given the current situation appears to be unsafe. The committee was told parents fear injury to children as cars jostle for positions in the afternoon.[43]

5.10. There was insufficient time for the committee to investigate these concerns further, but the Government needs to urgently respond to them.

Recommendation 4

5.11. The committee recommends that the Department of Education and Community Services urgently review the car parking arrangements at Gold Creek School and undertake the necessary capital works to ensure safety.

Community facility at Kippax

5.12. The Kippax Task Force proposed funding be set aside for the building of community facilities at the Kippax Group Centre. This organisation advised the committee that an investigation of the need for the provision of a multi-purpose community facility was to be undertaken by the Department of Education and Community Services in 2000-2001.

5.13. The Kippax Task Force and other community organisations in the West Belconnen area have been campaigning for a community centre for many years. The committee considers that it is time the Government advised the community of its plans.

Recommendation 5

5.14. The committee recommends that the Government report to the Assembly on its plans to progress the development of a community centre at the Kippax Group Centre.

5.15. The committee would be interested in developing a greater understanding of how the Government makes decisions about the need for community facilities.

[43] Submission 1, Gold Creek School Parents and Citizens Association.

<u>Recommendation 6</u>

5.16. The committee recommends that the Government table in the Assembly a list of all the analysis undertaken in the last six years on the need for additional community facilities at Kippax and across Canberra.

Interest Subsidy Scheme

5.17. The Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools once again drew the committee’s attention to the need for a small increase in the base funding level of the Interest Subsidy Scheme. The scheme provides interest subsidy support for capital works for non-government schools. Without an increase, the committee was told all applications will not be able to be met which could mean the difference between a building project proceeding or not.

5.18. The Catholic Education Commission proposes an addition of $300,000. It argues this would ensure that maximum Commonwealth Government capital support will be attracted to the Territory with the benefit of a return to the ACT economy.

5.19. The committee considers that a review of the funding for the scheme is timely.

<u>Recommendation 7</u>

5.20. The committee recommends that the Government review the base funding level of the Interest Subsidy Scheme.

Kerrie Tucker MLA
Chair
22 March 2001

Appendix 1 Submissions received

1. Ms Glenys Darnell, Gold Creek School
2. Mr Daniel Stubbs, ACTCOSS
3. Mr Frank Mestrov
4. Mr Geoff Joy, Catholic Education Commission
5. Ms Margo Mitchell, Belconnen Community Service
6. Ms Maureen Cane, Tuggeranong Community Service
7. Ms Meredith Hunter, Youth Coalition of the ACT
8. Mr Clive Haggar, Australian Education Union
9. Ms Susan Shallcross
10. Mr Chris Watson, Kippax Task Force
11. Ms Helen McClure, Australian International Christian School
12. Dr Ian Morgan, ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations Inc
13. Mr Shane Hudson Self Image Behavioral and Social Unit Richardson Primary School
14. Dr Andrew Brien, Autism Association of the ACT (3 parts)
15. Mr Eric Chalmers Assc. of Parents & Friends of ACT Schools Inc.
16. Mr Bill Morris The Smith Family
17. Galilee

Appendix 2 Witnesses at public hearings

5 March 2001

Mr Bill Stefaniak MLA, Minister for Education

Mr Trevor Wheeler, Executive Director, Sport and Corporate Resources, Department of Education and Community Services (DECS)

Mr Jim Coleborne, Executive Director, Education and Training DECS

Mr Peter Kowald, Acting General Manager, Corporate Services, Canberra Institute of Technology

Mr Michael Moore MLA, Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services

Mr Trevor Wheeler, Executive Director, Sport and Corporate Resources, DECS

Ms Sue Birtles, Executive Director, Children’s, Youth and Family Services Bureau, DECS

15 March 2001

<u>For the Catholic Education Commission</u>

Mr John Barker, Head Finance and Planning

<u>For Gold Creek School P&C Association</u>

Ms Glenys Darnell, President

<u>For Kippax Task Force</u>

Dr Chris Watson, Convenor

Mr Graham Wright, Member

<u>As individuals</u>

Mr David Short

Ms Norma Flint

For the Youth Coalition of the ACT

Ms Meredith Hunter, Executive Officer

Ms Susan Pellegrino, Project and Policy Officer

For the Autism Association of the ACT

Dr Andrew Brien, President

For the Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools

Mr Eric Chalmers, President

Mr Lawrie Woolf, Committee member

Mr Jim Collins, Committee member

Ms Maureen Hartung, Member

For the ACT Council on Social Service

Mr Daniel Stubbs, Director

Mr Chris Johnston, Policy Officer

For the Australian Education Union

Mr Clive Haggar, Branch Secretary

Ms Fiona Macgregor, Assistant Branch Secretary

For the Tuggeranong Community Service and the Belconnen Community Service

Ms Maureen Cane, CEO, Tuggeranong Community Service (TCS)

Mr Tony Campbell, Manager Support Link, TCS

Ms Margo Mitchell, Executive Director, Belconnen Community Service

For the ACT Council on P&Cs

Dr Ian Morgan, President

Mr Trevor Cobbold, Secretary

Appendix 3 - 2001-2002 budget consultation document

Australian Capital Territory

2001-02 Budget Consultation:

Phase II

Education, Community Services and Recreation

Draft Budget Initiatives

Summary of Financial Impact

	2001-02 Budget $'000	2002-03 Estimate $'000	2003-04 Estimate $'000	2004-05 Estimate $'000
Revenue				
Crisis Accommodation and Management	838	849	860	871
Increase/(Decrease) in Revenue	**838**	**849**	**860**	**871**
Expenses				
CIT Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students	100	100	100	100
Improved Information Systems for Community Organisations	13	25	25	25
Development of CIT Virtual Campus	500	0	0	0
Online Curriculum	150	150	150	150
IT School Grants	1 250	1 250	0	0
Protecting Children	351	359	367	375
Lower Early Childhood Class Sizes for Primary schools – Government Schools	1 468	4 394	7 221	8 732
Early Childhood Support - Non Government Schools	82	248	412	500
Indigenous Youth Centre	100	102	105	108
Expansion of the Out of School Education Program	120	122	124	126
Early Intervention Student Management Program	62	96	98	101
Youth Connection Family Support	75	76	77	79
Support for Students at Risk	206	211	211	211
Non-Government Schools Common Assessment Process for Literacy and	120	250	256	263

Numeracy				
Crisis Accommodation and Management	1 523	1 543	1 563	1 583
Increase/(Decrease) in Expenses	**6 120**	**8 926**	**10 709**	**12 353**
Net Impact on Operating Result	**(5 282)**	**(8 077)**	**(9 849)**	**(11 482)**

Initiative Descriptions

CIT Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students	2001-02 $'000	2002-03 $'000	2003-04 $'000	2004-05 $'000
Expenses	100	100	100	100

This initiative provides 50 scholarships to enable financially disadvantaged students (including indigenous students) to undertake study at CIT. The scholarships would include both new and continuing students in the target group and would be awarded based on previous academic performance.

Improved Information Systems for Community Organisations	2001-02 $'000	2002-03 $'000	2003-04 $'000	2004-05 $'000
Expenses	13	25	25	25

This initiative provides for the development of a flexible data collection and reporting system for contracted community services. This initiative will improve the efficiency of data collection processes and the reliability of data. This will assist the Department with the development of policy and funding initiatives within the sector. The financial impact above will differ from the funding that will be provided ($0.100m), as the system will be capitalised and depreciated over four years.

Development of CIT Virtual Campus	2001-02 $'000	2002-03 $'000	2003-04 $'000	2004-05 $'000
Expenses	500	0	0	0

This initiative provides for the development of an on-line virtual campus for delivery of CIT programs through the Internet, linked to the take up of the broadband cable across Canberra. This initiative will enable lifelong ACT learners to access vocational education from their home or workplaces. This will be complementary to the e-service initiative, which will enable students to access the administration aspects of CIT.

Online Curriculum	2001-02 $'000	2002-03 $'000	2003-04 $'000	2004-05 $'000
Expenses	150	150	150	150

This initiative provides for the ACT's contribution to the development of on-line curriculum through a joint Federal and State/Territory governments project over five years. The materials will be developed by State and Territory education agencies in partnership with industry. This initiative will assist the improvement of teaching quality through improved access to high quality curriculum materials.

IT School Grants	2001-02 $'000	2002-03 $'000	2003-04 $'000	2004-05 $'000
Expenses	1 250	1 250	0	0

This initiative extends the four year IT School Grants program by two years. This allows government schools to provide and maintain schools' IT facilities that will give them access to the internet and national on-line curriculum resources. The initiative will also contribute toward improving IT competencies for Year 10 students in government schools.

Protecting Children	2001-02 $'000	2002-03 $'000	2003-04 $'000	2004-05 $'000
Expenses	351	359	367	375

This initiative aims to strengthen measures for the protection of children, early intervention to prevent family breakdown, child abuse and neglect. The initiative will enable recruitment of senior child protection supervisors, provision of training to child protection staff and related agencies in the community services system, engage an Indigenous child protection worker and the provision of family support options for families at risk.

The program will raise the level of child protection through improved child protection decision making; provide an increased level of support to the Indigenous community and strengthen the capacity of families generally to keep their families safe.

Lower Early Childhood Class Sizes for Primary Schools – Government Schools	2001-02 $'000	2002-03 $'000	2003-04 $'000	2004-05 $'000
Expenses	1 468	4 394	7 221	8 732

This initiative provides additional teachers to enable the reduction of kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 2 class sizes in government schools to a maximum of twenty-one students. The reduction would occur progressively over the period from 2002 to 2004. This initiative will support better educational outcomes for lower primary students, particularly those with a range of challenging life circumstances.

Early Childhood Support - Non Government Schools	2001-02 $'000	2002-03 $'000	2003-04 $'000	2004-05 $'000
Expenses	82	248	412	500

This initiative provides additional per capita funding to non-government schools, for kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 2 in recognition of the importance of the early years of schooling. The provision of funding would occur progressively over the period from 2002 to 2004. This initiative will support better educational outcomes for lower primary students, particularly those with a range of challenging life circumstances.

Indigenous Youth Centre	2001-02 $'000	2002-03 $'000	2003-04 $'000	2004-05 $'000
Expenses	100	102	105	108

This initiative provides additional funding for the enhancement of the Indigenous Youth Centre's services, which will include an Indigenous High School Support Centre. This initiative will allow the Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation to build on their capacity to address the needs of Indigenous young people in the community, and Indigenous students who are at risk of performing poorly in the ACT education system.

The program will provide additional staff and education support resources so that Gugan Gulwan can provide greater support to a range of young people in need. This would be achieved through a range of flexible delivery methods including on-site educational support, in-school tutorial and cultural assistance and outreach services to the community. The service would have the potential to service a large proportion of the ACT's Indigenous students, in particular secondary students, whilst maintaining an effective broad service for Indigenous youth.

The program will also support Indigenous students and other young people to achieve additional opportunities for better performance at school, transition from school to work and access to culturally appropriate support and recreation services.

Expansion of the Out of School Education Program	2001-02 $'000	2002-03 $'000	2003-04 $'000	2004-05 $'000
Expenses	120	122	124	126

This initiative expands the successful Out of School Education Program. This program provides young people, who have left mainstream educational settings, with the opportunity to re-engage in education in a non-threatening, flexible and informal environment. The initiative will enable increased attendance for the program, enhance quality and flexibility of delivery and develop outreach support.

Early Intervention Student Management Program	2001-02 $'000	2002-03 $'000	2003-04 $'000	2004-05 $'000
Expenses	62	96	98	101

This initiative will allow government schools to address better the growing number of student management issues in schools, with a particular emphasis on early intervention and professional development. The initiative will support the establishment of an early intervention unit, and a program of professional development for teaching and administrative staff.

The initiative complements the *Schools as Communities* project, in that it is based on the philosophy of early intervention. The professional development aspect of the initiative will be developed in consultation with the *Schools as Communities* team.

Youth Connection Family Support	2001-02 $'000	2002-03 $'000	2003-04 $'000	2004-05 $'000
Expenses	75	76	77	79

This initiative provides support to some of the most at risk families in the ACT, through the provision of counselling and support services. The program will provide a specialised family counselling service for 60 at-risk families, in order to support improvements in the level of resilience in these families.

Support for Students at Risk	2001-02 $'000	2002-03 $'000	2003-04 $'000	2004-05 $'000
Expenses	206	211	211	211

This initiative provides for the establishment and operation of a Support for Students at Risk Program to support students at risk of early school leaving. The program will strengthen partnerships with agencies, schools and community groups to improve transitions between education, employment and training activities for young people.

Non Government Schools Common Assessment Process for Literacy and Numeracy	2001-02 $'000	2002-03 $'000	2003-04 $'000	2004-05 $'000
Expenses	120	250	256	263

This initiative provides for the provision of a common literacy and numeracy assessment process for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in non-government schools, as presently operates in government schools. The initiative supports the assessment of Years 3 and 5 in 2001, expanding to 3, 5, 7 and 9 in 2002 and subsequent years. The initiative will also provide information for parents and teachers on student performance and assist with the provision of required ACT wide results to the Commonwealth.

Crisis Accommodation and Management	2001-02 $'000	2002-03 $'000	2003-04 $'000	2004-05 $'000
Revenue	838	849	860	871
Expenses	1 523	1 543	1 563	1 583

This initiative provides increased funding to service providers of crisis accommodation to meet increased costs associated with introduction of the SACS Award for services provided under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). The initiative will enable the service providers to maintain quality service provision at current service delivery levels. The initiative is jointly funded by the Commonwealth and ACT with the Commonwealth contribution being $838,000 per year.

Draft Capital Works Program

Summary of Financial Impact

	Estimated Total Cost $'000	2001-02 Financing $'000	2002-03 Financing $'000	2003-04 Financing $'000	Estimated Completion Date
Government School Education					
Modifications and Upgrade - Older Schools	2 000	1 000	1 000	0	June 2003
Transportable Classrooms	3 745	3 745	0	0	Jan 2002
O'Connell Centre Relocation	2 000	2 000	0	0	Jun 2002
Safety Facilities – Roof Safety, Glazing and Safety Switches	300	300	0	0	Dec 2002
Upgrade Specialist Areas (Science)	1 300	800	500	0	Oct 2002
Upgrade Specialist Areas (Technology)	300	300	0	0	Jan 2002
Minor New Works – Government School Education	2 900	2 900	0	0	June 2002
Forward Design					
Upgrade Specialist Areas (Science)	200	200	0	0	June 2002
Gungahlin Primary	300	300	0	0	June 2002
Gungahlin High School	600	600	0	0	June 2002
	13 645	*12 145*	*1 500*	*0*	
VET Services (Canberra Institute of Technology)					
Minor New Works	2 000	2 000	0	0	June 2002
	2 000	*2 000*	*0*	*0*	
Children's, Youth and Family Services					
Preschool – Amaroo	955	80	875	0	Jan 2003
Minor New Works – Children's Youth and Family Services	1 100	1 100	0	0	June 2002
	2 055	*1 180*	*875*	*0*	
Sport and Recreation					
Sportsground Improvement	900	600	300	0	June 2002

	Estimated Total Cost $'000	2001-02 Financing $'000	2002-03 Financing $'000	2003-04 Financing $'000	Estimated Completion Date
Minor New Works – Sport and Recreation	648	648	0	0	June 2002
Feasibility Studies					
Conditional Audit – Civic Pool Permanent Cover	60	60	0	0	June 2002
	1 608	*1 308*	*300*	*0*	
Total New Capital Works	**19 308**	**16 633**	**2 675**	**0**	

Government School Education

- *Older schools refurbishment ($2.0m)*

This project involves upgrading a range of facilities in Primary Schools in the older suburbs of Canberra, such as Yarralumla and Campbell, which have an average age of 20-25 years.

- *Transportable classrooms ($3.745m)*

This project is aimed at providing transportable classroom units for Gold Creek, Lanyon High School, Charles Condor Primary and Ngunnawal Preschool ($1.440m). The Department has also brought forward a 2001-02 Budget initiative “Lower Early Childhood Class Sizes for Primary Schools”, which proposes to reduce class sizes within primary schools. This will require additional transportable classrooms within primary schools to ensure accommodation of excess students resulting from the implementation of reduced classes ($2.305m).

- *O’Connell Centre Relocation ($2.0m)*

This project provides for the relocation of functions currently located within the O’Connell Centre in anticipation of the redevelopment of Section 78 Griffith.

- *Safety Facilities ($0.3m)*

The provision of safe facilities within schools across the Territory for use by staff and/or students in relation to roof safety, glazing and earth leakage protection.

- *Upgrade specialist science areas ($1.3m)*

The aim of this project is to have science area facilities in a safe condition and meeting current education, building and OH&S standards/ requirements. Works are proposed for Copeland College and Hawker College.

- *Upgrade specialist technology areas ($0.300m)*

Project aims to have technology area facilities in a safe condition and meeting current education, building and OH&S standards / requirements. Works are proposed for the Canberra College (Weston) and Woden School.

- *Forward Design - Upgrade specialist areas (Science) ($0.200m)*

Replacements of obsolete benching, floor coverings, ceilings and storage and fume cupboards to meet the current standards. Works are proposed for Stromlo High School, Melrose High School and Canberra College (Weston).

- *Forward Design – Older schools refurbishment ($0.200m)*

This project involves upgrading a range of facilities in Schools in the older suburbs of Canberra, this project is to undertake work at Lyneham High School and Dickson College.

- *Forward Design – Gungahlin Primary ($0.300m)*

This project seeks to identify design options for the provision and establishment of a government primary school in Amaroo to be operational for commencement in 2004.

- *Forward Design – Gungahlin High School ($0.600m)*

This project seeks to identify design options for the provision and establishment of a government high school in Amaroo to be operational for commencement in 2005.

- *Minor New Works – Government School Education ($2.9m)*

To provide for a range of minor new works projects, each individually costed up to $0.250m, in and across various schools to undertake works such as:

- improved disabled access;
- upgrades of playgrounds;
- upgrades to fencing and floodlighting;
- upgrades to home science areas; and
- refurbishment of suitable classrooms for computers.

VET Services (Canberra Institute of Technology)

- *Minor New Works ($2.0m)*

To provide for a range of minor new works projects in and across existing major institute campuses, each individually costed up to $250,000. The prime areas addressed are those of access and equity for staff and students, security, OH&S, energy conservation and facility utilisation.

Children's, Youth and Family Services

- *Amaroo Preschool ($0.955m)*

This project seeks to identify design options for the provision and establishment of a government preschool in Amaroo. Construction is planned to commence during 2002-03, in order for the Preschool to commence operations in 2003.

- *Minor New Works – Children's Youth and Family Services ($1.1m)*

To provide for a range of minor new works projects, each individually costed up to $0.250m, in and across various preschools, child care centres, community and youth Centres to undertake works such as:

- OH&S Access and Equity Improvements;
- Building Refurbishment and Upgrade Works;
- Ground Upgrades; and

- Play Equipment and Softfall Upgrades.

Sport and Recreation

- *Sportsground Improvement ($0.9m)*

Refurbishment of existing sports ground facilities to improve their capacity to meet the needs of users. Works include provision of lighting, canteens, toilets, storage areas, change rooms and play surface refurbishment.

- *Feasibility Study* - *Civic Pool Permanent Cover ($0.060m)*

A study to identify the best method of permanently enclosing the 50 metre pool at Canberra Olympic Pool.

- *Minor New Works – Sport and Recreation ($0.648m)*

To provide for a range of minor new works projects, each individually costed up to $250,000, within sport and recreational facilities across the Territory, such as:

- Sportsground fencing and drainage works;
- Provision of new equipment at swimming pools – filtration systems, pool blanket, vinyl flooring etc; and
- fixed hoists for people with disabilities.