



Select Committee on the Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: **Ms Jo Clay MLA (Chair)**

Addressed to: Mr Chris Steel MLA

Redirected to:

In relation to: Treasury and Education Spend

Hearing: 5/3/2026

Uncorrected Proof Transcript: p 87-88

Transcript provided: 12/03/2026

Answer Due: 19/03/2026

Mr Chris Steel took on notice the following question(s):

THE CHAIR: I might have one last question on a new topic. Minister, your submission says the ACT government will continue to deliver a worldclass education system. The Saul Eslake report has a different take on our education system. He has noted for demographic reasons we should be spending—we should be able to provide good education services and spend a lot less, but we are in fact spending more than every other state and territory.

And he has looked at—he did not do this in depth, but he has just looked at a couple of metrics. We have got worse outcomes according to his report. We have got lower Year 12 completion rates and poor NAPLAN results. So where does that worldclass education system line come from and does ACT government have any comment on why we are spending more than every other state and territory to deliver our education system that 40 per cent of parents have walked out of?

Mr Steel: Well, we are constantly reviewing school education to ensure that every dollar spent goes into improving educational outcomes. I think these figures are not new, and that goes for the ROGS data presented on health, which Minister Stephen Smith, I think, provided some greater context around this morning, particularly in relation to New South Wales patients in the healthcare system that Mr Eslake may not have realised.

But, of course, we have the work underway on strong foundations at the moment that Minister Berry is leading which will use those evidence-based practices to improve educational outcomes in our schools, which is high, but of course, those figures compare us to some of the peer schools in the Year 9 NAPLAN. That attempts to get a good comparison and with other states and territories, but generally speaking, we have very high educational attainment rates. I mean, that was a point that Mr

Eslake made in his report as well. And we have very high outcomes in our schools and we will continue to put in place measures to improve that.

We have got a schooling resource review underway that I mentioned as well and that is looking, as well, about the investment that we are making in our schools and how it should be directed and to make sure it is sustainable as well from a budgetary point of view. So there is quite a lot of work underway in that area, but it is reasonable to raise those things, but it is not new information that is out there in the public domain. I am sure Minister Berry will be happy to provide some further input to the committee if you wished on that.

THE CHAIR: Sure. That was partly the reason I asked it here was to find out, when we have Minister Berry, who we should ask these questions of. So in terms of why we are spending more than every other state and territory, is that a question for you or is that a question for Minister Berry?

Mr Steel: Look, happy to come back with some further information, given the time, about that, if we can take that on notice.

MR CHRIS STEEL MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

The ACT's investment in education is reflective of a number of unique aspects to the ACT's education policy settings including:

- Teacher remuneration rates for public school jurisdictions are determined in the relevant industrial instrument. ACT public school teachers are currently among the highest paid in the country, as the ACT Government recognises the invaluable work that teachers and school leaders do every day. 53% of ACT school-based teachers are currently paid at the top increment of the teacher classification. Competitive remuneration is critical in attracting and retaining graduate and experienced teachers in ACT public schools in an ongoing national teacher shortage and in the context of generally high wages in the ACT. The ACT's historical Commonwealth superannuation schemes (PSS and CSS) also contribute to higher wage costs than a number of other jurisdictions.
- The ACT has a maximum class size policy that limits class sizes to 21 students per teacher (up to year 3), which increases the number of teachers required to be employed in ACT public primary schools in comparison to other States and Territories. Class sizes for years 4-6 can have up to 30 students per teacher. In 2025, the ACT's student-teacher ratio of 12.8 in government primary schools was notably lower than the national average of 13.7 in government primary schools. The only jurisdictions with lower student-teacher ratios in government primary schools were the Northern Territory (10.8) and Tasmania (12.4). As reported in the [2025 Census of ACT Schools](#), the student-teacher ratio across all school levels in the ACT was 12.7, compared to the national average of 13.0 for government schools.
- The ACT also has a face-to-face teaching hours policy embedded in the [Teaching Enterprise Agreement](#) which limits the number of hours a classroom teacher can teach to students on a weekly basis. For a new educator this is as low as 17 hours (high school and college), and for a standard classroom teacher this is 21 hours in primary schools and 19 hours in high schools and colleges.

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- The ACT also uses a [Student Resource Allocation](#) model that is a needs-based funding model designed to recognise and support the specific needs of Canberran students and provide a minimum level of education to all schools, regardless of enrolment numbers (which is the primary funding methodology for public schools).

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on the Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT

Signature:



By the Treasurer, Mr Chris Steel MLA

Date:

23/7/26