



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE  
Mr Alistair Coe MLA, Mrs Vicki Dunne MLA, Ms Tara Cheyne MLA,  
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## Submission Cover Sheet

COVID-19 pandemic response

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The Committee Secretary  
Select Committee on the COVID-19 pandemic  
response  
Legislative Assembly for the ACT  
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Roger Morton



## Submission to The Select Committee on the COVID-19 pandemic response

I am a concerned parent of a year 10 student.

On 21 April the ABC reported that ACT Education Minister Yvette Berry has committed the city's public schools to remote classes for at least all of term two<sup>1</sup>. Ms Berry said that "ACT was better placed than other jurisdictions to deliver education online".

I agree that this is the case and the ACT Government should be proud of this fact. However, I do not think that anyone can dispute the fact that online delivery of education is never going to be as good as face to face delivery – especially in the non-tertiary segment of education. This fact is supported by recent academic studies<sup>2</sup>. We know that many students are going to have their education adversely affected by remote learning. This impact will be felt highest by the indigenous and non-English speaking background members of our community.

The experience of students and parents on the ground unfortunately does not match the original promise of the online delivery method. There are - no doubt - many reasons why this is the case. For very young students my friends report that it is very hard to keep their children engaged with the computer. My year 10 student completes assigned work for the day in 2 to 3 hours which tells me that she is not getting anything like the depth of education that was being deployed face to face. She is having difficulty in scheduling any individual assistance from teachers. She reports scheduling conflicts with teachers attempting to deliver face to face meetings at the same time.

ACT may be well placed for online delivery. But this does not mean that we should use an online delivery method if there is no sound, evidence-based reason to do so.

It is great that the ACT has the technology to deploy an online learning model. Can we please keep this model in reserve for a future time when the risks from pandemic are high. Why waste my child's educational opportunities when it is not necessary? There may come a time when the risk/benefit analysis swings back the other way. But that time is not now—now is the time for children to return to school.

I urge the ACT government to either:

1. release the data that explains why its assessment of the risks associated with having schools open is different from the risk assessments of other Australian and international jurisdictions.

Or

2. Implement a planned return to face to face teaching in ACT government schools.



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1 ACT schools keep coronavirus plans in place for term two despite partial reopening of NSW schools  
<https://amp.abc.net.au/article/12169806>

2 Five reports on remote learning find vulnerable students could fall six weeks behind due to COVID-19-related measures - Conor Duffy  
<https://amp.abc.net.au/article/12190834>