



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUNG PEOPLE

2006-07 ANNUAL REPORT HEARINGS

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE Supplementary Question Nos. 7 to 13

The Standing Committee on Education, Training and Young People asked:

- Q7 I refer to page 47, "Measure of success - provision of quality learning environments which are safe, secure and inclusive". When in 2006-07 did you commence the new safety procedures in school that you spoke about in the hearings?
- Q8 Following Q7, how many assaults, harassments including racial harassments and sexual harassments and cases of bullying were reported by schools to the Department in 06/07?
- Q9 Following Q8, of the assaults reported to have occurred on or near school grounds during school hours, what number of incidents were reported to Police and of these how many incidents saw charges laid and how many charged cases resulted in found guilty?
- Q10 Following Q9 on assaults reported please list by incident, the injury to person and to property for each incident
- Q11 Following Q10 on assaults reported please advised how many of these resulted in [a] referral to hospital emergency ward and [b] referral to hospitalization
- Q12 Following Q9 of the incidents which resulted in a guilty finding in court what were the outcomes - how many convictions, how many sentenced to detention, how many sentenced to community service, how many released?
- Q13 How many serious assaults reported by a student or their parents to the school for incidents occurring during school hours in or near to school grounds were not reported to Police [a] in the first 24 hours of notification to the school, and [b] not at all?

MR BARR: The answers to the questions are as follows:

- Q7 In May 2007 the Department introduced a suite of policies relating to student management and care under the 'Providing Safe Schools' banner. It also set up the ACT Government's *Safe Schools Taskforce*, whose members include ACT Policing, the ACT branch of the Australian Education Union, the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens' Associations, the ACT Principals' Association and the Department of Education and Training. Over the past year, the Taskforce has worked with ACT agencies involved in education to ensure that our public schools continue to remain safe.

With the guidance of the Taskforce, in June 2007 the Department introduced new procedures for the management and reporting of critical incidents in schools. Critical incident guidelines were updated and circulated to every

school. The number of critical incidents has reduced in each quarter since reporting commenced.

Our schools are a microcosm of our broader society, and as such keeping them safe requires a whole of community approach. The Safe Schools Taskforce has proven to be very effective in developing safety guidelines and formulating policy because it is representative of our community, and the agencies that help keep us all safe.

Q8 Schools have always kept their own records of the behaviours referred to in this question. In the 2006-07 reporting year, schools recorded 2 instances of racial harassment and 100 instances of some form of sexual harassment.

The new critical incident reporting which commenced in the final quarter of the 2006-07 annual report period saw the introduction of standardised definitions of critical incidents and a standard reporting template, which now enables the Department to keep more accurate and reliable data on the most serious instances of these behaviours. Prior to 1 April 2007, school records did not contain the level of detail necessary to accurately identify serious assaults and bullying. A process for more accurately recording instances of bullying was introduced into schools at the start of the 2007-08 reporting year.

My answers to questions 8-13 will therefore be confined to the critical incident reports of the final quarter of the 2006-07 annual report period. Of the 31 critical incidents reported in the final quarter of 2007, 28 were classified as assaults or violence of some form. Two were instances of bullying and one of sexual harassment.

Q9 Of the 28 incidents, mentioned above, 20 were reported to police. Questions regarding the outcome of police investigations would have to be directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Attorney-General.

Q10 Of these 20 incidents, 18 involved some form of physical assault rather than damage to property. The remaining two incidents involved the threat of violence. Details about actual physical injury are not available as they are not always reported.

Q11 Of the 18 incidents of physical assault, mentioned above, none required referral to the hospital emergency ward or hospitalization.

Q12 Any question as to whether charges were laid and whether charged cases resulted in convictions would have to be directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Attorney-General.

Q13 It is departmental policy that police be contacted in all instances of extreme physical violence or criminal offence. The answer to part [a] of the question is 'nil'. The answer to part [b] is that in the 8 instances of less serious assault where it was not judged necessary to contact the police, matters were handled in accordance with departmental policies.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Young People

Signature:

Date:

By the Minister for Education and Training, Mr Andrew Barr MLA