



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2024-2025

Ms Nicole Lawder MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),
Miss Laura Nuttall MLA

ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE DURING PUBLIC HEARINGS

Asked by: Miss Laura Nuttall
Addressed to: Minister for Education and Youth Affairs
Redirected to: NA
Reference: Uncorrected Hansard Transcript pages 103-104
In relation to: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
Hearing Date: 1 August 2024
QTON lodgement date: 2 August 2024
Answer Due Date: 7 August 2024

MISS NUTTALL: Yes. Quick follow up. So in the report it mentioned that 92 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people who were surveyed indicated that they had been victims of racism, with the other eight per cent or so declining to answer. Considering all four accountability indicators in this budget involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were under target, some by as much as 20 per cent, what is being done to investigate the role racism plays in the education system, specifically towards our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids, and the role that that might be playing in these poor outcomes?

Ms Haire: Miss Nuttall, may I just make a brief comment about the indicators that you pointed to? We in the ACT, I think, are the only system in Australia where we measure the outcomes of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to exactly the same standard as all students and others have a lower target for the achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The education minister made a decision a number of years ago that that was—the appropriate non-racist outcome was put to have the same target for all students. What you see then in those indicators is a pattern which has been also highlighted in the release of the Closing the Gap report today, where as a result of history and systemic racism and a matter of grave concern to us, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students continue not to reach the same levels—attain the same levels as other children.

However, we do not step back from our goal to be that they reach exactly the same outcomes as all children. So in that context, that's that is our outcome. Then I hand—a number of the things that Ms Spence spoke about directly then to the rest of your question.

THE CHAIR: We must move on. If you are able to provide a bit of info, perhaps you could provide on notice because it is a very interesting question, but we must move on. Ms Lee, do you have a question?

Yvette Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

The Education Directorate makes every effort to reduce and prevent racism in ACT public schools, including toward Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. They do this through policy, curriculum, reporting and awareness raising activities, all targeted at ensuring school environments are safe and supportive for all. Examples of the ways public schools address racism include:

- Explicit Social Emotional Learning education is taught in ACT public schools as part of the Australian curriculum, alongside the modelling of pro-social respectful behaviours by teachers and staff.
- Children and young people are also taught about Cultural Integrity.
- The *Safe and Supportive Schools Policy* and associated procedures provide guidance for ACT public schools on creating positive and engaging environments where young people feel connected and respected, achieve success, and are fully engaged in education.
 - The Policy requires schools to intentionally develop students' social and emotional skills through the implementation of social and emotional learning approaches, and to explicitly teach bullying prevention skills.
 - A review of the Policy will commence in 2024 and addressing incidents of racism in schools will be a focus.
- ACT public schools have at least two identified Safe and Supportive Schools Contact Officers (SASSCOs).
 - SASSCOs are trained in identifying racism and harassment and provide support to students who may be experiencing bullying, harassment and/or discrimination, develop proactive strategies and supports to prevent and respond to bullying and harassment in schools, and promote an inclusive environment for all students.
- The ACT Education School Administration System (Sentral) provides the option to report incidents of bullying or harassment, including identifying if the incident is of a racial nature. The Directorate is considering ways to analyse this data to better understand the breadth of racial incidents reported and how this data can inform the strategies that can be put in place to minimise these instances.
- The annual National Day of Action (NDA) is Australia's key bullying prevention initiative for schools. Every year, ACT public schools are encouraged to hold activities and events about bullying prevention for students to connect, collaborate, and help shape a positive school culture together.
- The Education Directorate has representation on the Whole of Government Addressing Systemic Racism Working Group. The group has developed a Framework for Addressing Systemic Racism, which is based on the Education Directorate Cultural Integrity Framework. The work that Education is driving in its Commitment to Cultural Integrity is recognised as beneficial and aligns with work at the Whole of Government level.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2024-2025

Signature:



Date:

12/08/24

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA