

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: LIVERPOOL WEST PS – ASBESTOS - WHEN

QUESTION 1 PAGE NO 1

SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you. I will have a few more questions so there will be plenty of opportunity to put things on the record. In relation to Liverpool West Public School, when were you first made aware of the asbestos finding at that school? Ms PRUE CAR: I would have to take on notice the particular date, because I do not want to get that wrong—for the benefit of the Committee.

ANSWER

The old Liverpool West Public School was originally housed on the site adjacent to the Mainsbridge School site, which is where the new Liverpool West Public School has been constructed.

The original buildings at Mainsbridge School were known to contain asbestos which is not uncommon for buildings of that era. Around 2021, during early works for Liverpool West Public School (stage 1) and while the school was occupying its old site, asbestos containing material was found at the former Mainsbridge School site. The school community was made aware of this via the works notification and were kept up-to-date during remediation works which occurred from May to June 2023.

Project updates have remained publicly available.

During construction works at Liverpool West Public School, bonded asbestos was found at various times and dealt with under the sites unexpected find protocol. The areas were secured and appropriate control and monitoring measures were implemented to ensure no risk to the local community as per the project's Asbestos Management Plan and SafeWork NSW regulations.

Removal of asbestos containing materials was undertaken by licensed and accredited asbestos contractors and monitored by occupational hygienists in accordance with relevant legislation, regulations, polices and guidelines.

This work is not related to the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) mulch investigation.

Liverpool West Public School was identified as a priority site for testing by the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) after its investigation revealed mulch from the same manufacturer that supplied mulch to the Rozelle Interchange and Transport Infrastructure site had been used at the school.

The mulch at Liverpool West Public School was installed in two stages, Stage 1 was completed in early 2023, and Stage 2 was completed between in mid-to-late 2023.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

A number of samples were gathered by the EPA on Saturday 10 February 2024 from recently completed landscaping at the school and testing confirmed the presence of bonded asbestos in one sample, which was small in size.

The Department of Education has worked with the EPA officers, SafeWork NSW and an accredited independent hygienist to ensure all garden mulch was removed from Liverpool West Public School. A small amount of other material has been removed with the mulch as part of this process in line with hygienist's advice.

Students and staff returned to Liverpool West Public School on Monday 11 March after the area was fully remediated and a clearance certificate was issued.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: LIVERPOOL WEST PS - ASBESTOS

QUESTION 2 PAGE NO 3

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: —Mr Dizdar, I think you were quoted in the media as saying that at Liverpool West it was a "millimetres long" piece of bonded asbestos that was found. Is that correct?

MURAT DIZDAR: What I was quoted in the media was that there was one sample, a single piece that had come back positive out of multiple samples that were taken.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: How big was that piece?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'd have to take it on notice.

ANSWER

Please see answer to transcript question 1.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: LIVERPOOL WEST PS - MULCH

QUESTION 3 PAGE NO 4

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have more questions, with respect, Deputy Premier. How many cubic metres of mulch need to be removed from the site?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'd have to take that on notice unless Mr Dizdar has the details.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Does Mr Towers—does anyone know? Mr Dizdar?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, I can help here. Chair, we gave, through me, advice to the Deputy Premier's office that it looked like it was going to be two days initially, and that was the advice that I had to give, that we could remove safely the asbestos—sorry, the mulch—and the sample in question as well. But what became apparent when our people started to undertake that work with EPA was exactly what the Deputy Premier said. Unfortunately, and this is part of an issue that we're working through with the contractor—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sorry, Mr Dizdar. I don't mean to interrupt you, but the Deputy Premier has already answered that. I asked, specifically, how many cubic metres of mulch do you envisage needs to be removed from that school? Mr Towers, do you know?

PAUL TOWERS: At this stage we don't have an exact figure. We're working through it, but a significant amount has been taken out and we're still working through.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can you tell us how much has been removed so far?

PAUL TOWERS: I think there's a figure of the order of several thousand cubic metres, but I would have to take that on notice and come back to you and give you the exact figure. We're still working through it.

ANSWER

Please see answer to transcript question 1.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: LIVERPOOL WEST PS - ASBESTOS

QUESTION 4 PAGE NO 6, 7 & 8

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Obviously, and this hasn't been in any of your media commentary, there's quite an extensive amount of construction work happening at that site, isn't there—at Liverpool West?

Ms PRUE CAR: At Liverpool West? I'd have to take that on notice about what's happening onsite at Liverpool West.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Mr Towers, is that correct?

PAUL TOWERS: The school itself is complete.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Last year there was quite of a lot of work happening on the school site, wasn't there, for the new building?

Ms PRUE CAR: Yes.

PAUL TOWERS: It was being constructed last year.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Was there also, last year, a removal of an old building on that site?

PAUL TOWERS: I'd have to take that on notice. I believe there may have been some facilities that were removed, yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm happy to assist and I'm happy to table. I actually have a works notification from 4 April last year. I'll give a copy to the secretariat so that you can see it, Deputy Premier. It very clearly says that last year there was site remediation works happening for the removal of Mainsbridge House and that there was asbestos removal onsite between April and May of last year. Are you aware of that?

Ms PRUE CAR: I would have to take that on notice. But as I was saying, Ms Mitchell—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You are not aware or you are?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'm going to take that on notice about that particular case, because this is a very serious issue you're raising.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I understand that.

Ms PRUE CAR: I'm not—maybe, unlike yourself, I'm not in the business of making political hay with something that's to do with the safety of children.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, I'm trying to get information, with respect, Deputy Premier.

Ms PRUE CAR: No, I'm not going down that rabbit hole that you want me to go down.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Chair, I'm trying to—

The CHAIR: Order!

Ms PRUE CAR: Ms Mitchell, I'm attempting to answer this question. I'm sorry, Chair. This is very serious.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So you can take on notice whether or not you knew that there was asbestos removal onsite last year?

Ms PRUE CAR: I really want to make a point that I think it's very clear that the Government has been put in an extremely difficult position because of the supply chain in question—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm just going to redirect you back.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

Ms PRUE CAR: —with the provision of recycled mulch.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm asking about what happened on that school site last year.

Ms PRUE CAR: I understand you're trying to draw a bow where there may be one—I'm not sure.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, I am trying to seek information, Deputy Premier.

The CHAIR: Order! Order!

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you. There are copies that should be available to others. So the site remediation works, the notice that went out on 4 April last year, indicates:

... asbestos containing materials located within Mainsbridge House. Removal of these materials will take place from 11 April and will finish in May.

That's a School Infrastructure document. That, Deputy Premier, you would agree, indicates that there was asbestos on that school site last year that was removed?

Ms PRUE CAR: I would have to take that on notice, Ms Mitchell.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But it is written in black and white in front of you, from the department.

Ms PRUE CAR: I understand that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Mr Towers? I'm happy to provide you with a copy of that as well.

PAUL TOWERS: I don't have a copy.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's fine. I've got—

PAUL TOWERS: But the fact there may be asbestos in the school would be—if it's there, it would be right—asbestos is prevalent in schools.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sorry. It's hard to you hear in the microphone.

PAUL TOWERS: Can you hear me now?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, that's much better. Thank you.

PAUL TOWERS: The answer to your question is, yes, there was a previous school there. It has been removed. And there may well have been asbestos in there. If there is asbestos in there, it would have been removed in accordance—or guidelines, practices in accordance with the EPA requirements.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Have there been any conversations within School Infrastructure in the last week or two since the mulch issue about this removal and any potential concerns about the source of that asbestos?

PAUL TOWERS: I'm not aware of any concerns about the removal of that building in relation to asbestos.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Obviously you're only new into the role as relieving, and I appreciate that. There has been no concern raised, no-one has raised with you the idea that asbestos was also removed off that site from last year? That hasn't come up in any conversations or discussions with the builders, looking at the supply chain—has that been part of the discussion in the last week or two?

PAUL TOWERS: I'm not aware of it being a part of the discussion because the focus has been on the imported mulch which contained the fragment that was referred to earlier.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can you be sure that this asbestos removal last year isn't the source of where you found asbestos in the garden beds?

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

PAUL TOWERS: I can't provide assurance at this stage because we have not considered that. At this stage—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Has there been testing anywhere else onsite for asbestos or just in the mulch?

PAUL TOWERS: The testing has been focused on the mulch where the fragment was found.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Will you be looking at other areas? There's obviously been a lot of soil removal. With a new build there's a lot of construction and new things coming onsite. Will you be testing beyond just the mulch to be assured that this isn't from another source?

PAUL TOWERS: At this stage the mulch is widespread. It will cover the area where the facilities would have existed, so the testing has been focused on the mulch at this stage and not others.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You just said the mulch covers the area where those facilities had been removed, so it's possible that the asbestos found in the mulch at Liverpool West has actually come from the construction work. Is it possible?

PAUL TOWERS: I can't answer that because we haven't looked into that. We've looked at the mulch, and the mulch has been the source of the contamination. The contamination was in the mulch.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Deputy Premier, does that concern you, that this actually could be asbestos that's been on the school site for some period of time?

Ms PRUE CAR: At the moment, what concerns me is removing contaminated mulch at Liverpool West Public School, which I've communicated with the community—with the parents, with the staff, with the teachers, with the general community—that we are hard at work, diligently doing this. It's clearly an issue across the community—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If I can just redirect you, Deputy Premier—

Ms PRUE CAR: —that the supplier in question has put the people of New South Wales right in the middle of.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: With respect, Deputy Premier, you said you would take on notice this particular notification work. Now that you are aware that there was asbestos removed off that school site last year as part of the construction works—and we've heard evidence from Mr Towers that you can't be sure that that's not the source of it—what will you do? Will you commence further testing at that site? Will you go back and look at other suppliers or other sources that could potentially be the reason why you've got this contaminant at Liverpool West? Now you're aware of it, what are you going to do about it?

Ms PRUE CAR: Of course, Ms Mitchell, we will look into ensuring that the removal of that building in question was done safely, which I trust it was. I have taken it on notice—

ANSWER

Please see answer to transcript question 1.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: LIVERPOOL WEST PS - MULCH

QUESTION 5 PAGE NO 8

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Are you removing more than mulch? Is any topsoil being removed as part of the work that's happening?

Ms PRUE CAR: I have taken it on notice and my advice is—and you well know, I'm sorry, Ms Mitchell, that this is why we take things on notice. I do not want to give the wrong information.

ANSWER

Please see answer to transcript question 1.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: TREATY

QUESTION 6 PAGE NO 11

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Minister, last time I asked you about the treaty and the \$5 million listening tour that your Government has agreed to undertake. Has that now started at schools—any discussion around the treaty, to your knowledge?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'd have to take that on notice.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Well, you took it on notice last time in November.

Ms PRUE CAR: I just don't want to give you the wrong information.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Have you had a response since then?

Ms PRUE CAR: Ms Mihailuk, I don't want to give you the wrong information.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I'll just remind you that I asked you back in November.

Ms PRUE CAR: There are 2,200 schools, so I want to make sure that you get the accurate information.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: You told me you would take it on notice then. I didn't receive a response. I'm just asking the same question again. Given that your Government has agreed to undertake the treaty, the listening tour, the consultation tour across New South Wales, I asked you whether that treaty would be undertaken in schools and whether any type of discussion or any consultation would actually proceed in schools. Have you had any request as such to start that process?

Ms PRUE CAR: In answering your question, again, Ms Mihailuk, I would say that, as Mr Dizdar intimated just previously, our schools are places where we discuss relevant issues in current affairs at that time. Children ask teachers about what they see on the news and we use this opportunity as learning opportunities for our children. But I'll pass to Mr Dizdar if he has anything more to add on this about what's happening in the classroom.

MURAT DIZDAR: My understanding is that the treaty was an election commitment. It's a whole-of-government response. I can confirm to the Committee that there has been no work done in our schools around it. There has been no instructions given because I'm not sure that that work has actually commenced and is public and is out there. If and when that would occur, then we'll make sure we give advice to our schools, just like we did with the Voice referendum, Ms Mihailuk.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

ANSWER

Aboriginal Affairs NSW is the agency responsible for leading the consultation process. The Department of Education is not aware of any consultation in NSW schools.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: ABSESTOS CLEARANCE INCL LIVERPOOL WEST

QUESTION 7 PAGE NO 14

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Mr Towers, Mr Dizdar mentioned last year numerous times—I think you said April and December, Mr Dizdar—that there was clearance on those sites in relation to that construction work. Can you advise, when an independent hygienist presumably provides that clearance, what form does that take? Did they test the soil and the site at the time? What's the process?

PAUL TOWERS: My understanding is the hygienist will take samples. The samples are sent away for lab testing. The lab testing will come back, which the hygienist will verify. Then those test results are used to obtain a certificate of acceptance, I think it's called, from the EPA.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Where do the samples come from? I'm talking about the removal. Mainsbridge was knocked down last year. The April-May works notification said to the community that there would be asbestos removal. After that, presumably, there's testing that's done. Are those soil samples taken from large areas across the site, or what's that process? What specifically was the process at Liverpool West?

PAUL TOWERS: The exact testing procedure—the sampling, the spread of the sampling—I can't answer here. I'll take that on notice and provide that back to you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be good. Thank you.

PAUL TOWERS: But the testing would involve in-ground testing and air monitoring at the same time to check that the environment is not affected by the fragments. I think that was referenced earlier by the Chair. There is a range of tests undertaken to ensure that any demolition, any removal of a building which may have asbestos contamination in it—and any other contamination, of course—is undertaken in accordance with the requirements and regulations that match the EPA. That is what we would expect of the removal of those previous buildings.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But if you could take on notice, specifically, Liverpool West, because obviously now we've got this issue, and earlier evidence seemed to indicate that we couldn't rule out the source of this particular asbestos.

ANSWER

Please see answer to transcript question 1.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: LIVERPOOL WEST PS - MULCH DELIVERY DATE

QUESTION 8 PAGE NO 14

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When did that mulch, if we're talking about several thousand cubic metres, potentially, of removal—and I believe that's your evidence, without an exact figure as yet—start being put into the school? Was it in December last year? How long did it take?

PAUL TOWERS: I don't know the answer to how long it took. I'd have to take that on notice and come back to you. It would have been installed in the latter stages of the delivery of stage two of the new school.

ANSWER

Please see answer to transcript question 1.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: HASTINGS SECONDARY COLLEGE - CONTRACTORS

QUESTION 9 PAGE NO 19 & 20

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay. Can you tell me the last time the contractors, FKG, were onsite working on that building?

Ms PRUE CAR: Could I just say something about this upgrade, which I believe under your responsibility as Minister was committed to being finished entirely by the end of 2022?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can I just redirect you? It's a very specific question and I have limited time.

Ms PRUE CAR: We are standing here and it's not completed.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It's a very specific question. Deputy Premier, I'll redirect you. When

was the last time that FKG, the contractors working on that site, were onsite?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'm just trying to correct some of the misnomers about this particular project.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You can do that in your Government question time. It's very specific.

Mr Towers can answer it if you're not able to.

Ms PRUE CAR: I'm answering a question about this project.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When was the last time that FKG, the contractors, were onsite at that school?

Ms PRUE CAR: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay. Thank you, Deputy Premier. Is the school upgrade finished?

Ms PRUE CAR: But, I have to say, the project is well on track.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay, so it's not completed. The upgrade is not completed?

Ms PRUE CAR: Do you know that there's a first stage of the upgrade—I believe the creative and

performing arts building, which is open? Mr Dizdar and I spoke to the principal this morning about this.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Funny, that.

Ms PRUE CAR: Excuse me?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I said—nothing. Go. Go ahead.

Ms PRUE CAR: And they're very happy with their upgrade. The upgrade is on track for the second stage. It is well underway.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you, Deputy Premier.

Ms PRUE CAR: Funding remains for this project.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay. Fantastic. But when you said at the start of this year that that school project was complete, and it was in your media release that it was one of the new and upgraded schools—the project is not finished, is it?

Ms PRUE CAR: Well, the first stage of the project is done—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Is the project fully complete?

Ms PRUE CAR: —a project entirely that you committed to having done by the end of 2022.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, this is a direct question. Is the project fully complete—yes or no?

Ms PRUE CAR: We've made it very clear that there were two stages, and the first stage is complete.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, you didn't. It's nowhere in your press release. You claimed it was done, and it's not. There's scaffolding everywhere.

Ms PRUE CAR: I'm sorry, Ms Mitchell. You can't have it both ways. I'm really sorry. I have to put this on the record: You committed to having it done by 2022, and it's not done.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you, Deputy Premier. When the P&C president, Nicole Menzies,

says that construction has been going on and no-one has been on site for months, is she wrong?

Ms PRUE CAR: I would have to take on notice what's happening on site—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So you haven't checked?

Ms PRUE CAR: —but the project is well underway. It will be completed.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Was the school ever advised not to communicate to the broader

community about proposed changes to the scope of works at this site?

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

Ms PRUE CAR: I will take that on notice—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So you don't know that either.

Ms PRUE CAR: —but the project will be completed.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Has there been structural steel delivered to site last year that has been

sitting there for months?

Ms PRUE CAR: I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Mr Towers, this is probably for you. FKG, the contractors—do they still have the contract to complete that work? Has that been terminated or does that still exist?

PAUL TOWERS: FKG is still engaged.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When do you anticipate they will finish the work by? Are they on site

working today? Are they up there now?

PAUL TOWERS: I don't know if they're on site today. I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you know when they were last on site? The community seems to

indicate that no-one has been working on it for months.

PAUL TOWERS: I can't answer that, but I will take it on notice and I can provide information about their whereabouts.

ANSWER

Please refer to the response for transcript question 40.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: CONTRACTORS REPORTING TO ANTHONY MANNING

QUESTION 10 PAGE NO 21

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to talk to contractors. I have had concern with the number of contractors across the entire department. In line with this Government's commitment that every agency, including the one I proudly lead, would look at reducing the reliance on contractors and would bring down that spend, I've had concern around the number across the whole organisation and I've been working with my deputy secretary colleagues to bring that down.

The CHAIR: We talked last estimates sessions about—I think there were 200 contractors who were attempting to be put into permanent roles, or to basically go from 800 down to about 600, I believe, with some of them going to permanent positions. How has that gone?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to come back with specific numbers.

ANSWER

The number of contractors engaged by the department reduced by 491 (or 30.5%) between July 2023 (1610) and January 2024 (1119).

Of the 491 contractor engagements which ceased during the above period, 103 (or 21.0%) were converted to employee arrangements.

Over the same period, the department's monthly contingent spend decreased by 48.4% (from \$34.5 million in July 2023, to \$17.8 million in January 2024).

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: CONTRACTORS - SINSW

QUESTION 11 PAGE NO 21&22

The CHAIR: That would be useful. How many contractors did Mr Manning have reporting to him?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to take on notice what we have in School Infrastructure by way of

contractors. I'd just say, Chair, it is an area—infrastructure—with my understanding across government that has a reliance on contingent labour for projects, for a certain degree of expertise. I think it is an area that will always have some degree of that. I've been at work in Mr Manning's time to make sure that we could look at all roles and what are roles that we could have repeatable expertise on. Can I give an example? We might have a contractor who is responsible for, at our end, managing a major build, but we know that we've got several major builds that will come after that. My preference, as I discussed with Mr Manning—and we worked on that—was to have a permanent person in place who could go from that project then to other projects. We have worked to bring that down, but let me take the number for infrastructure on notice as well.

The CHAIR: How many contractors were let go by Mr Manning in the period since the last estimates?

MURAT DIZDAR: I also wouldn't just characterise it as Mr Manning. Let me come back as School Infrastructure. Why I say that, Chair—with all due respect, the leadership team there, where Mr Towers is also, will have line management responsibility for that. So let me just come back with the number that we've put on and that we've taken off as well.

The CHAIR: I'm particularly interested in how many Mr Manning was responsible for initiating the

letting go of or the termination of if you've got that information.

MURAT DIZDAR: If I've got that data, let me come back to you, Chair.

The CHAIR: I asked in the last budget estimates—and it was taken on notice. After we'd had the revelations with the department of transport where it turned out that there had been a number of contractors being employed, particularly in metro, who had been employed on this short-term contract but then actually had ended up being there in some cases for 10 or 12 years, I asked on notice and then I also put in supplementary questions asking for a breakdown of the contractors within School Infrastructure and how many had been there for how long. What I got back was just a generic statement, "We use contractors," basically and I never got that information. Is that information that you would be able to provide?

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

MURAT DIZDAR: That's not good enough, Chair. Let me go back and let me get you the number that we've got and what categories of duration we've got with that. If that was the answer we came back with, my apologies. Let's make sure we go and get you that data.

ANSWER

No contingent workers reported directly to Mr Manning.

The total number of contingent workers in School Infrastructure NSW (SINSW):

- Jun 2023 - 368
- Feb 2024 - 278

There were 201 contingent assignment cessations within SINSW in 2023 and from that total, 47 contingent workers successfully applied for a permanent role.

The following table provides a breakdown of the contingents within SINSW and their average tenure.

Directorate	Contingent Workers	Average of Tenure Months
Asset Management	30	18.57
Business Enablement	69	16.33
Office of the Chief Executive	10	27.1
Operations	149	30
Service Planning	20	12.15
Grand Total	278	23.99

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: MARTIN BERRY

QUESTION 12 PAGE NO 22

The CHAIR: I just want to bring one example of a particular consultant. I'm just looking at the eTendering records as, everyone knows, I love to do from time to time. I'm looking at somebody, a Mr Martin Berry, who I believe is the senior leasing manager of property services. He is on a contract from 13 October 2022 and he's just had his contract extended until 22 April 2024. He's on an annual salary of \$436,000. Is that a standard amount? How many other contractors are getting \$436,000 a year within School Infrastructure?

MURAT DIZDAR: It goes to my earlier commentary around particularly Infrastructure and IT with the competitiveness of what that market looks like and the need for, not only in my agency but I think you will find across agencies, expertise in particular areas. While I'm told that may be the market price that's required to get that, I share some of your concern, Chair. That's why I've been at work to deliver on the whole-of-government commitment that I bring down contractor use and reliance as number one but that I also look at building repeatable expertise. My preference as secretary, whether it's in Infrastructure or whether it's in IT or in any division, is to have repeatable expertise. But if that is expertise that has only to be short-run and short time, then I may require to go into the space that you have indicated.

The CHAIR: I would appreciate you looking into that one.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me look at the specifics of the one that you have named.

The CHAIR: I understand that Mr Berry also works at Metro. He is not only employed on \$436,000 a year within School Infrastructure; he's also got a job at Metro. So it does cause concern as to how many other people are on those kinds of salaries doing more than one job.

MURAT DIZDAR: Chair, let me go and look at the specifics of that individual you are naming. I'm not across what you have said by way of employment in two different agencies.

ANSWER

Five organisations were invited to participate in a competitive tender process for this work. These organisations were identified from the *Performance and Management Services Scheme*, which is a whole of government recommended scheme that all government agencies use.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

Following a competitive tender process, Heathwest Advisory Pty Ltd was successful.
The Contract Award Notice referenced Heathwest Advisory Pty Ltd.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: NSW ENROLMENT GROWTH AUDIT

QUESTION 13 PAGE NO 22

The CHAIR: Who created the NSW enrolment growth audit that came out in February? Were there consultants involved?

MURAT DIZDAR: It was led by my Infrastructure section. I'm not sure that we had anyone else involved. I'm just looking at Mr Towers to see if he's aware. My understanding is that it was run by us in Infrastructure.

Ms PRUE CAR: We would have to take that on notice. I would say that it was a key election commitment. It showed some startling findings about how we wish to do things differently so that we deliver the schools where they are needed, particularly in growing parts of Sydney that were neglected under the previous Government.

The CHAIR: I understand that the enrolment projections are normally completed by the department, but I understand that this particular audit may have been done with consultants and contractors involved.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me come back with the detail for you.

ANSWER

The NSW enrolment growth audit, which was released in February 2024, was prepared internally by School Infrastructure NSW. Consultants were not procured for the report.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: CONTRACTORS – CAPITALISED EXPENSES

QUESTION 14 PAGE NO 22

The CHAIR: That would be very useful. In the most recent annual report for education for that six-month stock—I understand you have a different financial reporting year—there was a large amount of expenses on contractors that were capitalised. I have a technical question around that as to whether that is an amount that gets transferred from operating expenses over to that capitalised amount or whether it is an amount that is capitalised from day one. Is anyone able to tell me that?

MURAT DIZDAR: I don't want to mislead you and get the technical wrong. Let me chase that detail. A number of our contractors, like we were talking about in Infrastructure and IT, are the result of capital projects and requirements for capital upgrades or major school builds, and that portion of that cost is attributed to that project. Let me get the technical answer for you. I don't want to give you the wrong answer.

The CHAIR: That would be very useful. I don't know, Mr Towers, if you know. On those accounts we always have a little asterisk that tells us how much has been capitalised. I'm interested in working out exactly whether that is a new separate cost from the amount that appears on the P&L or whether it's actually a doubling up of an amount that was previously reported on the P&L.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me get you the accounting treatment and what the rules are around that.

ANSWER

The Department of Education prepares financial statements according to Australian Accounting Standards, and NSW Treasury policy (TPG23-03): Financial Reporting Code for NSW Government Sector Entities.

Notes accompanying the department's audited Financial Statements outline the expense types that were subject to capitalisation during the financial year to support the delivery of Infrastructure and Information Technology projects.

These amounts do not form part of the expenses recorded by the department as at 30 June for the relevant financial year.

Notes regarding expenses that are capitalised have also been included in financial statements for previous years. The department will examine the way this information is collated and recorded.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: CONTRACTORS AND CONSULTANTS

QUESTION 15 PAGE NO 23

The CHAIR: Of course, that goes into the end of June last year so we don't have the most recent figures yet for the department because of that different reporting cycle. But are you able to tell me how you are tracking in relation to total consultant and contractor spend? It increased significantly in that period to June 2023.

MURAT DIZDAR: I am happy to get you the figures. We spoke about contractors but I can speak about consultants because it's an area where there's another whole-of-government requirement to bring down reliance and expenditure. I can say, Chair, that in my tenure as acting secretary and then secretary I haven't entered into an agreement with any of the big four. I've been closely monitoring with my dep sec colleagues, with required approval mechanisms at my level to enter into consultancies—again, so that we can go with repeatable expertise and build that expertise inside the organisation. So I know that that figure has also been carefully watched. While I get you the consultant numbers and detail, let me get you the contractor one as well.

ANSWER

The number of contractor engagements in the department decreased by 27% between July 2023 and January 2024.

Over the same period, the department's monthly contingent spend decreased by 50%.

Please note that the 2024 data may be subject to some adjustments.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: PRIVATE SCHOOL FUNDING

QUESTION 16 PAGE NO 23

The CHAIR: Thank you, that would be very useful. I want to come now to the New South Wales Government funding of private schools. I understand the NSW Teachers Federation reported that the former Government spent about \$850 million over-funding private schools. **Has the amount of funding for private schools increased or decreased in the current budget under your watch, Minister?**

Ms PRUE CAR: This is an important question and very timely at the moment, Madam Chair. I would note that the vast majority of our record funding in education is going to public schools. I will take this opportunity, if I can, to say that we're in the middle of negotiating the National School Reform Agreement with the Commonwealth, who have a sort of flipped arrangement where the majority of their funding goes to non-government schools. So we're proud to deliver the vast majority of our funding to our government schools. We're very hard at work. I will be in an education Ministers' meeting later this week, arguing that we get an increased amount of funding to our public schools as part of the new agreement.

The CHAIR: So the amount of funding for private schools in the last year—I'm just looking. In the last financial stub—that six-month statement that took us up to the end of June 2023—had just over \$1.5 billion in grants and subsidies going to non-government schools. What does that consist of, exactly?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'm just looking at the right deputy secretary to pass to so that we give you the right information, Madam Chair. Ms Read?

CHLOE READ: You are asking what comprises the funding that goes to non-government schools?

The CHAIR: Yes, that \$1.5 billion in the 2023 financial year. Grants and subsidies—what exactly are we spending that on?

CHLOE READ: I might need to take the full breakdown of that on notice, but a large proportion of it

would be the State Government portion of the school resourcing standard for those schools.

ANSWER

The Department of Education's Annual Reports are available on the department's website at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategies-and-reports/annual-reports>. The current version, Interim Annual Report 2023, includes audited financial statements for the year ending 30 June 2023.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

Note 7(b) of the financial statements shows that expenditure on grants and subsidies to non-government schools was \$1.5 billion in 2021-22 and \$1.5 billion in 2022-23.

Note 2(d) of the financial statements shows that the \$1.5 billion in 2022-23 includes \$1.4 billion for NSW's contribution to the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS), \$128.0 million for capital assistance and \$29.6 million for other grants (this includes \$23.6 million for the COVID Intensive Learning Support Program).

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: SUBJECT / VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS

QUESTION 17 PAGE NO 24, 31, 32

The CHAIR: I might come back to that. There was another line item in the Government amounts where it showed quite an increase over the years in the amount of out-of-pocket expenses that parents are having to pay. Can you explain why that is? I went back four years because I wanted to see if it was a COVID blip, but the percentage is actually increasing quite significantly in terms of the amount of subject contributions, and the sports and extracurricular activities revenue coming in. Can we explain that?

Ms PRUE CAR: Into government schools, you mean, Madam Chair?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Ms PRUE CAR: I have to say, every question relating to the funding of programs within schools, the practice sometimes of schools asking for parents to contribute to that—it all does actually relate to the need for greater funding as part of the National School Reform Agreement. We believe the Commonwealth has a big role to play in coming to the table on that. Ideally, we would like to see a situation—in fact, it's our Government's commitment—where we get to 100 per cent of that SRS funding at least as a minimum so that schools are properly funded and their programs are properly funded so that every child can have the opportunity to reach their full potential. That's what Gonski recommended all those years ago that we've never been able to realise. All of this relates to the drive for the urgent need for more funding in our schools. We don't want to see parents have to dig into their own pocket to do that, especially in public schools, because it is their right to send their child to a public school free of charge. We just don't want that to happen and we need more funding for our public schools.

The CHAIR: I absolutely agree with you. I understand that that period up until the end of the financial

year for 2023 was primarily not when Labor was in charge. But we had an increase from \$43 million to

\$86 million, which is double in terms of the amount that parents were putting in for sports and extracurricular

activities. How did that happen? Do we know?

Ms PRUE CAR: I might ask Mr Dizdar to elucidate.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

MURAT DIZDAR: Chair, let me come back with the exact figure.

.....

The CHAIR: —in relation to the doubling of parent contributions for sports and extracurricular activities. Where I wanted to get to with that is we hear a lot from the Opposition about the school voucher system no longer being in place. We're obviously all very aware of the cost-of-living crisis that we're in. What has been done to systematically unpick that increase to ensure that you can decrease it in the future?

Ms PRUE CAR: It is greatly concerning. I'm going to pass to Mr Dizdar, but I'm going to make it very

clear as well, as Minister I think it's important that I say this. The secretary has made this very clear to the leaders of our schools, our great principals, that the voluntary contributions are voluntary contributions. No student is to be excluded from activities or from enrolment in schools because of the lack of ability to give a voluntary contribution. They are not fees. I really want to make that very clear, because that's something very important to me about what sets us apart in our system.

MURAT DIZDAR: Chair, I want to make sure I come back with that figure because, as you would respect and appreciate, during those complex COVID years, we had no excursions running, no camps running, no extracurricular, no sport. So I want to make sure I get the right advice and the right numbers. Has the spike that you referred to gone back to what normal levels would be or is it part of the anecdotal that I've also picked up across the State? For example, I referenced transport costs by way of the school hires a bus to take the rugby league team and drop off the softball team. Principals have told me that's become more expensive across the State. I want to make sure I get the accurate info. You would appreciate those three tough years across that COVID landscape had none of that occurring and now it's gladly back to normal. But let me come back with the detail.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

MURAT DIZDAR: We have stressed—and I've seen this as a parent of three children in the system—

the voluntary contribution, even with subject contributions for electives, no child can miss out, no parent can feel like they're obliged to—no parent in their communication can feel like this is an obligation or a fee or a must-do, because that's what we pride ourselves on. Across the last four years—we give guidance that if you're going to increase the voluntary contributions—we haven't allowed for an increase of voluntary contributions. We're very respectful that families are doing it tough out there. We want to make sure we can support them in our education delivery.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

The CHAIR: I'm looking at the last four years of that line item. In the 2020 financial year—that's the

middle of 2019 to the middle of 2020—we were sitting at around \$68 million. Then it was \$68 million again in the following year, end of 2021. And then 2022 was this 43 and now we're back up to 86. So it is the highest it's been in four years. I'm not sure that's explicable from a COVID blip, but I guess \$40 million of expense for parents across the State is quite significant. Is there any way that the Government can just be allocating \$40 million through the budget to make sure this doesn't happen again?

MURAT DIZDAR: I totally concur with you and I wasn't offering it as an excuse. The mere practicalities

of those COVID years meant no excursions, no activities and no sport. That's why I want to go back and unpack that figure. I'll get that advice. I'll provide it to you. I did have the voluntary contribution and the subject contribution figures which I was reading out to you. They've remained very stable. But I do appreciate that you're talking to extracurricular and sporting, so let me find out the exact detail of what's attributable to that.

ANSWER

The item in discussion is 'Sports and Extra-Curricular activities', and the \$86 million and \$43 million figures quoted by the Chair are consistent with the 2023 Interim Annual Report.

Revenue from sports and extra-curricular activities in the years 2020, 2021 and 2022 decreased significantly due to COVID limiting school sporting and extra-curricular activities and students learning from home during periods of school closures.

The Department of Education has advised that revenue from sports and extra-curricular activities is now returning closer to historic levels pre-COVID, which were in excess of \$86 million.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: RESIGNATION AND RETIREMENT FIGURES

QUESTION 18 PAGE NO 30

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm asking about resignations versus retirements. I asked in December, and I didn't even get the figure of 2,000 and 1,000 that Mr Ruming has just provided now. Will you commit, then, when that data is made available to you in March, that you will publicly release it at that month and not wait until there's a convenient point in time?

Ms PRUE CAR: I will take your questions on notice. I have to say, Ms Mitchell—

ANSWER

Please see answers to supplementary questions 85 and 86.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: CANTEEN REVENUE

QUESTION 19 PAGE NO 33

The CHAIR: But we're still getting \$29 million in profit from our canteens during a time of extreme crisis for the average family.

MURAT DIZDAR: One other detail that I'd just provide for you, Chair: Those funds don't go to the department. Those funds go to the school and would go back into that school's general operation. I can tell you as a former principal in the system I did have cause to tender out the canteen at the time—fantastic operator. There was a small income flow that came back into the school, which was great, through that lease. I have to say the school community was really happy because they were being looked after by way of nutrition. I also made it my business as principal, if there was any child who was struggling financially with their family, to make sure I'd feed them and make sure they were well looked after.

The CHAIR: Perhaps I need some clarification on what that line item is then. How much of that \$29½ million is profit being made on goods sold from the canteen? I appreciate that there might be an amount going back into the school, but we've just talked about out-of-pocket costs for the average parent. The fact they're putting more into their school is not necessarily good in the context. Also, how much is coming back in, in terms of lease fees, for that quarter of our canteens that are being run for profit?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me go and see if I can give you that breakdown. I just wanted to reiterate, Chair, and make that clear. I think you've appreciated that. I don't want you to think that money is coming back into the department. That's going back to that individual school, if it's a leased canteen. Just stay with me—

ANSWER

Please refer to the answer to supplementary question 199.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: SYNTHETIC TURF IN BUSHFIRE PLANS

QUESTION 20 PAGE NO 35

Dr AMANDA COHN: While we're on synthetic turf, I'm also interested to understand what protections are currently in place for schools that are in extreme and high bushfire risk areas. We know that synthetic turf can increase the risk of adjacent buildings being ignited in a bushfire because of the way that they hold heat. There are several schools, for example, in the Blue Mountains area that have synthetic turf playgrounds. How is that risk managed by the department?

MURAT DIZDAR: Another very good question, Dr Cohn. I know that in our high-risk areas each of our schools has a bushfire management plan. That's developed with our work health safety directorate; we don't leave it to the school on its own. We work with Rural Fire Service et cetera to make sure evacuation zones and all the ingredients that are necessary to best protect that school are taken into account—in fact, including what you've referenced around synthetic turf. But I can come back to you on the specific of how we address that part of the plan. Is that okay?

Dr AMANDA COHN: I would appreciate that. My concern is that the Education Facilities Standards and Guidelines only recommend that synthetic play equipment be shaded and that there is no specific guidance there around the application of synthetic turf in high bushfire risk areas.

MURAT DIZDAR: No, I don't believe that to be the case of the only thing we advise on that front. Let me come back with the specific advice we provide to those sites in bushfire risk that have got synthetic turf.

ANSWER

All NSW Public Schools have been assessed for their bushfire and grassfire risk. Where schools are in areas prone to bushfire and grassfire, their emergency management plan includes a response which addresses the local context and facilities of each school.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: PES STAFFING

QUESTION 21 PAGE NO 36

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: How many vacant positions are there in PES at the moment?

MURAT DIZDAR: I wouldn't have that at my fingertips but I'm happy to find out.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you take it on notice? Are they being actively recruited for, any of those vacant positions?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to come back with the detail on how many, but my expectation would be that the executive director who leads that unit—and we're talking about a very large organisation, with 170,000 employees—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm very well aware of that. I just want to know how many vacant positions there are at the moment within PES, that unit, and are there active recruitments underway for any vacant positions or has that been submitted to a freeze?

MURAT DIZDAR: What I can say is that there's no freeze that has been given by me as secretary across the organisation.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, you've said that. But is there active recruitment for vacant positions in PES at the moment?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm very happy to take that on notice.

ANSWER

As at 1 March 2024 there were 204 positions in the Professional and Ethical Standards Directorate (PES). Of these, 14 positions were vacant. All vacant positions are under recruitment.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: RANKINS SPRINGS

QUESTION 22 PAGE NO 39

Ms PRUE CAR: I know there are a range of concerns at Rankin's Springs. I have, in fact, met with the local member and the P&C, which I have spoken about before.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm aware of that.

Ms PRUE CAR: I will pass to the department about what may be happening at Rankin's Springs.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's all right. I'll ask Mr Dizdar later. I've only got a few minutes left with you. Are you aware that parents have been told not to talk about that school situation publicly and that a number of staff and former staff are very concerned about what's happening with the students at that school?

Ms PRUE CAR: Honestly, in order to make sure that I give the community the right information, I'll have to take on notice that information.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's fine. I have a number of questions to put on notice about this, and I would appreciate an answer.

ANSWER

A School Development Review was undertaken at the school in Term 3, 2023. All parties at the school; community, parents, staff and students had the opportunity to take part in this review. Staff are now implementing recommendations from this review.

Concerns that have been raised by the school's P&C Association are being addressed by the department.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: SCHOOL COUNSELLORS

QUESTION 23 PAGE NO 39 & 40

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You said in the lead-up to the election that you were going to employ an additional 250 school counsellors. How many have been employed so far?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'll take that on notice about how many more school counsellors we have in the system. We're very proud to give them an historic pay rise, along with the teachers of New South Wales, to encourage counsellors into our schools, because it was something that was a key—

ANSWER

As at January 2024, there are currently 1,253 full time equivalent positions in the NSW School Counselling Service.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: SCHOOLS SPECTACULAR - SECRETARY

QUESTION 24 PAGE NO 41

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: ...Mr Dizdar, did you appear in the Schools Spectacular?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, I did.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you know the cost of the item that you were in?

MURAT DIZDAR: I was proud to appear in Schools Spectacular. It was the fortieth anniversary. The production team asked if I could make a guest appearance and I said I was happy to as secretary.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you know how much it cost for the item that you were in?

MURAT DIZDAR: No, I don't.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you take that on notice and come back to the Committee?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, I'm happy to do so.

ANSWER

The video item the Secretary was requested to appear in was designed as a celebration of 175 years of public education in NSW and 40 years of the Schools Spectacular. The theme of the segment was 'Back to the Future'.

Backstory and video promotion elements have been included in the production of Schools Spectacular since 2016. All elements of the production of the piece were incorporated into the 2023 Schools Spectacular costs.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - DEMOUNTABLES - MASTER LIST OVERALL FIGURE

QUESTION 25 PAGE NO 41

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: In terms of information being transparent, I've asked in the past about how many demountables are currently on school sites in New South Wales. Mr Towers, is there an overall figure that you can provide to the Committee as to how many demountables are on school sites?

PAUL TOWERS: I will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you do that, can I ask—in previous rounds I've asked and I've been referred to the School Infrastructure website, where every individual school, some 2,200, is listed with the number of demountables. But I'm well aware that there is an overall figure that the department has. Will you provide that overall figure on notice and not refer us back to the website again? Will you undertake to do that, Minister?

Ms PRUE CAR: Ms Mitchell, I will take that on notice but I would say that you very well know—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I know that the number exists. I would like the overall number.

Ms PRUE CAR: —that the number of demountables increased by—what was it under yourself? I think it was 35 per cent.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's why we'd like to know what they are under your Government.

Ms PRUE CAR: About what we are doing to fix your mess?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Referring us to a website is not the answer when there is a master list that exists. I just want the overall number and I think it's important that we are given it.

ANSWER.

The previous Liberal-Nationals government presided over a 35 per cent increase in demountables during its term in office.

Demountable numbers are published annually on the School Infrastructure website and can be found using the 'Explore our schools' tool from the homepage:.

TITLE: - PRESCHOOL ANNOUNCEMENT BY ELECTORATE

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

QUESTION 26 PAGE NO 41&42

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL..... Can I ask, Deputy Premier, with the announcement of the preschools this week, did you or your office ask for those sites to be broken down by electorate?

Ms PRUE CAR: I want to make this very clear and I made this very clear yesterday. One of the most wonderful things about this announcement is that those sites were selected based on an expert panel, reviewed independently and then reviewed again by a probity adviser.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Specifically to redirect you, Deputy Premier, did you or your office ask for those sites to be provided to you by electorate?

Ms PRUE CAR: I am saying I will take that on notice—

ANSWER

Please refer to page 53 and 54 of the Budget Estimates transcript (Portfolio Committee no. 3 – Education, 20 February 2024).

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - WSU - MILPERRA

QUESTION 27 PAGE NO 43

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Deputy Premier, if I could just pick up on the Milperra campus and the

announcement, the pre-election commitment:

Any new development on the Western Sydney University campus at Milperra must include a new high school.

Those are comments from yourself. Your colleague Kylie Wilkinson echoed those comments: "Communities and parents are still registering with us at the moment about the shortage of schools. Demountables are an option available to that." What is the status on the announcement of a new high school on the Western Sydney University campus at Milperra?

Ms PRUE CAR: I would have to take that on notice of what's happening with that site at Milperra. I understand it is subject to a development by the Western Sydney University.

The CHAIR: Just following up on that one, because I recall asking about that at last estimates as well. Minister, will there be a high school on that site or not?

Ms PRUE CAR: I would have to take that on notice about what our plans are, if any, for that community there at the previously owned site at Western Sydney University at Milperra. We're clearly delivering all of our election commitments that we went to the people of New South Wales with. In fact, some of the schools that we're delivering in south-western and north-western Sydney that the previous Government refused to deliver for all for 12 years—

The CHAIR: That's not the question, though. The question is about this particular site. I understand that the south Sydney planning panel made a determination on 24 July in relation to that land, which is about four months after Labor came to government. Did anyone from the Department of Education make formal representations at that time for this to be used for a public school?

Ms PRUE CAR: I would have to take that on notice, Ms Boyd.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

ANSWER

I share the concerns held across our State about the former NSW Liberal-Nationals government's failure to plan and deliver public infrastructure.

Before the former government approved the sale of the former WSU site to property developers, I met with community members and urged the Liberals to consider all options, including future educational uses.

I understand it has now been more than three years since the sale and development was approved by the former NSW Liberal-Nationals government, and the development is now in the final stages of approval.

As part of our record \$3.5 billion investment in new and upgraded schools in Western Sydney, the NSW Government has progressed planning for upgrades at both Sir Joseph Banks High School and Condell Park High School, which follow completed upgrades at Picnic Point High School. After 12 years of inadequate planning, these upgrades will help to deliver more local school capacity and ensure Milperra's education needs can continue to be met by the public high schools servicing the area into the future.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - TEACHER ATTRACTION INCENTIVE SCHEME

QUESTION 28 PAGE NO 43&44

The CHAIR: Looking at the teacher attraction incentive scheme, I understand that there has been a review or there's going to be a report released in relation to that incentive scheme. Is that correct?

Ms PRUE CAR: We're looking very carefully at incentives, obviously, because especially in some hard-to-staff areas, they're very important in terms of incentivising people, particularly to rural and regional remote schools. I will pass to the secretary of the department about any review.

MURAT DIZDAR: Chair, there's been quite a bit of work. Mr Ruming leads that work for us. I wonder if he's got where we are up to. If he doesn't, we're happy to come back to the Committee. Like the Deputy Premier said, we continue to evaluate because while they are some of Australia's leading incentives, financial, transfer points et cetera—I just came from Broken Hill recently, where it is still complex, despite those incentives, to get staff to make those decisions to be in those localities. I think it's well covered that the teacher shortage, not only in this State but across the country, is not universally experienced. We still do it tough in our rural, regional and remote locations and the geography of New South Wales is not quite like Victoria, for example, our next biggest counterpart. We have a lot more complexity. I know that this is something we keep evaluating, keep looking at. In fact, we've had to move some of those incentives into metropolitan locations where we haven't had to do that in the past as a short-term fix, because we've had sites where we had to advertise five, six times. I wonder if Mr Ruming has got where that work is up to?

SHAUN RUMING: Yes, sure. Thank you, Chair. As Mr Dizdar has explained, I think quite rightly, this is not just a New South Wales but a national issue. We have been focused on two important foundations around teacher pay and job stability. I think we reported to the Committee last year our temp to permanent work transition where we are taking temporary teachers and making them permanent teachers. That uplift has taken our permanent workforce from 64 per cent to 78 per cent, so really important foundations to build on top of our BAU hiring. We added more teachers in 2023 than in '22 or '21. It might interest the Committee that we placed 5,499 teachers into the system. We also, in addition to our BAU, have nine different workforce initiatives to attract and retain. They are quite varied from our Grow Your Own program across New South Wales to mid-career.

The CHAIR: Apologies to interrupt. I am curious on the incentives scheme. As I understand it, it was being reviewed. Is that correct?

SHAUN RUMING: Yes. There are numerous programs that have different incentives all the way through.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

The CHAIR: I understand.

SHAUN RUMING: They are right through a number of programs. Twelve months ago we had around 14 initiatives that we were working on. We are now focused on nine, but we have incentives and scholarships and all sorts of things right through different programs.

The CHAIR: I am particularly interested in the ones to attract people to rural schools.

SHAUN RUMING: We have teach.Rural Scholarships. We've had 60 successful applicants offered scholarships and the application process was between July and August of '23. We actually received 413 applications, so we were oversubscribed.

The CHAIR: Again, in terms of there being a review of the effectiveness of the incentives, are you basically saying that's an ongoing process across all of the incentive programs? Or has there been an official review and would there be a report available so that we could all have a look at the effectiveness of those programs?

SHAUN RUMING: Sure, happy to come back to the Committee on notice with an update, but we constantly review these programs and five programs were discontinued, and we've focused on nine programs, not specifically to rural and remote, but happy to come back to the Committee.

ANSWER

The attraction and retention of staff in rural and remote schools is an ongoing challenge. In recognition of this challenge, the Department of Education is continuing to review its rural and remote incentives scheme and make new investments, such as providing heating and cooling in more teacher housing.

In 2021, the department reviewed the rural and remote incentive scheme. The 2021 review found the department offers one of the most generous incentive schemes in the country, and that while financial incentives are useful levers to attract and retain rural and remote teachers, they are only one part of teachers' overall motivation.

As part of the recent historic teacher pay rise, locality allowances have increased. As part of the 2024 Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy Implementation Plan the department is developing an action plan for financial incentives to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - TIRKANDI INABURRA

QUESTION 29 PAGE NO 45

The CHAIR: Thank you. Just another, discrete issue: Tirkandi Inaburra, the Aboriginal-led centre for Aboriginal boys. I probably have pronounced it wrongly.

MURAT DIZDAR: Sorry, I missed where you said?

The CHAIR: Tirkandi Inaburra.

MURAT DIZDAR: Okay.

The CHAIR: I'm sure that I have pronounced that wrong.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Hansard will get it right.

The CHAIR: It's west of Wagga. Is that about right?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I said Hansard will get it right.

The CHAIR: Hansard will get it right. It's west of Wagga. It's an Aboriginal-led centre for Aboriginal boys. It was funded by DCJ, and then it was temporarily closed. At the beginning of 2024 it was announced that it would be permanently closed. Is the Department of Education looking at re-establishing that school?

MURAT DIZDAR: Chair, I'm happy to help the Committee, if I can go back to my DCJ colleagues as well. I'm not across that specific one. I know you'd appreciate we've got several across the State—

The CHAIR: Yes, absolutely.

MURAT DIZDAR: —where we work with other agencies. But I'm happy to go back to my DCJ colleagues and see what is the status there, and also what we've done locally if that is the case with what you say.

ANSWER

Tirkandi Inaburra was managed by the Department of Communities and Justice and questions about this program should be directed to the Minister for Families and Communities.

The NSW Department of Education is committed to strengthening cultural identity and resilience of young Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander males in our schools.

Since 2012, the department has worked with the Clontarf Foundation to provide mentoring, coaching and support services. Clontarf currently delivers the Clontarf Academy Program to up to 4,600 male Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students in Years 7-12 in NSW public schools to encourage positive participation and attitudes towards school, and support academic achievement.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - SCHOOL CLEANERS

QUESTION 30 PAGE NO 46

The CHAIR: Again, I'm wading into an area I don't really know the answer to; I will be honest about that. When we look at these school cleaning services, how many of them are directly employed by government and how many of those schools have outsourced to private operators the employment of those cleaners?

Ms PRUE CAR: I would have to take that on notice so that I could get the right information for you. Unless, Mr Dizdar, you have details.

MURAT DIZDAR: There are eight contracts across the State. We don't directly employ any cleaners for our 2,200 sites.

Ms PRUE CAR: Because they are whole-of-government contracts.

MURAT DIZDAR: They're under the contracts, whole-of-government contracts. Like the Deputy Premier indicated, we're underway with that cleaning review. We're on track to undertake that work this year.

The CHAIR: In the past was there a point where we had cleaners being directly employed by the Government?

MURAT DIZDAR: My understanding, Chair, is—and this precedes even my 27 years—there was a period in the department where there was direct employment and then we've been through a number of decades of whole-of-government contracts. But I can't say that I can speak for that time. It was before my tenure in the department.

The CHAIR: It would be interesting to know if any consideration has been given to whether or not directly employing cleaners in schools would, perhaps, all up, be more cost-effective.

Ms PRUE CAR: The review will, I would hazard a guess. Without wanting to pre-empt the findings of the review, I would hazard a guess that the review would be looking into that.

ANSWER

School cleaning is currently administered in line with the NSW Whole-of-Government cleaning contracts, implemented by NSW Public Works. Cleaners in schools are employees of the individual cleaning contractors engaged by NSW Public Works.

The cleaning needs of schools are currently being examined in line with the Government's election commitment to review the current contract arrangements.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

The outcomes of the review will inform decisions about the future operation of school cleaning services.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - MR DARRYL WALKER

QUESTION 31 PAGE NO 46

The CHAIR: I have one more pressing question before I hand back to the Opposition. Just coming back, Mr Dizdar, to our discussion on consultants and contractors. Another one that came across my desk—which you no doubt will need to take on notice and have a look into, but I'd appreciate it if you did—is Mr Darryl Walker, who is the director of research and innovation at School Infrastructure NSW. I understand that he was employed under—he's only been gone a short time and I have forgotten his name.

MURAT DIZDAR: Mr Manning.

The CHAIR: Mr Manning—I'm so sorry. He was employed under Mr Manning's watch from an infrastructure consultant firm and is on approximately \$600,000, is what I'm being told. There are allegations that there may be a conflict of interest involved in that appointment. If you're able to look into that appointment and whether it's still ongoing, I'd be very grateful.

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm not aware of it. I'm definitely happy to follow up and take it on notice.

ANSWER

Mr Walker was engaged as a contingent worker in May 2020 in School Infrastructure NSW. Mr Walker was subsequently appointed to a role in School Infrastructure in August 2023 through a competitive merit selection process in accordance with the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*. For privacy and confidentiality reasons the Department of Education is unable to provide any further comment on individual matters.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - DOLLY PARTON IMAGINATION LIBRARY

QUESTION 32 PAGE NO 46&47

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Minister, what's the current status of the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program with United Way?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'd have to take that on notice what the status of the Dolly Parton—what did you call it?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you know what that is? Have you heard of that program?

Ms PRUE CAR: I know that Dolly Parton has a great interest in encouraging reading in young children.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: She does. She's wonderful. Maybe that's something else we can agree on, Deputy Premier.

Ms PRUE CAR: There you go.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Are you a Dolly fan? Dolly brings everyone together.

Ms PRUE CAR: Look at this, bringing us all together.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Don't get me started on her or Taylor Swift, because we'll be here all day.

Ms PRUE CAR: Yes, that's true.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you take on notice the status of that? There was funding provided by the previous Government to roll that out in a number of vulnerable communities, and I've had some local government areas who are keen to pursue further funding opportunities. Could you just let us know if that's your intention—to provide any more money or to look to expand that program?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'd have to take that on notice.

ANSWER

The Department of Education is continuing to work with United Way Australia to deliver the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - EARLY CHILDHOOD FUNDING CUTS

QUESTION 33 PAGE NO 48

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Deputy Premier, in terms of sector support in the early childhood sector, why did you cut funding from organisations like CCSA and CELA, who have supported preschools for years?

Ms PRUE CAR: I will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You are not aware of that funding cut?

Ms PRUE CAR: But we are committed to supporting the sector. We are committed to supporting the sector as well as building up the public provision of preschools in this space.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Are you aware of the funding cut? You would, of course, be aware that the majority of preschool provision in this State is done through not-for-profit providers.

Ms PRUE CAR: In long day care centres. I understand that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, no, not in long day care. Community preschools make up the bulk of the early childhood delivery sector for preschool. There's about 700 community-run preschools in the State. You don't know that?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'm waiting to get to what your question is, as opposed to rolling statements.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You just said that not-for-profit is for long day care. We're talking—

Ms PRUE CAR: Both settings in long day care as well as community preschools, as you well know.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you agree that community preschools provide the bulk of provision of preschool education in this State?

Ms PRUE CAR: Yes, currently.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: And that will continue to be the case, because I think it's about 700. CCSA and CELA received sector support under the previous Government to support the work that was done by the majority of the preschool sector that your Government has cut. Are you aware of that?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'll take that on notice.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

ANSWER

Community Early Learning Australia (CELA) and Community Connection Solutions Australia (CCSA) had been contracted to provide program implementation support to services to assist with the introduction of fee relief and other major changes to the Start Strong program. The contracts for CELA and CCSA to provide program implementation support came to their conclusion in May 2023. The Department of Education continues to work closely with stakeholders in the early childhood sector.

Fee relief and other changes to Start Strong continue to be funded and supported.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - CHILDCARE FUND

QUESTION 34 PAGE NO 48

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can I also ask, in relation to the childcare fund, there was an allocation of \$100 million from this financial year to be spent. How much has actually been spent?

Ms PRUE CAR: I would have to take that on notice, Ms Mitchell.

ANSWER

As at February 2024, \$28 million has been expended.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - 50 PRESCHOOLS ON NON-GOV SITES

QUESTION 35 PAGE NO 48

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What is the status of the 50 preschools that you committed to building at non-government schools?

Ms PRUE CAR: I would have to take that on notice. We're committed to delivering that. That's part of our election commitment, of course, that we're committed to delivering—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you know if any work's been done on that?

Ms PRUE CAR: I'm going to take that on notice so we can give the Committee the right information.

ANSWER

The NSW Department of Education is working with the non-government school sector to deliver the NSW Government election commitment to provide \$60 million for new and upgraded preschools at non-government school sites.

Program Guidelines, which will be made available on the department's website, will see the program delivered through a program similar to the Building Grants Assistance Scheme.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - PRESCHOOL ANNOUNCEMENT CRITERIA

QUESTION 36 PAGE NO 48

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: In going from the 231 to the final 100, how did you decide who was in and who wasn't, if 231 met the criteria?

MARK BARRAKET: In addition to the data pieces that I described, there were a few other pieces that we considered. There was a site assessment that was undertaken for each of the schools to make sure that it was possible to build or construct a preschool onsite. There was also some financial analysis undertaken, and there was also a commitment that we wouldn't displace any Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. Through that process and through the local intelligence that we had through speaking with DELs, through speaking with principals and speaking with local service providers, we were able to reduce the number of schools that we considered.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I appreciate a hundred was your commitment and I know that you've got to work within the parameters of what government gives you. Of the 231 sites, how many were—I was going to say "knocked off the list" but that's not very parliamentary terminology. How many didn't have the right capability onsite to have a physical service?

MARK BARRAKET: I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you also provide the other criteria where you spoke about not wanting to displace Aboriginal-controlled or the reasons why others weren't—and numbers, as best as you can provide.

MARK BARRAKET: We're happy to take that on notice.

ANSWER

Schools that were not included in the final list of 100 schools to receive a public preschool were removed due to not meeting the following criteria:

- Negative impact/risk of displacement of nearby Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations – 7 sites.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

- Schools too small for a preschool (low kindergarten enrolments/isolated location) – 60 sites.
- School Infrastructure New South Wales (SINSW) reviewed infrastructure suitability as the build classification being too complex and/or high risk) – 103 sites.

TITLE: - PRESCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

QUESTION 37 PAGE NO 54

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When do you hope to start to see construction of some of these preschools onsite?

MARK BARRAKET: We do need to commence a procurement process in terms of construction. We will be commencing that immediately. The commitment is that these sites will be online for day one, term 1 in 2027, although we do anticipate there will be some that are operational sooner than that. Gulyangarri is an example of that, where we anticipate that it will be open later this year.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Well, it was almost built, really. It was well underway. In terms of the other nine of the 10 that were announced as part of the budget last year, has construction started on any of those new school builds yet or are they still some time away?

MARK BARRAKET: I might see if Mr Towers has any information on that but, to the best of my knowledge, no. But he might have further information.

PAUL TOWERS: The answer to that is no. The planning is underway for the inclusion of preschools in the capital works project, but construction has not started yet.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Would you be able to provide on notice for the remaining nine when you would anticipate construction to begin if that's possible?

PAUL TOWERS: Yes, we can do that. That will be linked to the program for the capital project.

ANSWER

The nine remaining sites are in the planning phase. The timing of commencement for each preschool is subject to relevant final business case approval, statutory planning approvals and any related site acquisitions. These will be delivered for Day 1 Term 1 2027.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - FLEXIBLE INITIATIVE TRIAL

QUESTION 38 PAGE NO 55

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I suspect we will be back here at the next estimates, as more time passes. But still on early childhood, the Flexible Initiatives Trial under the childcare fund—can you provide any information about that process, where that's up to and when that money will start to become available?

MARK BARRAKET: Certainly. Let me just pull up my notes on that. The Flexible Initiative Trial is \$20 million across two years. The first round opened on 1 September 2023, and we anticipate that successful applicants will be announced shortly, over the next couple of weeks. Round 2 for that program is expected to open in April 2024.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Is it like a \$10 million allocation each round? Or how are you breaking down that money?

MARK BARRAKET: I would need to take that on notice.

ANSWER

The Flexible Initiatives Trial follows a competitive assessment process with funds from a pool of \$20 million available to applicants across two rounds.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - LIVERPOOL WEST PS - ASBESTOS - BEASY

QUESTION 39 PAGE NO 56 & 57

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can I go now back to asbestos at Liverpool West?

MURAT DIZDAR: Sure.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Mr Towers or Mr Dizdar, which company is doing the removal of the mulch and that asbestos removal onsite?

MURAT DIZDAR: School Infrastructure is leading the work, and we've got SafeWork and EPA out there with us.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Have you brought in contractors to do the physical removal?

MURAT DIZDAR: Under the auspices of School Infrastructure. We've got our own people.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But School Infrastructure in and of itself doesn't have employees who come in and do this. You must have got an outside contractor who's onsite to come in and do removal. Are you able to tell me which company is doing that removal?

MURAT DIZDAR: I will take it on notice which company, but we've had to get expert help in to undertake that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I appreciate that. Do you know, Mr Towers, which company is onsite doing that removal of the mulch?

PAUL TOWERS: I can't remember the name of the company. I'll take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Is there a chance that it's Beasy?

PAUL TOWERS: That doesn't sound familiar.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I've been given from a resident in the area a notice of asbestos removal work from Beasy on the Liverpool West Public School site from 12 February this year through to 31 March. I'm happy to table a copy of that. I'm just trying to ascertain whether they are actually a company that's doing some of the removal, because that's gone out to community members, I've been told. I'm just trying to find out if that's actually correct.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let's make sure we come back with the right company that we've employed.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay. I will give that to the staff. If you could come back on that, Mr Dizdar.

MURAT DIZDAR: Sure.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You'll notice when you receive the copy, and I appreciate that it's not in front of you, that at the top of that notice—and it's of a photo, so it's quite poor quality; I'll concede that—it seems to indicate that the date of that notice of work is actually from December last year as well. I'm happy for you to take it on notice, but if you could provide firstly whether Beasy are currently doing the

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

work, if they've done previous asbestos removal work on the school site and at what dates?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to do that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I appreciate you haven't seen it before.

MURAT DIZDAR: This is a bit difficult to read as well.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's fine. But you can see the date of December and you can see what's there. As I said, this was provided to me.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me go back to our people and make sure we get the right information for the Committee.

ANSWER

Please refer to the answer to supplementary questions 29 and 30.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - HASTINGS SECONDARY COLLEGE - CONTRACTORS - 2ND ROUND OF WORKS

QUESTION 40 PAGE NO 57

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great. Thank you. I also want to go back to—I'm going to run out of time, but I'll take 30 seconds—the Port Macquarie Hastings school community. Were you able to find out at all since this morning whether there are contractors onsite at the moment to finish that project?

PAUL TOWERS: I don't have that information at the moment.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay. I've been given an indication that the company in question has only been engaged to fix up defects from the previous work and not to continue the rest of the project. Is that your understanding as well?

MURAT DIZDAR: I can help the Committee here.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Please.

MURAT DIZDAR: The contract was with FKG. It's still in place. They completed the works that we contracted them to do. But, as a matter of course with these contracts, they're live, like you indicated, until all financial aspects are finalised, which includes works such as defects. We have engaged another contractor for the next round of works.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sorry, who is that contractor then who's been engaged for the next round of works?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me get the details of who that is for the Committee.

ANSWER

The upgrade of Hastings Secondary College is continuing and is forecast for completion later this year. FKG was engaged to complete Stage 1 and 2 of the project, and has delivered:

Port Macquarie Campus:

- The new Technological and Applied Studies building, which was completed in December 2022;
- The new Creative and Performing Arts Building, which was completed for Day 1, Term 1 2024;

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

- A new two-storey North South Link walkway connecting through the centre of the school and providing access between buildings, which was completed in October 2023 for Day 1, Term 1 2024;

Westport Campus:

- The refurbishment of Building L as a new administration and staff building which was opened in March 2023; and
- The refurbishment of Building A to create three new learning spaces, which was completed in September 2023.

As part of the work under their contract, FKG was working on the site in January 2024 rectifying defects for the stages of work previously completed.

The remaining works in Stage 2 of the project are the re-construction of Building T and refurbishment of Buildings B and L into general teaching spaces. This work will be progressed under the Department of Education's Asset Management team.

A separate contractor was engaged to construct the new PCYC multi-sports facility beginning in November 2022, with construction due to be completed shortly. The multi-sports facility is Stage 3 of the upgrade, and consists of a new shared use, multi-sports facility with sports courts, gymnastics and gym facilities, multipurpose rooms, and PCYC Police Office, youth hub, administration and staff kitchen facilities.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - COUNCIL RUN ECE CENTRES - WAGES

QUESTION 41 PAGE NO 58

The CHAIR: Yes, I understand that. I guess the council-run early childhood education centres are of particular interest. That's a place where the Government can lead in terms of the best pay and conditions. Has there been any budgeting done or any work done so far to help councils provide a higher wage for workers?

MURAT DIZDAR: Mr Barraket might have some detail, but those initiatives he outlined that we're running run across the sector. It's not like we're just trying to create more early childhood education workers for our government preschools; it's to try—

The CHAIR: But in terms of wages—

MURAT DIZDAR: —and increase it across the sector. I'm not sure if he's got that detail around councils. But we would be advocating in our role for better outcomes for that workforce with the Commonwealth.

MARK BARRAKET: I'm happy to take on notice the piece around councils and come back to you on that.

The CHAIR: That would be really useful. I understand that this is something that Local Government NSW has been asking for, for some time—the USU has also been campaigning on this—to ensure that there is a State allocation of funding to encourage that wage increase at a council level. If you could come back to me, that would be very useful.

ANSWER

The Department of Education acknowledges the challenges that the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector faces in attracting and retaining qualified and professional staff.

Through our stewardship role, the department is working with the ECEC sector to create meaningful, long-term improvements to pay and conditions for ECEC professionals.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - TRAINEESHIPS IN ECE CENTRES

QUESTION 42 PAGE NO 58

The CHAIR: In terms of getting people in and giving them that sort of on-the-job experience, is that a Federal responsibility in terms of traineeships within these education centres or is that something that the State Government gets involved in?

MARK BARRAKET: Are you talking like practicum experience, like we have in our schools?

The CHAIR: Yes. It's been put to me that basically people were put in as trainees on a trainee rate.

MARK BARRAKET: Typically, those kinds of things may occur as part of the study. But I'm happy to take the specifics of that on notice and come back to you.

ANSWER

A traineeship is training that has been approved by the relevant State training authority, meeting the requirements of a training package, and developed by the relevant Industry Skills Council. Upon completion of the traineeship, the trainee will receive an Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) certificate level qualification.

On the job experience and the support trainees receive is provided for by the employer in line with national regulations and law as minimum requirements. While working as a trainee in the ECEC sector, wages typically fall under the National Training Wage, Miscellaneous Award.

The NSW Government funds training delivery for traineeships in the early childhood education sector (ECEC) for those entering the sector.

The Commonwealth Government funds existing workers who undertake traineeships when employed full-time for three months or more and/or 12 months part-time.

People studying full Certificate III and Diploma qualifications in ECEC require 120-240 hours practical placement hours to fulfill the training package requirements.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS IN PDHPE SYLLABUS

QUESTION 43 PAGE NO 59

The CHAIR: I would appreciate that. I will add in one more little question that you could address at the same time. I understand that there is a bit of an ad hoc approach to respectful relationships education across schools. I'm interested in what the Government is doing to ensure that consistent approach to the education as well.

PAUL MARTIN: Thank you for the question. The issue of respectful relationships was added to the PDHPE—the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education—syllabuses a few years ago in, I think, 2018. I will correct that if necessary.

ANSWER

Content on respectful relationships has been strengthened in the draft PDHPE syllabus which was released for public consultation in the 'Have Your Say' process from 26 February to 11 March 2024

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - UNFLUED GAS HEATERS

QUESTION 44 PAGE NO 60

The CHAIR: How many public schools have unflued gas heaters installed?

MURAT DIZDAR: Chair, let me take that on notice and get you that detail, because we've been at work around air cooling and heating in schools. There was a five-year program that recently came to completion, where we upgraded something like 9,000 learning spaces, close to 600 libraries, worked with sealed schools. We removed something like close to 4,500 unflued gas heaters as well. But your question specifically was how many remained. Let me come back on notice, if that's okay.

The CHAIR: That would be really useful. I will give you just a couple to take on notice, if you will. How many currently still have the unflued gas heaters installed? That number of how many have been removed in the past 12 months—presumably that's the 4,500 that you just mentioned, or is that over a longer period?

MURAT DIZDAR: What period was that? It's not over a specific period, but that was as at the end of last year.

ANSWER

The Department of Education has advised that it inspects the performance of all gas heaters every year between February and April. This inspection process ensures the heaters meet the current performance standards. The department also undertakes regular inspections of school assets through its local School Infrastructure NSW offices, and conducts immediate inspections and repairs when concerns are raised by schools. If a principal does have concerns about an unflued gas heater or any facilities at their school, they should contact their local School Infrastructure NSW office for advice.

Currently, 1,402 NSW public schools have unflued gas heaters, and as at January 2024, 4,317 unflued gas heaters have been removed.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - SOLAR PV PANELS

QUESTION 45 PAGE NO 60

The CHAIR: Okay. And then what percentage of New South Wales public schools have a solar PV panel system installed?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, we've been on a big sustainability campaign as well, so let me get you that data as well.

ANSWER

The Department of Education's records indicate that more than 75 per cent of NSW public schools have a solar PV panel system installed.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - TERMINATION PAYMENT - MR MANNING

QUESTION 46 PAGE NO 60

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Mr Dizdar, you just said earlier that Mr Manning did receive a termination payment. Is that correct?

MURAT DIZDAR: Correct.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Are you able to advise the Committee how much that was?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to take it on notice.

ANSWER

Termination payments are calculated under the *Government Sector Employment (GSE) Act 2013* and relevant regulations.

Mr Manning received a termination payment in accordance with regulation 39 of the GSE regulation - an amount equal to the executive's remuneration package for a period of 38 weeks, plus accrued statutory entitlements.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - HASTINGS SECONDARY COLLEGE - CONTRACTORS - 2ND ROUND OF WORKS - BUDGET - COMPLETION

QUESTION 47 PAGE NO 60&61

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Thank you. Just coming back to the issues at Hastings in Port Macquarie—and, I'm sorry, it was towards the end—Mr Dizdar, you said that another contractor has been engaged to do stage two. Is that correct?

MURAT DIZDAR: I don't have the name of the contractor, Ms Mitchell, but there is another contractor that has been engaged to undertake the remaining work at Port Macquarie campus.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: At the Hastings campus? Because there is Westport campus and Hastings campus.

MURAT DIZDAR: Sorry, did I say Port Macquarie?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes.

MURAT DIZDAR: I meant on the Hastings Secondary College site.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, which is in Port Macquarie.

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Got you. Did the contract engagement for the second stage go out to tender? Was there a process for that?

MURAT DIZDAR: There would've been, yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Has the forecast end cost of current works exceeded the approved funding for the project? I'm happy for yourself or Mr Towers to answer.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let's get you the detail of what the budget is and where we're at with the budget.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay—on notice?

MURAT DIZDAR: Please.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay. Are either of you able to tell me whether a request for additional funding was made for that project? My understanding is that it was. Is that correct?

MURAT DIZDAR: My understanding was that when we had the initial budget, we looked at topping up that budget for further works.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

MURAT DIZDAR: So let me come back on detail on what that was, if that's okay.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Was there a request? Can you advise whether a request for additional funding was made throughout the process?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me come back with those figures, if that's okay.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay. If that request was denied, could you also advise the Committee of that?

MURAT DIZDAR: Sure, but my understanding is that we are fully committed, in budget, to undertake the further work that's remaining. In the phone hook-up with the principal, I got her angle of what those remaining works were, and we'll make sure we deliver on those works.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm just trying to clarify, the original business case of the project and the upgrades that were part of that, is that what will be delivered or has that been revised in terms of the scope of work?

MURAT DIZDAR: The remaining works, as I understand—and I'm happy to correct these by way of the detail if I don't have them down pat—in talking with the principal, there's Building B with some works to happen there by way of support unit teaching spaces. There's a toilet block to complete. There is an infrastructure piece with the PCYC—I'm going to describe it as a multipurpose facility; that is to complete. And there's some works to complete in Building T. I was informed they're food technology and materials learning.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Will the project be delivered as per the original business case or has the scope been revised because of a budget issue?

MURAT DIZDAR: What I want to do, Ms Mitchell, is go back as secretary and compare what I was advised of by the principal in line with what was that original scope, but deliver on everything we agreed to.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am happy for you to confirm it on notice, but the question of will the project be delivered as per the original business case, that is the intention. Is that what you are saying now?

MURAT DIZDAR: The intention is to deliver on what we committed to up-front.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could provide that information that you've taken on notice to the Committee.

MURAT DIZDAR: Sure. I did say here, Building B with the support classes, Building T with the food technology classes, the toilet block and also the multipurpose facility.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The School Infrastructure website lists that this work will be completed by the middle of this year. I think it says end of term 2 in 2024. Is it on track for that to be completed by that date?

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

MURAT DIZDAR: My understanding is that the multipurpose facility—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm asking about the entirety of the works. When will that be completed by?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me go and get the advice and come back.

ANSWER

While the previous Liberal-Nationals government delayed this school upgrade, under the Minns Government, a major portion of this school upgrade has now been completed.

The remaining upgrade works at the Port Macquarie Campus include:

- minor refurbishments to some parts of Building B and Building L into general teaching spaces (upgraded classrooms) and to upgrade student amenities;
- the reconstruction of Building T (food, textiles and materials learning); and
- delivery of the new PCYC multi-sports facility.

The project team is working with the school on the remaining works. The project will be delivered within the project budget and as per the parameters of the original business case, and it is due for completion later this year.

The work at Building T, B and L will be progressed under the department's Asset Management team.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - TOD PRECINCTS DISCUSSIONS

QUESTION 48 PAGE NO 62 & 71

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Mr Dizdar, what discussions has the Department of Education had with the Department of Planning in selection of the eight accelerated Transport Oriented Development precincts relevant to the Transport Oriented Development SEPP?

MURAT DIZDAR: Ms Merton, let me take that on notice and come back. We're one agency amongst many others. I imagine our Planning colleagues have been in discussion with us on that as well, but let me come back on what input we've provided and when.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Have you had any discussions as Secretary of Education with the head of Planning about this?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me take it on notice. I talk to the head of Planning on a number of things but let me come back on that.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Mr Dizdar, given the significance of this reform in terms of population and future schooling needs, the community are asking what discussions are taking place between Education and Planning.

MURAT DIZDAR: I really respect and appreciate the importance of it and that's why I want to come back with the right answer for the Committee—the details.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: As a follow up, are you aware if the Department of Education has provided any information to the Department of Planning in the selection of these Transport Oriented Development sites?

MURAT DIZDAR: We would be part of these discussions, but I want to make sure I've got the right detail for you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Are there any of your deputy secretaries who have been involved in that work with Planning who can answer?

MURAT DIZDAR: I want to go back, because up until two days ago Mr Manning would have been leading there, so I want to make sure I come back with the right detail.

.....

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Are you aware, Mr Dizdar, if there's any—I appreciate you did take this on notice before—ongoing meetings between the head officials of various agencies around Planning, Housing, Education to deal with some of those challenges of higher density population, again going back to what my colleague said.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

I appreciate you indicated it may have been Mr Manning but, as secretary, are there meetings of the various secretaries to discuss these matters? The Government says it's a big priority and I'm trying to understand if that's filtering through to a public service level in terms of that collaboration?

MURAT DIZDAR: There's a secretaries board, which has got the heads of all the agencies. Some of these things come up to the Secretaries Board. I'm on the infrastructure committee across whole of government. I do rely on my School Infrastructure arm to go into the detail, but I'm across these things. I don't want to get it wrong for the Committee. That's why I want to take it on notice and come back with the details.

ANSWER

Refer to answers to supplementary question's 102-104.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - EARLY CHILDHOOD MODELS OF DELIVERY

QUESTION 49 PAGE NO 63

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can I go back because I know that Ms Hurcombe is only with us for a few more minutes here. In relation to some of the early childhood reforms, has there been any consideration—and it might go to the Flexible Initiatives Trial as well—looking at other models of delivery to support parents? One that has been brought to my attention recently—I don't know if you've heard of the company called BubbaDesk, where they look at working onsite with parents still there. It's almost a creche-type model. In terms of the Flexible Initiatives Trial, is that really looking just at centre-based care or are you looking at other forms of early childcare provision?

MARK BARRAKET: I'm happy to take that on notice, but my understanding is it is predominantly centre-based care.

ANSWER

To be eligible for the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Flexible Initiatives Trial, applicants must be an approved ECEC service provider under the *Children (Education and Care Services) National Law (NSW)* and *Children (Education and Care Services) Supplementary Provisions Regulation 2012*, excluding Department of Education preschools, and operating in NSW.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: - START STRONG

QUESTION 50 PAGE NO 63

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: In terms of Start Strong funding for preschools, were there any changes put in place to the funding guidelines or the rollout of that funding for services this year?

MARK BARRAKET: We did update the guidelines for that earlier in the year, yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What is different? What was changed?

MARK BARRAKET: I'll have to take on notice the specifics of the changes.

ANSWER

The following changes were made to the Start Strong for Community Preschools guidelines for 2024:

- The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) classifications have been updated from 18 SEIFA bands to 10 SEIFA deciles, with funding rates scaled accordingly to support equitable funding distribution. As part of the SEIFA classification update, 2021 SEIFA data is being used instead of the 2011 data previously relied upon. Transition arrangements were implemented to ensure no service will be worse off in 2024 because of SEIFA classification changes.
- The Start Strong for Community Preschools program has transitioned from a financial year program to a calendar year program. Moving to calendar year was supported by services as it allows greater forward planning by the sector and aligns with the preschool year as well as other funding programs.
- The equity loading eligibility for children with disability or additional needs, has been expanded to include children supported through the Disability and Inclusion Program who are yet to receive diagnosis documentation.
- The eligibility criteria for the Service Safety Net funding have been adjusted to greater support services in regional and remote areas.
- The Program Payment spending rules have additional clarification and examples of activities to assist services with their planned activities and expenditure.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

- Some structural changes and inclusion of more detailed information about payment timings and processes.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: 50 PRESCHOOLS ON NON-GOV SITES TIMELINE & METHODOLOGY

QUESTION 51 PAGE NO 63&64

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Obviously, with the BGA requirements, it's low-fee-paying areas and it's making sure it goes where there's need. Will you be using the same methodology that was applied to the hundred preschools or will that be separate?

CHLOE READ: I think it'll be separate, but it will be similar in terms of the intent of the program— high-growth areas, socio-economic status, student demographics and classification as a special school. But we will be working with the Catholic and independent sectors to determine the right process for awarding those grants.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you have a time frame of when you would expect there to be information to the community about where they would be located?

CHLOE READ: I might take on notice the exact timeline. We're working on adjustment to the guidelines and making regulation to do with preschools and non-government schools so that we give them really good advice—clarity for the sector on the way that they can operate well without falling foul of any of the guidelines on not-for-profit status.

ANSWER

The NSW Department of Education is working closely with the non-government school sector to deliver the NSW Government election commitment to provide \$60 million for at least 50 new and upgraded preschools at non-government school sites in high-growth areas.

Program Guidelines, to be published shortly, will see the program be delivered through a grants program similar to the Building Grants Assistance Scheme. These guidelines will outline the eligibility and selection criteria for grants, tailored to the delivery of this program, and therefore distinct from the delivery of 100 public preschools.

Further information on the program will be made available on the department's website.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: SYLLABUSES AND CONSULTATION PERIOD 2024

QUESTION 52 PAGE NO 65

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Mr Martin, this might be your space. In terms of the curriculum, parents are interested in learning about the process of this and their involvement and consultation and feedback. I'm wondering if you might be able to let us know how that works.

MARTIN GRAHAM: Is that in terms of the curriculum materials the department produces or the New South Wales syllabus?

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Sorry, Paul Martin.

PAUL MARTIN: Two Martins, one surname.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Not birthday Martin, the other Martin.

PAUL MARTIN: The older Mr Martin. There are 111 syllabuses in the process of being renewed. Most of those syllabuses have at least one, but often two, consultation periods. The consultation periods allow for teachers and the sectors, and also community members, to put in their views to us on either the NESA website or more formal submissions. We then take into account that consultation to provide a second phase of consultation. So the syllabuses that are to be finally released at the end of this year go out for their second phase of consultation on 26 February. That includes the ones I mentioned earlier: PDHPE in K to 6 and 7 to 10, and history and geography in 7 to 10. I can provide on notice all of the syllabuses and the consultation periods for 2024.

ANSWER

Syllabus development involves engagement with a wide variety of stakeholders, including teachers, subject experts, school sectors, professional associations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, diverse learning groups (including disability, English as an additional language and/or dialect, and gifted education), students, parent groups, unions and community groups.

The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) conducts at least one, and in most cases two, public 'Have your say' consultation periods for all K–10 syllabuses undergoing reform with one round of consultation for 11–12 syllabuses. NESA invites individuals and groups to provide feedback on K–12 draft syllabuses using online surveys available on the NSW Government website during the 'Have your say' period. NESA also accepts formal written submissions from organisations and individuals.

NESA undertakes targeted consultation with key education stakeholder groups, including a parent roundtable, to collect feedback on draft syllabus documents.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

The 'Have your say' consultation periods are held in Terms 1 and 3 for draft K-10 syllabuses, and in Term 4 for draft Year 11-12 syllabuses. After each 'Have your say', NESA considers the feedback collected from the community and makes refinements to syllabuses.

More information on NESA's syllabus development process can be found on the NSW Government website at <https://curriculum.nsw.edu.au/about-the-curriculum/syllabus-development>.

For additional details of the syllabus releases and consultation periods for 2024, please refer to the answer to supplementary question 101.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: TEACHER APPROVALS BY SECTOR

QUESTION 53 PAGE NO 65

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will stick with you, Mr Martin, while you've got the floor. Can you tell me how many teachers were given approval to teach in New South Wales last year? Have you got any data around that with you?

PAUL MARTIN: I have. It'll take just a second.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's all right.

PAUL MARTIN: The number of accredited teachers, conditional or provisional, in 2023 was 8,909.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you have a breakdown for how many of those you understand went into which of the school sectors?

PAUL MARTIN: I do but not here in front of me.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could take that on notice, that would great.

PAUL MARTIN: I can, yes. Some of them will be teachers who teach across sectors, because there will be casual or temporary teachers.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Some early childhood. But whatever you could provide on notice would be great.

PAUL MARTIN: Absolutely.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Would you also be able to provide on notice how that data compares to, say, the last three years as well in terms of those numbers and where we're seeing the split?

PAUL MARTIN: I can do that. I think I can say there's been an increase, but I'll provide the exact data on notice.

ANSWER

The first year of the Minns Labor Government saw a record number of teachers being granted conditional or provisional accreditation.

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total	6850	7172	8373	8909

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: RICHMOND RIVER HIGH SCHOOL

QUESTION 54 PAGE NO 66

MURAT DIZDAR: Ms Mitchell, we're working with the Reconstruction Authority, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, and Lismore Council to flush out all the options for rebuilding Richmond River High.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Is there any time frame of when a decision will be reached in relation to that?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to go back and see if there is any other detail, but I don't have that in front of me. I think, as you know and appreciate, it's quite a complex situation there.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Absolutely.

MURAT DIZDAR: So we're still exploring options around where would be most suitable to rebuild.

.....

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Mr Dizdar, you'll come back if there's any additional information and time frames?

MURAT DIZDAR: If there's any other detail that we have. I know that community would want surety, but they'd also want us to make sure we're working with all these different arms to get it right as well.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I appreciate the complexities, as you well know, but I also am aware that it has now been some time.

MURAT DIZDAR: It has been.

ANSWER

The Department of Education is undertaking detailed due diligence and technical assessment for risks such as flooding compliance, bushfires, any Aboriginal cultural heritage and ecological impacts. This work is necessary to ensure the right site is selected.

Once a preferred site is secured, the campus masterplan will be finalised. The department is taking all necessary steps to ensure the best location is selected for the new campus. Further information can be found on the department's website.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: TEMP TO PERM FUNDING SOURCE

QUESTION 55 PAGE NO 66 & 67

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I was just wondering whether they were still there. The temporary to permanent program for the school teachers and the budget allocations there—the funding for temporary teachers to become permanent, was that sourced from existing school budgets or has that been funded through the department?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to talk to this. If the Committee is interested in the numbers, there's 9,074 teachers that have been made permanent out of that initiative.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: How many support staff?

MURAT DIZDAR: And 7,888 support staff that have been made permanent. We're really proud that the workforce has moved from something like 64 per cent permanency on the teacher front to 78 per cent. We want to be the country's leading jurisdiction on this front, and we're at work on that. I must say, I've been taken aback by the feedback we've had from people, both by email and on our visits, what it's meant to them.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sorry, Secretary, I have 40 seconds left. Can you tell me, is the funding for that program sourced from existing school budgets?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, and I want to make sure I give you that as well. The qualifying rule was that they had been employed by a school for three years or longer. Those schools were already paying for that personnel. So in the vast majority of cases, those schools are now picking that cost up. In some cases, the department is absorbing the cost as well, because there could be backfill like long service leave, maternity leave or workers compensation leave.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you provide a breakdown of that on notice, how many have been filled by the school and how many the department is covering?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy if we've got that detail, to give that to the Committee. I'm not sure that we do, but I'm happy to come back to the Committee if we have that detail about the proportion of who is picking the cost up.

ANSWER

Staff transitioning from temporary roles to permanent roles are staff who are already employed by the Department of Education. School principals have been asked to prioritise their budgets towards permanent staffing.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: TEACHER NUMBER PROJECTIONS

QUESTION 56 PAGE NO 68

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We might come back to that one at a later estimates hearing as the year progresses, Mr Dizdar. I want to take you now to issues around staffing. I think, Mr Ruming, you provided back to this Committee in February last year that by 2027 there was going to be a surplus of teachers, but my understanding is that there are obviously concerns, particularly about high school subject areas as well. Do you have any updated data or have you done any further work in relation to where you think teacher numbers are projecting into the future over the next couple of years?

SHAUN RUMING: I would have to take the specifics on notice. What we have continued to do is fill vacancies as fast as we can. As we lift the standing of the profession, we have taken more graduates in 2023 than we did in 2022 or 2021, which is a green shoot, for sure. We've got 858 participants in our different teacher workforce initiatives, which are above and beyond our BAU hiring efforts. But I would have to come back to you on projections.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, I'm happy for you to provide that on notice. If you're doing that, do you have any projected data of how many teachers—and it can be as a percentage—will reach retirement age, say, over the next five years? Do you collect that data or project that?

SHAUN RUMING: Again, I will have to come back to you on notice on that.

ANSWER

In recent years, teacher shortages have been more acute in some specialist subjects, such as mathematics and science, and in particular geographic areas, such as rural and remote locations.

While not all teachers who reach retirement age immediately retire, 12.6% of teaching staff will reach the average retirement age of 63 over the next five years. This is one of the reasons why the Minns Government is working hard to address the teacher shortages left by the former Liberal Nationals Government.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: TEACHERS RE-ENGAGE PROGRAM

QUESTION 57 PAGE NO 69

MURAT DIZDAR: Sorry, Ms Mitchell. Given the shortage across the State in various pockets, we're encouraging teachers to stay beyond retirement with us if they can. We've actually kicked off a Teachers Re-engage program as well.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I was just about to ask you about that. How is that going? I think my understanding is that you are contacting recently retired teachers to see if they want to come back as casuals. Is that correct?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes. We've been contacting and personally ringing—through our HR folk—colleagues that are recently retired and asking them would they be willing to come back and assist. We've had fabulous response. We've been saying, "We can meet your needs—if you want to work one day, two days or five days, locations." Mr Ruming might have the exact details. We're in the process of making something like 4,000 calls to recently retired. I think we've already got something like 80 that have commenced with us, and we've got about 300 of those that have already said they want to be part of it as well.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you have figures?

SHAUN RUMING: Yes. We started the project—I'm going to say—in November/December last year, of which we have made about 1,500 calls. We've got about another 1,500 or so to go. Mr Dizdar is very close, but we've had 285 from those first round of calls of people saying they were very interested in working with us.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sorry, 285 of the first 1,500?

SHAUN RUMING: Yes, 285. Not all calls connected, as you can imagine, Ms Mitchell, and we didn't want to be a pest.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Everyone screens.

SHAUN RUMING: Yes, everyone screens. We've had 60 to date that have actually started in schools. We are working with another 100 teachers at the moment in terms of getting them ready to go back into schools. I think the level 3 casual rate that was introduced in the last round of award negotiations was attractive to people to come back as well. We only had two steps for casuals prior to that; we now have three steps. We're getting good feedback. Principals are very happy that they're able to access more casuals, but we've still got some ways to go in the coming months.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sure. Of the 60 that have re-engaged, for lack of a better term, do you have a breakdown of how many of them are—are they all just engaged? Not "just"; sorry—are they all engaged as casuals, or are any of them looking to fill other vacancies?

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

MURAT DIZDAR: Let's take it on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, that's fine.

ANSWER

Some of the 84 casual teachers we have re-engaged so far have expressed interest in permanent opportunities. The majority have expressed interest in casual opportunities.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: SUPPORT UNIT - INITIATIVES AND POSITIONS

QUESTION 58 PAGE NO 69

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I noticed that there was an announcement yesterday about more support units across the system. Are there any specific strategies in place to help recruit—particularly qualified teachers—for inclusive education and SLSOs for SSPs but also for those support units as well and further funding support?

MURAT DIZDAR: I think it's another very good question, Ms Mitchell. This is an area that's of high demand in the workforce challenge that we've got—to make sure that we've got skilled, qualified, backed-in folk around both at a school learning support officer level but at a teacher level for support classes and also in SSPs, in special schools. I think their workforce challenge is even more acute than if you look across high schools in general or locations in general. Mr Ruming might have specifics, but I do know that we run scholarship programs that have been historically there that we keep building on where we do take teachers that are interested in being special ed qualified and we support them financially through the study process for that so that we can get already established teachers that are willing to go into that area. I know we've got scholarship programs for those that want to enter undergrad in that space as well. The other thing that we've been doing is the SLSOs who want to convert into teaching as well—we've been supporting them

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm asking specifically for those children and those units where there are obviously additional needs and that inclusive education practice and specialisation. I appreciate there are scholarships, but they've been in place for a period of time. Is there anything new or different in that space? Although we are doing an entire inquiry into this matter as well, so there might be more opportunities to ask about that. Mr Ruming, do you have a breakdown of any data in terms of how many vacant positions there are at the moment in each SSP and support unit in schools as well? I'm happy for you to take it on notice.

SHAUN RUMING: Yes, I would need to take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Also, if you can, how many unfilled SLSO positions there are in the same units and SSPs, please.

SHAUN RUMING: Sure.

ANSWER

There are 163 full-time equivalent vacant teaching positions and 363 full-time equivalent vacant Student Learning Support Officer (SLSO) positions for Schools for Specific Purposes and Support Units.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

In addition to the Inclusive Practice in Education scholarships on offer, the Department of Education also works directly with universities that offer the preservice Inclusive Education programs (University of Newcastle, University of New England and Australian Catholic University). They identify their current special education students for priority contact and support to gain accreditation as early as possible and then gain fast tracked approval to teach.

In 2023, the department increased connection and support for current Special Education university students through the department's new Special Education Professional Experience Hub, to ensure access to quality professional experience in NSW public schools and early connection and retention in our sector.

The department seeks support from NESA to identify these students as early as possible for early conditional accreditation decisions.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: PES INVESTIGATIONS

QUESTION 59 PAGE NO 70

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Mr Dizdar, I want to go back to PES. Are you able to provide—I'm happy for you to do it on notice—how many investigations PES has conducted over the last three years?

MURAT DIZDAR: If we hold that data I'm happy to.

ANSWER

The Professional and Ethical Standards Directorate (PES) completed 1,565 investigations during the last three calendar years.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: PES STAFFING

QUESTION 60 PAGE NO 70

MURAT DIZDAR: ... Can I just use the opportunity to provide you some detail on a previous PES question?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, please. About the recruitment?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, because in the break I spoke to the head of PES, the executive director there. I can tell the Committee that there are 204 positions in PES. There are 15 vacancies at the moment and 11 are in the process of going through recruitment.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: And the other four?

MURAT DIZDAR: They've just occurred. They're working out what the steps are with those. If we can, we might take that question that we did put on notice off notice if you're okay.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Actually, I'm now going to put another one back on notice. You said there are 205 positions currently.

MURAT DIZDAR: There are 204 positions.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Would you be able to provide on notice how many positions there were in that unit over the previous three years as well? I'm just trying to ascertain if the overall numbers have remained steady or moved up or down.

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, I'm sure we should have that data.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sorry, you did some homework and now I'm giving you more.

ANSWER

Financial Year	Total Positions in PES
2020-21	168
2021-22	190
2022-23	188
2023-24	204

This includes temporary and permanent positions.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: RURAL EXPERIENCE PROGRAM & BEYOND THE LINE

QUESTION 61 PAGE NO 70&71

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: ... Some of the work around rural and remote staffing— I know that there was data released today. I think it was sitting at about 1,800 vacancies at the start of January. Do you have a breakdown, Mr Ruming, of how many of those are in rural and remote areas?

SHAUN RUMING: I think I can answer that. Our rural and remote vacancy as of 5 February was 938 vacancies, down from 1,241 similar time last year.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Then 5 February—is that the most recent vacancy data that you have?

SHAUN RUMING: That's the most recent.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What was the overall number? That was the 1,800 or so that was—

SHAUN RUMING: It was 1,782 as of 5 February, down from 2,242 similar time last year, so a change of 460 folks.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again, I'm not sure who is best placed to answer this. The Rural Experience Program, where university students can go out and get a taste of what it's like to live in wonderful regional areas—and they should all come out and live in the country. How many people took up the opportunity to be a part of that program last year? Do you have any data around that?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let's come back to you with the number.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Is anyone able to tell me where they went, what that program offered last year?

MURAT DIZDAR: If we have that detail, let's provide that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Does anyone know? No? What about for 2024? Are there any further experiences planned through that program?

MURAT DIZDAR: I know that, having just kicked off the school year, it was at the end of last year—it was in term 4—that we just farewelled a couple of busloads on the program.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you know where they went or what they did?

MURAT DIZDAR: That's why I want to get you that detail.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

SHAUN RUMING: Are you talking about the Rural Experience Program or Beyond the Line? There were two.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Good question. I'll take both. I was thinking about Beyond the Line, but also Rural Experience Program is when teachers go out and teach in other schools for periods of time as well.

SHAUN RUMING: Yes. For 2023, with the Rural Experience Program, we had 114 participants over the two years—85 participants in '23, 29 participants in 2024. I can come back to you on the exact numbers of Beyond the Line. That program ran, I think, last year for the first time. It was stopped prior to with COVID et cetera. I personally waved off one of the buses. I think there were two actual buses of 60 or so, but I'll come back on the details. They were off to places like Mudgee; I said, "I wish I was going with you—good wine country." But they went to a series of rural and remote. My understanding is we have hired a few people through that program who went out there and experienced that and wanted to be part of our rural and remote teaching community. But I can come back on the specifics.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be good. I saw some recent data on it.

MURAT DIZDAR: I know you know this really well, Ms Mitchell, but the Committee might not. That Rural Experience Program is where they leave the metro on secondment and actually go in and teach.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, and go and do a term.

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, fantastic.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sorry, I was looking at two sets of notes and got myself muddled. Yes, Rural Experience Program, there were those numbers, and Beyond the Line, there were two—

SHAUN RUMING: Two groups. It was the same group, but they went reverse itineraries.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sure. Are you able to provide—and I'm happy for it to be on notice— how many of Beyond the Line participants you expect this year and where you look to send them, and also how you determine where they go? Mudgee is lovely, but I'm just curious as to how you determine where they head.

SHAUN RUMING: Sure. I will come back on the specifics. My understanding is we're running two cohorts because of the success of the one cohort last year: one set for March-April and one set for September/October.

ANSWER

Rural Experience Program

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

The Rural Experience Program supports teachers (from non-rural and remote schools) to do a trial placement in a rural or remote school

To clarify, a complete breakdown of the total 85 participants that have been part of the Rural Experience Program over the past two years is as follows:

- 56 participants (as at 31 December, 2023)
- 29 participants (2024 to date)

So far, in 2024, 18 have decided to remain in rural NSW.

In 2023, students were placed at: Alma Public School, Anson St School, Armidale Secondary College, Ben Venue Public School, Bourke High School, Bourke Public School, Broken Hill High School, Broken Hill North Public School, Broken Hill Public School, Burke Ward Public School, Drummond Memorial Public School, Dubbo College Delroy Campus, Dubbo College South Campus, Dubbo South Public School, Eden Marine High School, Eden Public School, Finley High School, Forbes High School, Forbes North Public School, Forbes Public School, Gilgandra High School, Martins Gully Public School, Mudgee High School, Narrabri Public School, Narrabri West Public School, Narromine High School, Narromine Public School, Nemingha Public School, Orange High School, Pambula Public School, Peel High School, Portland Central School, Railway Town Public School, Toomelah Public School, Uralla Central School, Walgett Community College, Wee Waa Public School, Willyama High School and Yawarra Community School.

Beyond the Line

In 2023, the following schools were visited: Lithgow Public School, Lithgow High School, Coonabarabran Public School, Coonabarabran High School, Narrabri Public School, Narrabri High School, Barraba Central School, Gunnedah Public School, Gunnedah South Public School, Gunnedah High School, Taree Public School, Chatham High School, Quirindi Public School, Quirindi High School, Tooraweenah Public School, Binnaway Central School, Mudgee Public School and Mudgee High School.

The following schools will be visited in 2024:

Goulburn Public School, Goulburn High School, Wagga Wagga Public School, Wagga Wagga High School, Coolamon Central School, Temora Public School, Temora High School, Young Public School, Young High School, Wollondilly Public School, Mulwaree High School, Mount Austin Public School, Mount Austin High School, The Rock Central School, Junee Public School, Junee High School, Ardlethan Central School, Grenfell Public School, Arianah Park Central School, The Henry Lawson High School and Boorowa Central School.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: CAMELLIA-ROSEHILL STRATEGY

QUESTION 62 PAGE NO 71

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Fantastic. The Camellia-Rosehill strategy—this is coming back to the housing density questions that my colleague asked earlier. The Government's announced its intention at Rosehill racecourse to repurpose that for housing. Has there been any work done by the department and School Infrastructure in terms of what the need might be? Is there any work to put a primary school or a high school on that site if that medium density level housing goes ahead?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me come back on notice. We've got several established schools in that area by way of primary school and high school provision. I certainly am across the announcement as well. We've been at work with our planning colleagues on what the needs analysis might look like—whether the existing footprint out there by way of primary schools and high schools is sufficient or not. Let me come back.

ANSWER

Please refer to the answer to supplementary question 170.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: PARENT ENGAGEMENT PIECE

QUESTION 63 PAGE NO 72

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The Student and Parent Experience Directorate—is that still operational within the department?

MURAT DIZDAR: No.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Why was the decision made to discontinue that work?

MURAT DIZDAR: I looked at the re-prioritisation of different areas in the organisation to align it with the plan for public education, and I took features out of the school parent experience directorate and placed them elsewhere in the organisation and removed other parts of that division.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sorry, those staff have been moved to other areas in the department? Is that what you said?

MURAT DIZDAR: Some of the roles and features of that particular division I lifted and shifted into other parts of the organisation. Other people that were displaced in that process, we looked at opportunities within the organisation.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: And what about the work that was being undertaken by that directorate? Where has that gone?

MURAT DIZDAR: That's where I moved it into different parts of the organisation.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: For instance, there was some work I know that was happening about advice out to parents—and this is going back to my earlier questioning around how you communicate, how you provide updates to parents, but also to receive that feedback back to the classroom teacher. I know that there were trials of text messages and different ways to work through how parents wanted to be informed about what was happening at their children's school. Is that sort of work continuing now but in other parts of the department or has that ceased?

MURAT DIZDAR: Some of that function that you're describing I moved into the comms and engagement directorate.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What are they doing in terms of that parent engagement piece then in the comms team?

MURAT DIZDAR: I can come back with the detail of the workstreams and work areas that they are

working on, but I moved some of that function into comms and engagement to work closely with our P&C Federation, but broader parents. There was work that was

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

duplicative here. There was work already occurring in comms and already work in student parent exchange and I wanted to align that work.

ANSWER

The Department of Education's Communication and Engagement team is the lead team within the department for communicating with parents. The responsibility for the relationship between the department and the NSW Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations also sits in the Communication and Engagement team, in recognition of this team's existing leadership on parent communication and engagement.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: PARTNERSHIP WITH P&C - CHARTER

QUESTION 64 PAGE NO 72

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The work that was done, particularly around—I'm going to say I think

it was a memorandum of understanding between parents and teachers, because, as you would well appreciate, I think it's very important that parents are engaged in their children's education. However, there are times when perhaps parents feel that that availability of teachers should be 24/7, which is not reasonable. There was some work or discussion around how we can better have that messaging out to parents around how you should be in touch with your child's teacher, what you need to be doing. Is there any update on that that you can provide the Committee?

MURAT DIZDAR: We are proud of this because we hadn't had this before: We did sign a 10-year partnership agreement with the P&C Federation. I just recently met with Yvonne Hilsz, the President of the P&C Federation. Because this scenario we want to get tighter and better, both to meet the needs of our parents by way of information and access to the school and inquiry, but also to strike a balance about what's reasonable and what time frames can look like. One of the things that we were at work to look at was the charter—I think you are referring to the charter that was there—for parents that we provided to public schools. We are at work with the P&C Federation to revamp that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Is there a time frame for that work?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to come back. It's a pretty important piece.

ANSWER

The Department of Education's School Community Charter (2019) outlines the responsibilities of parents, carers, educators and other staff members in NSW public schools to ensure our learning environments are collaborative, supportive and cohesive.

As part of the department's regular review process, the School Community Charter may need to be refreshed to reflect the emerging needs of our school communities and align with Our Plan for NSW Public Education. This renewed focus is to ensure we strengthen school and community connections, as well as ensuring trust and respect for the teaching profession. This work is ongoing in consultation with the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: CHIEF BEHAVIOUR ADVISOR - CYBERBULLYING

QUESTION 65 PAGE NO 73

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Have there been any other—and I am happy, Mr Martin, I think the Chief Behaviour Advisor is under NESA in a sense, working across sectors—areas that the Chief Behaviour Advisor has been asked to support the school sectors on since we last met?

PAUL MARTIN: Thank you for the question. The Chief Behaviour Advisor works through NESA but largely works to the schools advisory council and the Minister, the Deputy Premier. You are right about the cyberbullying as being a focus and involved in a roundtable process—I think that goes on from last year and the year before's round table. I think also the independent and Catholic sectors have both used Professor Cross in behaviour issues in their sectors, but I'm not specific and I can put on notice the work she's done.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Would you also be able to provide on notice specifically the work around cyberbullying, if there's any indication? And, Secretary, if you have any information, feel free.

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes.

PAUL MARTIN: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I guess I want to know what advice and feedback around cyberbullying has been provided to the school sectors by Professor Cross.

PAUL MARTIN: Sure.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: On notice?

MURAT DIZDAR: That would be great, yes.

ANSWER

The Chief Behaviour Advisor remains engaged in ongoing consultation with senior staff responsible for student bullying prevention (including cyberbullying), wellbeing, behaviour, and student engagement in each of the three sectors and other groups associated with students' wellbeing, learning and development in NSW.

Current and recent priorities have included:

- work to develop a national definition of bullying behaviour;
- evidence informed policy and practice advice to address religious inclusion and to reduce bullying related to religion in government schools;
- ways to reduce harm from bullying for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

- assisting with the development of a national student mental health assessment tool;
- assisting CESE with suggested changes to bullying behaviour data collection;
- providing reviews of bullying-related research proposals submitted to NSW government schools; and
- reviewing behaviour resources for AERO.

The Chief Behaviour Advisor is currently collating an extensive review of evidence-based effective practice for school policy and practice to address student cyber behaviour and continuing to map evidence-based policy and practice and capacity building resources to address student cyber behaviours.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: SCHOOL COUNSELLING VACANCIES & SCHOLARSHIPS

QUESTION 66 PAGE NO 73

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's fine. Can you also provide—and, again, happy for this to be on notice—how many vacancies we have in terms of school counselling positions in schools at the moment, or if anyone has got that data?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let's come back to you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay. And then in terms of any sort of scholarship programs for additional school counsellor positions, if there are any currently open for application or underway?

MURAT DIZDAR: When we come back to you around the support units and the scholarships and programs, let's add counsellors, if that's okay.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay. Thank you.

ANSWER

As at 2024, 58 of 1,195.5 school counselling service positions are vacant and under recruitment, a reduction in vacancies when compared to 2023.

Scholarships to retrain and enter the school counselling service will open mid-2024 for the 2025 academic year.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: CONSULTATION RE CURRICULUM

QUESTION 67 PAGE NO 73

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Mr Martin, I will pick up the issue of curriculum and consultation, if I could, in terms of consultation across the school sector for government, independent and Catholic schools. I'm wondering about the priority that NESAs would give to curriculum consultation across the school sector.

PAUL MARTIN: There's a very extensive consultation process that we undergo. I'm happy to provide on notice the numbers of meetings we've had and with whom and the various consultations we've had formally across the sectors. It is extensive. We also have a curriculum committee that provides recommendations for approval of syllabuses and/or drafts of syllabuses, and that has representatives from all three sectors. The NESAs board itself has the three sector heads: Murat, Dallas McInerney and Margery Evans, who is there now. I was thinking of Geoff Newcombe because Geoff was on the board for many years. AHISA and the Catholic Secondary Principals are also cross-sector representatives on our NESAs board and are represented in various NESAs committees. I would suggest that we go through one of the most extensive consultation processes of any curriculum authority across the country. I'm happy to provide some more details.

ANSWER

The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESAs) is undertaking extensive consultation with representatives from each school sector for all syllabuses redeveloped as part of NSW Curriculum Reform. NESAs values cross-sectoral feedback on syllabuses and provides multiple opportunities for sectors to provide input throughout the syllabus development process.

The Department of Education, the Independent school sector and the Catholic sector all have formal representation in the following groups which are formed for each syllabus:

- Sector Reference Group
- Primary Principal cross sector working group (for Kindergarten to Year 6 syllabuses)
- Head Teacher focus group (for Year 7 to Year 10 and Year 11 to Year 12 syllabuses)

The membership of the Teacher Expert Networks (TENs) is also cross-sectoral. The TENs provide advice on draft syllabuses and user test resources as needed.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

Cross-sector representation is also a key feature of NESAs Curriculum and Credentials Committee which provides endorsement of final syllabuses before they are progressed to the Minister for Education and Early Learning for approval.

NESA also conducts targeted consultation as needed with sector representatives for key topics and learning areas to assist with refinements of syllabus content.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: PLANNED PARENTHOOD

QUESTION 68 PAGE NO 74

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Mr Martin, just in terms of Planned Parenthood, in terms of the consultation, do they have a seat at the table alongside the school heads? Or how does that work? Is that an appointment?

PAUL MARTIN: Other advocacy groups, and there's a range of them, can put in submissions to our syllabuses, but the people we consult most directly is the education community—so parents, teachers, school systems and sectors. They're the ones who have the most consultation. As you would imagine, there are a variety of groups out there that may have a view about our syllabuses, and they are quite free to put in submissions. As far as—I don't know, I have no knowledge of Planned Parenthood or their access to our syllabuses. They're not privileged in terms of the content that they would espouse.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: They're not in an appointed position or an official position, in terms of the curriculum discussion?

PAUL MARTIN: Not as far as I know, but I'll check that.

ANSWER

I am advised the organisation Planned Parenthood did not provide feedback, make a submission or take part in consultation for the Kindergarten to Year 6 or Year 7 to Year 10 Personal Development, Health and Physical Education syllabuses.

Family Planning Australia provided a survey response in the first round of 'Have your say' consultation when syllabuses were made publicly available for feedback.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: BASC GRANT

QUESTION 69 PAGE NO 75

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have some questions related to before and after school care grants— which I think is Mr Barraket. The transport grant—there was a round two for 2022-23. I received some feedback from an organisation that applied for funding. They were told in May last year that it was at the assessment round and that they expect that that would be sent to the Minister to provide final authorisation within the coming weeks. It was followed up again by this organisation in July last year, and they were told that the assessment panel recommendations are currently with the Minister. They now are still waiting, and we're now into February of 2024. So it has been some months. What's the status of that program?

MARK BARRAKET: I will have to take that on notice because I think that predates my time in ECO, but I am happy to follow up and come back to you on that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm sure they're happy if I mention them. This was the New School of the Arts Neighbourhood Centre in South Grafton. They put in an application and were told, as I said, various times throughout last year that it was all being assessed, yet they're still waiting and nothing has been determined either way. In May last year, they said that they would be told in coming weeks and were just not receiving any information. So it has been nearly 12 months.

MARK BARRAKET: I'm sorry, I'm not familiar with the grant application or the outcome of that. I will take that on notice for you.

ANSWER

The assessment rounds for these grants are currently in the final stages.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: WILLYAMA HIGH SCHOOL – TIMELINE

QUESTION 70 PAGE NO 75

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: ... I want to turn now to the issues at Willyama High School out in Broken Hill, in terms of the mould. Is there any updated information that anyone can provide in terms of the work that's happening out there, whether the path forward has been determined in terms of whether it can be cleaned, or whether you need to have it knocked down and rebuild a new school? What's the status of that particular issue?

MURAT DIZDAR: I was out there last Wednesday, Ms Mitchell. I went and visited both the closed site and spoke with our folk out there and also the sites where our education is continuing. Can I just, on record, commend the four principals of the schools for their extraordinary leadership. It's not easy to start a school year with a significant interruption of this kind, where we sent year 7 and 8 at one stage to one location, and 9 and 10 to another, and 11 and 12. I was at Broken Hill High, and year 11 and 12 are continuing there, which is fantastic to see. Year 9 and 10 are at Morgan Street, and year 7 and 8 are at Broken Hill North Public. I want to commend them. I want to thank our people that put in arrangements to support them, including the delivery of laptops, the delivery of demountables to add to the infrastructure provision. That was a hot topic when I was out there. Staff were asking me. I assured them that we would not compromise their safety. We would not be returning to site until we get the full outcome from the hygienists. We don't have that as yet.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, that's fine. Can I just go back a step? From media reports and through some questions asked in the upper House of the Minister representing the Deputy Premier, my understanding is that that was first detected over the Christmas holidays. Is that correct? Can you provide a time line of when the mould was first discovered and when you became aware of the extent of the problem?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yeah, I'm happy to come back on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Was it January? You were just out there. Was it over the school holidays?

MURAT DIZDAR: I don't want to get the dates wrong, but the advice I had in the discussions I had without people and the schools was that this was detected over the recent summer break.

ANSWER

The Department of Education has been advised that the final report from the independent hygienist is being prepared. The department will review the findings and recommendations to inform appropriate remediation activities to ensure the continued safety of students, staff and the school community.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

As advised in updates provided to the community, mould was first identified at the school on 9 January 2024.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: WILLYAMA HIGH SCHOOL – DEMOUNTABLES

QUESTION 71 PAGE NO 76

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I appreciate, Secretary, you've indicated that that work of an independent hygienist is still ongoing. Is there a time frame as to when you would anticipate that work to be concluded and next steps can be decided upon?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, the first time frame we communicated when I was out there was that we want to have a pop-up school in place because we've gone on to three different sites and split up the school. We've got staff moving between sites and families, so we're working hard to get a pop-up school on the Broken Hill High School site for day one, term 2. We're running really hard to have the school community back together.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: How many demountables do you need to get out there to do that?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me get you the number, but I'm going to say it was something like 39 teaching and admin spaces. But I don't want to get the number wrong. It was just last Wednesday when I was out there that they were giving me that detail. I was able to observe things that already happened and are in play there. The first thing that we're really running hard on is to bring the school community back together and then get the expert advice on the Willyama site. Is it possible to remediate and rectify? Or will it require a complete knockdown rebuild? We're not at that stage and I committed to those school communities—I think I did this on ABC Broken Hill on the day as well in an interview—that we'll give them that information as soon as we have it.

ANSWER

The department is currently establishing the pop-up Willyama High School by installing 38 demountable buildings on the Broken Hill High School site for use by Term 2, as well as wellbeing hubs where staff and community service organisations can provide school programs and support to students.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: DAVIDSON HIGH SCHOOL HALL

QUESTION 72 PAGE NO 77

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can I ask, in relation to the Davidson High School hall, I think the P&C recently launched a petition wanting to see an upgrade to that hall. Particularly, the female toilets, I think, are in a bit of a state of disarray. Is there any planned work to upgrade that hall or put a new hall in or improve the toilet facilities at Davidson High School?

MURAT DIZDAR: I certainly don't have the detail. I'm not sure if Mr Towers does. Otherwise, we can come back to the Committee.

PAUL TOWERS: We don't have any provisions for that at the moment.

ANSWER

The Department of Education is providing a change room refurbishment to accommodate students with additional needs, which will be delivered in Term 2, 2024. School Infrastructure NSW is working with the school on its requirements.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: JORDAN SPRINGS HS PROPOSED SITE & SCOPE

QUESTION 73 PAGE NO 77

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The site of the proposed new high school for Jordan Springs—I believe that was announced recently. Is that land now owned by the department and ready to start the process for that planning to occur?

PAUL TOWERS: I will take that on notice because I'm not confident I can recall whether that piece of land has been acquired yet. So I'll take that on notice and come back to you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But a site has been selected.

PAUL TOWERS: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I think the Deputy Premier was out there last week.

PAUL TOWERS: Yes.

MURAT DIZDAR: Correct. But in terms of ownership, let's come back to you.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great. Thank you. Again, I'm happy for you to take this on notice if you need to, but if you could provide some indication as to the scope of works for that site. My understanding is that there's a Government commitment that it will be open day one, term 1 2027. There has been talk, I think, of 1,000 students, but there was also some media commentary around that school being delivered over stages. So could you provide—and, again, happy for it to be on notice—what the intended capacity is for that school, both on its day one, term 1 opening date and then into the future as well?

MURAT DIZDAR: Sure.

ANSWER

The preferred site for the new high school at Jordan Springs has been selected.

The high school is on track to open on Day 1, Term 1, 2027.

The former Liberal Nationals overnment repeatedly told families in North-West Sydney that new and upgraded schools would not be needed. Local families fought hard to be heard, and the Minns Government is proud to be delivering a new high for this growing community.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: JORDAN SPRINGS PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLMENT

QUESTION 74 PAGE NO 77

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you also provide on notice what the current enrolment is for Jordan Springs Public School?

MURAT DIZDAR: Primary school?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes.

ANSWER

Enrolment information is available publicly.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: IRRAWANG & HUNTER RIVER HS CAPITAL WORKS

QUESTION 75 PAGE NO 78

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What is the status of the works you are undergoing at the moment at both Irrawang and Hunter River High School in the same area? I'm happy for you to take it on notice.

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm just seeing if we've got that, Ms Mitchell. We might have to take that one on notice.

ANSWER

This information is available publicly on the School Infrastructure NSW website.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: SMALL GROUP TUITION PROGRAM

QUESTION 76 PAGE NO 79

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That's not a problem at all. What number of students will be accessing the Small Group Tuition program this year? Do you have any data on how that program will be rolled out this year and how many students you anticipate will benefit from it? I am happy for whoever's patch that's in to answer.

MURAT DIZDAR: Mr Graham has a lot of detail on this one.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'd love to hear as much detail as Mr "Birthday Boy" Graham would like to give me.

MURAT DIZDAR: We can throw to him.

MARTIN GRAHAM: Certainly. The tuition program, 2024 there will be approximately \$50 million allocated for the program. I can get you the precise figure on that. It's allocated for students who are below the expected level in NAPLAN. It will be provided to all schools, including SSPs.

ANSWER

Funding is allocated to schools based on the number of students who achieve a NAPLAN proficiency of "Needs Additional Support" in reading or numeracy. In 2024 there were approximately 39,000 students in the Needs Additional Support category for Reading and/or Numeracy.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: MURDOCH CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE

QUESTION 77 PAGE NO 82

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So for 2025 and 2026 you'd look to do more—fantastic. Jumping back to a different area now, there was some work that was done prior to the election from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute—the question was taken on notice—particularly around developing social and wellbeing initiatives. That work was completed in March 2023. That was the response I think I got back on notice. Are there any updates on the findings, the outcomes, the recommendation that came from that and whether any of those were implemented in schools?

MURAT DIZDAR: Mr Graham might have more detail.

MARTIN GRAHAM: This was the quality assurance process by the Murdoch institute?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes.

MARTIN GRAHAM: Yes, they gave us the evidence threshold against which to assess programs, and those programs have been made available to schools. I can get back to you with some data on which programs have been used, but that checklist is now being used by schools and those QA programs are out there for them to use.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: My understanding is that they were also doing some work that was very school specific, based not just about quality assurance but around how they could be tracking and measuring wellbeing. Are you aware of any work in that space that they did?

MARTIN GRAHAM: I'll have to get back to you with detail of any of that work.

ANSWER

The Murdoch Childrens Research Institute (MCRI) were engaged by the Department of Education to pilot a primary school wellbeing survey tool at the end of Term 4 2022. There were 14 participating schools across NSW. The MCRI presented their findings in March 2023.

The Commonwealth are developing a Voluntary Mental Health Check Tool called My Mind Check. This will be available to NSW schools in 2024.

In 2022, the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute (MCRI) were also engaged to to inform the process and criteria for quality assuring external wellbeing programs. The

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

Student Wellbeing external programs catalogue is now operational with over 60 quality assured programs.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: SCHOOL BREAKFAST 4 HEALTH PROGRAM

QUESTION 78 PAGE NO 82

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The School Breakfast 4 Health program—again, last time I asked on notice for a list of schools that were taking part in that and how many new schools had been added, and I didn't get an answer. Are there any updates in terms of how many additional schools have been added to the School Breakfast 4 Health program?

MURAT DIZDAR: As a result of election commitments? Let's come back on notice. We'd definitely be able to follow up on the election commitment side. And you'll know, Ms Mitchell, there is a range of things here where schools initiate their own breakfast programs. We don't keep data on that front, but by way of election commitments we can have a look at that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Because the Government said that they were going to increase the number of schools that were receiving that program but, when I asked for how many additional or where they were, I didn't get a response. I just wanted to make sure that it is expanding and how many and where they are. If you could provide that on notice, that would be appreciated.

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, let me come back.

ANSWER

As at February 2024, Foodbank has reported that more than 540 public schools are receiving the School Breakfast 4 Health Program funded by the NSW Government.

Foodbank NSW/ACT are contracted to roll out the program to 1,000 schools over the course of the program.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: SUPPORT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD STAFF

QUESTION 79 PAGE NO 83

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'm going to go back to the childcare fund. The budget talked about—I think it was \$3 million for research to investigate delivery models and strengthen the workforce pipeline.

MARK BARRAKET: I'm not sure if that was a fund initiative. That might've been an election commitment under workforce.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Regardless, in terms of looking at that system stewardship piece and what is happening around workforce, is there any update that you can provide on that, Mr Barraket?

MARK BARRAKET: We're still scoping out the election commitment, which is the \$3 million workforce commitment. In terms of workforce with the fund, there are a couple of test and trial initiatives that relate specifically to workforce. The business capability development program, which looks at how we build business capability within the workforce—we hope that that will reduce workload because people are more proficient in managing their centres. We expect that that program will go live in May of this year and will be trialled in three parts of the State, which are still to be determined. There's also work that we're currently scoping through the fund of the trial of free or low-cost ECEC for children of teachers and educators. That is still being scoped. There will be a range of other initiatives that will be embedded into the strategic investment plan, which is due to the Deputy Premier and Treasurer by the end of this financial year.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Is there any indication in terms of that workforce issue—I think you might have mentioned it in a response to the Chair. I think you said before that you may be looking at other workforce—I don't know if it was retention or support. **What is happening in terms of that space for early childhood staff, specifically?**

MARK BARRAKET: I did provide a list of some of the initiatives that we have in place at the moment and we are looking to expand upon that. We do have the IPART report that talks about some recommendations to do with workforce and we are in the process of assessing that and then determining what will be the next steps in response to that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The fund this year, I think, had \$100 million allocated as per the legislation that was passed. **Do you have detail, Mr Barraket, on how much of that has been expended thus far?**

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

MARK BARRAKET: I'll have to take on notice how much has been expended so far, but the payments for those test and trial initiatives won't all be expended in this financial year because some of them will carry forward over future years. We'll take on notice how much has been expended this financial year.

ANSWER

As at the end of February 2024, \$28 million has been expended.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: COMMUNITY GROUP RENEWAL PROJECT

QUESTION 80 PAGE NO 83

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sector support funding—I did ask the Deputy Premier about this. Have there been changes—I've been advised that a number of organisations who used to receive sector support funding are now no longer. Can you advise any information about that?

MARK BARRAKET: I know the Deputy Premier took on notice those two examples you provided this morning. But my understanding is that they were subject to procurement agreements. When the department has the procurement piece in place or a contract in place, that expires and we then go back out and tender again. All of our guidelines adhere to the department's procurement policy around work that we put out there for agencies to support us with.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you know whether that has gone out to further procurement—and I appreciate what you are saying, if you have a sector support for a period of time and then you need to refresh and make sure you are getting value for money and what not—but is that happening for early childhood education sector support currently?

MARK BARRAKET: I'll need to take on notice to see what we do have in place currently.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: And whether or not any other organisations received that sector support funding. I did mention CCSA and CLO.

MARK BARRAKET: I am happy to take that on notice.

ANSWER

The Department of Education does not have a single program known as 'sector support' instead the sector is supported through a range of initiatives.

Prior to May 2023, Community Early Learning Australia (CELA) and Community Connection Solutions Australia (CCSA) were contracted to provide program implementation support to services, to assist with the introduction of fee relief and other major changes to the Start Strong program.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

The contracts for CELA and CCSA to provide program implementation support ended in May 2023, and a new open tender for Sector Implementation Support was opened in June 2023. No contract was awarded.

This procurement process was undertaken in line with the department's procurement policy. The department continues to provide implementation support to early childhood education care services through regular electronic direct mail updates, webinars, and supporting online material and tailored support through a dedicated email and phone line.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: COMMUNITY RENEWAL PROJECT

QUESTION 81 PAGE NO 83

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am going back to School Infrastructure now. The community group renewal project, there was Bathurst Secondary School Community Group, Dubbo Primary School and Leeton Primary School. Are there any further updates for the Committee in relation to the status of those projects and the consultation with the school communities?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let's get those for you. There were several sites there.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, Leeton, Dubbo and Bathurst. There were three that were regional. There was a \$750,000 allocation in the budget but I want an update in terms of that work.

MURAT DIZDAR: Sure, let's grab that for you, Ms Mitchell.

ANSWER

Planning is underway for projects in these communities.

Recently, in the Dubbo School Community Group, the Minns Labor Government announced that Orana Heights Public School would benefit from a major upgrade. This is in addition to a much-needed rebuild project at Dubbo South Public School, which the previous Liberal Nationals government failed to deliver.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: DUBBO PUBLIC SCHOOL

QUESTION 82 PAGE NO 83 & 84

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: While you're doing that on notice, secretary, also, particularly for Dubbo public, can you provide any information in relation to their capacity? My understanding is that there was previously conversations about expanding them back onto a site where the conservatorium of music was, which adjoins that school site. I think there has now been some information to parents that that won't be happening. I understand that that school is very crowded and I would like some further clarity around the plans for that site, if someone's got it now or on notice?

MURAT DIZDAR: Sure. We can give you their enrolment cap and what their assumed population is.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Particularly in terms of expansion.

EDUCATION MURAT DIZDAR: And what the plan is.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: My understanding is that they were going onto that site or expanding back, which is department owned, but now they have been told that that's not happening.

ANSWER

In 2023, Dubbo Public School had 537 enrolments. Enrolment data indicates that the school currently has a significant number of non-local enrolments. This will be impacted over time due to changes made to the school intake area in March 2022.

The school is anticipating a small reduction in enrolments for 2024, which will be confirmed as part of the enrolment census.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: VAPING ROUND TABLE

QUESTION 83 PAGE NO 84

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great. Any information that you can provide would be fantastic. I want to go now to the issue of vaping in schools. The vaping round table that was held in November 2023, which area of the department is leading that work?

MURAT DIZDAR: It was in Mr Graham's area at the time, hosted by us in conjunction with Health.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can you tell me how many school students were at that round table?

MURAT DIZDAR: I am happy to get that detail. I was in attendance. I will say there was at least two.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you know how many adults were there?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'm happy to give you the list, because it ranged across—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great. If you can give us the list on notice, that would be fantastic.

ANSWER

Attendees at the Vaping Roundtable included:

The Hon Prue Car, Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning
The Hon Ryan Park, Minister for Health
Dr Kerry Chant, Chief Health Officer, NSW Health
Carolyn Murray, Director, Tobacco and E-Cigarettes Strategy, Centre for Population Health, NSW Health
Alecia Brooks, Manager, Tobacco Control Unit, Cancer Council NSW
Associate Professor Becky Freeman, School of Public Health, University of Sydney
Murat Dizdar, Secretary, NSW Department of Education
Leanne Nixon, A/Deputy Secretary, Learning Improvement, NSW Department of Education
Renee West, Leader Curriculum Stakeholder Engagement, NSW Department of Education
NSW Public Schools Principals x 4
Catholic Schools Principals x2Catholic Schools Office, Director Policy
Association of Independent Schools NSW, Principal Association of Independent Schools NSW, Education Consultant: Teaching and Learning

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

Two Students – DOVES members
Senior Adviser Minister's Council, NSW
Public Schools/DOVES
President, Secondary Principals Council
Secretary, Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW/Deputy
President, NSW Teachers Federation
Zoe Robinson, Advocate for Children and Young People
Participation Manager, Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People

There were additional observers in the room from NSW Health and NSW
Department of Education.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: BRIGHTER BEGGININGS

QUESTION 84 PAGE NO 85 & 86

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I can keep going. The Brighter Beginnings, the developmental checks—Mr Barraket, can you provide an update? I think the announcement or the advice to the Committee last time was that it was going to start to roll out across six local health districts. Can you provide any information about the status of that?

MARK BARRAKET: Yes. The health and development checks in the early childhood education that looks at delivering health and development checks for four-year-olds in preschools. You're correct, we did commence with six local health districts. As of December 2023, the program is available in 12 out of the 15 local health districts. We anticipate that the remaining three will come online this year

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you know which three are yet to come online?

MARK BARRAKET: I'll need to confirm that for you and take that on notice. The Hon.

SARAH MITCHELL: That's fine.

MURAT DIZDAR: The 12 are?

MARK BARRAKET: I've got the 12, if you want me to give you those?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, I'll take those.

MARK BARRAKET: Central Coast, Illawarra Shoalhaven, Hunter New England, Mid North Coast, Murrumbidgee, Nepean Blue Mountains, South Eastern Sydney, South Western Sydney, Southern NSW, Western NSW and Western Sydney. The Hon.

SARAH MITCHELL: Do you have any data in terms of how many children or families have utilised those development checks so those far?

MARK BARRAKET: I don't have data on how many children have utilised it, but we know that it will be available to around 85,000 children.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Would you be able to take on notice—and I appreciate that it's a collaboration with Health—in the time that those services have been offered or that those checks have been offered, if it's possible, to get an overall figure of how many children have taken up that opportunity and possibly a breakdown by LHD? MARK BARRAKET: Happy to take that on notice and see what we can get you.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

ANSWER

The three local health districts (LHDs) that are yet to commence offering the health and development checks are Northern NSW, Northern Sydney, and Far West. These LHDs will begin rolling out the program before the end of 2024.

With respect to how many children have taken up the health and development checks so far, services provided by LHDs are the responsibility of the Minister for Health and Minister for Regional Health.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: ECE CAPITAL WORKS GRANTS INCLUDING EUGOWRA

QUESTION 85 PAGE NO 86

MARK BARRAKET: Seventeen million dollars was allocated for that. There were a number of grants that we handed out in all three categories: in the crisis category, in the minor capital works and in the major capital works.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Are you able to provide on notice the breakdown of those that were funded and which are the categories they fit under?

MARK BARRAKET: Yes, I'm happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Did Eugowra fit under the crisis capital works; are you aware?

MARK BARRAKET: I need to double check that one for you. I think it was there, but I want to confirm that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again, I am happy for you to take this on notice because I know it is quite specific, but the previous Eugowra children's centre offered both a long day care and a preschool component. Obviously the capital works is usually just for preschool provision, but will they be able to use that capital funding to be able to support the service in its entirety? Is that the intention?

MARK BARRAKET: I'll need to check that and provide it to you on notice.

ANSWER

Eight grants were awarded under the final rounds of the 2022-23 Start Strong Capital Works program, with a combined grant value of \$16,720,562 (ex GST). The below table provides a breakdown of the awards across funding categories:

Funding Category	Provider Name	Service Name
Major Fund Round 3	Integricare	New Service
	Cowra Early Childhood Services Co-operative Ltd	New Service
Crisis Fund	Bangalow Community Children's Centre	Bangalow Community Children's Centre
	Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre Aboriginal Corporation	Cullunghutti Early Learning Centre
	Eugowra Community Children's Centre Incorporated	Eugowra Community Children's Centre
	Lightning Ridge Pre-School Centre Inc	Lightning Ridge Preschool Centre

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

	Yalbillinga Boori Day Care Centre Aboriginal Corp	New Service
Minor Fund Round 2	Hamilton Child Care Centre Inc	Hamilton Child Care Centre

As shown in the table above, Eugowra Community Childrens Centre Incorporated was awarded \$5,290,231 (ex GST) under the 2022-23 Program's Crisis Fund. As per the relevant Program Guidelines, capital works grants can only fund the portion of the build that will increase licensed places allocated to preschool-aged children enrolled in a preschool program.

Eugowra's proposed capital works include the maintenance and creation of preschool places, which can be funded by the grant, and a smaller portion of non-preschool places, which must be funded by other sources. At the time of application, Eugowra Community Childrens Centre nominated alternative funding sources they intended to utilise to cover that portion of the build.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: RURAL ACCESS GAP EXPENDITURE REPORT

QUESTION 86 PAGE NO 86-87

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It's a little bit specific so I understand that. Coming to some of the rural and regional education programs. Is there an update on the Rural Access Gap program that was rolled out by the previous Government, that technology piece, and whether there's been any additional funding or further support to schools through that program?

MURAT DIZDAR: As at 19 December last year, when we closed off the school year, the program had delivered support to 1,058 rural, regional and remote schools. The original plan was to deliver to 1,003 schools, plus an additional 55 schools on top of that that we went to. The final benefit realisation report is due at the end of March. We're proud that there were 22,255 additional student devices and 18,020 teacher devices. In those schools, it brought down the ratio of device to student to one to four, from one to six, so a significant improvement, and a teacher ratio of one to one. In that program there were 5,596 upgrades to learning spaces. There were three internet upgrades for 1,027 schools. It provided the largest target connectivity speed of five megabytes per second to more than 200,000 students across the State.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You said that there would be something that would be finalised in March?

MURAT DIZDAR: We're asked to produce a benefits final realisation report; what were the benefits of the program. That's due to Government at the end of March.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Will that be made public?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'll have to find out how those reports work. I imagine we'll be talking to the benefits of the program.

ANSWER

The program has remained on track to be completed as per the program timeline established under the former Liberal National Government.

A report on the program outcomes is being developed. Once the report is finalised, it will be made available on the Schools Digital Strategy Webpage at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategies-and-reports/digital-strategy>.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: RURAL TEACHER HOUSING INCENTIVES

QUESTION 87 PAGE NO 88

CHLOE READ: There was an implementation plan released a few days ago—I think over the last weekend—which has a range of measures in there. You were asking about the housing one, I think, in particular. We've obviously heard that there's a range of considerations around housing. One of them is about both the condition and the maintenance of the housing stock and also, for want of a better term, the kind of customer support of the ease of access to facilitate that maintenance. The things that we'll be measuring is that we prioritise work in regional, rural and remote locations; that we facilitate faster identification management and remediation of crisis maintenance issues; and that we want to streamline the process of accessing that maintenance. People are giving us anecdotal suggestions that you ring and someone doesn't know about it and they don't ring you back, and then when they do it's someone else, and those kinds of things. We want a single point of contact for staff during the application process for housing so that we really get that service in place. Then of course we are working on future housing strategy and a business case that's been developed to put to Government, which is about broader issues of supply. There is also, I think, a budget commitment from 2022-23 that the Teacher Housing Authority are leading that is delivering new key worker housing under that program. The update that I have from them would be 83 delivered to date out of a target of 221, so we're trying to improve supply at the same time as maintenance.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The focus on housing is predominantly on teacher housing not, for instance, helping a teacher in a rural community use incentives to purchase their own home? Is that on the agenda or not at this point?

CHLOE READ: I think we have some incentives in Mr Ruming's area. The specific initiative that I've got carriage of is as I outlined, but Mr Ruming has a number of things in the rural staffing and incentive spaces. The Hon.

SARAH MITCHELL: I know that is something that was looked at before. Is there an update on that?

SHAUN RUMING: We'll give you an update on the actual number of teachers that have taken up the stamp duty incentive, which is \$10,000 towards stamp duty if they purchase a home in the local area. I was out at Nyngan talking to our principal, Ben—

ANSWER

Since the Rural and Remote Stamp Duty Relief payment was introduced in Term 1, 2023, 19 teachers have received a payment of up to \$10,000 to support them buy a home close to their place of work, and a further four teachers have been deemed eligible and will receive their payment shortly.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: RURAL AND REGIONALTEACHER VACENCY AND RETENTION

QUESTION 88 PAGE NO 89

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Then, obviously, the third component, being the teacher vacancy rates and retention—again, is that just pure numbers in terms of measurement?

MURAT DIZDAR: I'll let Ms Read add to it, but what they were calling out, which really resonated with Ms Summerhayes and I when we were principals, because we had this on the ground, was they wanted a relationship structure with our HR folk. Because, when we were in the principalship, we knew who our staffing officer was. That was the constant person. That person got to know our school, would come out and visit the school, so would get to know our operation. That made it a lot easier. This is what they articulated when they were looking for support on staffing—that they weren't having to start from scratch and explain the school and explain the needs. They really hammered home to us that they wanted this customer service relationship that was stronger, and they referenced the priority recruitment teams that we'd put in place to good effect and that we should be making them all priority recruitment sites. Again, that's fair commentary. Having experienced that, Ms Summerhayes and I and even Mr Barraket when he was principal, it is something that we wanted to look at and see if we could achieve and give that stronger customer service. They're very appreciative that the teacher shortage and challenge is widespread, that there's got to be work to increase the supply but, in trying to do that, can we have greater attention on them was the call out that I heard. Ms Read?

CHLOE READ: In that vein, Mr Ruming is my new best friend because he's done a phenomenal job in bringing together a set of initiatives in that staffing support vein—so expanding priority recruitment support to another 22 regional, rural and remote schools. There are currently 78, so that takes us up to 100 schools in that program. The Grow Your Own - Local Teacher Pipeline—three locations in regional and rural areas, expanding Grow Your Own to access more beginner teachers and some mid-career pieces and some visa pieces. You pointed to a figure just before, Mr Ruming. I don't know if you wanted to—

SHAUN RUMING: It's just with Grow Your Own. It was that 40 per cent of the Grow Your Own cohort is from rural and remote, which is a fantastic result. I'll have to take the specific figure on notice. It's around 2,500 of temp to perm were also regional and remote—given permanent jobs, which was very popular.

ANSWER

The Grow Your Own Local Teacher Pipeline launched in Term 1 2024. It is an expanded stream of the existing Grow Your Own Teacher Training Program to attract and grow local teacher talent in targeted locations facing the highest staffing challenges. The program supports aspiring secondary teachers to commence

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

accredited secondary initial teacher education pathways while gaining valuable experience working in a NSW public secondary school as an Educational Paraprofessional.

The program supports secondary schools in Western and South Western Sydney, the Murray region, Queanbeyan and surrounds, and Dubbo and surrounds.

A total of 34% are based in a regional, rural, or remote area.

TITLE: GROW YOUR OWN AND TEACHER PIPELINE

QUESTION 89 PAGE NO 90

CHLOE READ: That speaks to that other piece of work that comes from the audit, which is about embedding consideration of regional, rural and remote contexts and data in everything that we do. Under the plan for public education, having specific reporting on the rural and remote cohort in there, both staff and students— just to make sure that, as every program looks to deliver support for a particular domain area, we're thinking about regional and rural and remote locations in that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The local teacher pipeline program that I think you just mentioned, Ms Read—I think it was extended to three new areas. Can you or Mr Ruming confirm where is it actually?

SHAUN RUMING: There are two programs under the same banner. The teacher training program, which has got the most participants, at 340, was the nearly 40 per cent of rural and remote I just referred to. That's the program where you'll do the SLSO and get your qualifications and we provide the scholarships et cetera, and you can either land at that school or a school within the State.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That was the first kick-off of Grow Your Own.

SHAUN RUMING: That was the first iteration, yes. The second area was what we call the local teacher pipeline, where we have 60 participants in 2024—Dubbo, Queanbeyan, and I'll have to come back to you on the other two locations, but it was specific—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Is that Western and south-western Sydney and Murray?

SHAUN RUMING: I'll have to come back to you on the specifics, but it was four locations where those 60 "grow your owns" were. They start at that school and they land at that school at the completion.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

ANSWER

The Grow Your Own Local Teacher Pipeline launched in Term 1, 2024. It is an expanded stream of the existing Grow Your Own Teacher Training Program to attract and grow local teacher talent in targeted locations facing the highest staffing challenges. The program supports aspiring secondary teachers to commence accredited teaching degrees while working in a NSW public secondary school as an Educational Paraprofessional.

The targeted locations for the Grow Your Own Local Teacher Pipeline in 2024 are:

- the Murray region
- Western and South-Western Sydney
- Dubbo and surrounds
- Queanbeyan and surrounds

The Grow Your Own Teacher Training Program first launched from Term 1, 2023 to support School Learning Support Officers to train as teachers within NSW public schools, with a focus on rural, regional and high-demand metropolitan areas. This program expanded for the 2024 intake to also support permanent or long-term temporary Aboriginal Education Officers, School Administration Officer, School Administrative Managers and Business Managers to train as teachers.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: HALT'S

QUESTION 90 PAGE NO 90

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If you could provide that on notice, that would be fantastic. Speaking of teachers and great teachers—amazing, fantastic teachers—throwing to my perennial favourite topic of HALTs. Mr Martin, any update on data on how many highly accomplished and lead teachers we've currently got and any increase since we last had you before estimates hearings?

PAUL MARTIN: I think there are an additional 800 in the pipeline. It's 800 and something. I'll get that on notice for you. That's a good result, if they continue to go through the process. The existing 300-odd that are there now—I can get you the numbers in just a second.

ANSWER

As at 31 January 2024, there are 348 Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in New South Wales and there are 861 applications open.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION CHANGES

QUESTION 91 PAGE NO 90-91

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: She said everyone had a lovely time and what happens in the stadium stays in the stadium, so we'll leave it at that. Can I also go quickly to some of the work—and I appreciate it's been done at a national level—around areas of reform around ITE provision and that consistency? There have been a number of different reports looking at these issues that I know the education Ministers meeting has commissioned and had provided back. From a NESA perspective, is there anything over the course of this year around that ITE provision, that accreditation consistency across the courses that are being provided, that we would expect to see improved or changed?

PAUL MARTIN: The national tertiary workforce action plan—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The NTWAP—terrible acronym.

CHLOE READ: The National Teacher Workforce Action Plan.

PAUL MARTIN: The teacher workforce action plan, and the TEEP process, chaired by Mark Scott—

CHLOE READ: Teacher Education Export Panel.

PAUL MARTIN: —there are recommendations and actions to be processed through those. You'd be aware, Ms Mitchell, that a lot of the work that other States and Territories are doing with initial teacher education had already been commenced in New South Wales. The most obvious things are the movement of the LANTITE forward so that teachers have an opportunity or prospective to pass that earlier in their qualifications so that they get an understanding of where they're up to before they go too much further. There are other actions that I'm happy to put on notice and where New South Wales is up to in relation to them.

ANSWER

Education Ministers are progressing the recommendations of the Teacher Education Expert Panel (TEEP) report, including:

- embedding core content in ITE courses by the end of 2025
- establishing a new, independent Initial Teacher Education Quality Assurance Oversight Board, and

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

- developing national practical experience guidelines with support from the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.

NSW is on track with implementing relevant recommendations.

Updates on the progress of national implementation are available through the Education Ministers Meeting communiques.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: NESA BOARD REAPPOINTMENTS

QUESTION 92 PAGE NO 91

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That would be great. Are there any members of the NESA Board who are due for reappointment this calendar year that you're aware of? I'm happy for you to take it on notice.

PAUL MARTIN: Yes, I will take it on notice. There were a number of appointments that were extended for just the one year. There has been a retirement from one board member and there are another two board members that have a one-year extension that may continue, depending on the wishes of the Deputy Premier. The Hon.

SARAH MITCHELL: If you could provide on notice any detail around those positions and who they are and time frames for potential changes, that would be great.

ANSWER

The terms of three NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) Board members are due to expire in December 2024, being Dallas McInerney, CEO, Catholic Schools NSW, Veronica Yewdall, Independent Education Union and Christine Legg, Early Childhood CEO, KU Learning Services.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: TERRIGAL HIGH SCHOOL AIR CONDITIONING

QUESTION 93 PAGE NO 92

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: I think this sort of fits just in terms of school infrastructure. I was just wondering whether there might have been an update about discussions between Terrigal High School and the department relating to air conditioning.

MURAT DIZDAR: Let's take it on notice, Ms Merton, and come back to you. It's a specific school. Let's take it on notice.

ANSWER

The department is continuing to work with school principals to address their heating and cooling needs on a case-by-case basis.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: LAND – LEPPINGTON AND DENHAM COURT

QUESTION 94 PAGE NO 92

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Thank you. At the last estimates I put a question to Mr Manning, and it was related to selecting land for Leppington and Denham Court high schools. In response, Mr Manning thought that land would be secured sort of towards the end of last year, if not early this year, relating to Leppington and Denham Court. I am wondering what the current status might be on that.

MURAT DIZDAR: Can we take that on notice, too, with those specific sites and come back to you?

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Okay.

ANSWER

A preferred site has been announced for the new public high school at Leppington that the Minns Government is delivering.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: TEACHER WORKLOAD REDUCTION – LINE BY LINE AUDIT

QUESTION 95 PAGE NO 92

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can I ask about teacher workload reduction? There was an election commitment by the Government that they would ask the department to do a line-by-line audit on all policies. Has that been completed and how many policies have been removed?

MURAT DIZDAR: There has been a ton of work that has happened behind the scenes here to bring those numbers down and more in line with—make it more useful and meaningful. I can get you the exact numbers.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I'd love the exact numbers.

MURAT DIZDAR: What we've been doing is looking at reducing something like 360, or thereabouts, policies and procedures in the department. When I started my teaching career in public education, it was something like 60; it has grown to 360 over time. So we've been at work to reduce that, and we're going to be considerably below that because we've had overlap and policies that are clashing. We've done a massive piece across the organisation to bring that in line. We're going to have more to say about that soon. It has been an important piece.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you provide on notice, if you can, Mr Dizdar, how many there were, say, at the start of 2023 in terms of policy and procedures and how many there are now? I was on the website last week, and there are still quite a few on there. Obviously, there are some that you clearly need to keep on in terms of some of the policies, but it's just hard, as a layperson, to really understand exactly how many have been removed. So if that could be provided on notice, that would be great.

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes, definitely. But you're spot on, Ms Mitchell, because we haven't actually unfurled that work yet. It's still being behind the scenes. What you're seeing is that proliferation over time. In fact, our workers discovered that there are pieces that are not sitting on that website that should be. So this has been a massive exercise. But we're getting closer to going out there and advising the ground of what that work look like, what the new structure looks like, what the search and functionality of that looks like. We'll have more to say on that soon.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: One of the policy areas that the now Premier and Deputy Premier spoke about at the time—and it was in the paper—was about caring for animals and what you need to be doing. I think they used the example of a classroom pet that ran in one of the weekend papers. Surely a policy like that, though, would not be cut because schools have requirements in terms of the care

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

and protection of animals. So that wouldn't be one that would be on the chopping block?

MURAT DIZDAR: Let me take the specifics. What we've been doing in each policy, like I said—because there's overlap; there's overplay. Some of it can be very lengthy. How do we give guidance to teachers in their busy roles that they can get the key information on that policy and then, if they need to go any further, the detail is there for them? That's what we've been doing with each of those, and also amalgamating one. I mean, one that I know fairly well, as a former teacher, is the excursion policy. Teachers want to organise excursions. How can we give them the key things they need to know, and then any of the further detail can be embedded.

ANSWER

The line by line audit of all policies and procedures is one of the initiatives being undertaken to reduce the excessive administrative workload that was imposed on schools by the former Liberal National Government.

The aim of the audit is to reduce the number of documents and make the remaining operational policies and procedures easier to find, read, interpret, and implement. Principals and teachers should not be wasting time in trying to find what they require.

The audit has been extensive. Overall, 360 policy documents have been identified with work now underway to reduce, consolidate and redesign the documents. The Department will take a staggered approach to releasing the reduced and revised documents to ensure schools have time to familiarise themselves with the documents.

Budget Estimates 2023-24 Hearing – 20 February 2024

Transcript Questions

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning
and Minister for Western Sydney

TITLE: SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL ADMIN STAFF

QUESTION 96 PAGE NO 93

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Are you also able to provide, in terms of the support for school admin staff in particular—I know that online enrolment was something that became available. Is that available at all schools now? I think that work was underway by the former Government, but I'm keen to know if that's available more broadly?

MURAT DIZDAR: Yes. I'm just looking at my colleagues who may have detail on that and where we've got up to with online. We might take that on notice but it is still work that we have continued.

ANSWER

The Online Enrolment System (OES) was first piloted in 2020 and has since been adopted as an option for parents and carers to enrol their child at 2,027 schools.

The OES program was extended in 2023 to include the Department of Education's annual Year 6 to Year 7 transition process, which has also proven to be a significant time-saver for both the parent/carer community and school staff.