



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMY AND GENDER AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY
Ms Nicole Lawder MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),
Mr Johnathan Davis MLA

Submission Coversheet

Inquiry into ACT Budget 2020–21

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ACT Gifted Families Support Group Inc

Submission for Inquiry into ACT Budget 2020-21

**ACT Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality
And
ACT Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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ACT Gifted Families Support Group

Reply to ACT Budget to 2020-21

Brief Overview of Our Organisation and Purpose

The ACT Gifted Families Support Group (ACT GFSG) is a small, not-for-profit association run entirely by volunteers. Our focus is on supporting and advancing the needs of gifted and talented children by bringing together parents, teachers and other professionals to share and engage with evidence based best practice to meet the needs of Gifted and Talented learners. The ACT GFSG is an affiliate of the Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented which publishes the academic journal *Australasian Journal of Gifted Education*.

Written Analysis of the ACT Budget

We have no complete written analysis of the budget.

Our three key priorities and the ACT Budget.

(taken from our submission to the ACT Budget)

1. Training for teachers in Gifted Education

The skills and knowledge of a classroom teacher have a significant impact on the learning that takes place on a day-to-day basis in the classroom. But many of our teachers have not been provided the opportunity to complete a semester-based unit of training in the needs of gifted learners during their preservice university training. To be able to fulfil the ACT Government's Future of Education Strategy of "Students at the Centre", teachers need to be provided with a minimum prerequisite of training in catch up professional development.

Also, to ensure our future teachers are provided with training in gifted education before they enter a classroom, that funds are allocated in the budget to allow the ACT Education Directorate work with both the University of Canberra and the ACU Canberra campus to implement a research-based gifted education unit in their preservice degrees.

No funding can be found for this in the budget.

2. Establish Combination Selective Schools from Year 3 to Year 12

The ACT budget does contain funding for both the design of new schools and the building of new schools. However, all these schools have been announced to be established as mainstream schools. There is no mention of a selective school stream for gifted and talented learners. The term gifted learner does not appear at all.

The schools proposed were designed to be dual streamed: with each year group a stream of 150 students from the local area and 150 students selected for a gifted learner's stream. One of the learning provisions that some gifted students benefit from is subject acceleration. It should not be a rare occurrence in our schools, but timetabling decisions in High Schools and the artificial borders to College mean that unlike in other education jurisdictions around Australia it is hardly ever happening.

To be able to attend a school that allows them to subject accelerate gifted students need a school where the timetabling is designed to expect and cater for them, where the geographical distance of primary school to high school or high school to college does not get in the way of subject acceleration. It would allow students from all backgrounds to apply and attend a school with like minds.

Such a school would reduce the age versus stage barrier by, for example, allowing a Year 7 student to study Year 11 Chemistry but return to Year 7 (at the same school) to attend PE classes.

The budget does not provide funds to meet the needs of these learners.

3. Funding for the Implementation of the New Gifted and talented Policy

A new policy needs training to implement new procedures. The NSW Education Department has recently spent 18 months training all school principals and school leadership teams in how to support, encourage and mentor teaching staff so that the implementation of their new Gifted and Talented Policy is of the highest standard. What will happen when our new policy is launched?

Gender Impacts of the ACT Budget

Girls, gifted girls, often go unidentified or underachieve so that they fit in with their class group rather than have their ability stand out. They often get missed.

In recent years we have seen this in the reduced number of girls enrolled in H subjects Maths, Physics and Chemistry.

Also, though not formally reported due to the small numbers, the ACT GFSG has not been able to find one current example of a radically accelerated gifted girl (skipping 2 years or more). This is different to the boys. Anecdotally the ACT GFSG is aware of several boys in school where this is the case.

Girls are missing out.

To address this, we need better teacher who have the knowledge and skills to put in place systems to identify gifted girls and then address their learning and social emotional needs.

Closing Remarks

It is the belief of the ACT GFSG that one day the government will be sensitive to the needs of gifted learners, and this struggle to get the basic needs for these learners will be met. The ACT Education Act will include a clause on gifted education, that teachers and principals will be familiar with how to identify EVERY gifted child not just those that are in a high SES bracket, teachers will have the training to meet the needs of gifted learners and schools will be structured in a way that best meets their needs.

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