



Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA

Minister for Health

Minister for Families and Community Services

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Member for Kurrajong

Mr Mark Parton MLA

Chair

Select Committee on Estimates 2023-24

LACommitteeEstimates@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Mr Parton

Mark

I refer to the appearance before the Select Committee on Estimates 2023-2024 of the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs on 19 July 2023.

On Minister Berry's behalf, I wish to provide a clarification to the record on information provided to the Select Committee by Ms Deb Efthymiades. I refer to a question asked by Mr HANSON (Proof Hansard Page 11) regarding growth in Independent Schools. While there is technically no error in the evidence provided, Ms Efthymiades has identified that her efforts to make the explanation straight forward have resulted in an over-simplified message and leaves the evidence open to misinterpretation.

In her evidence Ms Efthymiades stated: *The two that have genuine growth are Marist and Burgmann. The two that are in recovery are: Brindabella Christian school, and that had the largest increase year on year of 157 students, so that is all publicly available; and St Edmund's. Between those four schools—that caters for 66 per cent of that growth. There has also been an uptick in the two schools that are grounded in Islamic faith; that is about 74 students, so that takes us to about 79 per cent of the growth.*

Technically, Brindabella Christian School has both recovered and experienced genuine growth. As mentioned in Ms Efthymiades' evidence, the school has experienced the largest increase year-on-year of 157 students. Of the 157, the initial enrolment of 99 students completed the school's recovery to its previous enrolment peak in 2019. The additional 58 enrolments represent genuine growth.

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The Education Directorate also wishes to provide a clarification on evidence provided by Ms Angela Spence, Executive Group Manager, Service Design and Delivery on 21 July 2023 on a question asked by Ms Clay about canteen menu assessments (pages 532 and 533 of the Proof). Ms Clay referred to evidence from Nutrition Australia given on 17 July 2023, who were keen to ensure adequate funding was provided by the ACT Government for good nutrition in school canteen. Ms Clay further asked about the Budget initiative for canteen menu assessments.

In her evidence Ms Spence stated: *This particular budget commitment is to work with Nutrition Australia to conduct, in all of our schools, annual canteen health assessments, looking at the menus to ensure that the school canteen menus comply with our food and drinks policy. They deliver that function and also support our canteen operators in schools by providing relevant information, if they are not meeting that policy obligation, to help them to become compliant with that particular policy.*

The *Supporting healthy nutrition in public schools* is a new initiative in the 2023-24 Budget to reinstate annual school canteen menu assessments. While Ms Spence mentioned this commitment is to work with Nutrition Australia, to clarify for the Committee at this stage the Education Directorate is undertaking a process to reintroduce this service and a decision has not yet been made about who or how this initiative will be delivered.

Thank you for the opportunity clarify these issues and, with your agreement, I would be grateful if consideration could be given as to how the public record could be updated to reflect this clarification.

Yours sincerely



Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
A/g Minister for Education and Youth Affairs
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