

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING
AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

Inquiry into the Educational Achievement Gap in the ACT

MAY 2010

Report 3

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Resolution of Appointment

On 9 December 2008, the Legislative Assembly for the ACT resolved to establish a Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs to examine matters related to early childhood education and care, primary, secondary, post secondary and tertiary education, non-government education, youth services, technology, arts and culture

Terms of Reference

On Thursday 25 June 2009, the Legislative Assembly for the ACT referred to the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs for inquiry and report the extent of existing socio-economic differences in educational engagement and achievement in all ACT government and non-government schools, with particular reference to:

- educational engagement and outcomes for students of all interests and abilities, with reference to any implications of cultural background, including Indigenous and ESL students;
- engagement and achievement rates within the ACT student population including those related to national and international assessments, including:
 - average outcomes;
 - proportion of students below national and international assessment benchmarks; and
 - proportion of students achieving at the highest and lowest proficiency levels;
- qualitative assessments of educational experiences for students from different backgrounds;
- current programs and initiatives designed to address educational achievement gaps, including resources allocated and relevant experiences in other jurisdictions; and
- any other related matter.

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Abbreviations used

ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACTCOSS	ACT Council of Social Service
AEDI	Australian Early Development Index
AEU	Australian Education Union
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
ASSPA	Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness
ATESOL	Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of other Languages
CALD	culturally and linguistically diverse
CEO	Catholic Education Office
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DET	Department of Education and Training
EAL/D	English as an additional language or distinct dialect
ESCS	Index of economic, social and cultural status
ESL	English as a second language
IEC	Introductory English Centres (
Indigenous	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
LBOTE	Language background other than English
LPR	Language Proficiency Rating
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council of Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy
NATSEM	National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling
NSM	National Minimum Standard
OCYFS	Office for Children, Youth and Family Support

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PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SES	socio-economic status
SOS	Save Our Schools
The Agreement	National Education Agreement (The Agreement)
The Council	ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations
The Support Group	ACT Gifted and Talented Support Group
YAC	ACT Youth Advisory Council
YCACT	The Youth Coalition of the ACT

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide pre-service training or professional development for teachers in interpreting standardised testing results.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that teachers are aware and able to access expert advice and services to support them in adapting their pedagogical practice to suit the different educational needs of their students.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training provide to the Legislative Assembly an analysis of ACT NAPLAN results using comparable 2008 and 2009 NAPLAN data from NSW and Victorian urban schools.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training encourage schools to reflect on and respond to standard assessment results by quantifying and reporting on the qualitative measures used to support improvement in the achievement of their students.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government to provide Members of the Legislative Assembly copies of the response to the Report on the outcomes of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Elected Body Estimates Hearings 2008-09.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training establish cross-cultural awareness training options for ACT teachers and negotiate with the Faculty of Education at the University of Canberra for the inclusion of pre-service courses in Indigenous studies.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Committee recommends that further analysis be undertaken by the Department of Education and Training into the need for a specialist Indigenous language and creoles support program in the ACT education system.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Committee recommends that any programs or initiatives developed should be undertaken in consultation with ESL teachers and Indigenous educators and community leaders and that these programs should be funded independently of the existing ESL funding model.

RECOMMENDATION 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensures that multi-agency funding arrangements do not have a detrimental impact on services delivered to disadvantaged students and, where required outputs are being met and continued funding is anticipated, the disruption and uncertainty of contract changes are resolved by the government in a timely manner.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government investigate options for expanding the Gudan Gulwan program to include Years 11 and 12 students.

RECOMMENDATION 11

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training undertake a full review and assessment of the EAL/D profile in the ACT education system including a breakdown of the groups of students within the broader category and a clear articulation of the sort of supports these students are likely to need.

RECOMMENDATION 12

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training undertake a review of the funding model for EAL/D students with particular attention to the capacity of the model to meet the needs of the broader group of students identified by the profile review and whether targeted funds are able to meet all needs.

RECOMMENDATION 13

The Committee recommends that any reviews of programs, services or funding models should be undertaken in consultation with students directly effected.

RECOMMENDATION 14

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government undertake to monitor and evaluate the early childhood schools success in preparing students, particularly those at risk of educational disadvantage, for learning and enhancing the capacity of families to support educational engagement.

RECOMMENDATION 15

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government, bearing in mind the outcomes of the evaluation, commits to extending successful strategies of early childhood education into other areas of the school system as appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION 16

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government work closely with the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools to ensure that early learning and school transition advantages can be extended to all ACT students.

RECOMMENDATION 17

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training facilitate forums on best practice in family engagement with student learning and provide resources to support teacher initiatives in this area of school activity.

RECOMMENDATION 18

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training ensure that the diverse backgrounds and socio-economic circumstances of families are recognised as a factor influencing any family engagement strategies undertaken by schools and that schools are resourced to respond to the diverse needs of the school community.

RECOMMENDATION 19

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training, in consultation with the Centre for Research on Education, Poverty and Social Inclusion, develop strategic indicators to measure the performance of the education system in meeting identified equity challenges.

RECOMMENDATION 20

The Committee recommends that that ACT Government provide details to the Legislative Assembly of how the quality teaching strategy will address the specific needs of educationally disadvantaged students.

RECOMMENDATION 21

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government commission an assessment of how well targeted programs for educationally disadvantaged or at risk students are meeting social inclusion objectives and priority 5.3 of the *Canberra Social Plan* and that the assessment be made publicly available.

RECOMMENDATION 22

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government advocate through COAG for longitudinal studies to be conducted as a means of expanding the national research base for quality teaching strategies.

RECOMMENDATION 23

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that equity and need are given priority in Commonwealth – State/Territory funding negotiations.

RECOMMENDATION 24

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training provide a comprehensive assessment of current methods and outcomes for meeting identified need in the education system and develop a coherent strategy in which all programs can be reviewed against the objective of improving the educational engagement and achievement of disadvantaged students and enhancing equity within the system

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 25 June 2009, the Legislative Assembly for the ACT referred the matter of the gap in educational achievement of students in the ACT to the Committee for inquiry and report.
- 1.2 The Committee advertised in *The Canberra Times* on 5th August 2009 and on the Legislative Assembly website. Stakeholders and interested members of the community were directly invited to make a submission.
- 1.3 The Committee received 9 submissions from organisations and individuals (see Appendix A). All submissions received have been published on the Inquiry webpage.¹
- 1.4 The Committee received a submission from the ACT Government with attachments of relevance to the Inquiry.² These attachments are documents available on the public record.
- 1.5 During the inquiry, the Committee held five public hearings.³ Witness details are provided in Appendix B. The Minister for Education and Training met with the Committee on two occasions to discuss issues arising from the Government's submission and answer questions. On the second occasion, the Minister appeared to provide details about the "My School" website which was launched as a Federal Government initiative in January 2010. Details of this public hearing are discussed in Chapter 2.
- 1.6 The Committee appreciated the support and assistance of all those who participated in the Inquiry.

Structure of the report

- 1.7 This report canvasses the issues arising from the notion of an educational achievement gap as it has emerged in ACT debates. The Committee considered that the key purpose of the Inquiry was to contribute constructively to and clarify the existing debates on the definition and

¹ Submission can be accessed at:

<<http://www.parliament.act.gov.au/committees/index1.asp?committee=117&inquiry=822&category=14>>

² Submission no. 2. The attachments are not included with the published submission but are available on request. A list of the attachments is at the back of the Government submission.

³ The transcript of all hearings can be accessed at

<<http://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2009/comms/default.htm>>

measurement of educational achievement. Some of these issues are briefly scoped in this chapter so as to set the scene for the discussion that follows.

- 1.8 Chapter 2 examines the definition of educational achievement gap and canvasses some of the social, economic and cultural factors which may affect student performance.
- 1.9 Chapter 3 outlines the ACT results from standard assessment tests in a comparative perspective. While it is evident that the ACT performs highly in these general comparisons, it is also evident that some greater scrutiny of the data is required to examine the performance of students in the ACT education system.
- 1.10 Chapter 4 provides an overview of educational disadvantage - comparative and contextual - and identifies some key strategies for how the education system might respond to this disadvantage.
- 1.11 Chapter 5 provides an overview of the main issues raised during the Inquiry and concludes the report.

Purpose of the inquiry

- 1.12 The Inquiry has provided the opportunity to examine in more detail an issue which has arisen in various public forums over recent years. In 2008 (during the 6th Assembly), Dr Deb Foskey MLA raised with the Minister for Education and Training concerns about indicators of student performance and whether the extent or relevance of socio-economic status to the achievement of students were well understood and whether responses by the education system were adequate. At the time, these concerns were amplified by the comparative student achievement data provided by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).⁴
- 1.13 On the basis of the PISA results, and other indicators, the ACT was characterised as a high quality but low equity education system.⁵
- 1.14 The Government's submission stated clearly that socio-economic status could not be attached to individual schools and highlighted that:

⁴ Select Committee on Estimates 2007-2008, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 June 2007, pp 285-288; Standing Committee on Education, Training and Young People (Sixth Assembly) *Transcript of evidence*, 26 February 2008, pp 23-26; Legislative Assembly for the ACT: 2008 Week 3 *Hansard* (2 April), pp. 831-832

⁵ Prof McConaghy, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, p 44; Mr Cobbold, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 86, Submission no. 9, p1. See discussion in Chapter 2

there is no strong evidence or data from national or international measures to suggest there is a significant disparity between schools in the ACT similar to that observed in other jurisdictions. We do know, for example, that while a relationship between socioeconomic status and school performance is evident in other states, the character of the ACT population is different, and there is no evidence available to suggest that socioeconomic profile has a significant between-school influence on performance in the ACT.⁶

- 1.15 The Committee did not consider the key issue for this Inquiry to be the performance of individual schools within the education system.⁷ Rather the purpose of the Inquiry has been to assess evidence about socio-economic disparities within the student population as a whole and to contemplate whether these disparities correlate with membership of particular socio-economic groups.
- 1.16 The Committee noted other complications in the debates on this matter including the following range of issues:
 - Implications of a comparatively high socio-economic status for the ACT – is this the reason for our higher than the national average achievement levels?
 - Shifts in student enrolment from government to non-government schools – are parental decisions based on perceptions about achievement levels?
 - The adequacy of government funding – are government funds adequate and appropriately targeted to meet the diverse learning needs of all students across the system?
 - The impact of federal and state/territory funding agreements – do agreement requirements and reporting obligations facilitate the best outcomes for all ACT students?
 - The weight given to the various testing programs as a means of measuring student achievement – what kind of performance can various tests measure?

⁶ Submission no. 2, p 6

⁷ The Committee did note with interest, the analysis provided by Dr Mark Drummond regarding the systemic advantage gained by some colleges (government and non-government) because of the processes used to calculate university admission scores. See Submission no. 9

- 1.17 The Committee did not address these matters in any particular detail but rather focused on clarifying the connections between educational achievement and social context and considering some of the subsequent policy implications that should be noted and addressed by the ACT Government.

Educational achievement in a social context

- 1.18 In undertaking this Inquiry, the Committee was aware that the issues influencing the educational achievement and education of ACT students are broad-ranging.⁸ Much of the evidence received by the Committee highlighted factors that the Committee understands are beyond the sole influence of education departments.
- 1.19 Factors such as housing status, family income and employment status, the health of the student and other family members, cultural background, access to educational resources such as books, information and communications technology and access to appropriate study space can all have a major influence on educational engagement and outcomes. These sorts of socio-economic factors require a whole of government approach.
- 1.20 Nonetheless, much of the evidence provided during the Inquiry suggested that the influence of socio-economic factors should be acknowledged as central to the delivery of education services and that strategies to ameliorate the impact of these factors should be actively pursued wherever possible.

Identifying socio-economic disadvantage in the ACT

- 1.21 The complexity of addressing socio-economic disadvantage directly is compounded in the ACT because of a lack of certainty about the extent or locale of such disadvantage. In general, the ACT is considered to be a high income jurisdiction particularly when compared to other Australian jurisdictions. The Committee observed that whether the ACT (a mostly urban jurisdiction) is directly comparable to other Australia jurisdictions (with urban, regional and sometimes remote population groups) should be carefully considered.⁹ This is discussed in more detail in chapter 3.¹⁰

⁸ *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, 25 June 2009, pp 2929-2933

⁹ See discussion in Chapter 2

¹⁰ See recommendations 3 – 4.

- 1.22 The difficulties with measuring socio-economic status in the ACT also became apparent to the Committee. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Education Agreement performance report for 2008 noted that, in the context of national incomes levels, only 0.2 per cent of the ACT population is in the bottom, most disadvantaged, quintile.¹¹
- 1.23 However, an analysis of ACT household income using spatial microsimulation techniques undertaken by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) indicated that in 2006:
- There were around 16,000 households in the ACT that were in the bottom Australian equivalised income quintile. This equates to just over 13 per cent of the ACT's total households.¹²
- 1.24 The disparities between 0.2 per cent and 13 per cent are difficult to reconcile without considering the rationale for the special microsimulation methodology used by NATSEM. Spatial microsimulation techniques have allowed NATSEM 'to produce estimates of the characteristics of low income households in the ACT, and to compare these characteristics to those of more affluent territory households'.¹³ Using this method, the socio-economic comparison can be between ACT households, not ACT households and households in other, geographically different, jurisdictions. Socio-economic disadvantage is geographically dispersed in the ACT.
- 1.25 The technique essentially "reweights" Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) income data (based on a small, sample size in the ACT) to the Census data (which includes insufficient income detail) to allow NATSEM 'to calculate equivalised disposable income quintiles'.¹⁴ The NATSEM analysis, therefore, has drawn on two distinct data sets to provide a synthetic breakdown of household income consistent with the distinctive profile of the ACT. As the analysis suggests, far more than 0.2 per cent of the ACT population should be considered to be experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

¹¹ COAG Reform Council, *National Education Agreement: Baseline performance report for 2008*, p 125: accessible at <<http://www.coag.gov.au/crc/reports.cfm>> (accessed 4 March 2010)

¹² Rebecca Cassells, Quoc Ngu Vu & Justine McNamara (2007) *Characteristics of Low Income ACT Households*, NATSEM and ACTCOSS: Canberra, p 8

¹³ Rebecca Cassells, Quoc Ngu Vu & Justine McNamara (2007) *Characteristics of Low Income ACT Households*, NATSEM and ACTCOSS: Canberra, p 6

¹⁴ Rebecca Cassells, Quoc Ngu Vu & Justine McNamara (2007) *Characteristics of Low Income ACT Households*, NATSEM and ACTCOSS: Canberra, p 6

Educational implications of socio-economic disadvantage

- 1.26 The Committee also noted that although the measurement of socio-economic disadvantage focuses on households, the factors which influence household status are broadly based. Professor McConaghy, Director of the Centre for Research on Education, Poverty and Social Inclusion at the University of Canberra indicated to the Committee that the issue of socio-economic disadvantage should not be interpreted as a simple variable in the personal or family circumstances of individual students. Rather, broader social, economic and cultural influences have a bearing on educational outcomes. In analysing the reasons for variable educational achievement, Professor McConaghy was of the opinion that:

Home, I think, is an inadequate way to explain things like the effect of global economic restructuring on communities. We can think in terms of the social determinants of health, but we struggle around the concept of the social determinants of education. If it is not the teacher then what is it? It must be poor parental—low aspiration, parents not reading with their kids. We tend to look at an individualistic family-based explanation, whereas I think we need to be looking at larger social readjustment issues.¹⁵

Socio-economic status and education systems

- 1.27 Just as variations in personal or family circumstances do not complete the picture, the outcomes for students are not determined by the type of school they attend. Socio-economic factors can affect students within the government or non-government school systems equally.
- 1.28 Recognising the impact of socio-economic factors at the school level, the National Partnership education funding arrangements include financial provisions for low socio-economic status school communities. Funds are available to both government and non-government schools which meet specified criteria.
- 1.29 During the Inquiry, the Committee heard from the Catholic Education Office (CEO) and the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT who advised

¹⁵ Prof McConaghy, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, p 48

that the average calculation of socio-economic status (SES)¹⁶ in ACT Catholic system schools and independent schools were fairly consistent across the whole education system. The CEO advised the Committee that their schools 'very much reflects the homogeneity of the ACT and is probably pretty close to the average SES for government schools as well'.¹⁷

- 1.30 The Committee was advised that none of the Catholic or independent schools qualify for additional Commonwealth support as a part of the Low Socio-economic status (SES) School communities National Partnership.
- 1.31 Four ACT public schools have qualified for additional financial support from this program, however.¹⁸
- 1.32 The ACT Government submission highlighted for the Committee that there were some general difficulties for the ACT with this program as:
many low-SES families are hidden amongst the relatively affluent population in Canberra. In deciding the schools to participate in this NP, student profiles which exhibit an elevated low socio-economic status (SES) population combined with Indigenous and non-English speaking background populations were taken into account.¹⁹
- 1.33 The Committee concluded that there is a considerable challenge for governments seeking to genuinely commit to assist students to reach their full potential despite their personal or social circumstances. This would require a commitment to identify and respond to individual students' educational needs recognising the broad-ranging social, economic and cultural influences which influence this need. There are clear resource implications to such a commitment.
- 1.34 The Committee observed, however, that it is governments that provide leadership in addressing difficult social policy problems. In addition, many of the most disadvantaged students are likely to be a part of public school communities.

¹⁶ SES scores for a non-government school are determined under section 72(2) of the *Schools Assistance Act 2008* using ABS Census data. The socio-economic status (SES) score is intended to represent the average SES profile of a community supporting a school and show the relative capacity of a community to support its school. Low score schools may attract additional funding from the Commonwealth Government.

¹⁷ Ms Najdecki and Mr Irvine, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, pp 138-140

¹⁸ These schools are Charnwood Dunlop Primary School, Florey Primary School, Kingsford Smith School and Richardson Primary School.

¹⁹ Submission no 2, p 54

- 1.35 The Committee considered that educators could not be expected to "fix" what is a difficult public policy issue, or as Professor Brian Head has characterised, a policy issue that is 'complex, intractable, open-ended and "wicked"',²⁰ Rather, it is the role of governments to champion strategies that establish equity in the provision of educational services.

Policy framework for equitable services

- 1.36 The particular difficulty for the provision of equitable educational services is to balance the need for universal service provision with the need to identify and provide specialist educational services to some students because of their learning needs. These issues are discussed in detail in chapter 4.
- 1.37 The Committee concluded that there are difficult policy questions arising from this understanding, particularly how to target the most disadvantaged students so that equity of the current system is maximised. The importance of prioritising early intervention strategies was apparent from the evidence provided during the Inquiry. Teacher capacity, in terms of knowledge and access to resources, to identify and respond to students' learning needs was also a key factor raised.
- 1.38 The Committee did not consider the question of teaching capacity to be the same as the Government's quality teaching strategy which has a universal focus.²¹ While fully supporting the focus on improving the overall quality of teaching and the status of the teaching profession, the evidence presented to the Committee indicated that more specialist teachers are also required to address the disadvantage experienced by some identifiable groups of students. Understandably, achieving the right mix within the teaching profession could be difficult and the Committee noted some steps have been taken to achieve this objective. It seemed clear to the Committee from the evidence presented, including results from various standard assessment tests, that this has not been adequate. This is discussed in detail in chapter 3.²²
- 1.39 The Committee understands a part of the rationale for broad-based testing processes is to enhance the data available for system planning purposes.²³ The Committee also heard during the Inquiry that the ACT Government and the University of Canberra have established a research partnership to progress

²⁰ Brian Head (2008) "Wicked Problems in Public Policy" in *Public Policy*, Vol. 3, no. 2: pp 101-108

²¹ See discussion in Chapter 4

²² See recommendations 6 – 13.

²³ *Transcript of evidence*, 17 February 2009, pp 12-13

longitudinal assessments of available data.²⁴ The Committee considered that this should be a priority for government and that the resources and skills to interpret these results should be consolidated to enhance teaching practice. This is proposed in recommendations 1 and 2.

- 1.40 Professor McConaghy informed the Committee that the Centre for Research on Education, Poverty and Social Inclusion at the University of Canberra had:

entered into an agreement with the ACT department of education to analyse their school achievement data. We have done some preliminary analysis of the K-5 literacy data. We have found that the results in kindergarten are predictors of the results in year 5, and the results in kindergarten are negatively affected by low socioeconomic status. So there is a correlation between the low kindergarten results and low socioeconomic status, and those results do not pick up by year 5. So we need to look at the types of schooling interventions that will address the disparities in kindergarten right through.²⁵

- 1.41 Dr John Ainley, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer for the Australian Council for Educational Research, told the Committee that:

for kids of low socioeconomic background in relatively deprived areas the importance of the quality of the teaching is even greater because there is less opportunity for those children to pick up the skills, to learn the skills, from other experiences. If you have a lot of books at home and your parents are engaged in reading with you then it is less of an issue what happens in the classroom than if you do not have those resources.²⁶

- 1.42 In their submission to the Inquiry, the ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) made it clear to the Committee that the issue of socio-economic disadvantage needs to be approached carefully by Governments as a simple strategy of targeting individuals or groups falling outside of desired outcomes can continue a process of marginalisation. The advocated for a rights-based approach which places 'an onus on services to adapt to meet individual needs...[and] on upholding the capacity of individuals to determine their own direction and supporting them to achieve it.'²⁷

²⁴ Prof McConaghy, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, p 45

²⁵ Prof McConaghy, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, p 45

²⁶ Dr Ainley, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 November 2009, p 159

²⁷ Submission no 4, p 7

1.43 The Committee has concluded that the ACT Government could employ the following policy leavers:

- Recognition of education as a key determinant of community inclusion;
- Assessment of the adequacy of current resources available to meet identified learning needs of disadvantaged students;
- Extended resourcing to provide qualified assessment and to meet the individual learning needs identified as children enter the education system (at all levels, so as to support new arrivals);
- Improvement in the capacity of teachers to identify, assess and analyse a variety of performance measures;
- Extended systemic allocation of resources to meet identified needs of disadvantaged students;
- Review of the adequacy of current programs to meet the identified need for all educationally disadvantaged students; and
- Adoption of performance indicators which measure the provision of quality educational experiences for all students.

1.44 The broader policy issues are addressed in chapter 4.²⁸

²⁸ See recommendations 14 – 24.

2 IDENTIFYING GAPS IN ACHIEVEMENT

Achievement gap

- 2.1 In simple terms, the educational achievement gap has been defined as the 'marked difference between the achievement or performance level of one group of students relative to another group.'²⁹ Differences are characterised as ranging between high and low achievement as measured by standardised assessment tools.
- 2.2 Evidence to the Inquiry indicated that a number of different factors influence levels of educational achievement and that these factors can range from the specialist resources within the education system itself to the individual circumstances of students. Of particular importance to the Inquiry was the extent to which the range of achievement in the ACT was influenced by external factors, including:
- Socio-economic status;
 - first language;
 - cultural, ethnicity and race;
 - country of origin;
 - physical and intellectual ability (including disability within the family); and
 - gender.
- 2.3 The Committee observed general agreement between all contributors to the Inquiry that gaps in the achievement of individual students was particularly troubling when the difference appeared to be caused or exacerbated by some form of identifiable disadvantage. The ACT Council of P&C Associations (the Council) emphasised that:
- Government school education should aim to provide for the maximum development of every student without distinction due to social or economic status, ability, gender, race, religion, colour or family beliefs.³⁰

²⁹ Submission no. 2, p 6

³⁰ Submission no. 5, p 3

- 2.4 Mr Cobbold, from the ACT-based organisation Save Our Schools (SOS), suggested to the Committee that:

The well-known achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is an extreme version which has specific features relating to Indigenous communities. The achievement gap broadly refers to the influence of socioeconomic background on education outcomes, but it affects other ethnic groups as well.³¹

- 2.5 For the Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of other Languages (ATESOL), there is inevitably a gap for English as a second/additional language/dialect 'between their current English proficiency level and desired English and educational levels'³² From this perspective, the gap only becomes an issue for concern 'if learners slow down or stall in their progress towards full participation in education.'³³

- 2.6 The ACT Gifted and Talented Support Group also informed the Committee that 'gifted underachievement' is a common experience which can easily occur when:

someone who has exceptional performance on a measure of intelligence but who nevertheless does not perform as well as expected for students at the same age on school-related tasks.³⁴

- 2.7 In some cases, students with high potential fail to engage with the learning process. According to the ACT Gifted and Talented Support Group, 'high potential too often does not result in demonstrated high performance in our schools'.³⁵ Importantly, it is evident that there may be a range of social factors which 'mask' underperformance from very capable students including:

- English as a second language;
- cultural differences;
- disability; or
- socio-economic circumstances.

- 2.8 The Youth Coalition of the ACT (YCACT) highlighted the impact that familial

³¹ Mr Cobbold, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 86

³² Submission no. 6, p 10

³³ Submission no. 6, p 10

³⁴ Ms Robb, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, p 63

³⁵ Ms Robb, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, p 64

disability might have on a student performance. Not only could this affect the socio-economic circumstances of the family, but some students may also assume significant caring roles with their families. Estimates suggest that this obligation may affect between four and ten per cent of young people in the ACT. According to YCACT, young carers:

are children and young people who care for or help care within a family affected by illness, disability, alcohol and other drug and /or mental health issues of one or more of its members...Young carers live in families of financial hardship, and often do not identify [that they have specific] times without care responsibilities. Young carers may also experience negative impacts of caring including fatigue, injury, greater level of stress and anxiety, financial insecurity, family breakdown and limited social and recreational opportunities.³⁶

- 2.9 Professor McConaghy, Dean of the Education Faculty at the University of Canberra, advised the Committee that, in general, socio-economic factors may account for as much as 70 per cent of the variables evident in levels of student achievement.³⁷

Identifying disadvantage in the gap

- 2.10 Dr Ainley, Deputy Chief Executive Officer from the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), informed the Committee that:
- the data that we have from the large-scale studies is fairly consistent in telling us what the big gaps are. The big gaps are with respect to socioeconomic background. So between the top and the bottom quarter of people, on socioeconomic background, the gap is about 0.8 of a standard deviation. I would not want to be held to that but it is a rough figure. They are typically scaled with a standard deviation of 100, so it is about 80 points on that scale; that is the gap between the top and the bottom quarter of the socioeconomic distribution.³⁸
- 2.11 The Government's submission provided detailed information about the various measurement tests and their effectiveness in measuring gaps in

³⁶ Submission no. 3, p 10

³⁷ Prof McConaghy, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, p 45

³⁸ Dr Ainley, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 November 2009, p 154

achievement between various cohorts. The National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) 'provides the most comprehensive information on the performance of all students and subgroups'³⁹ including the following:

- Language background other than English (LBOTE);
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous); and
- Gender.

2.12 Information about a student's first language, cultural, ethnicity and race, country of origin, physical and intellectual ability and socio-economic background is not collected as a part of the standard NAPLAN test. While these background variables cannot be disaggregated from assessment data, , further qualitative analysis by teachers and education experts may produce a refined interpretation of student performances in a particular locale.

2.13 The ACT Government maintained that the major testing program was not reliable in drawing definitive conclusions about socio-economic impacts on student performance.⁴⁰

2.14 Another major assessment test referred to by many submitters was the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests which have been conducted in 2000, 2003, 2006 and 2009.⁴¹ These tests, based on a randomly selected sample of students from across the education system (government and non-government), did gather socio-economic details from participants.⁴²

2.15 Following considerable debate about the socio-economic implications of the 2006 PISA results, the Department of Education and Training commissioned ACER to undertake an analysis of the data. The report, prepared by Sue Thomson and Lisa de Bortoli, concluded that in a comparative Australian context:

The socioeconomic gradients for each of the three literacy domains show that the ACT has higher levels of achievement than any of the other states over all levels of socioeconomic background. At the lowest level of achievement the score is similar to that of a few of the other states,

³⁹ Submission no. 2, p 9

⁴⁰ Submission no. 2

⁴¹ The 2009 results could not be anticipated until late 2010 so could not be incorporated in this Inquiry.

⁴² The sample size in the ACT is approximately 1000 students. The socio-economic data taken is discussed at footnote 15

however as socioeconomic levels increase, the gap between the performance of students in the ACT and Australia increases. In all literacies assessed, at all socioeconomic levels, students in the ACT performed at a higher level than students in other states.⁴³

- 2.16 Thomson and de Bortoli also noted that the ACT PISA results confirmed that: There is no significant difference between the percentage of students in the lowest socioeconomic quartile performing at or above the OECD average in any of the three literacies in the ACT and Australia.⁴⁴

- 2.17 While high achievement levels indicated a system that provides high quality educational services to the community in general, the report did comment on the equity of the ACT system noting that:

The distribution of socioeconomic levels in the ACT is narrower than that of other states: the lower and higher socioeconomic levels are higher for the ACT than for all other states.⁴⁵

- 2.18 In effect, while the ACT has very few students who register in the lowest quartile on the composite ESCS scale⁴⁶ compared with other states, the educational achievement gradient between lowest to highest is relatively steep suggesting a high quality but low equity system. Those in the lowest quartile do not achieve at a higher level than their counterparts in other jurisdictions.⁴⁷
- 2.19 The Committee recognised the complexity of this comparison, reflecting in the ACT a higher than average, but also narrower socio-economic range in the

⁴³ Sue Thomson and Lisa de Bortoli (2008) *The Performance of Students in the Australian Capital Territory on PISA: Report to the ACT Department of Education and Training*, pp 3-4; assessable at: <http://www.det.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/22908/ACTPISA2008.pdf> (accessed 25 February 2010)

⁴⁴ Sue Thomson and Lisa de Bortoli, (2008) "The performance of students in the Australian Capital Territory on PISA" Australian Council for Education Research (ACER) provided as Appendix C to submission no. 2

⁴⁵ Sue Thomson and Lisa de Bortoli (2008) *The Performance of Students in the Australian Capital Territory on PISA: Report to the ACT Department of Education and Training*, p 3; assessable at: <http://www.det.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/22908/ACTPISA2008.pdf> (accessed 25 February 2010)

⁴⁶ PISA uses a composite index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS), which is based on the occupations of the parents or guardians, the highest level of education of the parents converted into years of education, an index of the home educational resources, an index of cultural possessions in the home, and an index of family wealth. See Sue Thomson and Lisa de Bortoli (undated) *PISA in Brief From Australia's perspective*: ACER, p 14: accessible at <http://www.acer.edu.au/documents/PISA2006_PISAinbrief.pdf> (accessed 18 March 2010)

⁴⁷ See also Table 1

community than occurs in other Australian jurisdictions.⁴⁸

2.20 Nonetheless, it is this characteristic of the ACT results that have led analysts to identify the ACT as a high quality, low equity education system.

2.21 According to Professor McConaghy, over the years the PISA data has highlighted two aspects of the ACT education system. Firstly, while the 2000 results showed the ACT was outperforming Finland in literacy results, 'between 2000 and 2006 there was a slight drop in overall achievement in the ACT and a widening of the gaps'.⁴⁹ Secondly, the data indicated that there were 'higher than average gaps in educational achievement compared with some other jurisdictions'.⁵⁰

2.22 SOS gave further substance to this analysis by quantifying the effects of the gradient as follows:

The achievement gap in average results for high and low SES 15-year-old students in the ACT represents about 2½ years of schooling. Much higher proportions of low SES students achieve at the lowest proficiency levels and much lower proportions achieve at the highest proficiency levels compared with high SES students. Low SES students in the ACT are doing no better than low SES students across Australia.⁵¹

2.23 The Committee noted that a partnership between the ACT Government and the Centre for Research on Education, Poverty and Social Inclusion at the University of Canberra as providing the opportunity to identify 'ACT-specific indicators of social disadvantage and their impacts on educational disadvantage'.⁵²

2.24 The Committee anticipated that this research will give further detail to the issues raised during this Inquiry about the limits of current measures and how teachers and educators might gain further insight into the socio-economic factors affecting their students' learning and achievements.

⁴⁸ See Sue Thomson and Lisa de Bortoli, (2008) "The performance of students in the Australian Capital Territory on PISA" Australian Council for Education Research (ACER) provided as Appendix C to submission no. 2; p 28, Figure 4.1

⁴⁹ Prof McConaghy, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, p 44

⁵⁰ Prof McConaghy, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, p 44

⁵¹ Mr Cobbold, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 86

⁵² Prof McConaghy, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, pp 45

Interpreting assessment data

- 2.25 A number of the submitters to the Inquiry highlighted significant interpretive limitations to the current standard measures and thus a limit to the conclusions that could be drawn. Standard assessment tests have been referred to as snapshot tests, providing an impression of performance at a particular moment in time.
- 2.26 Other evidence highlighted limitations with the available measurements to accurately determine student performance. The Committee noted the importance, for the purposes of this Inquiry, of being clear about what is not being measured as well as what is being measured.
- 2.27 The ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations (the Council) noted that the focus on average performance or minimum standards in testing programs such as NAPLAN can mask important trends. There can be unintended consequences when such tests are used by teachers to respond to student performance and educational achievement. As the Council observed:
- In looking after the lower end of the proficiency spectrum the performance of students at the upper and middle ends can tend to be taken for granted, and may decline through fixed resources being preferentially allocated to groups identified with particular needs.⁵³
- 2.28 The specialist education needs of some groups may be obscured if a particular measurement is generically applied. Dr Moore, from the Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ATESTOL) informed the Committee that in many cases, language teaching issues are conflated with literacy issues and subsequently, literacy testing has been presented as an adequate means of assessing outcomes for students who speak other languages.
- 2.29 When such measures are used to determine funding levels, the situation can be exacerbated for some groups. Dr Moore informed the Committee that commonwealth/state-territory funding partnerships had had a significant impact on the provision of ESL teaching services.

Basically, in our view, it is wiping targeted provision and targeted policy making and concern for ESL kids off the map. It is being supplanted by a

⁵³ Submission no. 5, p 5. The submission reproduces PISA data reported by Sue Thomson and Lisa de Bortoli, (2008) *The Performance of Students in the Australian Capital Territory on PISA* (tables 1.9-1.11) to illustrate declining performance of both ACT and Australian students in the highest levels of mathematical literacy.

concern with literacy scores on the national tests. Those national tests...do not pick up on what the issues are for ESL kids. We get told over and over again, "Of course, literacy is targeting ESL." So I ask you: if you went to China and were told that you were illiterate or had a literacy problem, how would you see that as responding to your needs? Lots of ESL kids are perfectly literate. They do not know English; they do not know the words...What they need is English, not literacy. They should not be targeted as literacy problems.⁵⁴

- 2.30 Robyn Pierce and Helen Chick have made a tangential point with regard to numeracy assessment and the capacity of teachers to interpret and analyse data and then implement appropriate remedial strategies. This capacity of teachers is considered pivotal to achieving the link between standard assessment tests and quality teaching. Pierce and Chick observe that:

there is a need to investigate the statistical literacy needed to interpret and make use of these reports. These two factors—statistical competence and affect—together will govern the extent to which teachers and principals are able to interpret data and make consequential teaching and policy decisions that might lead to better outcomes for students. If intended users lack the necessary skills and do not believe in the value of the data, the potential benefits of such large-scale testing and reporting will not be realised.⁵⁵

- 2.31 The Committee identified professional development for teachers and the provision of systemic expertise in result interpretation as crucial to the cycle of assessment testing. In the absence of this stage of the process, national testing processes may generate little more than league tables.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide pre-service training or professional development for teachers in interpreting standardised testing results.

⁵⁴ Dr Moore, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, pp 94-95

⁵⁵ Robyn Pierce and Helen Chick (undated) "Teachers' intentions to use national mathematics assessment data" available at <<http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/sme/research/TeacherIntentions-workingpaper.pdf>> accessed 25 January 2010

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that teachers are aware and able to access expert advice and services to support them in adapting their pedagogical practice to suit the different educational needs of their students.

Geographical comparisons

2.32 The Committee received a detailed submission from Dr Mark Drummond regarding the veracity of inter-jurisdictional comparisons given the primarily urban characteristics of the ACT.⁵⁶ The Committee noted that little of the ACT could be classified as regional and this jurisdiction does not confront the difficulties associated with the delivery of educational services to remote community as occurs in the Northern Territory.

2.33 Evidence from Dr Ainley confirmed the bearing of geographical factors on educational disadvantage. Dr Ainley observed that:

This is less of an issue for the Australian Capital Territory, but across Australia there is an effect between metropolitan, provincial, remote and very remote. I think a number of us were quite surprised at something that came out of the NAPLAN data that had not been as evident before in sample studies—the gap for young Australians in very remote areas, and the interaction of Indigenous status and geographic location. For Indigenous students in very remote areas, that was where the gap was very large. For Indigenous students in metropolitan areas, the gap was not as large.⁵⁷

2.34 The Committee considered the compounding effects of geolocation on educational achievement could have a bearing on the way the ACT data should be interpreted. ACT student performance may reflect a geographical advantage not simply a quality school system. Dr Drummond's comparative analysis of NAPLAN results suggested to the Committee that further analysis by the Department of Education and Training was warranted to provide a refined, and possibly more realistic, comparison of the performance of the ACT as a jurisdiction with unique characteristics.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Submission 9 and 9a

⁵⁷ Dr Ainley, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 November 2009, p 155

⁵⁸ Some analysis of comparative urban outcomes is provided in Chapter 3.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training provide to the Legislative Assembly an analysis of ACT NAPLAN results using comparable 2008 and 2009 NAPLAN data from NSW and Victorian urban schools.

"My School" website

- 2.35 Towards the end of the Inquiry, the Committee considered the implications of the launch of the "My School" website. This website provided, for the first time, public access to NAPLAN test results for each school. Concern was raised in the public debate that ensued that this website would provide the basis for league tables which ranked schools according to their students' average performance on this test.
- 2.36 As noted earlier in this report, the Committee did not believe that the socio-economic factors affecting achievement should be assessed at the school level. However, given concerns raised about school league tables, the Committee sought reassurance from the Minister for Education and Training that, as a consequence of this new information, teaching in individual schools would not become focused towards "teaching to the test" rather than student needs.⁵⁹
- 2.37 The Minister advised that this was unlikely as the NAPLAN testing design did not include standardised questions but rather questions drawn from across the literacy and numeracy curriculum. He assured the Committee that:
- It is not the intention of the ACT government for NAPLAN to become a new subject area within the curriculum. But, equally, I do not have any concerns that what we teach, what we should be teaching in terms of literacy and numeracy, will be aiding our efforts in terms of our NAPLAN results if we teach our literacy and numeracy well.⁶⁰
- 2.38 The Committee considered that with the publication of comparative data on school performance in NAPLAN tests, that it would become even more important to encourage schools to reflect on and draw attention to the effective qualitative measures used to enhance the performance and confidence of all their students.

⁵⁹ A second hearing with the Minister for Education and Training and officials from the Department of Education and Training was held on 16 February 2010.

⁶⁰ Mr Barr, *Transcript of evidence*, 17 February 2010, p 163

Qualitative assessments of educational experiences

- 2.39 The terms of reference for the Inquiry sought feedback on qualitative assessments of educational experiences as a way of recognising that standard statistical measures may not always provide an adequate overview of the quality of a school's educational experience.
- 2.40 The ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations (the Council) nominated a range of activities that recognise and support the diverse backgrounds of students ranging from one-off activities to more formal and prolonged programs or initiatives, including:
- School assemblies run by Indigenous or ESL students;
 - NAIDOC week and Harmony Day celebrations;
 - The inclusion of Indigenous art and history in the curriculum;
 - Literacy and numeracy assistance programs to ensure that students with diverse needs reach the minimum standards expected on entry to high school;
 - College courses for students with low literacy;
 - Reading and maths extension program, and other programs for gifted and talented students;
 - Outdoor education programs that build self esteem, confidence and resilience;
 - Access to a special teacher who comes into the school to work with Indigenous students, working with them individually with input from classroom teachers and parents/carers;
 - Delivery of the *National Values Project* which contains many avenues for studying social issues relating to Indigenous people, minority groups human rights, inclusion, acceptance, tolerance and religious freedom;
 - Implementation of a program called "Learning by Design" with some of the units incorporating Indigenous art, culture and history;
 - Implementation of programs for students at risk of dropping out of school early, for example, the Fast Track Program and the V-Tech program (which includes a literacy component);

- Employment of an Indigenous Liaison Officer;
- Artists in-residence;
- Corporate volunteers/mentors assisting with literacy;
- Implementation of the junior international Baccalaureate program, an inquiry based program that works well in engaging students across all levels.⁶¹

2.41 A recent report by The Grattan Institute has emphasised the need for 'value-added measures' to supplement standardised test and their 'current focus on student performance at a single point in time.'⁶² The report observes that value-added measures focus on the contribution made by schools to the progress of their students and can acknowledge the different efforts required to recognise and respond to the needs of different student groups, such as those describe above.

2.42 The Committee considered that "value-added" measures describe those activities through which schools maximise the potential for engagement and achievement within the school community. These activities are a key component of the ACT Department of Education and Training's School Improvement framework which sets out a review and assessment program for all public schools.⁶³

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training encourage schools to reflect on and respond to standard assessment results by quantifying and reporting on the qualitative measures used to support improvement in the achievement of their students.

⁶¹ Submission no 5, pp 6-7

⁶² Ben Jensen (2010) *Measuring What Matters: Student Progress*, Grattan Institute, Report No. 2010-1, p 6, accessible at <<http://www.grattan.edu.au/blogs/2010/01/26/temp/>> (accessed 23 February 2010).

⁶³ See ACT Department of Education and Training (2009) *School Improvement Framework Better schools... better futures Raising quality and achieving excellence in ACT public schools*, accessible at <http://www.det.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/64298/SchoolImprovementFramework.pdf> (accessed 25 March 2010)

3 ACT RESULTS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

- 3.1 The standard tests and measures used in the ACT and other jurisdictions can highlight overall performance of the student body and provide a range of indicators about the social, economic and cultural characteristics of those students in the Australian education systems. In the ACT these results indicate that:
- Overall, students perform very well with a high proportion of students achieving at or above the minimum national standard;
 - The higher comparative income level means that few students register in the bottom income quintile compared to other jurisdictions;
 - Indications are that lower income students perform at a comparable level to other jurisdictions;
 - Subgroup performance can be distinguished to a limited degree⁶⁴;
 - A connection between subgroup membership and socio-economic status can be inferred from available data
- 3.2 Evidence to the Committee indicated that there is common agreement that the ACT education system achieves at a very high standard. As the Government submission highlighted, the ACT is a system in which there are:
- very high proportions of students achieving the national minimum standard in each of the years and domains tested and the highest or the equal highest mean scores across most domains.⁶⁵
- 3.3 The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) performance report for 2008 indicated that:

⁶⁴ Subgroups identified are noted at 2.11.

⁶⁵ Submission no. 2, p 10

The ACT has results above the national average for all measures, with the exception of participation in Year 5 NAPLAN for which it is similar to the average.⁶⁶

- 3.4 The 2009 NAPLAN results confirmed the high achievement levels of ACT students compared to other Australian jurisdictions.⁶⁷
- 3.5 The ACT Government's submission set out the NAPLAN results providing clear evidence of the high achievements of students in the ACT education system.⁶⁸

Achievement below minimum standard

- 3.6 The table below sets out the percentage of ACT students achieving below national minimum standard and the ranking compared to other Australian metropolitan jurisdictions.⁶⁹ In this case, eight represents the best ranking as it would indicate the lowest number of students not meeting the standard compared to other jurisdictions.
- 3.7 The ACT is consistently at the lower end of the ranking. The data confirms that, in general, a smaller percentage of students in the ACT achieve below the national minimum standard compared to the other seven jurisdictions.⁷⁰ However, in contrast the consistently high ranking at the top end of the achievement levels the ACT is not the lowest ranked jurisdiction in this analysis.⁷¹
- 3.8 The Committee noted that the ACT did not rank eighth (as having the lowest percentage of student at this standard) at all, being consistently out-ranked by

⁶⁶ COAG Reform Council, *National Education Agreement: Baseline performance report for 2008*, p 125: accessible at <<http://www.coag.gov.au/crc/reports.cfm>> (accessed 4 March 2010)

⁶⁷ Submission no. 2, p 11. The summary results were released in September 2009 and detailed results in December 2009.

⁶⁸ Submission no. 2, p 11, Figure 2

⁶⁹ The data is sourced from the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs NAPLAN report accessible at <http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/naplan_2009_report,29487.html> (accessed 19 March 2010). It should be noted that the rankings provided differ significantly from those provided by the Minister for Education and Training and appended to this report. This reflects the use of comparable metropolitan student data to establish rank rather than comparing against the Australian average.

⁷⁰ Please note that in the Northern Territory, the geolocation category of "metro" is not recorded and this jurisdiction is included in the total for convention.

⁷¹ See also Submission no. 9a for a comparative analysis of the ACT, NSW metro and Vic metro rankings which similarly indicates that the ACT does not perform as well against comparable geolocations.

Victoria metropolitan results. This comparison confirmed the proposition that the ACT tends to be a low equity system. While the ACT ranked first on a number of band levels as having the highest proportion of students above the national minimum standard, this did not appear to translate into qualitatively different outcomes for underachieving students.

- 3.9 Of particular concern is the poor ranking of the ACT in the percentage of students performing below the standard in spelling across all year levels tested.

Table 1: Percentage of students achieving below minimum national standard and ranked against other Australian metropolitan jurisdictions

2009 NAPLAN results	Reading	Writing	Spelling	Grammar	Numeracy
	ACT (rank)	ACT (rank)	ACT (rank)	ACT (rank)	ACT (rank)
Year 3	2.4% (7) Vic metro 1.6%	1.2% (7) Vic metro 0.6%	4.2% (6) Vic metro 2.1% NSW metro 2.8%	2.8% (7) Vic metro 1.8%	2.3% (7) Vic metro 1.4%
Year 5	3.8% (7) Vic metro 2.8%	3.9% (6) Vic metro 2.2% NSW metro 3.1%	5.2% (6) Vic metro 2.3% NSW metro 3.2%	3.4% (7) Vic metro 2.1%	2.4% (7) Vic metro 1.7%
Year 7	3.0% (7) Vic metro 2.6%	5.3% (6) Vic metro 4.0% NSW metro 4.7%	5.4% (5) NSW metro 3.7% Vic metro 3.9% SA metro 5.2%	4.0% (7) Vic metro 3.6%	2.9% (7) Vic metro 2.1%
Year 9	3.9% (7) Vic metro 3.8%	8.7% (7) Vic metro 7.2% NSW metro 6.5%	6.9% (6) Vic metro 6.3%	5.2% (equal 8) Vic metro 5.2%	2.6% (7) Vic metro 1.8%

- 3.10 The Committee noted the consistently low ranking of Victorian metropolitan schools. Against this ranking, the Committee reflected on the specific commitment of the Victorian Government, through their *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* policy, to ensure that all government schools are 'providing opportunities for every child to succeed, in every circumstance'.⁷² The *Signposts Report* documents research undertaken in

⁷² Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2009) *The Signposts report: how Victorian Government schools have improved student performance*, p 1: accessible at

Victorian schools which have consistently supported improved performances for the students, including students from a variety of social backgrounds.⁷³ The report identifies 16 practices and behaviours which help improve student performance.

Identifiable subgroup achievement

- 3.11 The Committee sought further information from the Minister for Education and Training about the results from the 2009 NAPLAN tests.⁷⁴ The Minister's responses are appended to the report.⁷⁵
- 3.12 The Minister for Education and Training provided the Committee with statistics on subgroup performance for the 2009 NAPLAN. This data indicated the following:
- The mean score for ACT Indigenous students was significantly below the mean scores of non-Indigenous students across all year levels and all assessments.⁷⁶
 - Generally, language background other than English (LBOTE) students achieve at a higher mean score in writing, spelling and numeracy compared to non-LBOTE students.⁷⁷
 - ACT female students achieved at a higher mean score than ACT male students in all areas tested except for numeracy.⁷⁸

Identifiable subgroup disadvantage

- 3.13 The Minister provided details of the actual numbers of LBOTE and Indigenous

<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/publ/research/nws/Signposts_report.pdf> (accessed 26 March 2010)

⁷³ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2009) *The Signposts report: how Victorian Government schools have improved student performance*, accessible at <http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/publ/research/nws/Signposts_report.pdf> (accessed 26 March 2010)

⁷⁴ Detailed analysis of the 2009 NAPLAN results were not available at the time the Government submission was prepared. The Committee wrote to the Ministers seeking an update on 20 January 2010.

⁷⁵ See Appendix C

⁷⁶ See Table 2

⁷⁷ See Table 3

⁷⁸ See Table 1

students whose achievement was below the National Minimum Standard (NSM). The table below shows the number of students in each group who did not meet the NSM and the total number of students in these groups who participated in the 2008 and 2009 NAPLAN assessment.

Table 2: Numbers of students in subgroups – below national minimum standards and total

Number of ACT students below National Minimum Standard (NMS)	Test domain	LBOTE 2008	LBOTE 2009	Indigenous 2008	Indigenous 2009
		No. below NMS (Total LBOTE)	No. below NMS (Total LBOTE)	No. below NMS (Total Indigenous)	No. below NMS (Total Indigenous)
Year 3	Reading	82 (724)	80 (734)	17 (98)	15 (96)
	Writing	62 (724)	78 (738)	17 (98)	16 (96)
	Numeracy	67 (718)	94 (734)	12 (97)	16 (94)
Year 5	Reading	92 (789)	76 (683)	18 (96)	29 (98)
	Writing	64 (789)	71 ((683)	18 (97)	26 (101)
	Numeracy	62 (786)	54 (679)	15 (97)	14 (97)
Year 7	Reading	54 (696)	52 (603)	6 (76)	9 (75)
	Writing	52 ((694)	67 ((610)	14 (76)	21 (78)
	Numeracy	34 (694)	47 (694)	9 (78)	7 (70)
Year 9	Reading	38 (630)	69 (664)	11 (63)	20 (78)
	Writing	80 (621)	91 (681)	17 (64)	22 (81)
	Numeracy	40 (629)	46 (670)	14 (65)	14 (78)

- 3.14 The Committee noted the significant proportion of Indigenous students (as a total of all Indigenous students) who did not meet the National Minimum Standard. The table also highlights an area of underperformance for LBOTE students which contrasted starkly to the high performance in some domains by some students in this subgroup. On average, ten per cent of LBOTE students do not meet the minimum national standard suggesting a highly segmented subgroup category requiring more refined analysis.

Indigeneity

- 3.15 The Department of Education and Training identified that through comparison of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students that:

There is a gap of about 10 percentage points between the proportion of Indigenous students who met the national minimum standard and the non-Indigenous students meeting the national minimum standard.⁷⁹

- 3.16 A 2009 report drawing on 1996, 2001 and 2006 Census data indicated that in Australia generally, while there has been some improvement in educational attainments for Indigenous young people,:

the gap in educational attainments has often widened – particularly for higher education qualifications and for non-school qualifications overall.⁸⁰

- 3.17 The need to address the differentials in achievement for Indigenous students has been recognised as an equity issue at the federal level. The focus on the reducing the gap in the achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is central to the current funding agreement between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments. A framework for measuring and reporting on outcomes in this area have been established and results for 2008 have been published in the *National Agreement Performance Information 2008: National Education Agreement*.⁸¹

- 3.18 The ACT Government advised the Committee that:

Indigenous literacy and numeracy has been an area of concern...We have a program of literacy and numeracy officers who work kindergarten to year 4. We changed the program. Initially, it was a program for year 4 Indigenous students which arose out of the NAPLAN results in year 3. We very quickly realised that year 4 is far too late to start doing intensive work with them, so we work with students in kindergarten to year 4 across the ACT, choosing schools that have the greatest number of Indigenous students with the greatest need. That is a program where officers work in schools for a term at a time, and there is an extension if the needs are still there.⁸²

⁷⁹ Ms Steward, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, pp 104-105

⁸⁰ Centre for the Economics of Education and Training (2009) *How young Indigenous people are faring: Key indicators 1996-2006*, Dusseldorp Skills Forum and Reconciliation Australia, p 9: accessible at <<http://www.dsf.org.au/resources/detail/?id=139>> (accessed 26 March 2010)

⁸¹ Productivity Commission (2009) *National Agreement Performance Information 2008: National Education Agreement*, accessible at <<http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/national-agreements/education>> (accessed 8 February 2010)

⁸² Ms Wilks, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 105

- 3.19 The Australian Education Union (AEU) advised the Committee that:
data about the school leaving age indicated that there is more likely to be a significant drop-out rate in later years of high school among Indigenous boys, although of course they are not the only group of Indigenous students who are at risk.⁸³
- 3.20 The Department of Education and Training has also provided targeted support for Indigenous students making the transition from primary to high school by establishing the position of Indigenous transition officer 'who works to support students moving from year 6 into year 7 with the increased literacy requirements of a high school'.⁸⁴
- 3.21 The Committee was also advised that the Department of Education and Training:
provide Koori preschool programs, of which there are five sites. They have been conducted in the ACT for a number of years and they are received very positively by the Indigenous community. They provide very much a cultural context for young children as they begin their school education.⁸⁵
- 3.22 Of the measures in place to support better outcomes for Indigenous students, the AEU indentified the following programs as particularly effective:
- The Dare to Lead program for principals seeking to support Indigenous students and promote reconciliation within their school;
 - The availability of eight Indigenous literacy and numeracy officers to work for extended periods within individual schools and build teacher capacity.
- 3.23 Based on the evidence provided, the Committee observed that the ACT Government has targeted the key challenges identified for Indigenous students at risk but the impact of these programs may only just be beginning to influence the learning outcomes of Indigenous students.
- 3.24 The Committee also noted the assessment made by the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Elected Body following their Estimates hearings in 2009 that there were obvious 'difficulties with Years 8 and 11 attainments as well as

⁸³ Ms Gilmour, *Transcript of evidence*, 6 October 2009, p 10

⁸⁴ Ms Wilks, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 105

⁸⁵ Ms Melson, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 109

a high dropout rate. Their report recommended in relation to schooling and education that:

- The Department of Education and Training improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student after Year 5, including improved support for children in education after Year 5, particularly during the transition to high school and beyond, to maintain literacy and numeracy achievements;
- The Department of Education and Training increases the numbers of teachers who have Indigenous studies qualifications and increases the amount of Indigenous history, and contemporary cultural awareness training delivered to both the teach and departmental workforces;
- There are programs to increase high school retention rates;
- There is one Elected Body member on the Indigenous Education Consultative Body;
- There is more consultation and involvement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families about Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) funding;
- There is a longitudinal study of Year 12 students and Year 12 graduates to find out where they end up and what their career and training needs are. This should include an examination of the effectiveness of school-based apprenticeships.⁸⁶

3.25 The committee understands that the ACT Government will respond to the Elected Body's report in due course and looks forward to seeing these recommendations actioned by the Department of Education and Training.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government to provide Members of the Legislative Assembly copies of the response to the Report on the outcomes of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Elected Body Estimates Hearings 2008-09.

3.26 The AEU also identified cross-cultural awareness training mandatory pre-service courses in Indigenous studies as matters to be addressed in the

⁸⁶ Report on the outcomes of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Elected Body Estimates Hearings 2008-09, January 2010, p 27

professional development of teachers.⁸⁷ The Committee noted that the Department of Education and Training advised the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body that cross-cultural awareness training was being considered.⁸⁸

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training establish cross-cultural awareness training options for ACT teachers and negotiate with the Faculty of Education at the University of Canberra for the inclusion of pre-service courses in Indigenous studies.

- 3.27 The Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ATESOL) observed that for some Indigenous students, the use of Indigenous language or creole/Aboriginal English in the home can be a facet of Indigenous learning that requires expert teaching.⁸⁹ The Department advised the Committee that they recognised this learning need as a component of the ESL programs.⁹⁰
- 3.28 The Committee considered that the need in this area was not well understood and the use of an already stretched LOBTE funds to meet this need was not desirable. ATESOL advised the Committee that the programs in this area of need may not be adequately focused as 'specific linguistic, cultural and educational expertise is needed in working with speakers of Aboriginal languages and creoles.'⁹¹ ATESOL also highlighted the importance of including Indigenous educators and community leaders in providing expertise in this area of teaching.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Committee recommends that further analysis be undertaken by the Department of Education and Training into the need for a specialist Indigenous language and creoles support program in the ACT education system.

⁸⁷ Ms Gilmour, *Transcript of evidence*, 6 October 2009, p 10

⁸⁸ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (2010) *Report on the outcomes of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Estimates Hearings 2008-09*, January 2010, p 27

⁸⁹ Ms Mayers, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 98

⁹⁰ Ms Wilks, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 115

⁹¹ Submission no.3 p 27

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Committee recommends that any programs or initiatives developed should be undertaken in consultation with ESL teachers and Indigenous educators and community leaders and that these programs should be funded independently of the existing ESL funding model.

- 3.29 The Youth Coalition of the ACT informed the Committee that often schools did not have enough flexibility to cope with the different learning capabilities, behavioural issues and life issues of students from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background.⁹² The Coalition emphasised the importance of alternative educational settings to suit the diverse needs of students and identified Gugan Gulwan as a community service providing an important alternative to traditional educational services.⁹³
- 3.30 At one hearing, representatives from Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation (a community service funded by the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services) explained that a key aspect of their success with students was in facilitating a bridge between the student, their schools and other social support services. The objectives of the program were to facilitate the students return to mainstream education services. The school catered for approximately 10 students at one time with up to 30 students being progressing through the program each year.⁹⁴
- 3.31 The Executive Director of Gugan Gulwan advised the Committee that:
- We have an individual education plan for each of the students that come through, so we address a whole heap of issues. They might be sent to us with educational issues and then they become homeless. There might be family dysfunction or family breakdown, drug and alcohol issues—myriad things that could be happening in that young person's life, or any young person's life; they are not restricted to Indigenous young people. We find with the case management style that we are able to bring in a lot of other services to assist that young person.⁹⁵

⁹² Submission no 3, p 9

⁹³ Submission no 3, p 17

⁹⁴ Ms Wass, *Transcript of evidence*, 6 October 2009, pp 21-24

⁹⁵ Ms Davison, *Transcript of evidence*, 6 October 2009, p 22

Funding for specialist schools

- 3.32 The Committee noted that the need for this kind of intensive wrap-around service was not exclusive to Indigenous students and that Galilee was another community service providing a range of education services supporting children and young people. The school was characterised as a "last-resort" option for students.⁹⁶
- 3.33 The Chief Executive Officer of Galilee advised the Committee that the students involved with this program come from a range of backgrounds, including Indigenous backgrounds. However, the program was not exclusive and extended to other low socio-economic groups, however, including students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.
- 3.34 The Committee considered that the specialist programs offered by both organisations illustrate the challenges that can confront older students in mainstream schools who have experienced educational disadvantage, often because of external factors such as race, culture and socio-economic background. The supports required for these students can be extensive and continuous through the curriculum years.
- 3.35 The funding arrangements for these community-based organisations were of concern to the Committee. Both organisations identified funding shortfalls or contractual complexities as factors which detract from or limit the services they could provide. Gudan Gulwan was facing uncertainty about the continuation of their school program which was supported by both federal and ACT government funding.⁹⁷ The Chief Executive Officer advised the Committee, 'we are used to operating like that'.⁹⁸
- 3.36 The Committee noted that a more secure funding model would enhance the stability offered to students and staff and facilitate strategic planning opportunities for the organisation.
- 3.37 Similarly, the funding arrangement for Galilee School was complicated by multiple agency contracts with the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support (OCYFS) in the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services, the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The

⁹⁶ Ms Harwood, *Transcript of evidence*, 6 October 2009, p 36

⁹⁷ Ms Davison, *Transcript of evidence*, 6 October 2009, pp 32-33

⁹⁸ Ms Davison, *Transcript of evidence*, 6 October 2009, p 33

Committee was advised that it was the intention of OCYFS to divest itself of the responsibility for the school funding and that they were negotiating with DET to achieve this objective.⁹⁹

- 3.38 The Chief Executive Officer told the Committee that because OCYFS were restructuring, the funding contract was being rolled over every three months and that:

 although they have been very honest and transparent about it, we know that they are in total negotiation with the education department at the moment to pass the responsibility. Certainly that does not make us feel very confident.¹⁰⁰

- 3.39 The services to disadvantaged youth provided by Gudan Gulwan and Galilee reflected the sort of wrap-around services that are often required to address complex social policy issues. The Committee considered that the incapacity of government departments to better coordinate funding agreements for the delivery of such complex services was to the detriment of these community organisations. The Committee considered that where these services are meeting outputs and achieving required outcomes, a whole of government approach to contract management should be adopted.

RECOMMENDATION 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensures that multi-agency funding arrangements do not have a detrimental impact on services delivered to disadvantaged students and, where required outputs are being met and continued funding is anticipated, the disruption and uncertainty of contract changes are resolved by the government in a timely manner.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government investigate options for expanding the Gudan Gulwan program to include Years 11 and 12 students.

Language, culture and country of origin

- 3.40 The Committee heard that Galilee was increasingly offering education services

⁹⁹ Ms Harwood, *Transcript of evidence*, 6 October 2009, pp 37-38

¹⁰⁰ Ms Harwood, *Transcript of evidence*, 6 October 2009, p 38

to students from refugee backgrounds, as well as students from low socio-economic and Indigenous backgrounds. The Chief Executive Officer indicated that this shift in their client group presented particular challenges in terms of the organisation being:

across the issues and then equipped to support the CALD people, whose issues are certainly different from those we have been considering before.¹⁰¹

- 3.41 Galilee can cater for 12 to 15 students at any one time and works on a ratio of one teacher/youth workers for two students. The Committee heard that the personal circumstances for students involved with the program are very complex and that 'the counselling and support are as essential as the numeracy and literacy'.¹⁰²
- 3.42 The Committee was also informed by the Australian Education Union (AEU) that an increase in humanitarian visa holders from Sudan and Burma (the Karen people) has increased in recent years creating 'a unique need' as:
- a lot of these students have not been to formal schooling ever. They have very complex needs that need a multidisciplinary approach really. It is not just a school issue. These students need support from the whole community and all of the services need to work together effectively to be able to support them and their families.¹⁰³
- 3.43 The Committee noted with concern the specific socio-economic and cultural difficulties that confront refugee students including trauma, dislocation, poverty, poor health, educational disadvantage and lower levels of English proficiency. The Youth Coalition of the ACT cited a survey of refugee students in Australia conducted in 2003 which indicated that 16 per cent were homeless or in unsafe, unhygienic or overcrowded accommodation.¹⁰⁴ Among the needs of this group of students, the Coalition noted 'mentoring and identifying and developing aspirations and goals'.¹⁰⁵
- 3.44 A major concern identified by the AEU, and other submitters, was the capacity of the current system to support what appeared to be a growing and complex group of students with diverse needs. Students grouped within the

¹⁰¹ Ms Harwood, *Transcript of evidence*, 6 October 2009, p 36

¹⁰² Ms Harwood, *Transcript of evidence*, 6 October 2009, p 39

¹⁰³ Ms Smith, *Transcript of evidence*, 6 October 2009, pp 15-16

¹⁰⁴ Submission no. 3, p 9

¹⁰⁵ Submission no.3 p 10

broad category of ESL ranged from the children of diplomats, with generally high education levels and high English language capacity, to the refugee students noted above. The AEU indicated that, over the last 10 years, the growth in English as a second language (ESL) students has been about 35 per cent. This group now represents about 11 per cent of the public school population.¹⁰⁶

- 3.45 The Committee sought further data from the Minister regarding ESL enrolments in mainstream classes and at Introductory English Centres (IECs). The Minister's response have been appended to the report.¹⁰⁷
- 3.46 The Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ATESOL) in the ACT provided detailed evidence to the Inquiry and offered considerable insight into the characteristics of this category of learner.
- 3.47 In the first instance, ATESOL suggested a redefinition of the category as learners of English as an additional language or distinct dialect (EAL/D). In this categorisation, ESL students are a subgroup.¹⁰⁸ The broader category accommodates other dialect speakers such as some Indigenous students (as has already been mentioned). This broader definition also recognised the complexity of this category of learner.
- 3.48 The evidence provided by ATESOL indicated a gradual decline in the capacity of the ACT education system to support the complex needs of this broad group. The Committee was informed that:

For ESL students, targeted support hinges on (1) assessment on a 5 point English proficiency rating scale (where level 4 = average native English competence) and (2) a funding formula derived from total enrolments in ACT schools. This funding formula has steadily reduced support for ESL students, as overall enrolments decline and migrant and refugee intakes increase. In 2008, 52 per cent of ESL students rated with "below average" English went unfunded for ESL support; only those assessed as level 1 ("minimal English") gained full funding.¹⁰⁹
- 3.49 In 2008, according to ATESOL, only those students assessed at or below 1.5 on the Language Proficiency Rating (LPR) scale received specialist support.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Ms Smith, *Transcript of evidence*, 6 October 2009, pp 14-15

¹⁰⁷ Appendix C

¹⁰⁸ Submission no. 6, p 4

¹⁰⁹ Submission no. 6, p4

¹¹⁰ Submission no. 6, p 20

Those rated at 1.75 received partial funding. Both ATESOL and the AEU highlighted that those with learning needs just above these levels may be missing out on much needed support. The four per cent cap on ESL staffing means contrasts with the total of 10.94 per cent enrolment of ESL students in 2009.¹¹¹

3.50 A range of programs existed to support the needs of this student subgroup as a whole:

- Introductory English Centres (IECs);
- ESL Executive Officers/consultants;
- Pilot refugee program at Dickson College;

3.51 However, it seemed clear from the evidence provided to the Committee that these programs could not entirely meet the need within the system. As a consequence, ATESOL raised concerns about:

- The funding model used and the incapacity of this model to respond to all but the most substantial learning needs.
- The language proficiency rating (LPR) used by schools to access students.¹¹²
- The capacity of the LRP scale to identify specific EAL/D needs including those who identify as:
 - Speaking Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language or Aboriginal creole; or
 - Being born or having parent born in a country where English is not the main language; and speaking a language other than English at home; and having attended an Australian school for less than 7 years.¹¹³
- The number of ESL qualified teachers;
- Access to preschool services and only two ESL teacher available to support mainstream preschools;¹¹⁴
- The value-added analysis of existing data to identify and cross-reference other data sources such as Indigenous student performance; visa categories of students; other testing results; other demographic data.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Submission no. 6, p 20

¹¹² Submission no. 6, p 4

¹¹³ Submission no. 6, p 13

¹¹⁴ Ms Dawson, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 95

- 3.52 The Committee heard from the Department of Education and Training that there were aware of the complexity of ESL needs and advised that:

We also look at the students who are ESL but who also require literacy support. Sometimes one masks the other. We are aware of that. Then for these students who are really at need, we look at having individual plans to support them. Again, it is around the differentiated curriculum and having teachers understand. This is part of the role of the [ESL Executive Officers or] coaches too—to help teachers understand the particular needs of students and to work to meet their needs. But the work we are having to do is to upskill our teachers and actually getting qualifications around the teaching of English as a second language.¹¹⁶

- 3.53 The Department acknowledged that there were insufficient numbers of ESL teachers and advised the Committee that:

That is an area where we recognise that we do have a shortage in trained ESL teachers. To compensate that, we offer fairly intensive professional development programs through the department to support those people and we are looking at scholarships next year to provide that additional training for those teachers.¹¹⁷

- 3.54 The Department advised, however, that they were not considering a review of the funding model at this stage.¹¹⁸

- 3.55 On the basis of the evidence received by the Committee, a comprehensive review of the ESL/D support services is needed to ensure that the complex needs of this group of students are being met.

RECOMMENDATION 11

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training undertake a full review and assessment of the EAL/D profile in the ACT education system including a breakdown of the groups of students within the broader category and a clear articulation of the sort of supports these students are likely to need.

¹¹⁵ Submission no. 6, p 17

¹¹⁶ Ms Wilks, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October, 2009, p 116

¹¹⁷ Ms Wilks, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October, 2009, pp 105-106

¹¹⁸ Ms Wilks, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October, 2009, pp 116

RECOMMENDATION 12

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training undertake a review of the funding model for EAL/D students with particular attention to the capacity of the model to meet the needs of the broader group of students identified by the profile review and whether targeted funds are able to meet all needs.

Gender difference or gender gap?

- 3.56 The Committee also heard how gender can influence achievement. For instance, the engagement of some boys with the curriculum wanes as they move through the stages of schooling.
- 3.57 The Committee acknowledged that differences in the achievement of girls and boys could be easily identified from the various performance tests. However, they did not believe that this gap was constituted in the same way as other risk factors identified during the Inquiry.
- 3.58 The Committee noted that gender is a relatively simple distinction of the student cohort based on an obvious physiological variable. The Committee did not consider the differences in achievement evident in the results constituted an achievement gap, although some witnesses referenced to curriculum changes and assessment practice over the last few decades may have influenced the engagement and achievement of both boys and girls.¹¹⁹
- 3.59 However, as one witness noted, 'there is often more difference within the sex than between the sexes.'¹²⁰
- 3.60 In this sense, the relevance of gender may be in the kinds of supports that should be offered to individual students striving to reach their potential. For instance, Menslink (a community organisation providing mentoring and other support services to boys and young men) informed the Committee of the need to recognise gender in the delivery of support services. Mr Cullen advised the Committee about:

the life coaching service, which essentially is a counselling service. We call it life coaching because we find that it helps facilitate engagement from young guys—just the language, because of that stigma that is there. Why we see that as being a good model for taking into schools is...that

¹¹⁹ Ms Nadjeki, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 143; Mr Cullen, *Transcript of evidence*, 6 October 2009, pp 3-4

¹²⁰ Mrs Dorrian, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 144

there is less stigma around seeing the guy from Menslink, for example, as opposed to seeing a school counsellor. It is really all about that perception from the student's point of view.¹²¹

- 3.61 For students challenged by educational disadvantage or disengagement, the strategies that may be needed to maximise the opportunities for boys or girls in the educational system should vary to meet the circumstances of the individual.

Subgroup performance not identified

- 3.62 The Committee recognised that educational achievement can reflect the spectrum of individual student capacity. Those students with a high level capacity might reasonably be expected to be significantly more advanced than the general cohort. Other students may struggle to reach their potential. In both cases, recognition of specific needs and additional support could make a significant difference to the performance of these students.

Gifted and talented students

- 3.63 The Committee heard from the ACT Gifted and Talented Support Group (the Support Group) that the potential achievement of some children may not be realised if their talents are unrecognised or ineffectively supported. In terms of the achievement gap, this group of students were described as being 'the missing part of the puzzle' as they represent the potential at the higher end of the spectrum.¹²²
- 3.64 The Support Group advised that high-level achievement, relative to overall achievement, has declined in the ACT and that:

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many families with children of high potential simply leave town for established programs interstate. For those who educate their gifted children in the ACT, much of their education has been negotiated through individual teachers rather than as a result of a whole-of-school set of strategies and programs.¹²³

¹²¹ Mr Cullen, *Transcript of evidence*, 6 October 2009, p 6

¹²² Ms Robb, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, p 69

¹²³ Ms Robb, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, p 63

- 3.65 The evidence provided by the Support Group highlighted an important component of the achievement equation – individual capacity and enthusiasm for learning. Without a willing engagement with the learning process, educational systems and teaching practices cannot improve outcomes for individual students.
- 3.66 Engagement is not as simple as school attendance, however, and the experiences of gifted and talented students illustrated how a range of social, economic and psychological factors can impact on an individual's willingness to participate.
- 3.67 The Committee was informed that 'a large proportion of students identified come from high socio-economic families, suggesting that lack of access to equal resources also plays a substantial role in the identification of high potential'.¹²⁴
- 3.68 The Support Group advised that identification at the school level is crucial if targeted programs or strategies are to be developed. These strategies may include measures such as vertical movement through subject groups, cluster groups of students, individual learning plans or the provision of extension work. One public high school in the ACT provided, for example, an elite sports extension programs for athletically gifted students. However, in general, the strength of school-based programs would rely on the skills of individual staff within the school.¹²⁵
- 3.69 The Support Group emphasised the identification of gifted and talented students as a threshold issue for addressing this level of achievement and identified training within teacher training courses and professional development for established teachers are as the best way 'to develop that pool of knowledge that the ACT really needs'.¹²⁶
- 3.70 The Department of Education and Training advised the Committee that they had provided funding to the ACT Gifted and Talented Support Group to develop information materials for parents, recognising the important role that parents play in supporting the learning of these students.¹²⁷
- 3.71 In terms of strategic planning to meet the needs of students at a systemic level, the Department informed the Committee that:

we are looking at developing programs on a cluster basis, for instance in

¹²⁴ Ms Robb, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, p 64

¹²⁵ Ms Robb, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, p 66

¹²⁶ Ms Robb, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, p 66

¹²⁷ Ms Wilks, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 106

the arts to meet the needs of those students who may be highly accomplished in the arts but an individual school does not have either the number of students or the expertise to meet their needs.¹²⁸

- 3.72 The Minister for Education and Training observed that there may be other models that are worthy of consideration:

If there is one thing that is clear from the selective school models we have interstate, it is that some jurisdictions are really pushing their best and brightest.¹²⁹

- 3.73 The Committee agreed that the Department of Education and Training should respond to this learning need at the system level particularly given the suggestion that the needs of high achievers may not be met by the current arrangements. The Committee was also concerned that students experiencing socio-economic disadvantage may be completely overlooked by a reliance of school-based initiatives.

Students with a disability

- 3.74 The Disability and Community Services Commissioner submitted to the Committee that the needs of students with a disability should be considered within the terms of reference for this Inquiry, notwithstanding the fact that the Committee was also inquiring into the needs of students with a disability. The Commissioner considered that gaps in achievement may also be influenced by the capacity of some students to engage in their learning and thus achieve at their full potential.
- 3.75 While the Minister advised that some students with a significant disability would be exempted from the NAPLAN assessment test, the Committee acknowledged that the experience of participating students with a disability would not be disaggregated in the data. The Committee was concerned that the recognition of the socio-economic, and other demographic, circumstances of these students may also be overlooked.

Student views

- 3.76 The Committee received evidence from the ACT Youth Advisory Council

¹²⁸ Ms Wilks, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 106

¹²⁹ Mr Barr, *Transcript of evidence*, 16 February 2010, p 167

(YAC), a consultative group which provides advice to the Minister for Children and Young People.¹³⁰ The ACT YAC provided details about a survey they had conducted on the issue of education engagement and achievement and advised the Committee that, while most respondents believed that the ACT education system 'caters for a range of students from different backgrounds and with different educational needs and interests', a number of the respondents noted that a limited range of subjects offered could act as a constraint on individual engagement and achievement.¹³¹ The ACT YAC reported that one respondent, for instance, had 'stated that the courses offered by ACT educational institutions seemed to cater more for academic subjects and not subjects for artistic students.'¹³²

- 3.77 It was of concern to the Committee that student views may not be readily identified in discussions about educational engagement and achievement.
- 3.78 The ACT YAC reminded the Committee of the importance of incorporating students' views into any reviews of current practices.¹³³

RECOMMENDATION 13

The Committee recommends that any reviews of programs, services or funding models should be undertaken in consultation with students directly effected.

¹³⁰ Submission no. 7, p 3

¹³¹ Submission no. 7, p 5

¹³² Miss Tran, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 133

¹³³ Submission no. 7, p 6

4 ENHANCING EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1 It is apparent that the level of engagement by individual students with the education system and their own learning experience has a profound impact on their achievement.
- 4.2 Evidence to the Inquiry indicated that just as lack of engagement can result in poor achievement, a failure to identify and support the potential for achievement in some students can affect their level of engagement with the school and the curriculum.
- 4.3 The educational achievement of individual students can reflect:
 - The unique abilities and talents of the individual student;
 - The willingness of the individual student to engage with learning;
 - The personal circumstances of the individual student and family;
 - The quality of teaching and of the curriculum;
 - The criteria and processes used to assess achievement; and
 - The resources available to support student learning.
- 4.4 In the results from major assessment tests, the educational achievement outcomes are evident and can be quantified. However, the causes behind these outcomes are not always clear. Just as a significant number of Indigenous students do not meet the national minimum standard on these tests, a larger number of Indigenous student do meet the standard. Similarly, some LBOTE students may excel in some testing domains, while others will not meet the minimum required.
- 4.5 The challenge for education administrators and the teaching profession is to identify the variable social, economic and cultural factors which influence student learning and establish capacity for responsive delivery of education services to meet the diverse learning capabilities of the student body.
- 4.6 None of the contributors anticipated or advocated for equity of outcome in educational achievement, but rather for equity in opportunity with a system of service delivery which recognised the known barriers to achievement. A number of contributors to the Inquiry observed that socio-economic indicators of risk required a system level response. Equity in the resourcing and delivery of education services was an issue of particular concern raised during the

Inquiry.

- 4.7 In terms of addressing the achievement gap, the Committee considered that identifiable risks associated with socio-economic disadvantage have been verified and that these risks should focus the attention of educators and teachers who seek to encourage an equitable system which supports all students to maximise their educational achievement and engagement.

Socio-economic disadvantage

- 4.8 The ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations (the Council) highlighted this concern by drawing the Committee's attention to the concept of "socio-economic disadvantage". The Council advised that:

Risk factors indicting socio-economic disadvantage are wider than socio-economic status, and include:

- poverty;
- single or no parent(s);
- no parent employed full-time/for the full year;
- all parents have a disability;
- mother does not have a high school education;
- no parent fluent in English.¹³⁴

- 4.9 ACTCOSS identified that:

The three most cited dimensions of poor socio-economic status are; parental occupation, parental education and wealth correlated with low tertiary education of parents.¹³⁵

- 4.10 Against an understanding of socio-economic disadvantage, the Council proposed that strategies for "closing" the gap should not focus on curbing successful performance, but should seek to 'improve the progress of all students, including the acceleration of lower performing students.'¹³⁶
- 4.11 The Catholic Education Office also proposed that socio-economic disadvantage should not be accepted as an excuse at the school level because

¹³⁴ Submission no. 5, p 4

¹³⁵ Submission no. 4, p 6

¹³⁶ Submission no 5, p 4

'when we look across our schools we find that some of our schools with the lowest SES in fact have excellent results'.¹³⁷

- 4.12 By focusing on risk factors, such as those outlined above, the constraints on educational achievement for those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage can be considered. For instances, as ACTCOSS pointed out, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) studies have established that there is a 'positive relationship between the extent of home educational resources and reading achievement'.¹³⁸
- 4.13 As a consequence, ACTCOSS emphasised the importance of understanding broader social and cultural patterns. Having identified the link between socio-economic disadvantage and educational outcomes for individual students, ACTCOSS highlighted the intergenerational dimension of poor educational outcomes.¹³⁹

Entrenched disadvantage and educational engagement

- 4.14 The Australian Social Inclusion Board's report entitled *Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is Fairing* and released in January 2010, identified a range of indicators of social inclusion including proportion of year 9 students reaching the national minimum standards for literacy and numeracy.¹⁴⁰ This indicator identifies student who fall below a minimum standard in achievement as being at risk of not progressing satisfactorily with their education. In explaining the relevance of this indicator, the Board observed that:

the outcomes of students were clearly related to the education and occupation of their parents. The higher the education level of the parents the better the student performed on average. In terms of occupation, a

¹³⁷ Ms Najdecki, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 141

¹³⁸ Submission no. 4, p 6. See the report prepared for the New South Wales Department of Education and Training by Erebus International (2005) *Review on the Recent Literature on Socio-Economic Status and Learning* accessible at <<http://www.lowsesschools.nsw.edu.au/resources/ErebusReport.pdf>> (accessed 3 February 2010)

¹³⁹ Submission no 4, p 6

¹⁴⁰ Australian Social Inclusion Board (2010) *Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is Fairing* Commonwealth of Australia, accessible at <http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/Resources/Documents/SI_HowAusIsFaring.pdf> (accessed 3 February 2010), p 51. Data for this indicator was take from MCEETYA, National Summary Report: Achievements in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy (2008)

greater proportion of children reached the standards with parents who were professionals compared with those who had not been in paid work.¹⁴¹

- 4.15 The Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Council for Educational Research advised the Committee that:

the gap that emerges early both maintains and in some areas gets a little wider as students go through school. That is not surprising because if the foundations for learning are not established in the early years then you would expect that, unless there is some intervention, that gap would widen.¹⁴²

- 4.16 Other evidence to the Committee highlighted the flow-on consequences for educational achievement throughout life. A representative from Save Our Schools remarked that:

these inequalities that are set up very early on last for the whole of life. A report released in the last week shows that the access of low SES students and students disadvantaged in other ways to universities has stagnated in the last close to 10 years.¹⁴³

- 4.17 The Committee concluded that early interventions for children at risk of poor educational engagement and achievement because of identifiable socio-economic factors should be a priority in the delivery of educational services.

Early childhood development

- 4.18 In intergenerational terms, educational achievement can become a perpetual inheritance. The Australian Social Inclusion Board's report noted the results of the first Australian Early Development Index (AEDI), conducted in 2009, which collected developmental progress data for 261,000 Australian children.¹⁴⁴ Analysis of this data suggested that children living in areas of most

¹⁴¹ Australian Social Inclusion Board (2010) *Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is Fairing* Commonwealth of Australia, accessible at http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/Resources/Documents/SI_HowAusIsFaring.pdf > (accessed 3 February 2010), p 51

¹⁴² Dr Ainley, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 November 2009, p 152

¹⁴³ Professor Morgan, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2010, p 88

¹⁴⁴ Australian Social Inclusion Board (2010) *Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is Fairing* Commonwealth of Australia, accessible at

disadvantage are more likely to be developmentally vulnerable than those living in areas that are least disadvantaged.

- 4.19 The Committee noted from the AEDI results¹⁴⁵, that the ACT ranked fifth against other states and territories for the percentage of children in the ACT who were assessed overall as being developmentally vulnerable or developmentally at risk (below the 25 percentile). Table 3 sets out the percentages of children considered to be developmentally vulnerable or at risk – that is, below the 25 percentile.

Table 3: Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) by jurisdiction (lowest to highest)

Jurisdiction	Total below 25 percentile percentage	Developmentally vulnerable	Developmentally at risk	On track
		Below 10 th percentile	Between 10 th & 25 th percentile	Total percentage above 25 th percentile
Victoria	22.4	8.4	14.00	77.6
NSW	22.9	8.8	14.1	77.2
WA	23.8	7.7	16.1	76.3
Tasmania	24.8	8.6	16.2	75.1
ACT	25.1	8.9	16.2	74.9
SA	26.3	10.0	16.3	73.6
Queensland	29.2	12.1	17.1	70.8
NT	35.6	18.1	17.5	64.4

- 4.20 The current evidence regarding the importance of the early years as the foundation for good outcomes highlights the social and systemic determinants of educational achievement. Ensuring that all children are "learning ready" presents a major challenge for all governments.
- 4.21 Save Our Schools (SOS) informed the Committee that:
- One year of compulsory preschool is something which we have not opposed, but it is only touching the tip of the iceberg of the problem. You

<http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/Resources/Documents/SI_HowAusIsFaring.pdf> (accessed 3 February 2010), p 53

¹⁴⁵ Australian Early Development Index (2009) A Snapshot of Early childhood Development in Australia, AEDI National Report accessible at <http://www.rch.org.au/aedi/media/Snapshot_of_Early_Childhood_DevelopmentinAustralia_AEDI_National_Report.pdf> (accessed 4 February 2010)

really need to be able to get back into families who, often because of lack of parental education, do not have those resources to get their kids moving early on.¹⁴⁶

- 4.22 The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) outlined the interconnections between development in the early years and learning, noting that:

‘Readiness to learn’ is the ability of children to develop and learn at each stage of life. This process starts at birth and builds on the many different experiences through which young children learn language, physical, emotional and social skills. Recent findings in neuroscience show that children’s interactions with people and objects in their social environment create connections in the developing brain, shaping their ability to learn long before they go to school.¹⁴⁷

- 4.23 During the Inquiry, the Committee heard that the ACT Government had identified and responded to this need in a variety of ways.¹⁴⁸ The strategies adopted include:

- Amalgamation of preschools into the general school system to remove disruptions to learning arising from transition processes.
- Universal provision of 12 hours per week of preschool services for four year old children and a commitment to the national partnerships program to provide 15 hours per week.¹⁴⁹
- Koori preschool program for Indigenous students from 3 years old.¹⁵⁰
- The establishment of an early childhood school system at five locations in identified low socio-economic areas.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Prof Morgan, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 90

¹⁴⁷ ARACY (2009) *The implications of poverty on children’s readiness to learn*, p. vi: accessible at <http://www.aracy.org.au/cmsdocuments/REP_the_implications_of_poverty_on_childrens_readiness_to_learn_2009.pdf> (accessed 12 March 2010)

¹⁴⁸ Ms Melsom, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 110; see also Submission no 2, pp 42-43

¹⁴⁹ At 27 October 2009, 15 hours were offered at five early childhood schools.

¹⁵⁰ The Koori preschool program is provided at Narrabundah and Charnwood-Dunlop. An expanded preschool program is also provided at Jervis Bay and an interim program at the Lyons Early Childhood School.

¹⁵¹ The early childhood schools are: O’Connor Cooperative School, Isabelle Plains Early Childhood School, Lyons Early Childhood School, Narrabundah Early Childhood School and Southern Cross

- A reduction in the class sizes to 21 students for Kindergarten to year 3.¹⁵²
- The provision of playgroups and other programs for two to six year olds, with a particular focus on those at risk of developmental delays.¹⁵³

4.24 The Committee was advised that the advantage of the early childhood schools is that they also provide a site for a range of parenting, community and health services to be offered to children from birth to age eight and their families. This model most closely meets the need to consider the social determinants of education and build on the connections provide by schools within the community. The ACT Government's Early Education Framework explains that:

schools are recognised as effective centres for integrated services for children and families. ACT public schools are already well recognised for providing a universal service, for providing venues for community services and for facilitating community connectedness.¹⁵⁴

4.25 The Committee anticipated that the outcomes of this model will be carefully monitored and would encourage the ACT Government to regularly evaluate and publicly report on the effectiveness of this framework:

- to enhance individual children's learning readiness;
- to enhance progression through the education system; and
- to support families to encourage their children's engagement with education.

4.26 The evaluation methodologies should be attentive to the identified socio-economic risks outlined in this report.

Early Childhood School. See the Department of Education and Training web site:
<http://www.det.act.gov.au/teaching_and_learning/early_childhood_schools>

¹⁵² Submission no 2, p 42

¹⁵³ Submission no 2, p 43

¹⁵⁴ ACT Government (2008), *Early childhood schools: A framework for their development as learning and development centres for children (birth to eight) and their families*, p 6
<http://www.det.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/23855/Early_childhood_schools_final_web.pdf>

RECOMMENDATION 14

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government undertake to monitor and evaluate the early childhood schools success in preparing students, particularly those at risk of educational disadvantage, for learning and enhancing the capacity of families to support educational engagement.

RECOMMENDATION 15

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government, bearing in mind the outcomes of the evaluation, commits to extending successful strategies of early childhood education into other areas of the school system as appropriate.

- 4.27 The ACT Catholic Education Office also advised the Committee that early childhood learning represented a priority area and recognised the need to provide the same transition pathway from preschool to primary school for students whose families choose the Catholic education system. However, the Catholic Education Office indicated that it would not have any funding for preschool programs from 2010, despite the fact that in effect, 'school begins, here in the ACT, at preschool'.¹⁵⁵

RECOMMENDATION 16

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government work closely with the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools to ensure that early learning and school transition advantages can be extended to all ACT students.

Parental involvement

- 4.28 Involving parents in their children's learning by developing parent-school relationships was seen as a priority by the ACT Council of Parent & Citizens Associations and the ACT Principals Association.¹⁵⁶
- 4.29 A recent study in the UK highlighted best practice approaches used by some schools to 'help parents and carers to improve their child's learning. The report identified five distinctive approaches to engaging parents in the learning experiences of their children, including:

¹⁵⁵ Ms Najdecki, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 145

¹⁵⁶ Submission no 5, p 8; Mr Battenally, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, pp 73-74

- Sharing outline curriculum plans with parents with suggestions of activities for parents/siblings to work on together as part of homework;
- Using homework activities to communicate key areas of learning that parents can support;
- Giving parents access to curriculum materials for current teaching and learning on the school website of the virtual learning environment;
- Involving parents in their child's lessons in school;
- Helping specific parents to work with their child on identified curricular targets.¹⁵⁷

4.30 The Committee considered that many effective engagement strategies approaches are being used in ACT schools and would encourage the Department of Education and Training to ensure that successful programs and strategies are shared across the teaching community and that case study materials are made available to facilitate specific initiatives within schools.

RECOMMENDATION 17

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training facilitate forums on best practice in family engagement with student learning and provide resources to support teacher initiatives in this area of school activity.

4.31 The Committee was mindful, however, that different strategies may be required to engage with a diverse school community. ATESOL identified parental engagement as a factor where language and culture need to be recognised and addressed by schools.

For example, if parents do not feel welcome into schools because they cannot speak English or they feel embarrassed for their children if they cannot express themselves to teachers, they do not engage with the community and with the school community. We have a need for the parents to understand what is going on in schools. They can only do that

¹⁵⁷ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009) *How primary and secondary schools help parents and carers to improve their child's learning: Guidance for schools*: accessible at <<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-01115-2009>> (accessed 3 March 2010).

if they have the ability to communicate with the school and through using the translating and interpreting service.¹⁵⁸

- 4.32 In the same way that the learning experiences of students are best catered for when their diverse language and cultural backgrounds and socio-economic circumstances are recognised, the same approach is required when engaging with the families of students. This may include promoting events which engage all families in the school community or ensuring that translation services are available when needed.¹⁵⁹

RECOMMENDATION 18

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training ensure that the diverse backgrounds and socio-economic circumstances of families are recognised as a factor influencing any family engagement strategies undertaken by schools and that schools are resourced to respond to the diverse needs of the school community.

Quality teaching

- 4.33 The ACT Government highlighted the quality of teaching practices as a significant factor in contributing to variable achievement and cited a 2008 Western Australian report which set some parameters to the public policy debate on this issue in the following terms:

What students 'bring to the table' is the most important determinant of their success. However, there is little that policy can do – even in the long run – to change students' innate abilities or the social life of their family and community. There are few obvious, acceptable policies for raising the quality of parenting and raising parents' expectations for their children. Policy can improve school infrastructure and reduce average class sizes. The quality of school leadership can be raised. But the combined effects of these policies are minor relative to the influence of the teacher.¹⁶⁰

- 4.34 According to the ACT Government, current research indicates that 'the quality

¹⁵⁸ Ms Mayers, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 97

¹⁵⁹ Ms Mayers, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 97

¹⁶⁰ M Ryan (2008) *Top of the Class: Making the Most of Western Australian's School System*, Institute of Public Affairs and Mannkal Economic Education Foundation Project Western Australia Discussion Paper quoted in Submission no 2, p 7

of teaching can account for about 30 per cent of the variance in student performance'.¹⁶¹ The quality teacher strategies adopted by the Department of Education and Training have responded to this evidence.

- 4.35 The Department of Education and Training explained to the Committee that: it is accepted practice through leadership and writing from leaders within the field that quality teaching is the most influential determinant that will ensure that success comes to students. The ACT has invested heavily in the quality teacher program.¹⁶²
- 4.36 The Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ATESOL) advised the Committee that quality teaching also involved the knowledge and skills to best support the learning of speakers of other languages. Similarly, cross-cultural awareness training should be a priority for all teachers, particularly those working with Indigenous students.¹⁶³
- 4.37 The Committee accepts that quality teaching strategies may represent the most effective education system response to achievement gap issues but this should not be the limit of the ACT Government's policy response to the issues noted in this report. Professor McConaghy advised that the focus on teaching as the major variable 'is contestable' as factors other than teaching 'account for 70 per cent of variation'.¹⁶⁴
- 4.38 Professor McConaghy indicated that there was a need to reconnect 'education policy with social and economic policy at the regional level'¹⁶⁵ and highlighted the following measures as working towards such an objective:
- Models of teaching and teacher education that can be informed by social analysis and informed by analyses of the practices that can have positive interventions in these social trends;
 - Increased numbers of teachers with post-graduate qualifications; and
 - Interpreting quality teaching as including an understanding of the community and having the skills to enhance the relationship between the school and the community.
- 4.39 The Committee asked how teachers could be expected to respond to the

¹⁶¹ Submission no. 2 p 7

¹⁶² Dr Watterston, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 102

¹⁶³ Submission no 6

¹⁶⁴ Prof McConaghy, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, pp 44-45

¹⁶⁵ Prof McConaghy, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, pp 45

broader community context and Professor McConaghy explained that teachers need to be able to find answers to questions like:

Where am I? Who are these families? What is the result of that factory having closed down last year? Am I aware of the higher rates of youth suicide in this particular area where I am teaching? Am I aware of the higher rates of male mental health problems and what do I do about that on Monday morning in my class?

4.40 Professor McConaghy explained:

that type of understanding is quite important and it has not been a focus of a lot of teacher education for the last decade. The focus has been much more on the behavior of the individual child.¹⁶⁶

4.41 Professor McConaghy suggested that a policy focus on the interaction between educational disadvantage and socio-economic disadvantage might be accomplished if the Department of Education and Training reported on educational differentials for specific equity groups and in response to specific equity challenges in their annual and other reports.

4.42 The Committee noted that the 2008-2009 Annual and Financial Report contains two strategic indicators relating to student performance – student NAPLAN outcomes and Year 12 completion rates. The Committee considered that more specific outcome measures were warranted.

RECOMMENDATION 19

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training, in consultation with the Centre for Research on Education, Poverty and Social Inclusion, develop strategic indicators to measure the performance of the education system in meeting identified equity challenges.

RECOMMENDATION 20

The Committee recommends that that ACT Government provide details to the Legislative Assembly of how the quality teaching strategy will address the specific needs of educationally disadvantaged students.

4.43 The Committee also considered the need for a whole-of-government approach to the issue educational disadvantage and, in particular, the bearing it has on

¹⁶⁶ Prof McConaghy, *Transcript of evidence*, 20 October 2009, p 50

social inclusion strategies and the priorities set out in the Canberra Social Plan.¹⁶⁷ Priority 5.3 of the Social Plan stated that:

The Government will improve the capacity of government schools to increase literacy and numeracy levels through intensive support for underachieving students.¹⁶⁸

- 4.44 In 2009-2010, the Government provided an additional \$4million in funding (over four years) 'to assist students with learning needs, socio-economically disadvantaged students and special education students'.¹⁶⁹

RECOMMENDATION 21

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government commission an assessment of how well targeted programs for educationally disadvantaged or at risk students are meeting social inclusion objectives and priority 5.3 of the *Canberra Social Plan* and that the assessment be made publicly available.

Preparing for quality schools

- 4.45 A number of factors are agreed to influence the quality of schools and there has been debate at the state/territory and the national level about the best strategy to improve the quality of public schools and the student outcomes that they can support. Of the various options being proposed, a number are already on the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agenda. For example, the development and implementation of a national curriculum. Also, being progressed is the national assessment agenda, the data from which is represented as a key resource in ensuring quality in the provision of educational services. National assessment testing was discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of this report.
- 4.46 The Committee found it interesting that within this debate about quality schooling, Brian Caldwell and Julia Harris have advocated for the importance

¹⁶⁷ ACT Government (2004) *Building our Community: The Canberra Social Plan*, pp 50-54: accessible at <http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/1236/Social_Plan.pdf> (accessed 29 March 2010)

¹⁶⁸ ACT Government (2004) *Building our Community: The Canberra Social Plan*, p 51: accessible at <http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/1236/Social_Plan.pdf> (accessed 29 March 2010)

¹⁶⁹ ACT Government (2009) *Canberra Social Plan: Progress Report 2009*, p 12: accessible at <http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/3773/social_plan_progress_2009.pdf> (accessed 29 March 2010)

of a sunset period for the national testing scheme, suggesting that the intention of such testing is to facilitate transparency in performance across states and territories. They explain:

Teachers are already gaining skill interpreting a range of data and, if uniformly high quality of teaching is achieved, there may be no need for such a program. This strategy is another facet of building the intellectual capital of the profession.¹⁷⁰

4.47 The Committee has already noted the emphasis placed on quality teaching by the ACT Government and indicated their support of this as a priority for education policy. The Committee has also confirmed the value of testing to provide teaching professionals with the information they need to assess the effectiveness of their teaching strategies.

4.48 The Committee heard from the Department of Education and Training that leadership at the school level has become a crucial element in the literacy and numeracy strategy adopted in 2009.

The strategy, again, builds heavily on building teacher capacity. We say it is very important for the leadership dimension, having regard to the importance of school leaders. There is a lot of research around that role. The school leaders, at whatever levels, must be involved in and understand what quality teaching, whether it is in literacy and numeracy, in mathematics or in anything at all, looks like.¹⁷¹

4.49 The Committee understands that data collection methods will improve over the coming years as longitudinal studies reveal patterns of achievement and allow schools to identify and track particular students needing intensive support at each particular testing point in year 3, year 5, year 7 and year 9. The systemic advantage of this sort of testing would be in allowing specific educational interventions to be assessed against level of improvement achieved in individual cases.

4.50 National testing will also allow education departments to recognise year group trends and patterns in student development, including for students who are educationally disadvantaged. When meeting with the Committee, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer for the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), Dr Ainley, emphasised the role of current decision-makers

¹⁷⁰ Brian Caldwell and Jessica Harris (2008) *Why not the best schools?* ACER Press, Camberwell: p 167

¹⁷¹ Ms Wilks, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 105

in ensuring that this level of analysis will be undertaken.¹⁷²

RECOMMENDATION 22

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government advocate through COAG for longitudinal studies to be conducted as a means of expanding the national research base for quality teaching strategies.

4.51 As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Committee took note of the performance of Victoria in the NAPLAN testing results and the research conducted and summarised as a part of the *Signposts Report*. The 16 key behaviours and practices of improving and high performing schools identified as a part of this research included:

1. Using data;
2. Coaching, mentoring and sharing expertise;
3. Raising teachers' expectations of students;
4. Establishing and aligning vision, values and goals;
5. Working in teams;
6. Aligning professional learning;
7. Raising students' expectations;
8. Assigning staff to key priority areas;
9. Focusing on literacy and numeracy;
10. Establishing partnerships;
11. Personalising through individual learning plans;
12. Engaging students;
13. Articulating clear staff performance expectations;
14. Targeting resources to student needs;
15. Releasing staff for group learning, dialogue and planning; and
16. Recognising staff and student achievement.¹⁷³

¹⁷² Dr Ainley, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 November 2009, p 152

¹⁷³ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2009) *The Signposts report: how Victorian Government schools have improved student performance*, accessible at <http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/publ/research/nws/Signposts_report.pdf> (accessed 26 March 2010)

4.52 The Committee also noted recent contributions to the debate on quality schooling and the characteristics of the best education systems. Following an international assessment of high quality education systems which supports success for all students, Caldwell and Harris have identified the following, ten strategies:

1. A national curriculum is designed that is broad enough and sufficiently adaptable to ensure the professional judgement of a highly skilled profession will prevail at the school level.
2. Initial teacher education is transformed to ensure all teachers have a master's degree and remain at the forefront of knowledge and skill through continuous professional development.
3. New structural arrangements are designed to ensure diversity of programs in the post-compulsory years in an effective, constantly changing alignment of education, economy and society.
4. National testing of all students is minimised as the highest levels of knowledge and skill are developed by teachers and those who support them.
5. The wider community including business is seriously engaged in design and delivery, with public and private funds deployed through networks of foundations and trusts.
6. Transparent, needs-based mechanisms are designed to ensure the efficient deployment of public and private funds.
7. Innovative approaches to governance are introduced along the lines of publicly funded, no-fee charter schools to ensure that public schools maintain their appeal to parents.
8. School ownership ceases to be a factor in determining the amount of public funds that are disbursed to schools.
9. Higher levels of school autonomy in the public sector are achieved within a framework of accountability and choice.
10. Most schools in the public sector are rebuilt or redesigned to make them suitable for learning and teaching in the 21st century.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Brian Caldwell and Jessica Harris (2008) *Why not the best schools?* ACER Press, Camberwell: pp 170-171

- 4.53 In concluding their plan for a transformation of Australian schools, Caldwell and Harris advise that it will require:
- unprecedented levels of cooperation by different levels of government in partnership with all stakeholders who are committed to the idea that success can be secured for all students in all settings.¹⁷⁵
- 4.54 The Committee comprehended that there are substantial shifts underway in the vision educational experts have of the future of education services in this country. The Committee considered that the ACT Government could provide leadership in affirming the momentum of this reform agenda having taken an initiative in a number of areas already, such as the development of a new curriculum and the expansion of ICT capacity within schools. In the context of the current Inquiry, the Committee would highlight strategy six from the list provided by Caldwell and Harris:
- Transparent, needs-based mechanisms are designed to ensure the efficient deployment of public and private funds.

Equitable funding

- 4.55 The ACT Council of Parent and Citizens Associations (the Council) identified equitable and needs-based funding as a priority issue for the ACT Government in the negotiations which will lead up to the new Commonwealth-State/Territory funding agreement scheduled to commence from 2013.¹⁷⁶
- 4.56 The evidence to this Inquiry has clearly indicated the requirement for areas of need to be funded adequately according to fair and transparent criteria and for capped funding models to be avoided in known areas of educational disadvantage.
- 4.57 For instance, the funding of language support programs is based on a capped funding model meaning that some students may not receive the assistance they need once finite funds have been used.
- 4.58 The Council has, since at least 2002, recommended that 'equity and need' should be a priority for funding.¹⁷⁷ The Council advocated that the ACT Government be a strong advocate for Commonwealth funding that targets

¹⁷⁵ Brian Caldwell and Jessica Harris (2008) *Why not the best schools?* ACER Press, Camberwell: p 171

¹⁷⁶ Submission no. 5, p 12

¹⁷⁷ Submission no. 5, p 12

educational achievement gaps when negotiations for the 2013 agreement commence.¹⁷⁸

- 4.59 The Committee noted that the National Education Agreement (The Agreement) between the Commonwealth, states & territories confirmed a commitment shared by all Australian governments to address 'the issue of social inclusion, including responding to Indigenous disadvantage.'¹⁷⁹ In meeting this later objective, the Agreement:

will drive reform directions to 'Close the Gap' in education outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. This will be supported by Ministerial Council of Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) Indigenous education policy directions and action plans.¹⁸⁰

- 4.60 Save Our Schools observed that the additional funding provided through this agreement would assist many disadvantaged schools in Australia, but noted that:

[it] is imperative that the increased funding needed is well targeted. Finland has about the same per capita expenditure per student as Australia, and so is lower than the ACT, but achieves higher average outcomes and much greater equity in student outcomes. It uses its resources more effectively. Program funding in Australia and the ACT is often too indiscriminate to make a difference in terms of the achievement gap. For example, many states, including the ACT, have embarked on extensive across-the-board reductions in class size. These are popular with parents and teachers, but they are also very costly and they have not resulted in higher average outcomes or reductions in the achievement gap since they have been implemented.¹⁸¹

- 4.61 Dr Ainley also advised the Committee that an overall policy to reduce class sizes 'is unlikely to have the effect you expect.'¹⁸² He informed the Committee

¹⁷⁸ Submission no. 5, p 13

¹⁷⁹ National Education Agreement (Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations) January 2009

¹⁸⁰ National Education Agreement (Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations) January 2009

¹⁸¹ Mr Cobbold, *Transcript of evidence*, 27 October 2009, p 88

¹⁸² Dr Ainley, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 November 2009, p 161

that:

The evidence seems to be—as it was in the syntheses of a large number of studies for a long while—that the effects of class size tend to be noticed when you are operating at the very small end of class sizes. To put it bluntly, to move from an average class size of 30 to 20 does not have a big effect. To move from an average class size of 15 to 10 starts to have something of an effect.¹⁸³

- 4.62 According to Dr Ainley, such policies require additional expenditure through the employment of additional teaching staff. However, the pressure to recruit may reduce the quality of the teaching staff overall. Rather, Dr Ainley suggested a targeted focus on reducing class sizes depending on the needs of the students – for instance at particular stages of schooling or for particular activities where smaller groups are more conducive to learning.¹⁸⁴

RECOMMENDATION 23

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that equity and need are given priority in Commonwealth – State/Territory funding negotiations.

RECOMMENDATION 24

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training provide a comprehensive assessment of current methods and outcomes for meeting identified need in the education system and develop a coherent strategy in which all programs can be reviewed against the objective of improving the educational engagement and achievement of disadvantaged students and enhancing equity within the system

¹⁸³ Dr Ainley, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 November 2009, p 160

¹⁸⁴ Dr Ainley, *Transcript of evidence*, 24 November 2009, p 160

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The evidence gathered during the Inquiry provided clear indications about which groups of students require particular support to improve their educational outcomes. These included:
- Indigenous students;
 - ESL students from refugee backgrounds; and
 - Students with unrecognised gifts and talents.
- 5.2 The social indicator identified as most likely to have a negative influence on the educational experiences of these students was socio-economic disadvantage. Low socio-economic status will increase the risks that students will not fully engage with the education system and that opportunities to reach their educational potential will be reduced.
- 5.3 The Committee concluded that there is an education achievement gap in the ACT evidenced by subgroup performance in standardised assessment tests as well as by the qualitative experiences of experts working in the field and who have provided evidence to the Inquiry.
- 5.4 The key strategies required in responding to the achievement gap include:
- Maximising opportunities for early childhood development and intervention;
 - Increasing the opportunities for parental involvement, including by enhancing the communications and skills within school communities;
 - Introducing and supporting a framework for the development of quality teaching practices within the teaching community;
 - Ensuring the quality of schools so that teaching professionals have the resources and support to provide quality education; and
 - Addressing the need for equitable funding by advocating for equitable funding models and providing school communities with the resources to meet identifiable need.

Amanda Bresnan MLA

Chair

14 April 2010

APPENDIX A: Submissions

Submission No.	Submitter
1.	Disability & Community Service Commissioner
2.	ACT Government
3.	Youth Coalition of the ACT
4.	ACT Council of Social Service
5.	ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations
6.	Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages in the ACT
7.	ACT Youth Advisory Council
8.	ACT Gifted and Talented Support Group
9.	Dr Mark Drummond
9a	Dr Mark Drummond (supplementary)

APPENDIX B: Hearings

6 October 2009

Mr Glenn Cullen, CEO, Menslink
 Ms Penny Gilmour, Secretary, Australian Education Union (AEU)
 Mr Phil Rasmus, Branch President, AEU
 Ms Cathy Smith, Assistant to the Secretary [Professional], AEU
 Ms Kim Davison, Executive Officer, Gugan Gulwan
 Ms Ali Wass, Teacher, Gugan Gulwan
 Ms Lynne Harwood, CEO, Galilee Education Services

20 October 2009

Professor Cathryn McConaghy, Dean, Faculty of Education, University of
 Canberra
 Ms Emma Robertson, Director, Youth Coalition for the ACT
 Mr Jamie Glasscock, Policy and Development Officer, Youth Coalition for the
 ACT
 Ms Ann Robb, Committee Member, ACT Gifted and Talented Support Group
 Mr Michael Battenally, Co-President, ACT Principals Association
 Mr Murray Bruce, Co-President, ACT Principals Association
 Ms Elizabeth Singer, President, ACT Council of P&C Associations
 Mr Mark O'Neill, Vice President, ACT Council of P&C Associations
 Ms Tina Anderson, Secretary, ACT Council of P&C Associations

27 October 2009

Mr Trevor Cobbald, Convenor, Save Our Schools
 Professor Trevor Morgan, Member, Save Our Schools
 Dr Helen Moore, Member, Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of
 Other Languages ACT (ATESOL ACT)
 Ms Misty Adoniou, Member, ATESOL ACT
 Ms Jennifer Mayers, Member, ATESOL ACT

Ms Felicite Dawson, Member, ATESOL ACT

Mr Andrew Barr MLA, Minister for Education and Training

Dr Jim Watterston, Chief Executive, Department of Education and Training

Ms Trish Wilks, Director, Curriculum Support and Professional Learning,
Department of Education and Training

Ms Tracy Stewart, Director, Measurement Monitoring and Reporting,
Department of Education and Training

Dr Mark Collis, Director, Student Services and International Education,
Department of Education and Training

Ms Kathy Melsom, Director, Indigenous Education and Early Learning,
Department of Education and Training

Ms Kaye O'Hara, Deputy Chief Executive Academic, Canberra Institute of
Technology

Ms Jackie Wenner, Director, CIT Vocational College, Canberra Institute of
Technology

Ms Sharon Tran, Member, ACT Youth Advisory Council

Ms Mimi Pierce, Member, ACT Youth Advisory Council

Mr Ben Harris, Member, ACT Youth Advisory Council

Mr Jeremy Irvine, Executive Director, Association of Independent Schools of
the ACT

Ms Moira Najdecki, Director, Catholic Education Office

Ms Mary Dorrian, Head, Religious Education & Curriculum, Catholic
Education Office

24 November 2009

Dr John Ainley, Chief Executive (Research), Australian Council of Educational
Research (ACER)

16 February 2010

Mr Andrew Barr MLA, Minister for Education and Training and the following
officials from the:

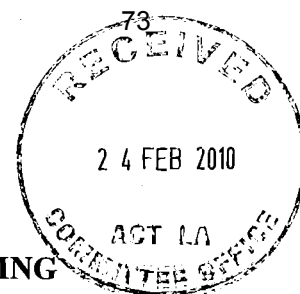
Dr Jim Watterston, Chief Executive, Department of Education and Training

Ms Trish wilks, Director, Curriculum Support and Professional Learning,
Department of Education and Training

APPENDIX C: Supplementary information

The Committee requested supplementary information on the following issues from the Minister for Education and Training:

- 2009 NAPLAN Subgroup results;
- 2009 NAPLAN jurisdiction comparison;
- NAPLAN specific groups;
- ESL Language proficiency assessment;
- Introductory English Centres;
- NAPLAN exempt students; and
- Clarification of the treatment of students exempted from NAPLAN testing.



**MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP HEARING
27 OCTOBER 2009**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS**

2009 NAPLAN Subgroup results

MS BRESNAN - asked the Minister for Education and Training on 21 January 2010.

- (1) The Government's submission (p.10) advised that detailed subgroup performance results would be available in December 2009. Could you please provide the Committee with an update on subgroups' performance for the 2009 NAPLAN?

MR BARR - the answer to Ms Bresnan's question is:

- (1) Subgroup performance results by gender, Indigenous status and Language background other than English are provided below.

Table 1 describes the mean scaled scores by gender

The mean scores, which do not include exempt students, show that with the exception of numeracy ACT female students achieved a higher mean score than ACT male students. This trend was similar across Australia. In reading and grammar and punctuation, ACT male and female students outperformed males and females across jurisdictions in all year levels.

Table 1 : Mean scaled scores by gender and year level for ACT and Australia									
Domain	Gender	Mean Scale Scores							
		Year 3		Year 5		Year 7		Year 9	
		ACT	Aust	ACT	Aust	ACT	Aust	ACT	Aust
Reading	Male	425.3 ± 7.2	401.9 ± 1.3	501.4 ± 7.6	485.3 ± 1.2	549.3 ± 11.8	532.7 ± 1.7	590.7 ± 10.1	571.3 ± 1.8
	Female	442.0 ± 7.3	419.9 ± 1.2	524.2 ± 6.7	503.0 ± 1.1	567.4 ± 10.0	549.9 ± 1.5	607.8 ± 9.3	590.1 ± 1.6
Writing	Male	408.8 ± 5.8	401.6 ± 1.0	476.0 ± 6.5	471.5 ± 1.0	522.2 ± 10.4	516.7 ± 1.6	561.2 ± 11.0	550.5 ± 2.0
	Female	434.4 ± 5.1	427.8 ± 0.9	503.3 ± 5.3	498.6 ± 0.9	555.7 ± 8.5	548.9 ± 1.4	596.5 ± 8.6	588.1 ± 1.8
Spelling	Male	400.8 ± 6.5	393.9 ± 1.3	480.3 ± 6.1	478.1 ± 1.1	530.8 ± 8.9	529.9 ± 1.7	575.1 ± 9.8	565.3 ± 1.8
	Female	421.5 ± 5.7	416.1 ± 1.2	496.9 ± 5.3	496.6 ± 1.0	549.1 ± 7.9	550.5 ± 1.4	595.3 ± 8.8	587.9 ± 1.6
Grammar & Punctuation	Male	428.0 ± 7.6	407.1 ± 1.4	503.5 ± 8.1	487.9 ± 1.3	545.7 ± 11.9	528.8 ± 1.9	582.6 ± 11.2	563.2 ± 2.0
	Female	453.2 ± 7.4	432.9 ± 1.3	529.4 ± 6.9	512.1 ± 1.2	568.4 ± 10.5	550.6 ± 1.7	602.9 ± 9.8	584.3 ± 1.7
Numeracy	Male	413.9 ± 6.5	397.5 ± 1.2	501.1 ± 6.5	492.6 ± 1.2	556.2 ± 12.7	549.1 ± 2.0	605.0 ± 12.3	592.4 ± 2.2
	Female	402.1 ± 6.3	390.2 ± 1.0	490.3 ± 5.9	480.6 ± 1.0	542.3 ± 10.5	538.0 ± 1.7	595.4 ± 9.8	585.6 ± 1.9

Source: ACARA (December 2009) - National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy Final Report

Table 2 describes the mean scaled scores by Indigenous status

Note: Caution needs to be taken when considering Indigenous student results due to the small number of students that participated in the assessments in each year group.

In the ACT and across Australia the mean scores of Indigenous students were significantly below the mean scores of non-Indigenous students across all year levels and all assessments. In the ACT, the greatest difference in performance occurred at year 3 in grammar and punctuation (87.6), reading (74.1), and spelling (70.1).

Across the levels of testing (years 3, 5, 7, and 9), the mean score gap between ACT non-Indigenous and Indigenous outcomes was most obvious in grammar and punctuation, particularly so in year 3 with a mean score difference of 87.6 points. The gap was generally lower in writing, where at year 3 the gap was 49.8 mean score points.

In the ACT, the difference in the performance of Indigenous students compared with non-Indigenous students reduced across the levels of testing (years 3, 5, 7, and 9), and was the lowest at year 9 where in reading the gap was 60.1 mean scaled points, writing: 51.4, spelling: 47.2, grammar and punctuation: 53.4, and numeracy: 60.8

Table 2 : Mean scaled scores by Indigenous status and year level for ACT and Australia									
Domain	Status	Mean Scale Scores							
		Year 3		Year 5		Year 7		Year 9	
		ACT	Aust	ACT	Aust	ACT	Aust	ACT	Aust
Reading	Indigenous	361.6 ± 18.2	327.4 ± 4.2	458.5 ± 20.0	414.4 ± 3.5	501.0 ± 16.3	473.2 ± 3.1	540.1 ± 17.1	510.2 ± 4.0
	Non-Indigenous	435.7 ± 6.1	415.0 ± 1.1	514.1 ± 6.3	498.1 ± 1.0	559.9 ± 9.3	544.4 ± 1.3	600.2 ± 8.5	583.8 ± 1.4
Writing	Indigenous	373.3 ± 16.6	340.2 ± 4.2	439.5 ± 14.6	412.1 ± 3.7	474.0 ± 17.6	460.2 ± 4.1	527.7 ± 19.0	488.4 ± 4.9
	Non-Indigenous	423.1 ± 4.6	418.3 ± 0.8	490.8 ± 4.9	488.5 ± 0.8	540.5 ± 8.5	536.0 ± 1.3	579.1 ± 8.7	572.8 ± 1.6
Spelling	Indigenous	342.9 ± 18.5	322.8 ± 4.6	444.6 ± 18.3	421.6 ± 3.4	482.9 ± 17.6	479.1 ± 3.6	538.3 ± 19.5	509.8 ± 4.4
	Non-Indigenous	413.0 ± 5.1	409.0 ± 1.1	489.6 ± 4.9	490.6 ± 0.9	541.4 ± 7.1	543.0 ± 1.3	585.5 ± 8.0	579.5 ± 1.4
Grammar & Punctuation	Indigenous	355.5 ± 18.3	321.4 ± 4.8	450.6 ± 19.8	407.9 ± 4.1	481.2 ± 18.5	457.3 ± 3.8	540.1 ± 17.8	497.0 ± 4.2
	Non-Indigenous	443.1 ± 6.3	424.8 ± 1.2	518.0 ± 6.4	504.6 ± 1.0	559.1 ± 9.6	543.4 ± 1.5	593.5 ± 9.1	577.2 ± 1.6
Numeracy	Indigenous	344.9 ± 14.2	320.5 ± 3.6	443.2 ± 13.1	420.5 ± 2.7	487.3 ± 15.5	474.4 ± 2.7	540.9 ± 17.3	520.2 ± 3.0
	Non-Indigenous	409.8 ± 5.5	397.7 ± 1.0	497.1 ± 5.5	490.3 ± 1.0	551.2 ± 10.3	547.0 ± 1.6	601.7 ± 9.7	592.4 ± 1.7

Source: ACARA (December 2009) - National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy Final Report

Table 3 describes the mean scaled scores by Language background other than English (LBOTE)

Across Australia LBOTE students achieved a higher mean score in writing, spelling and numeracy compared with non-LBOTE students. This was generally the case in the ACT, with the exception of year 3 students in numeracy, although the difference in this case was not significant.

The greatest variance between LBOTE and non-LBOTE students occurred in spelling. In the ACT the variance was only significant at years 3 and 5 in spelling, whilst nationally the variance was significant across most year levels.

Table 3 : Mean scaled scores by Language background other than English for ACT and Australia									
Domain	Status	Mean Scale Scores							
		Year 3		Year 5		Year 7		Year 9	
		ACT	Aust	ACT	Aust	ACT	Aust	ACT	Aust
Reading	LBOTE status	427.0 ± 10.5	412.5 ± 2.3	503.1 ± 11.0	490.8 ± 2.2	551.2 ± 14.7	536.9 ± 3.4	588.2 ± 12.4	572.9 ± 3.5
	Non-LBOTE	434.7 ± 6.1	410.8 ± 1.2	513.7 ± 6.1	495.2 ± 1.0	558.8 ± 9.1	541.9 ± 1.2	600.3 ± 8.6	582.4 ± 1.4
Writing	LBOTE status	425.8 ± 7.0	423.2 ± 1.8	495.0 ± 8.2	494.9 ± 1.9	544.0 ± 13.5	538.1 ± 3.1	582.1 ± 10.8	572.3 ± 3.7
	Non-LBOTE	420.4 ± 4.8	412.6 ± 0.9	488.0 ± 4.9	482.5 ± 0.9	537.3 ± 8.4	530.9 ± 1.2	576.4 ± 8.7	568.3 ± 1.6
Spelling	LBOTE status	429.6 ± 9.8	429.8 ± 2.3	504.1 ± 8.5	509.8 ± 2.1	555.1 ± 12.7	558.0 ± 3.4	598.4 ± 11.5	590.2 ± 3.8
	Non-LBOTE	407.2 ± 5.1	398.6 ± 1.0	485.3 ± 4.9	481.8 ± 0.8	537.1 ± 6.6	535.5 ± 1.0	582.0 ± 7.6	573.4 ± 1.2
Grammar & punctuation	LBOTE status	432.8 ± 11.0	420.6 ± 2.5	513.1 ± 10.5	501.3 ± 2.4	550.1 ± 16.2	534.6 ± 3.8	586.4 ± 13.6	568.9 ± 3.9
	Non-LBOTE	441.4 ± 6.2	420.1 ± 1.3	516.1 ± 6.4	499.9 ± 1.1	557.4 ± 9.3	540.4 ± 1.4	592.8 ± 9.0	574.9 ± 1.5
Numeracy	LBOTE status	405.8 ± 9.0	397.9 ± 2.1	502.7 ± 9.8	498.2 ± 2.4	564.6 ± 16.4	556.3 ± 4.4	617.9 ± 14.7	604.4 ± 4.6
	Non-LBOTE	408.3 ± 5.6	393.2 ± 1.0	494.2 ± 5.3	484.2 ± 0.9	546.9 ± 9.6	540.3 ± 1.3	597.1 ± 9.1	585.6 ± 1.5

Source: ACARA (December 2009) - National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy Final Report

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Andrew Barr MLA
Minister for Education and Training

Date: 10.2.10

**MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP
27 OCTOBER 2009**



**QUESTION ON NOTICE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS**

2009 NAPLAN jurisdiction comparison

MS BRESNAN - asked the Minister for Education and Training on 21 January 2010.

- (2) In discussing the NAPLAN results, the Government's submission focuses on percentages of student achieving at or above the national minimum standard (p.10). Could you provide details of the range of achievement levels in the ACT and how this data compares with other jurisdictions.

MR BARR - the answer to Ms Bresnan's question is:

- (2) The percentage of ACT students in the top two band levels was higher than the Australian average and within the top three performing jurisdictions for all domains and year levels.

The ACT's strong representation of students in the top two bands was most notable in reading: year 3 (51.8%), year 5 (41.7%), year 7 (36.8%) and year 9 (30.3%), in grammar and punctuation at year 3 (56.7%), year 5 (42.9%), year 7 (36.1%) and year 9 (27.3%) and in numeracy at year 9 (29.6%).

Tables indicating the breakdown of the percentage of student's achieving in each band for each year group are provided below.

Table 4: Achievement of Year 3 Students, by domain, 2009

	Below national minimum standard	At national minimum standard	Above national minimum standard			
	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6 or above
Reading						
ACT	2.4	7.1	14.1	21.8	22.4	29.4
Aust	4.4	11.2	18.1	22.7	20	21.8
Rank	7	8	8	6	1	1
Writing						
ACT	1.2	4.9	14	29.9	30	17.1
Aust	2.4	6.3	15.1	29.8	28.8	15.7
Rank	7	7	6	5	3	3
Spelling						
ACT	4.2	8.2	18.7	25.6	20	20.4
Aust	5.9	9.5	18.7	25.1	20.2	18.7
Rank	6	6	5	4	3	3
Grammar and Punctuation						
ACT	2.8	5.5	11.1	20.9	25	31.7
Aust	5.7	9	14	21.4	22.5	25.5
Rank	7	8	8	6	1	1
Numeracy						
ACT	2.4	8.1	19.8	28.1	24.1	14.7
Aust	4.2	11.8	22.7	26.9	20.2	12.3
Rank	7	7	7	1	1	3

Source: ACARA (December 2009) - National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy Final Report

Table 5: Achievement of Year 5 Students, by domain, 2009

	Below national minimum standard	At national minimum standard	Above national minimum standard			
	Band 3 or below	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6	Band 7	Band 8 or above
Reading						
ACT	3.8	8.9	17.8	25.5	24.0	17.7
Aust	6.6	12.9	20.7	25.1	20.6	12.5
Rank	7	8	7	2	1	1
Writing						
ACT	3.9	11.1	25.5	32.1	18.7	6.5
Aust	5.3	11.6	26.6	30.9	17.2	6.7
Rank	6	6	5	3	3	3
Spelling						
ACT	5.2	12.8	26.4	25.6	18.4	9.5
Aust	5.9	13.0	25.8	26.4	17.6	9.6
Rank	6	6	6	5	3	3
Grammar and Punctuation						
ACT	3.5	7.5	17.1	26.9	24.7	18.2
Aust	6.3	10.8	19.8	25.9	21.1	14.4
Rank	7	8	8	2	1	2
Numeracy						
ACT	2.4	10.6	25.9	30.9	18.9	9.2
Aust	4.2	13.7	27.4	28.3	16.5	8.2
Rank	7	7	6	1	3	2

Source: ACARA (December 2009) - National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy Final Report

Table 6: Achievement of Year 7 Students, by domain, 2009

	Below national minimum standard	At national minimum standard	Above national minimum standard			
	Band 4 or below	Band 5	Band 6	Band 7	Band 8	Band 9 or above
Reading						
ACT	3.0	9.5	21.1	28.0	23.0	13.8
Aust	4.8	13.2	24.5	28.6	19	8.6
Rank	7	8	7	5	1	1
Writing						
ACT	5.3	13.1	26.5	27.9	16.8	8.9
Aust	6.2	14.0	28.1	27.4	15.4	7.7
Rank	7	6	7	3	2	2
Spelling						
ACT	5.4	13.4	25	27.6	17.9	9.3
Aust	5.9	12.5	24.8	28.6	17.8	9.3
Rank	6	5	6	5	3	2
Grammar and Punctuation						
ACT	4.0	9.9	20.8	27.8	21.6	14.5
Aust	6.7	13.0	23.7	27.6	17.9	9.8
Rank	8	8	7	3	1	1
Numeracy						
ACT	2.9	12	24.9	28.7	18.4	11.7
Aust	3.9	13.5	25.7	27.9	17.4	10.3
Rank	7	7	6	3	2	2

Source: ACARA (December 2009) - National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy Final Report

Table 7: Achievement of Year 9 Students, by domain, 2009

	Below national minimum standard	At national minimum standard	Above national minimum standard			
	Band 5 or below	Band 6	Band 7	Band 8	Band 9	Band 10
Reading						
ACT	3.9	10.7	22.6	30.4	22.1	8.2
Aust	6.5	15.5	27.0	28.6	16.1	5.0
Rank	8	8	7	2	1	1
Writing						
ACT	8.7	16.5	26.3	24.3	14.1	8.2
Aust	10.9	19.1	26.8	22.2	12.5	7.2
Rank	7	8	4	1	2	2
Spelling						
ACT	6.9	14.2	26.0	26.8	16.4	7.6
Aust	9.0	16.1	26.7	25.8	14.9	6.2
Rank	8	7	6	1	2	2
Grammar and Punctuation						
ACT	5.2	12.6	24.2	28.8	19.4	7.9
Aust	8.3	17.4	28.0	26.0	14.1	4.8
Rank	8	8	7	1	1	1
Numeracy						
ACT	2.6	11.9	24.7	29.2	19.5	10.1
Aust	3.7	14.8	28.3	28.1	16.2	7.6
Rank	7	7	8	2	1	2

Source: ACARA (December 2009) - National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy Final Report

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.

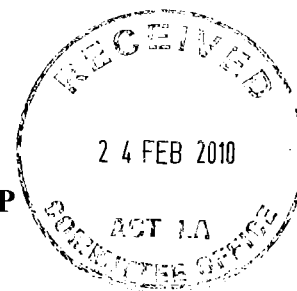


Andrew Barr MLA

Minister for Education and Training

Date: 10.2.2010

**MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP
27 OCTOBER 2009**



**QUESTION ON NOTICE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS**

NAPLAN specific groups

MS BRESNAN - asked the Minister for Education and Training on 21 January 2010.

- (3) In providing details of the NAPLAN results for specific groups (gender difference, p 14; Indigenous students, p 15; and LBOTE, p 17). The Government's submission provides a comparative analysis of Indigenous and non-Indigenous achievement by 'subtracting the proportion of Indigenous students achieving at or above the national minimum standard from the proportion of non-Indigenous students' (p 16).
- (a) Could you provide details of the number of Indigenous students who are not meeting the national minimum standard and the total number of Indigenous students who sat the NAPLAN test in 2008 and 2009.
 - (b) Could you provide details of the number of LBOTE students who are not meeting the national minimum standard and the total number of LBOTE students who sat the NAPLAN test in 2008 and 2009.

MR BARR - the answer to Ms Bresnan's question is:

- (3) The information provided in tables 8, 9, 10 and 11 represent year level and domain counts of ACT Indigenous students and Students with a Language Background other than English, and the numbers of students who achieved scores below the national minimum standards in NAPLAN 2008 and 2009.

Caution needs to be taken when considering Indigenous student results due to the small number of students in the ACT who participated in the assessments in each year group. Also, please note that the percentages of students achieving at or above national minimum standard provided in the NAPLAN 2008 and 2009 national reports are generated using a statistical procedure and are different to those generated using counts of students.

Table 8: Number of Indigenous Students, ACT Public Schools, NAPLAN 2008 and 2009

Cohort	Domain	Year	Total
3	Reading	2008	98
		2009	96
	Writing	2008	98
		2009	96
	Numeracy	2008	97
		2009	94
5	Reading	2008	96
		2009	98
	Writing	2008	97
		2009	101
	Numeracy	2008	97
		2009	98
7	Reading	2008	76
		2009	75
	Writing	2008	76
		2009	78
	Numeracy	2008	78
		2009	70
9	Reading	2008	63
		2009	78
	Writing	2008	64
		2009	81
	Numeracy	2008	65
		2009	78

Source: results from National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy assessments 2009 (unpublished)

Table 9: Number of Indigenous students below National Minimum Standard (NMS), ACT Public Schools, NAPLAN 2008 and 2009

Cohort	Domain	Year	Below NMS
3	Reading	2008	17
		2009	15
	Writing	2008	17
		2009	16
	Numeracy	2008	12
		2009	16
5	Reading	2008	18
		2009	29
	Writing	2008	18
		2009	26
	Numeracy	2008	15
		2009	14
7	Reading	2008	6
		2009	9
	Writing	2008	14
		2009	21
	Numeracy	2008	9
		2009	7
9	Reading	2008	11
		2009	20
	Writing	2008	17
		2009	22
	Numeracy	2008	14
		2009	14

Source: results from the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy 2008 and 2009 (unpublished)

Table 10: Number of students with Language Background other than English, ACT Public Schools, NAPLAN 2008 and 2009

Cohort	Domain	Year	Total
3	Reading	2008	724
		2009	734
	Writing	2008	724
		2009	738
	Numeracy	2008	718
		2009	734
5	Reading	2008	789
		2009	683
	Writing	2008	789
		2009	683
	Numeracy	2008	786
		2009	679
7	Reading	2008	696
		2009	603
	Writing	2008	694
		2009	610
	Numeracy	2008	694
		2009	601
9	Reading	2008	630
		2009	664
	Writing	2008	621
		2009	681
	Numeracy	2008	629
		2009	670

Source: results from the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy 2008 and 2009 (unpublished)

Table 11: Number of students with Language Background other than English below National Minimum Standard (NMS), ACT Public Schools, NAPLAN 2008 and 2009

Cohort	Domain	Year	Below NMS
3	Reading	2008	82
		2009	80
	Writing	2008	62
		2009	78
	Numeracy	2008	67
		2009	94
5	Reading	2008	92
		2009	76
	Writing	2008	64
		2009	71
	Numeracy	2008	62
		2009	54
7	Reading	2008	54
		2009	52
	Writing	2008	52
		2009	67
	Numeracy	2008	34
		2009	47
9	Reading	2008	38
		2009	69
	Writing	2008	80
		2009	91
	Numeracy	2008	40
		2009	46

Source: results from the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy 2008 and 2009 (unpublished)

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Andrew Barr MLA

Minister for Education and Training

Date: 23 - 2 - 2010



**MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP
27 OCTOBER 2009**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS**

ESL Language proficiency assessment

MS BRESNAN - asked the Minister for Education and Training on 21 January 2010.

- (5) At the hearing, Ms Wilks advised the Committee that:
students who are working in mainstream schools undergo assessment to determine their level of language proficiency and through a moderated process we provide additional staffing, generally with teachers who have extra qualifications in ESL (*Transcript of evidence 27 October 2009, p 105*).
- a) Could you provide details of the assessment process uses and personnel and conditions under which the assessment is administered.
 - b) Could you advise the Committee of the number of student (as a whole number and as a percentage of total students in the public education system) who have been assessed over the last 5 years.
 - c) Could you provide details of the outcomes of these assessments in terms of the percentage of students who are ranked at each level of 1 to 5.
 - d) Could you provide details about what is know to be the general profiles of these students (including approximate numbers of students) in terms of socio-economic disadvantage, indigenous/non-indigenous status, Australian born or overseas born; gender; age, visa category (if relevant); years of previous schooling in Australia and/or overseas, and fee-paying international students.
 - e) Could you provide details in general terms of the principal learning needs of these students?
 - f) Could you please provide details about the total numbers of ESL teachers as a percentage of the total number of teachers, and the level of their qualifications. How many teachers are currently being supported by the Department to achieve post-graduate qualifications in this area?

MR BARR - the answer to Ms Bresnan's question is:

- (5) a) The Department provides ESL specialist teachers for school on the basis of assessed student need and the allocation of a Language Performance Rating (LPR).

In June of each year, students who meet the ESL eligibility criteria are assessed across the four macro skills (speaking, listening with understanding, writing and reading with understanding) using set assessment tasks for each year level. The tasks are administered by the ESL teacher, on an individual or group basis, depending on the task.

ESL teachers mark the assessment tasks and assign an LPR using a scale of 0 to 5, with 4 representing an average English speaker for age and year level. The ratings and samples of work are then moderated by all ESL teachers to ensure a consistent rating process across the system.

The classroom teacher also provides an overall LPR on the student's English language performances in the four macro skills across the curriculum and over a period of time. The combined ratings determine the level of language proficiency.

- b) Please find below the number of students (as a whole number and as a percentage of total students in the public education system) who have been assessed over the last 5 years.

Census Year	Students Assessed	ESL as a % of System Enrolments
Aug-05	3246	9.14%
Aug-06	3411	9.62%
Aug-07	3532	9.67%
Aug-08	3766	10.05%
Aug-09	4067	11.05%

- c) Outcomes of assessments in terms of the percentage of students who are ranked at each level of 1 to 5 are detailed in the following table.

LANGUAGE PERFORMANCE RATINGS 2005 - 2009 in ACT Public Schools

Census Year	LPR 0.00 to 0.75	LPR 1.00	LPR 1.25 to 1.50	LPR 1.75	LPR 2.00	LPR 2.25	LPR 2.50	LPR 2.75	LPR 3.00	LPR 3.25	LPR 3.50 to 3.75	LPR 4.00	LPR 4.25 to 5.00	Total Enrolments
Aug-05	9.37%	2.53%	7.39%	5.85%	9.80%	10.26%	6.47%	4.65%	7.64%	5.79%	12.14%	10.47%	7.64%	3246
Aug-06	14.37%	2.55%	7.48%	5.98%	11.76%	8.71%	6.24%	4.63%	6.30%	4.54%	10.67%	9.24%	7.53%	3411
Aug-07	11.41%	4.08%	9.09%	7.16%	8.04%	4.93%	5.32%	5.61%	6.48%	6.14%	12.68%	9.58%	9.48%	3532
														3246
Aug-08	8.82%	3.48%	11.29%	9.64%	10.22%	3.80%	4.86%	4.59%	6.80%	5.02%	12.03%	10.58%	8.87%	3766
Aug-09	11.19%	4.20%	11.83%	8.29%	5.88%	4.03%	5.04%	5.16%	6.91%	5.53%	11.97%	9.64%	10.33%	4067

- d) Detailed demographic information of these students is not currently available.
- e) ESL students can be classified as either ESL or ESL/Literacy needs. These classifications generally reflect the different educational experiences of students.

The ESL student classification is dispersed over the full Language Performance Rating (LPR) Scale and is generally dependent on the length of time the student has been learning English.

Students with ESL/Literacy needs have low LPRs and would normally attend an Introductory English Centre prior to enrolment in a mainstream class.

- f) In 2009, 2168.95 full-time equivalent (FTE) classroom teachers were employed by the Department. Of this total, 3.2 % was allocated to ESL teaching positions in mainstream and Introductory English Centres.

The Department is working to ensure all practising ESL teachers have specialist ESL teaching qualifications which meet the Department's policy of a minimum of one semester unit, or equivalent, in the methodology of teaching students who bring an additional language, at an accredited tertiary institution. The Department is planning to offer up to 30 places in a Graduate Certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language through the Teacher Scholarship Program.

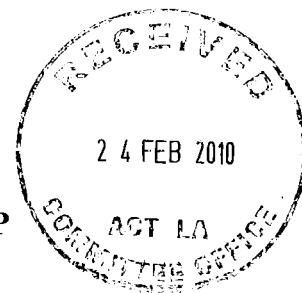
Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Andrew Barr MLA

Minister for Education and Training

Date: *19.2.10*



**MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP
27 OCTOBER 2009**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS**

Introductory English Centres

MS BRESNAN - asked the Minister for Education and Training on 21 January 2010.

(6) Regarding the Introductory English Centres (IECs) could you please provide the Committee with further details about:

- (a)** the total student population and number of classes in each school in which the IEC is located;
- (b)** ESL student numbers;
- (c)** class sizes;
- (d)** the number of classrooms occupied by IEC classes and the total number of classrooms in the school;
- (e)** students' ages in relation to their years of previous schooling;
- (f)** the distances ESL students travel to the Centre each day;
- (g)** the qualifications of each ESL teachers within the centre.

MR BARR – the answer to Ms Bresnan's question is:

- (a) the total student population and number of classes in each school in which the IEC is located;**

2009 Census - Projected 2010 Enrolment Numbers - Mainstream Classes

Hughes Primary School – 191	9 mainstream classes
North Ainslie Primary School - 233	11 mainstream classes
Urambi Primary School – 245	11 mainstream classes
Dickson College – 653	Not Applicable as IEC has separate designated area

The number of classes in the IEC program varies from term to term in response to immigration trends and a continuous enrolment policy. In 2010 the IEC program will start the year with the following staffing allocation:

Southside Primary (SPIEC)	- 4 classes
Northside Primary (NPIEC)	- 6 classes
Tuggeranong Primary (TPIEC)	- 2 classes
Secondary (SIEC)	- 6 classes

(b) ESL student numbers**Projected 2010 ESL student numbers in mainstream classes**

Hughes Primary School – 109

North Ainslie Primary School– 63

Urambi Primary School– 33

Dickson College – 48

(c) class sizes

Class sizes in the IEC program have clustered around a ratio of 1:12 with overall centre enrolments used to determine additional staffing.

(d) the number of classrooms occupied by IEC classes and the total number of classrooms in the school;

Hughes Primary School - 17 classrooms - 5 allocated to IEC program

North Ainslie Primary School - 18 classrooms – 7 allocated to IEC program

Urambi Primary School – 21 classrooms - 3 allocated to IEC program

Dickson College – Not Applicable as IEC has separate designated area

(e) students' ages in relation to their years of previous schooling;

This information is not available at the system level.

(f) the distances ESL students travel to the Centre each day;

The IEC programs enrol students from the following regions or suburbs:

IEC	Region or Suburbs
NPIEC	North Canberra, Civic, Belconnen, Gungahlin
SPIEC	Woden South Canberra
TPIEC	Tuggeranong area Weston Creek area
SIEC	All high school and college aged students from all areas

Transport time is determined by the distance of the student's home from the centre. Students eligible for bus transport to and from the IECs may spend up to an hour and 15 minutes on the bus, as specified in the transport agreement.

- (g) the qualifications of each ESL teachers within the centre.

The Department is working to ensure all practising ESL teachers have specialist ESL teaching qualifications which meet the Department's policy of a minimum of one semester unit, or equivalent, in the methodology of teaching students who bring an additional language, at an accredited tertiary institution. The Department is offering up to 30 places in a Graduate Diploma in TESOL through the Teacher Scholarship Program.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Andrew Barr MLA

Minister for Education and Training

Date: 12. 2. 10

**MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP
27 OCTOBER 2009**



**QUESTION ON NOTICE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS**

NAPLAN exempt students

MS BRESNAN - asked the Minister for Education and Training on 21 January 2010.

- (4) The Government's submission qualifies the data for students achieving below the national minimum standard by noting a category of exempt students or those who did not sit the test (p 12).
- (a) Could you explain the criteria used to determine exemptions?
 - (b) Could you provide details of the number of exemption given for the 2008 and 2009 NAPLAN tests and any relevant break-down according to the exemption criteria.
 - (c) Could you advice the Committee whether any assessment is undertaken by the Department to determine the implications of these exemptions on the overall performance of the ACT education system?

MR BARR - the answer to Ms Bresnan's question is:

- (4) (a) Students may qualify for exemption if they have a significant intellectual disability, or if they have arrived from overseas less than one year before the test with a language background other than English.
- (b) The table below lists exemption counts by type for NAPLAN 2008 and 2009.

	2008	2008	2009	2009
Year level	LBOTE	SWD ¹	LBOTE	SWD ¹
3	29	76	62	66
5	24	57	44	57
7	22	59	25	45
9	14	47	39	58
Total	89	239	170	226

1. SWD-Students with Disabilities

- (c) Exempt students are classified as having performed below the national minimum standard. In 2009, the ACT had a relatively high proportion of exempt students, contributing to a lower rate of ACT students being above the national minimum standard compared with most other jurisdictions.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.


Andrew Barr MLA

Minister for Education and Training

Date: 10.2.10

**MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS**

Clarification of the treatment of students exempted from NAPLAN testing.

THE CHAIR, MS BRESNAN asked the Minister for Education and Training on 16 February 2010 to provide clarification on the treatment of students exempted from NAPLAN testing.

MR BARR - the following information has been provided in answer to Ms Bresnan's question:

As stated during the hearing, students who are exempted are those who have a significant intellectual disability or who have arrived from overseas less than one year before the test with a language background other than English. In reporting by band, these students are included as being below the national minimum standard. However, they are not included in any reporting of mean score results.

There are two further groups of students who do not sit NAPLAN tests:

- Students who were absent on the testing day
- Students withdrawn from the testing program by their parent/carer.

Absent and withdrawn students are treated differently to exempted students in that they are excluded from all assessment reporting, including by band and by mean score. They are only included in measures of student participation.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Andrew Barr MLA

Minister for Education and Training

Date: 5.3. 2010

**MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS**

Auditing process for students sitting the NAPLAN test.

THE CHAIR, MS BRESNAN asked the Minister for Education and Training on 16 February 2010 to explain the auditing process for students sitting the NAPLAN test administered by ACARA.

MR BARR - the answer to Ms Bresnan's question is:

Prior to testing each year, students in every school are registered using the School Online Assessment Register (SOAR). Schools are provided with test booklets that are pre-printed with each student's name according to the details provided in SOAR. Schools are required to manually check for any anomalies and advise the test administration authority (ACT Department of Education and Training).

On the test day, test booklets are distributed according to the registrations on SOAR for each student in attendance. At the completion of the testing, all booklets are accounted for against student participation data recorded in SOAR.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Andrew Barr MLA

Minister for Education and Training

Date: 5.3.10