

2019

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

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

REPORT ON ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2017-2018

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

Introduction

On Thursday, 25 October 2018, the 2017-18 Annual and Financial reports of all ACT Government agencies were referred to the relevant Standing Committees of the Assembly for inquiry and reporting.

The following annual reports, or sections of annual reports, were referred to the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs (the Committee):

- Education Directorate;
- ACT Long Service Leave Authority;
- Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate;
- ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority;
- Canberra Institute of Technology (2017); and
- University of Canberra.

Response to Committee Recommendations

Recommendation 1

2.12 The Committee recommends that Education Directorate continue to recognise NAPLAN as a valuable diagnostic tool when used appropriately.

Government Response – Noted

The results of standardised tests, such as NAPLAN, can be used to aid improvements in system wide performance and, used at the school and classroom level can provide more detailed information on student progress to aid teachers in meeting the needs of their students

Recommendation 2

2.13 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate continue to work with, and support schools, to transfer to online NAPLAN testing as a matter of priority.

Government Response – Noted

The ACT has achieved the highest levels of implementation of NAPLAN Online nationally and will continue to work effectively with all three school sectors to ensure that participation in NAPLAN online remains high.

Recommendation 3

2.14 The Committee recommends that Education Directorate work with the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority on further development and delivery of online NAPLAN testing with a view to delivering results to schools and parents faster than current practice.

Government Response – Noted

There are a number of national projects underway to this end and the ACT will continue to participate as an early adopter of this technology when confident that it can be effectively delivered.

Recommendation 4

2.15 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate provide regular updates to the ACT Legislative Assembly on efforts made to monitor participation rates in NAPLAN testing in all ACT government schools.

Government Response – Noted

Parents and carers are encouraged to support their children's participation in NAPLAN testing.

Recommendation 5

2.16 The Committee recommends that the Council of Australian Governments Education Council review into NAPLAN data presentation by Professor Bill Louden, due to be presented to Education Council in the first half of 2019, be made available to the ACT Legislative Assembly as soon as practicable after its release.

Government Response – Noted

Any publication of the review report, its findings, or of any agreement to its recommendations, will be made and published by the Education Council in accordance with its normal rules of operation.

Recommendation 6

2.17 The Committee recommends that Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development regularly report to the ACT Legislative Assembly on progress made in addressing performance concerns outlined in the ACT Auditor General Report No 4/2017, including reference to how strategic indicators will reflect growth in student learning.

Government Response – Noted

Changes to strategic reporting implemented with effect from 2018-2019 will ensure that there is regular reporting of student gain, equity, and student belonging. These changes reflect concepts included in the Auditor General's report No 4/2017.

Recommendation 7

2.18 The Committee recommends that Education Directorate continue to work with school administration, including principals and deputy principals, to ensure that schools develop evidence-based decision-making, including using data collected through NAPLAN to address and prioritise areas of need.

Government Response – Agreed

In 2017 the Education Directorate commenced an initiative '*Enabling Evidence Based Improvement in Canberra Public Schools – Valuing Data as Evidence to Inform Great Teaching*'. The initiative is designed to:

- align school and system data for planning and accountability;
- clarify the agreed data sets and their presentation to ensure that they are fit for purpose and meet the specific needs of teachers, school leaders and the Education Support Office;
- increase teacher and school leader knowledge and skill in the use of data analytics including the use of the achievement standards of the Australian Curriculum to drive planning, assessment and reporting of student achievement; and
- provide timely and differentiated professional learning and support for school leaders in the use of data to inform improvement student and overall school performance.

Recommendation 8

2.19 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate continue to develop the most effective methods of professional development to ensure the maximum teacher growth and understanding, including data skills to maximise the utility of NAPLAN data.

Government Response – Agreed

Additional training is being provided to schools in the use of the SCOUT system, which the ACT has acquired from NSW. SCOUT provides schools with a detailed view of NAPLAN results from the level of the individual question response, to the whole school.

Recommendation 9

2.20 The Committee recommends that teachers in ACT government schools be provided with training to increase their understanding of data literacy and analysis in respect of all standardised tests used in ACT schools.

Government Response – Noted

Teachers' data literacy needs have been a focus in all leader capability sessions. Intentional training has been provided to leaders at all levels to more effectively analyse student learning data including standardised tests. The leader learning around maximising multiple sources of data to shape courses of action and target student learning is an ongoing focus in 2019.

Recommendation 10

2.21 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate investigate ways it can better utilise NAPLAN data to improve student outcomes.

Government Response – Noted

NAPLAN testing is one form of standardised testing that can be used to improve student outcomes. Formative assessment tools that can be applied outside the NAPLAN process are another valuable means of using standardised testing to improve student outcomes that are used in the ACT. With regard to NAPLAN interpretation, the Education Directorate makes the SCOUT system available to schools and teachers in the ACT. This tool provides data to teachers on NAPLAN performance, at the level of the individual student and individual question. The Directorate is conducting additional training for schools in the use of this tool.

Recommendation 11

2.22 The Committee recommends that Minister for Education request Education Council commission research on why some states make above or below average progress across the different NAPLAN testing domains.

Government Response – Noted

This recommendation goes to questions of comparison across jurisdictions that are subject to analysis of ICSEA, and any questions of comparison between the ACT and any other jurisdiction are dependent on the results of this analysis. Additionally, analysis of this nature is properly the preserve of jurisdictions to undertake and is not a matter for the Education Council to pursue.

Recommendation 12

2.23 The majority of the Committee recommends that the Education Directorate initiate a public inquiry, in collaboration with the government and non-government school sectors, into the causes of the observed underperformance of ACT schools in NAPLAN.

Government Response – Not Agreed

The question of '*observed under performance*' is subject to the outcome of current analysis into the operation of ICSEA in small jurisdictions. Definitive judgements as to '*observed under performance*' cannot be made ahead of the outcome of this analysis.

Notwithstanding the question of the operation of ICSEA, the ACT Government launched a community consultation on the future of education in the ACT in 2017 to ensure that the people of the ACT, and particularly the students and their families, had a real opportunity to have their voices heard. The issue of the overall performance of the ACT education system was aired through that process and is well understood.

The Education Directorate is now in the process of implementing the strategies that were developed through the future of education process, including strategies to improve the equity of educational outcomes in the ACT and to improve our overall performance, in line with the expectations of our students and of their families.

At a point where in-depth analysis of the performance of the ACT school system, including equity, has already been undertaken, and strategies to improve these outcomes are in the process of being implemented, another analysis of the past will not contribute significantly to current understanding, or to intended directions, and is more likely to simply delay the implementation of strategies to improve outcomes, to the detriment of the children.

Recommendation 13

2.28 The Committee recommends that Education Directorate give consideration to more detailed reporting on retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students between preschool, years 6-7 and from year 7 to year 10.

Government Response – Agreed

The retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students is an important objective. Consideration will be given to how this recommendation can be met, noting that privacy considerations can impact reporting of small numbers of students. Consideration will also take into account the issue of cross-border enrolments, with the consequent difficulties of gaining data on students who continue to attend school, but not any longer in the ACT.

Recommendation 14

2.29 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate report on the number of school leaders that have undertaken cultural awareness training either online or in person over the 2018 school year.

Government Response – Agreed

A Cultural Awareness program has been developed for Senior Executive staff and school leaders to equip them to challenge deficit discourse and construct cultural integrity action plans and lead the implementation of the government's policy position of strengthened cultural integrity

in every school and Education Directorate workplace. It is expected that all existing and new school leaders and Executive staff attend.

Cultural awareness training is also being provided to teachers, business managers and education support staff. This ensures the Directorate will have a whole system approach to Cultural Integrity.

Recommendation 15

2.30 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate establish strategic indicators to assess the effectiveness of cultural awareness training of staff in schools.

Government Response – Agreed in Principle

The Education Directorate is working with schools and local communities to further strengthen cultural integrity ensuring all government schools are safe places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Recommendation 16

2.34 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate provide an update to the ACT Legislative Assembly on the teacher mentor training program and its uptake in ACT schools.

Government Response – Agreed

Approximately 50 leaders from 20 schools participated in leader coaching. Approximately 960 teachers and leaders engaged with the series of Universal professional learning sessions. Most of these teachers and leaders were from schools other than the 20 involved in the intensive consultancy.

Recommendation 17

2.35 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate provide an update to the ACT Legislative Assembly on work being undertaken to expand the core skills of leaders and classroom teachers in early years literacy and writing in high schools program, and its uptake in ACT schools.

Government Response – Agreed

The government has a strong and ongoing commitment to expanding the core skills of leaders and classroom teachers. 328 teachers and leaders from 20 schools have engaged in the intensive three term consultancy in the intensive Early Year Literacy initiative. Approximately 3,600 preschool to year 2 students from the 20 schools received the benefits from the capability development. Performance Indicators Primary School (PIPS) data over 2017 and 2018 indicates that 63 per cent of phase 1 schools and 83 per cent of phase 2 schools have shown improvement in their results for the category 'expected and better than expected growth' in Reading. In addition, the consultant and Instructional Mentors noted increased levels of data literacy amongst both teachers and leaders after participation in the initiative.

In 2018 nine high schools were involved in the Project with the consultant with approximately 70 teachers and leaders involved in the professional learning sessions. These leaders reached 210 high school teachers.

Recommendation 18

2.42 The Committee recommends Education Directorate provide an update to the ACT Legislative Assembly on the number of schools that have completed occupational violence training as at the end of 2018.

Government Response – Agreed

All schools completed the face to face occupational violence training in 2018.

Recommendation 19

2.43 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate continue to work with teachers and learning support assistants to identify and report early indicators of whether further support structures are needed to assist teacher and student safety.

Government Response – Agreed

The Education Directorate is proactively working with schools to strengthen the implementation of risk assessments to eliminate or minimise risk; promote incident reporting and the role of supervisors in responding to incidents; and strengthen and promote the information and referral hotline for staff to seek advice and assistance on work health and safety matters.

Recommendation 20

2.44 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate continue to implement the occupational violence plan.

Government Response – Agreed

The government is committed to the safety of all workers, students and visitors to ACT government schools. In 2016, the Education Directorate worked with staff and the Australian Education Union in designing and implementing the Occupational Violence Policy and Management Plan. The Policy and Management Plan strengthens the Directorate's approach to prevent and reduce violence in schools and responses to occupational violence. Implementation of the plan remains a priority.

Recommendation 21

2.45 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate engage with parents, and school systems in other jurisdictions, to learn from and address the needs and safety of students in ACT schools.

Government Response – Noted

The government has a strong history of engaging with parents to respond to issues that support learning and wellbeing in schools. This commitment is visible through the Future of Education

Strategy and recent Building Strong and Safe Communities for Learning partnership project between the Education Directorate and the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations. The ACT has led a national education system and education union forum to share learnings across jurisdictions. Through this forum, it was recognised that the ACT response to occupational violence is sound, comprehensive and aligned to national best practice.

Recommendation 22

2.46 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate enact the four recommendations made in the Caple Report, including:

Key recommendation 1. Provide better targeted training and support for staff in schools who work with students with complex needs.

Key recommendation 2. Utilise a Workplace Health and Safety compliant risk assessment process and a case work approach for students and families with the most complex needs.

Key Recommendation 3. Review the options for a more suitable centrally controlled incident reporting tool for occupational violence to improve the quality and amount of data captured as well as to improve the useability and access to the data.

Key Recommendation 4. Develop closer working relationships with Universities to ensure pre-educators and early educators are provided placements and support to teach students with complex needs.

Government Response – Agreed

The government has a strong and ongoing commitment to working with staff to support safety.

The Education Directorate is implementing a mandatory work health and safety training package; role specific work health and safety training; and strengthening site specific work health and safety training based on the site's specific work health and safety risk assessments and identified mitigations.

The Education Directorate Occupational Violence Management Plan articulates a risk management approach to supporting safety in schools and managing risk. Using this approach, the Directorate has implemented a case management response for those students with the most complex needs.

The Directorate has developed a centralised process for analysing data related to workplace health and safety incidents, complex needs and behaviours, and occupational violence risk .

The Directorate is working closely with the University of Canberra to deliver the Future of Education Strategy initiative, Affiliated Schools Program. The Program is designed to strengthen pre-service and in-service, including early career, teacher capability and further enrich the learning culture of the Directorate. The components of the program are to host professional

experience placements and school-based teacher education clinics; university delivered professional learning; scholarships for masters-level study; school-based coordinators in full program affiliated schools; and research programs. There are specific elements of inclusion and equity throughout the program and pre-service teachers are benefitting from the ability to work with students, including those with complex needs, early in their education.

Recommendation 23

2.50 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate continue to implement the recommendations from the Ombudsman's report into reportable conduct in the ACT.

Government Response – Agreed

The Education Directorate has progressed implementation of actions and initiatives responding to the ACT Ombudsman's report recommendations, with most expected to be completed and delivered by end of July 2019.

Recommendation 24

2.51 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate update the teacher's code of professional conduct at the soonest possible juncture to reflect both recommendations from the Ombudsman's report into reportable conduct, and all relevant legislation.

Government Response – Noted

The Education Directorate has undertaken a review of the Teacher's Code of Professional Practice and has now developed the Code of Conduct for Teachers, School Leaders and Principals and the Code of Conduct for School Based Staff (non-teaching). The Codes have been circulated to key internal and external stakeholders for consultation which will close on 21 June 2019. It is anticipated that the Codes will be finalised by end of July 2019.

Recommendation 25

2.54 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate update to the ACT Legislative Assembly on the final policy for suspensions, transfers and expulsions in ACT schools.

Government Response – Noted

Work on the suspension policy is ongoing.

Recommendation 26

2.57 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate undertake an audit of qualifications of all specialist teaching staff and the subjects that they are currently teaching.

Government Response – Noted

The Education Directorate continues to look at appropriate levels of qualifications and experience required of its teaching staff to ensure these are appropriate.

The government is also progressing workforce planning as part of the Future of Education implementation.

Recommendation 27

2.59 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate update the ACT Legislative Assembly on progress made in developing the three year old preschool initiative.

Government Response – Noted

The Education Directorate is progressing the development of the ACT Government’s goal of phased in universal access to quality early childhood education for three year old children in the ACT, as a key part of the Early Childhood Strategy. The development of the initiative is through a community consultation process, modelling and analysis work undertaken by external technical consultants, and collaborative work with key government and non-government stakeholders including Directorates and the ACT’s education and care sector in preparation for implementation of the first phase of the Strategy in 2020. The community will be provided with further detail once the modelling and analysis of the universal access initiative for three year olds, and the final design of the Strategy, is complete.

Recommendation 28

2.63 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development report on results of the evaluation of chromebooks in ACT schools as an education tool in a classroom setting to the ACT Legislative Assembly.

Government Response – Noted

The Education Directorate is currently evaluating the technology enabled learning program (TEL). The evaluation will help shape the future formation of the program and ensure equity of devices for all students.

Recommendation 29

2.64 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate assess the academic performance improvements, including digital literacy, derived from the roll out of chrome books across ACT government schools.

Government Response – Noted

The Education Directorate is currently evaluating the technology enabled learning program (TEL). The evaluation will help shape the future formation of the program and ensure equity of devices for all students.

Recommendation 30

2.65 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate report on whether the chrome book roll out has led to increased homework completion to the ACT Legislative Assembly.

Government Response – Not agreed

The evaluation will not consider homework completion rates.

Recommendation 31

2.68 The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate work with Transport Canberra and City Services to harmonise responsibility for oval facilities such that ACT Government employees conduct oval maintenance.

Government Response – Noted

The Education Directorate will meet with TCCS to discuss the issues associated with this recommendation. The following issues will be challenging to address:

- Access to school ovals during school hours (limited periods of time) or higher cost for after-hours access;
- The intensity of use at a school is greater than a community oval;
- Spraying of chemicals near students during school hours and the presence of residual chemicals;
- Quality of the maintenance is higher for a school
- Community use of school ovals after-hours
- Need to bring school ovals up to a standard that can then be routinely maintained.
- Increased cost of irrigation and routine maintenance to territory for currently non-maintained ovals.