

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

2016–17 ANNUAL REPORT HEARINGS



**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
FRIDAY, 16 FEBRUARY 2018**

**SESSION ONE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Members

**Hon Alanna Clohesy (Chair)
Hon Tjorn Sibma (Deputy Chair)
Hon Diane Evers
Hon Aaron Stonehouse
Hon Colin Tincknell**

Hearing commenced at 10.02 am

Hon SUE ELLERY

Minister for Education and Training, examined:

Ms SHARYN O'NEILL

Director General, examined:

Ms JENNIFER McGRATH

Deputy Director General Finance and Administration, examined:

Mr LINDSAY HALE

Acting Deputy Director General Schools, examined:

Mr STEPHEN BAXTER

Executive Director Statewide Planning and Delivery, examined:

Mr DAMIEN STEWART

Executive Director Workforce, examined:

Mr PETER TITMANIS

Executive Director Innovation, Performance and Research, examined:

Mr JOHN FISCHER

Executive Director Infrastructure, examined:

Mr JAY PECKITT

Chief Finance Officer, examined:

The CHAIR: On behalf of the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I welcome you to today's hearing on the 2016–17 annual report for the Department of Education. Can the witnesses confirm that they have read, understood and signed a document headed "Information for Witnesses"?

The WITNESSES: Yes.

The CHAIR: It is essential that all your testimony before the committee is complete and truthful to the best of your knowledge. This hearing is being recorded by Hansard and a transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. It is also being broadcast live on the Parliament's website. The hearing is being held in public, although there is discretion available to the committee to hear evidence in private. If for some reason you wish to make a confidential statement during today's proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session before answering the question. Agencies have an important role and duty in assisting the Parliament to review agency outcomes and the committee values your assistance with this.

Minister, do you have a brief opening statement of no more than two minutes?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No, I do not.

The CHAIR: We will start with questions from the committee and then to participating members.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: I refer to page 28 and the paragraph at the bottom of the page that outlines that 76 schools were prepared to complete NAPLAN Online. Can you tell the committee what the cost of those preparations was?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might in the first instance refer to the director general. If you are interested, she might be able to give you an update on how far we have progressed since then, because we are continuing to work towards rolling out NAPLAN Online.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: I have another question around that, which maybe the director general can answer at the same time. I wonder whether there was a loss as a result of the delay in NAPLAN Online or the costs invested in preparing those schools can be used when it is rolled out in 2018? Was there any loss associated with that delay?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might make some initial comments to put it in a bit of context. It would be difficult to quantify precisely the cost of preparing students to participate in NAPLAN and NAPLAN Online because it is an assessment of what they have learnt, so everything that a school does—everything that they teach effectively in the literacy and numeracy area is assessed by NAPLAN. If you really wanted to drill down into the costs, you would be looking at the cost of providing teaching in those areas. If your question is about the online provision in particular—is that what it is?

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Yes. I am hoping you can tell me a little bit about the IT costs associated with it.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, we can examine the IT costs.

Ms O'NEILL: In 2016–17, which is I think the year in question, we had a project to support schools moving into the NAPLAN Online environment and the expenditure in 2016–17 actual was \$836 000. That kind of support provided to schools is to help them do an assessment of their online environment, the kind of bandwidth that might be needed to be able to do the tests online, supporting teachers so that they can understand the way in which the tests will be undertaken. So, that was the cost in that financial year. We already, aside from NAPLAN Online itself, work with schools in terms of their IT upgrades in an ongoing way, so obviously that has been a focus of the work, but it is work that we would be wanting to do in any case, particularly to ensure that the hardware that they have is fit for purpose—there are different devices that can be used for NAPLAN Online—and also to ensure that there is a stability of the online environment in terms of bandwidth. Obviously that is more challenging the further you get from Perth, but that is why some of the testing has been done and that is why have already, with those schools, been working with a range of schools, so that we can be ready to do that testing. WA was in a reasonably good place to undertake that first lot of testing, but a decision was taken by ministerial council in the first instance to move that out a bit further.

[10.10 am]

Hon SUE ELLERY: If I can add perhaps a bit more information with respect to ICT. I am advised that the ICT division in the agency has provided technical consultancy and support to the 276 schools participating in getting ready for full online testing.

All schools have been provided with access to real-time information illustrating local bandwidth use, infrastructure, health, wireless activity and school network performance through the ICT dashboard and the ICT capacity calculator tools; arrange more than 60 specific site visits to assess the school infrastructure; provide technical upgrade consultancy along with network management and policy advice; built capacity in school staff to successfully deploy NAPLAN Online; and increased available bandwidth wherever it is possible in schools to maximise the capacity and then trial with the

NAPLAN Online test in schools using both managed and unmanaged devices with wired and wireless connectivity to provide awareness of the test performance in both of those environments.

Ms O'NEILL: Just to make clear, the project I referred to is a component, and then the IT is obviously a big component, but it is part of the ongoing work we will do for all schools.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Moving ahead to page 41 of the annual report, the bottom paragraph outlines the engagement of two elders-in-residence. Can you advise the committee of the cost of those two positions and what their work involves? Are they educators or is it mostly in a support engagement community role that they are employed?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask the director general if she or one of the officers can talk about the costs associated with that. This was a program that was begun previously. They will be able to tell you when it started. It is important if you think about the role that schools play in educating Indigenous children. Of course, the vast majority of Indigenous children in Western Australia attend public schools. I think this program is important both symbolically, because it demonstrates how seriously the agency takes its commitment to protecting the culture and ensuring that Indigenous kids growing up and going to school can be assured that protections of their culture are in place in everything the department does. I think it is important symbolically, but it is also important at a senior level that the department has two highly respected Western Australian Indigenous people who can provide advice across the board on the work the agency does. I will hand over to the director general to make some more detailed comments.

Ms O'NEILL: Professor Colleen Hayward, whom many of you would know and respect, and similarly Mr Ian Trust, were engaged by the department. It is the first time that we have ever had elders-in-residence. We thought it was a really important step forward in supporting our Aboriginal cultural standards framework and also moving from awareness raising to aspects of cultural competence. They also have a role in providing from time to time strategic advice to the minister and also directly to me on public schooling directions, particularly with respect to partnerships with Aboriginal people. The elders-in-residence have been engaged initially for a two-year period for, we estimate, about 150 hours per annum. The 2017 year is the beginning of that. They will visit small networks of schools and, where appropriate, residential colleges. It is about building stronger partnerships and having a voice of clearly senior and respected Aboriginal people in the policy environment and operational environment of public schooling. During 2017 they did a range of things, which I can talk about, but to your answer, given that 2016–17 was the beginning—I guess we were getting underway—my advice is that around \$10 000 was spent, but that would be, I think, just indicative of the work getting underway.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I would like to continue in the same area that the honourable member just spoke about. The minister knows my interest in Indigenous affairs so it is that area that I am looking at. I refer to page 29. In your view, what has contributed to the 75.8 per cent attendance rate for Aboriginal students—the lowest in recent years?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will get the director general to make some comments on that as well, but it is useful to talk about solutions as well. I was in Geraldton yesterday at John Willcock College, which is a middle school for years seven to nine. I visited a classroom in which they were running a program they call Ambition In Mind. It is for young Indigenous boys who are disconnected with severe attendance issues. Two of them stood up and gave a little presentation to us, which they had written themselves. The first one told us that when he started the program, he was at severe educational risk from his lack of attendance. I am sure the director general will walk you through how we define that in attendance. His attendance is now at 97 per cent, which is fantastic. It strikes me that it is more of those kinds of engagement issues and programs that we need to have put in place to

address those issues. I will ask the director general to comment. She may call on other officers to talk about the specific rates.

Ms O'NEILL: In terms of the question around what drives poorer attendance with Aboriginal students, it is probably worthy of a thesis over many days and weeks. Perhaps I can just give some of the broader indicators that might come with that. This is not particular to Aboriginal students, but if we just focus on that. One could talk about problems with engagement historically. For example, parents who did not do well or have good experiences at school does not encourage them to have as a priority schooling engagement for their own children. That is something that we try to deal with in an Aboriginal standards framework; for example, trying to get more positive experiences for parents such that they will then want to place on children a greater expectation perhaps. I do not want to generalise; we have many Aboriginal families who do well with attendance as well, so I am trying to make broad descriptions here. Some of it is just poor experience of their own background. Intergenerational unemployment and poverty is another issue. We have some children who are the only person who gets up in the morning to go anywhere. Issues of poverty, unemployment and economics play a big part there. Our people on the ground do some wonderful work with mentorship and going into homes helping those children, breakfast clubs, trying to bridge some of those gaps, so there is an economic situation as well. For some Aboriginal students, the schooling program is not necessarily exciting or meeting their needs, so that is the work of the schools to be able to deal with that. There are issues of transport for some Aboriginal children, so the Department of Transport and others do some of that. It is a bit of a question of how long is a piece of string. Many factors come into play.

Some of the good work that is being done—I can talk more later about the Aboriginal cultural standards framework, the only one we have in Australia; the work we do with the Clontarf Foundation in engaging boys. There is some more work that we need to do around engaging girls in schools. There are breakfast clubs, the KindiLink program—many programs—multilayered programs, trying to get parents more involved. It is a very complex question and there is no one single solution to that problem, but enormous efforts are made. It is not just a Department of Education problem. A lot of cross-agency work is being done, with child protection and health, for example. Other good factors to consider are foetal alcohol issues, health issues, children coming to school with hearing problems. We have technology that helps that, so we have to deal with it on many layers, many levels, and there are historic issues that we are trying to deal with as well.

[10.20 am]

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I thank you, director general, for that answer. When I first came into Parliament, I had a chat with the new minister for Indigenous affairs, and we were talking about the importance of bringing all the departments together to work with Indigenous affairs. Health is linked to education and everything else is linked to everything else, so you are right. I suppose sometimes you get surprised by the figures that come out and you are wondering, “Wow! We thought we were doing better than that.” I suppose now it is just a matter of really looking at the current programs and reassessing them. Is that sort of your approach to getting that sort of figure?

Ms O'NEILL: Yes. The figures do vary. We have some variance, but we have not had the experience of seeing great elevations in my experience over the 10 years of being in this position. It is certainly something that remains an enormous challenge for all of us, and if you are not there, you do not learn. We know that for some Aboriginal kids that they are there for the equivalent of a couple of days a week. We did some work with Telethon Kids Institute, and you really need to be at school 90 per cent of the time to be able to continuously engage in the learning program and have it reinforced. Yes, we try to be innovative. We are looking for any solution. We have always been open

to partnerships, and we have some strong partnerships in Munderoo and other not-for-profits as well to try to look for different ways to be engaging, to do it in a respectful way that has appropriateness in terms of cultural importance. That is why it is really great to have people like Ian Trust and Colleen Hayward, who can give us advice about other approaches that we might take or areas that we might want to focus on. Certainly, your comments about working with other agencies is just so important. It is something that we spend a lot of time doing on the ground in the different regions. If I am enabled to have a perspective on this, it cannot just be about bringing kids and forcing kids into school. Schooling has to be more engaging, but there has to be—unfortunately for some children, there is a lack of social structure and regulatory structure, given that some Aboriginal people operate more autonomously, and I have worked in these communities. We have young Aboriginal men, for example, who are autonomous of decision-making who decide not to come. So it is very complex and it has to be not only with other agencies, but it has to be with the families, and that is why it has to be localised and on the ground. Policy, obviously, is really important, but we need to be trying to, family by family, engaging young people as well, and their broader families and caregivers.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Thank you. I only have one other question in that area and it is just a little bit of the figures. Once again, it is probably a little bit hard to understand how they work out like this. I refer to page 28 and the NAPLAN results, which explains the variability of Aboriginal students' performance in years 5 and 6, given that years 3 and 9 were the best ever. Have you been able to get to the bottom of that yet?

The CHAIR: The variability in the performance.

Ms O'NEILL: We were thrilled that we are seeing improved results with some of our Aboriginal students. Obviously, the gap continues to be there. I guess on one hand I would like to say that it is the result of some continued intensive focus on Aboriginal education, but we have always had that. We do have a good focus continuing on attendance. We have spoken with schools and given support to schools about localised partnerships. I think it would be more of a combination of a range of things. I think some of our work at schools with families has increased awareness of the importance of schooling. KindiLink and child and parent centres are good, early intervention initiatives, because that is really what is going to make the difference. But I am really thrilled. The minister will give out Rob Reilly awards into the future, so we are seeing some young people just excelling in achieving ATARs and other entrances into workplaces. Like with any students, it is never just one thing; it is a combination of things. The challenge for us is finding the combination of engagement, positive support for those students and the great work that people do on the ground. Education is not a perfect science. It is usually about finding the combination of things for that child, and that is always the challenge for us. We have 300-and-something-thousand students. They are all individuals and they all take a slightly different intensive intervention. I would like to be able to say to you that we have found the silver bullet; we are working on it.

The CHAIR: We'll move to participating members—Hon Donna Faragher

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I first turn to page 16 in terms of the functional structure. I have got some general questions on that. I am using this as the way to ask these questions, specifically in and around statewide services and workforce and the like. Last year, the department announced that 188 positions were to be abolished in central and regional offices. Have any other positions been abolished since that announcement; and, if so, how many and what is the list of positions?

The CHAIR: Minister, just before you answer that, the purpose of these hearings is the annual report 2016–17 and the agency's performance within that. We have consistently applied that across here. I am not sure—you gave a sort of a hook page. Was that within the —

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Yes. Statewide services, for example, had positions that were abolished.

The CHAIR: So, within that time period.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: The challenge that we have with respect to the Department of Education is often, with respect to funding and like, that it is based on calendar year. We have a bit of a challenge there. I am not trying to be difficult, but it is just because of the calendar year.

The CHAIR: We have found that throughout all of the hearings, and it is the timing of these hearing as much as anything else, but the budget estimates pushed it out. What we have been saying is that if you have got the capacity to answer that, then please do, and we will just apply that as a general rule of thumb.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I appreciate that if there needs to be something taken on notice as well, I accept that as well.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I can make some comment but I am not going to be able to give you numbers, if that is what you are after. The original changes that you are talking about were outside the period of this reporting period, but they are in the public domain, so we can talk about those. In respect to any savings measures subsequent to that as a result of budget decisions that resulted in changes in staffing levels, all agencies have been required to report on those as part of the current budget process, and there will be a report within the budget in May of this year. So I am not able to give you any further information about that, because you would appreciate where we are now in February that we are in the budget process and we are working towards that. There will certainly be an opportunity for you to explore that further as part of your examination of the budget, but I am not able to give you any additional numbers beyond those that have been put in the public domain.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: If I can go then back to the 188, if we are happy to stick with that for the moment, can you tell me how many of those staff have taken a voluntary redundancy?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will make another general comment as well. The voluntary targeted severance scheme is still open, so I am not able to provide you with additional information on how many have taken a voluntary severance scheme to date because the scheme is still open. Agencies have been asked, as part of the budget process, to identify how many of the scheme positions have been taken, and we are in the process now of preparing the budget. So you will be able to examine that as part of the budget. I am not able to give you, if you like—this is my language, not yours—a kind of running commentary of where we are at just yet because we have been asked to provide that information as part of the budget process.

[10.30 am]

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Can you tell me when the scheme closes? Have you got an end date?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes. That was announced when the scheme was announced, and it is 30 March.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: What is the target for the department to achieve with respect to the necessary savings? I am just seeking some clarification.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not know if it is clarification; it is a pretty specific question. Every agency was asked to make a contribution to the 3 000 figure which was put in the budget. Education was asked to make a contribution to that and we are doing that. The scheme is still open and we will report against that scheme in the budget in May.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I will take you then to page 10 with respect to cost of services and FTE. It is the last paragraph. I just have some specific questions. Again, you may tell me this is not the time to ask it, but I am going to ask it anyway. It is some questions in and around the redeployment pool.

There were questions that were asked during the budget estimates process in relation to that. Perhaps this can only be determined based on a financial calendar year, but can you provide me with the current number of permanent employees requiring placement?

The CHAIR: Again, if that figure is available for 2016–17—for the reporting period. If you have any additional information, that is welcome but not —

Hon SUE ELLERY: As at 30 June 2017, the headcount of permanent staff requiring placement was 421.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Have you got a breakdown as to how many of those were teachers?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Two hundred and twenty-seven.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Were teachers?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: This is just, again, a general clarification question. Can you tell me—are women who are on maternity leave placed in the redeployment pool? I do not believe that that is the case. However, it has been referenced that a number of staff within the redeployment pool are there because they have taken maternity leave. That was something that the Premier said in answer to a question last year, so I am seeking some clarification from you in terms of the accuracy of that.

Hon SUE ELLERY: They are not, but you might use people in the redeployment pool to fill the vacancy while they are off on maternity leave, but I might ask the director general perhaps.

Ms O'NEILL: When a staff member takes maternity leave—let us say they are a year 3 teacher at Beldon Primary School—they go off on maternity leave and a fixed term person comes in and fills their position for the period that they are out of school.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: That was my understanding, but that was an argument that was put previously with respect to this.

Ms O'NEILL: If there was a particular example that you wanted to, out of session, provide—because from time to time there are personal circumstances of an individual, but that is certainly not the policy position. I think that under public sector standards it would not be able to be effective in any case.

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is worth adding, I think, the context of the comments at the time were —

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I think you know the comments that I—yes.

Hon SUE ELLERY: You will always need a pool of people because there is such, if I can use the expression, churn in the workforce, because people are moving in and out for different reasons. You will always need a pool of redeployees, and maternity leave is one reason why you need to have that pool, and that is the context of the Premier's comments.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I do not think we are disagreeing in relation to that. I think it is the context of how the answer was given in Parliament last year, suggesting that it was women on maternity leave in the pool. If I could go to page 31, please, reference is made in the fourth paragraph with respect to WA colleges of agriculture. This may need to be taken on notice. Could I please have the level of funding provided to each of the colleges for the 2015, 2016 and 2017 school calendar years? Again, I appreciate that might need to be taken on notice.

The CHAIR: Similarly, we do not expect agencies to come with back data —

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: No, and that is why I am prefacing my comments in that —

The CHAIR: — so that is why you might need to take that on notice.

Hon SUE ELLERY: What we might do is take it on notice because there is calendar year, which is the way schools operate, and then there is the financial year. We will take it on notice and we will give it to you for the 2016–17 financial year.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Could I just clarify, because there are some answers that were given to Hon Jackie Boydell in advance of these hearings, where the answers were given in calendar year. I think we just need to have some consistency in terms of the answers.

Hon SUE ELLERY: How do you want the answer?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Would it normally be done in calendar year?

Ms O'NEILL: We do both.

Hon SUE ELLERY: You say what you want and we will take it notice.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Let us do it by calendar year and, depending on that, I may come back to you again if I cannot get a —

The CHAIR: Could you, just for the record, explain the exact dataset that you are looking for?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: It is the exact level of funding provided to each of the colleges—this is the WA colleges of agriculture—for the 2015, 2016 and 2017 school calendar years.

[Supplementary Information No A1.]

The CHAIR: As usual practice, too, if information is not able to be provided, we expect the department to indicate in the answer why it is not able to be provided.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Yes. That is understood. Then, probably in line with what we have just been asking, on page 63, table 15, reference is made to specialist services, which I understand includes camp schools. Again, similar to the question that I have already asked, are you able to provide a breakdown of the revenue generated by each of the camp schools through camp fees for the 2015, 2016 and 2017 calendar years?

The CHAIR: The income derived from camp fees?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Camp fees or any other revenue, but I am presuming that the bulk is the camp fees.

The CHAIR: So income by item?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: As I understand, there is a collective amount of money that is obviously received through camp fees for each of the camp schools, so I am seeking a breakdown for each of those schools of the revenue. I would expect that almost 100 per cent of it is through camp fees. There might be some other bits attached to it, and you might elaborate on that if that is the case. I am simply wanting to know the revenue that has been received for those years.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will have to take that on notice.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: That is understood.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think it is clear from what the honourable member just said exactly what she is seeking. We will take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No A2.]

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: For each of those schools, can you also confirm, in terms of the revenue that is obtained through those fees—as I understand, that is returned to the department. Maybe not all that is returned to the department, so I am wanting to find out if there is any held with the

camp schools or if there is revenue returned back to the department. Perhaps you can actually tell me how it works if I have not got it quite clear.

The CHAIR: Or how it is accounted for.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Yes, o it is a bit clearer to everyone.

The CHAIR: Maybe it is about the expenditure of each of the camp schools.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Yes, exactly.

[10.40 am]

Hon SUE ELLERY: What we might do is provide an explanation for how the system works and then if we are able to provide you with more, we will now and, if not, we will take it on notice.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Sure, okay.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am being told I need to take that on notice. We can explain the process but we will take on notice the detail of the numbers you are seeking.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: That is understood.

Mr PECKITT: The camp schools are funded through our funding model and they obviously charge fees. Those are then returned to the department, as you have mentioned. My understanding is that there is a certain point where they then can retain an amount above that, a certain limit, but we can explain that when we provide the information to you.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Just so that I am clear, based on what you have just said, the department will provide an annual grant, if I can use that terminology, to the school.

Mr PECKITT: Yes, they are funded through a grant.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: So each will get a separate grant and I think that answer has already been provided in an earlier answer to Hon Jacqui Boydell. The department provides a certain amount of funding to each school; then, after that, throughout the year funds are generated through camp fees. Some of those—if not all, or maybe to a point—funds are returned back to the department. Does that offset the funding that is provided annually by the department?

Mr PECKITT: Yes, the net cost to government, I suppose, is the net amount, so the difference between the amount we fund the camp schools and the amount of revenue received.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: All right, thank you for the clarification. Just so we are clear in terms of the question that will be taken on notice, based on all of that, you will provide to me the breakdown of the revenue generated by each of the schools and then you will also provide to me the total amount that was returned to the department for each of those years as well. Is that okay?

Mr PECKITT: Yes.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: For the 2015, 2016 and 2017 calendar years.

[*Supplementary Information No A3.*]

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Can I turn now to page 4, going slightly off topic from what we have previously been talking about. This relates to the amalgamation of the department. Has the final structure of the amalgamated development been completed?

The CHAIR: Just a reminder of the proviso regarding the scope of these hearings, minister.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes. I will just get some advice from the director general but certainly the machinery-of-government process really commenced from 1 July 2017, which is outside the scope of this report hearing. I might just seek a bit of advice. The formal legal structure came into effect

from 1 July 2017, so all the structural changes took effect from that date and have been operating since that date.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Okay, but as I understand it, we talk about a final structure but I had understood that you would be looking at delegations and all those sorts of things across the various aspects—for example, part 4 of the act, which relates to non-government schools. Has the director general delegated any of those functions? I am trying to get an understanding across the different sectors that now fall under the Department of Education. Are there any delegations that have been put in place or are intended to be put in place as part of the new amalgamated department?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The timing is outside this annual report. However, there has been some information in the public domain, so I am happy to provide you with an update on that and I will ask the director general to do that.

Ms O'NEILL: It was a requirement that by 1 July all the legal requirements of a new department were in place, so as of 1 July I had to have those delegations that you are referring to already in place. As an example of that, pursuant to section 51 of the PSMA, on 1 July I, as director general of the Department of Education, was also appointed to act in the office of CEO of what was the old School Curriculum and Standards Authority. I hold that position concurrently with that of director general. For example, part 4, SCSA, all of those legal entity requirements are already in place and functioning as we speak.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: So there is no delegation with respect to part 4 of the act? You take full responsibility for part 4 and there is no part of that delegated?

Ms O'NEILL: I am responsible —

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: There are obviously some day-to-day aspects of that part of the act.

Ms O'NEILL: With regard to part 4, I am the accountable authority for that. Like when the previous director general of the Department of Education Services was responsible for part 4, he would have had senior officers undertaking some of those responsibilities on his behalf. Likewise, as now the CEO of part 4, I will have similarly senior officers undertaking some responsibilities on my behalf. There is no formal delegation under part 4 where I have delegated responsibility to another officer. With regard to SCSA, though, the difference there is that the board of SCSA, as a statutory authority, has some of its own powers, obviously. To ensure what we might commonly refer to as firewalls that people have asked for to ensure that data, for example, remains secure in the way that it was with the statutory separation, the board itself has its own powers to delegate some functions to another senior officer. In that regard, Allan Blagaich, former CEO of SCSA, has some formal delegations under the SCSA authority to undertake some day-to-day responsibility. So all of those legal arrangements are in place; they have been through the State Solicitor's Office and they are operating now.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might add to that that I meet with the chair of SCSA separately and he is able to raise any issues that the board wants to raise directly with me, without any officers present.

Ms O'NEILL: Yes, the legal day-to-day administration of the authority in legal terms right now is with the executive general of SCSA, Allan Blagaich, so every arrangement has been put in place and reviewed to ensure its integrity, such that concerns raised about potential conflicts have been mitigated.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I have a number of questions on a range of topics. I refer to page 23 and program governance, specifically to grants that are provided by the Department of Education—for example, to the Gould League to run the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre.

The CHAIR: Would you mind repeating the question?

Hon ALISON XAMON: Page 23, and I am referring to program governance and specifically to grants provided. I may have to take this on notice. What grants were provided to external agencies or organisations, and for what programs or initiatives, in that year?

[10.50 am]

Hon SUE ELLERY: A lot; so can we take that on notice?

Hon ALISON XAMON: You can.

[*Supplementary Information No A4.*]

Hon SUE ELLERY: Can I just clarify? You mean non-government organisations?

Hon ALISON XAMON: I mean external agencies or organisations.

Hon SUE ELLERY: External agencies could mean another agency of government.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Yes, I would like them as well. I would like both.

Hon SUE ELLERY: You want both, okay.

Hon ALISON XAMON: What I am actually seeking to find out is which of these grants are not continuing beyond the 2016–17 year and also whether there are any additional grants that have been proposed for the 2018–19 year.

Hon SUE ELLERY: We are dealing with the annual report —

The CHAIR: Within the scope of the hearings, we can ask for the information in relation to that financial year. If there is additional information that is in the public domain, it could be useful, but really the hearings are about the 2016–17 annual report.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, we will provide you with that information in respect of 2016–17.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Great, so I will have the full list of that for 2016–17.

Hon SUE ELLERY: For 2016–17.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I am going to move on to page 32 and gifted and talented education. Again, I am happy to take this on notice, but I also have some specific questions that hopefully can be answered now. I was hoping to get a list of all the GATE programs and also the fees that are being charged for inclusion in these programs.

Hon SUE ELLERY: We would have to take the list of the GATE programs offered school by school on notice for 2016–17. There are no fees, so you do not have to pay a fee to participate in a GATE program.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I am getting reports from parents that they are being hit up with fees to participate in particular programs, most notably I have had concerns raised around fees with John Curtin. That is an area that has been raised.

Hon SUE ELLERY: For secondary schools there are a range of fees charged by schools for some specific courses. That is not a function of whether or not that program—that course—is a GATE program or otherwise; that is a function of the way secondary schools have always been able to charge different fees for different courses. There is nothing new about that, but it is not as a function of that course being a GATE course.

Hon ALISON XAMON: So, if a child or child's family is not able to afford the fees to attend that particular course, they are excluded from the course?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might ask one of the officers to make some further comment, but every school will make every endeavour to ensure that every child is able to participate in the full range of courses. Then, from time to time, arrangements can be entered into. I might ask the director general to add a bit more information about that. I might reiterate that that is a longstanding arrangement in respect of fees for different courses in secondary schools, not as a function of those being GATE programs. Whether it is GATE or not, there are fees charged for a range of courses in secondary schools. Fees are not charged to participate in a GATE program, because it is a GATE program.

Ms O'NEILL: The minister is quite right; there is no authority for schools that run GATE programs to go outside of the normal charges policy. They are referred to under the act as “charges” and regulations provide for K to year 6 a \$60 maximum and \$235 for years 7 to year 10. Under the regulations there is no maximum amount for year 11 and 12 charges. That is the case, although we expect principals, obviously, to be sensible in that regard. There are payment plans and options for parents who are struggling to make payments and so over time they can make payments if they want. We have in place also the allowances for parents who are on health care cards, so low-income earners; there are financial allowances that are provided for people as well. There are things called high-cost options and in senior secondary from time to time there will be such things as high-cost options and parents are provided with that information up-front before children and parents decide whether to take on those particular courses.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Would you be able to give an example of a high-cost option?

Ms O'NEILL: One that I know of is when they are doing their PADI certificate—scuba diving, for example. Those courses can be expensive. That might be an option that they are doing through their physical and health studies, as an example for you.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I am happy to take this on notice. Do you have an example of what would be the highest fee that is charged within the public system for any of those courses?

Ms O'NEILL: We do not collect that centrally, I do not think.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Do they simply exist at the school level?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We could undertake to provide you with some examples, but because the fees for 11 and 12 are school by school, that information is not collated centrally. We would be happy to give you some examples and I am happy to give you an undertaking to give you examples of what we have got, but I am not sure that we would be able to do more than that without doing a survey of every single secondary school, and I am not sure I am prepared to devote the resources to doing that. I am just advised, if it is helpful to you as well, that the fees charged for those sorts of courses are approved by school boards, so that gives you a sense that a check is kept on that by those responsible for those level of governance. The undertaking I can give you is that we can give you some examples of fees that are charged and give an undertaking that will try to give you some examples at the higher end of what is available to us and at the lower end of what is available to us, but it is not collated centrally.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Just to confirm then, if a parent or parents had concerns about the child not being able to access particular programs because of cost, their primary recourse would be via the school board?

Hon SUE ELLERY: In the first instance I would always recommend to parents that they go and talk to the principal, so talk directly to the principal. As the director general said, there are a range of measures that schools can and do put in place around payment plans or whatever. If they are not satisfied with that and they want to take it further, they could certainly talk to the board. I mean, there will be parent reps on those boards and so they could certainly do that.

Ms O'NEILL: It is also useful to know whether courses and programs run does not swing on voluntary contributions. Obviously, we are really thankful and keen for parents to make that, but it makes up about 0.3 per cent of our budget. Nonetheless, we encourage parents to make those contributions.

The CHAIR: Can I just get some clarity around the exact information that the minister has agreed to provide. It is examples of fees charged for —

Hon SUE ELLERY: Courses in year 11 and 12, and I will try to find an example of a high end and one of a low end.

[Supplementary Information No A5]

Hon ALISON XAMON: Can I please move on to page 37 and issues around student wellbeing and support. I have noticed that it says there is an average of 316.8 full-time equivalent school psychologists, which is up from 304.7 FTE in 2015. Is that continuing to trend up?

[11.00 am]

Hon SUE ELLERY: We are just going to check.

The CHAIR: Whether you have the data.

Hon SUE ELLERY: It may well be linked to kind of numbers; I do not know. I will ask the director general to provide an answer to that.

Ms O'NEILL: The reason why there is some fluctuation, we have a solid allocation that we have had from year to year, but schools now will from time to time seek to employ some psychology service as well. Some of it is also driven by student numbers. So we will see fluctuations going up and down, depending on whether schools decide to do that; depending on the student numbers. So it is not fixed as in waiting for additional allocations. We will have movement, depending on some of those factors.

Hon ALISON XAMON: What I was after, though—because I am after a statewide number—is generally whether it is continuing to trend up to reflect, if nothing else, increased levels of acuity in terms of issues for children.

Hon SUE ELLERY: So headcount at 2017 is 423, and —

Hon ALISON XAMON: Do you have that in terms of FTE so it is comparable?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not know. We might have to take that on notice. The answer to your question is yes, it is trending up. So as at year to date, at 29 June 2017, it was 329.32.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Thank you. In relation to the data that is kept about individual students who may have risk factors around their lives, I am aware that very often it is the teachers who can be at the front line of being able to identify when a child may need additional support needs.

Hon SUE ELLERY: They are at the front line. Not may be; they are.

Hon ALISON XAMON: They most certainly are. Is it possible to get an idea of what data is kept with a child's record that follows what is happening for that child? So, for example, if a school becomes aware that a child has been subject to sexual abuse, which can of course play out in a number of ways many years down the track, is that the sort of information that is kept that goes with the child's record? I am interested to know the scope of risk factors that is kept as data in the education department's database.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might ask the director general to make some comments about that.

Ms O'NEILL: Historically, it has been challenging with this many students and some who are very transient. I think if we kind of go back in time, I think it has been challenging, and it was more difficult

to have something following the student. In the older days—I think we still have some parts of it—there was transfer note where something went in the mail and some files went with it; I am talking historically. More recently we did some work—it came about last year, but I think the work has been going on for a couple of years—where we have now a new online web-enabled system; I think that is probably the right word. It is called OSI, but off the top of my head I do not remember why it is called that. It is the online student information system. That is very new—end of last year, this year—and the reason it took some time to develop that system also is because we have all the privacy issues that go with that.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Yes, you do.

Ms O'NEILL: So the information that is allowed to be shared and in a form that it is allowed to be shared, this system does enable that information. But the fact remains that there is information that we do not receive ourselves or we have partnership agreements with other agencies, so under certain circumstances. I think that we are getting closer to a better solution for the information we are allowed to have and we are allowed to share. We are trying to do that in a more efficient way. We spent some funding some years ago with the school psychology service, actually, in trying to modernise the way in which records are kept, records are transferred, but, as you would be aware, the privacy provisions around all that are extensive. They must be respected at all costs. Achieving that balance between meeting our obligation requirements and compliance around record sharing and enabling teachers, as you have said, on the ground to have appropriate information in a timely fashion that enables not only to fashion the curriculum, but also the student services report, is an ongoing challenge for our system and every system around.

Hon ALISON XAMON: So is it possible, through the Chair, to get a breakdown of the sort of information that OLSIS is now able to capture? I am interested in getting the scope of the type of information that potentially could be part of a student record that follows them.

Ms O'NEILL: Sure.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might ask Peter Titmanis to join us at the table to make some general comments, and then we might take some on notice as well.

Mr TITMANIS: So with the online student information system, we have tapped into existing databases that we have. For instance, we collect information about the education of parents, as well as their employment—all the enrolment information they have—but then as students pass through school, the schools will add additional information. So, for instance, if there is a special education need that the student has, that gets recorded, they have all their results—whether it is NAPLAN, whether it is school assessments such as the two semester reports they get—and all that information gets added. If there are any unique experiences the students have—for instance, they get referred to some of the specialist centres we have—then that information gets added. So it is possible to take a look across the whole school to see which students are most vulnerable on a number of different measures, and also to actually look at any individual child to see their particular record. As the director general and the minister have previously stated, we are adding to that information as privacy and exchange of information agreements allow.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Can I just ask, in relation to the privacy matters as well—because it is a delicate balancing act—of course we know that other government agencies such as the police, for example, have ways of being able to notify if there has been inappropriate access to information. Does the education department as yet have anything similar, so that if there is anyone who is inappropriately accessing information, they are able to very readily be picked up and have that addressed?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Can I ask the director general to comment on that.

Ms O'NEILL: So like with all our systems we have in our IT governance arrangements the capacity to monitor all our systems, and from time to time we have had to take action—misconduct action or investigative action—around systems where we think people might have been using those inappropriately.

Hon ALISON XAMON: So it does flag in the system if there has been inappropriate access?

[11.10 am]

Ms O'NEILL: In addition to that, though, to go back to the point that we were talking about in terms of the privacy also, no one electronic system can carry really sensitive data, as I am sure everyone is aware. So one of the investigations that we have been looking at is: can we put on a system a flag to indicate—a flag—something that will show to the individual that there are further holdings of information on this child? It is not appropriate to have it here—there are privacy issue—and they should go and seek further discussions with a psychologist or another agency. I think that, to get the balance right, because we do not want in any way to expose—it would be noncompliant if we did—we are trying to find interesting ways where we can indicate to people that there is something more that you might need to investigate here without having it held on an IT system, for all the obvious reasons.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Looking at page 28—let me double-check that.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Did you say 28?

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Actually, no; I have lost the page number. It is about independent public schools. I think the numbers are something around 67 per cent of all public schools have joined the IPS scheme—something around 80 per cent of all students and teachers, I think it was, which is fantastic. It sounds like a very successful program. I was wondering if you could give me any information about the distribution of independent public schools. I was wondering if the distribution—is there is more take-up in metro areas or regional areas? Can you tell me anything about that?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will get the director general to make some comments about that. I will make a general comment, which is that one of the characteristics of the IPS system is a system of governance that requires significant buy-in and input by a board. There are some public schools, as you might imagine, in some areas that will never be able to get that level of buy-in to a board as a function of a combination of geography and the kind of socioeconomic status and other levels of social disadvantage in those areas. There are some schools that will not be able to meet that criteria. There are other schools that for other reasons have chosen not to participate. I will ask the director general to make some comments about that.

Ms O'NEILL: Really just to confirm, remote schools do not feature. I think we might have one or so. They are not really in the group of independent public schools. They are certainly welcome to be, but there are good reasons we understand why decisions would be made for them not to nominate. We would work with those schools if they wanted to put their hand up to be in the round. They struggle to get boards and councils, but, nonetheless, some of them might be able to. In terms of the rest of the demographic, there is spread, metro and country, when you take the remote out, but they are more likely to be—not more likely; there are more in the metropolitan area. For example, most of the secondaries—all but a handful—in the metropolitan area would be IPS.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: I had some questions around that. I think, minister, you may have answered most of them. I was tending towards wondering why we do not have a higher uptake. We have a very high uptake, but what barriers might exist preventing a higher uptake? I was wondering

whether the selection criteria has anything to do with that and if any schools that are looking to enter the program are having trouble with the selection criteria. Is that a factor at all?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might get the director general to add some comments. If you appreciate the way the system was introduced, it was in tranches. It was not, “Everybody stick your hand up at one time; you can all come in.” It was done in tranches. Yes, there is a process that schools have to go through and they have to be able to demonstrate certain things, including that issue that I raised around governance and the buy-in of the community to assist to be part of the governance of those schools. I will get the director general to add some comments, but there was also a process—I recall asking about it when I was in opposition—where a kind of review was done, I think, or feedback was given to schools about why they were not successful. I might ask the director general to make some comments about that as well.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Perhaps if there is any information about a failure rate of those that try to get in but do not reach that criteria. I suppose it might be difficult to answer.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I would put this caveat around it: because it was done in tranches and if there were more schools trying to get in than were allocated for that particular tranche, that might have been a function as well.

The CHAIR: Director general, before you proceed, we might just take your answer on this and then have a break after that. We have a scheduled break for 11.15.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: So feel free to be brief, I suppose!

The CHAIR: We will still have the 15-minute break. But I am just letting you know that if people are starting to look at the door, it is not your answer!

Ms O’NEILL: I appreciate I am between you and coffee! I will make it snappy.

There is no failure rate as such because people have to nominate. In the first instance, remote schools have not nominated. I think that is important—they have not failed but they have not nominated. Because of the previous minister sharing some concerns, we put in place a development program. Before, it was purely a selection program. I think last year, or it might have been the year before, was the first time we ran that, and it was a development program so that we helped or we gave more assistance so that people could develop their applications and their process, and then there was a selection process. I think that we have accounted somewhat for that. The reason why some remote schools would not put their hand up—I think it is important to remember that at many of those schools also the principal is reasonably new and coming to terms with their own role and what they have to do. Some of them have just elected to leave that for a few years and work through a process. Whether people are in IPS or not, the fact now remains that they have similar staffing or the same staffing processes; they have the SCFM, so all of those people are receiving training on those base things anyway, but they have not elected necessarily to go remote—to go that next step and take their community through a process. We are working with anyone that wants to have a look at the program. No-one should feel, and hopefully does not, unsupported. There is no failure rate in that sense. You have got to nominate; you are supported and developed. To some people we do say, “You’re not quite ready”, and then we turn around and work with those people, if there is going to be another round.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: I will yield for now. I will have some more questions about that when we return.

The CHAIR: Members, we might take a 15-minute break and return about 11.35-ish.

Proceedings suspended from 11.17 to 11.33 am

The CHAIR: Before we start, Mr Hale, we will just get you to state your name and position for the record and whether you have read and understood and signed the document “Information for Witnesses”.

Mr HALE: Lindsay Hale, acting deputy director general, schools, Department of Education. Yes, I have read and signed the witness statement.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: I have just a few more questions along the same lines of inquiry. Before we broke, we were talking about independent public schools and the sort of selection process for them and the groups that are taken in. You mentioned a development program there to assist schools to develop their application process so they can meet the needs of that selection criteria. I am wondering if you can give me an idea of the costs associated with that development program. It sounds great. I am just wondering what the costs are there. I am also wondering if any sort of comparison has been made. I am not sure if there is, but maybe you can tell me if any comparison exists between the costs involved with IPS, perhaps including or excluding that development program, or any potential cost savings identified through IPS. We are seeing a lot of uptake. I am wondering if there is any difference in the finances there between IPS and non-IPS.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might start by making some general comments. The philosophy behind it was about greater autonomy at school level. It was not driven by a philosophy of “this will save money” or “this will cost money”. It was driven by local decision-making, I guess. That was the principle behind it. If any savings occurred, they would have occurred school by school and on different things in different years, because it was really about localising decision-making. But I might ask the director general if there is information available—well, I will start with 2016–17—on the costs of providing that development program.

Ms O’NEILL: I do not know that we ran a development program last year in the calendar year. Perhaps I can have that clarified. But as an indication, when we run the development program this year, we anticipate it will cost around \$184 000. So, with the development program, it is people coming in from wherever they are. We have staff who work through with them a range of processes and programs and activities. So, that will give you at least a ballpark idea of how much that might cost. The minister is right; the IPS program in its inception was not about cost saving or cost growing. We did in the first years have a small group of people in the central office that were assisting us with development of the program, but now that is part of the whole way of operating, remembering that some of the bigger processes that IPS had access to are now part of the school funding arrangement and the staffing arrangements. So, the only other thing that I can perhaps think about, but it was largely commonwealth funded, are, in the early days, the fellowship program for the principals—that was at that IPS—and, more recently, the ministers got a group going and that has been opened up to everyone, so that is not specifically an IPS program.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Thank you. I am wondering along the same lines, do you have—this will need to be taken on notice if you have it—a breakdown of test results by year for IPS and non-IPS schools, just aggregate, not the individual school locations but just by those two categories, IPS and non-IPS.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might make a general comment. So, I might direct you to the committee report from the Legislative Assembly in 2016, I think, that had a look at part of that. The view that had been expressed prior to that and I think was in the committee’s recommendation was that it was not driven by, “This will result in a difference in educational outcomes.” It was about governance and about local decision-making. Now, that might have a flow-on effect. It would be very hard to

measure, I think, because there is a whole lot of other variables that impact on NAPLAN results, but I will get the director general to make some comments.

Ms O'NEILL: The research shows that autonomy is one factor in some successful schools. I think it might be Hanushek or Dahle Suggett here in Australia who have done some research, but it just tells us what we already know; that is, good governance or the involvement of parents is a good factor in how schools operate. The largest driver, however, of school performance is the socio-economic index of students, so you would not be able to isolate governance as a single factor and we therefore do not make comparisons on an ongoing basis between IPS and non-IPS for the purposes of student results. You will find some IPS schools who have fabulous student results and you will find some IPS schools who do not, and the point of both is to improve continuously.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Just to clarify, you do not make those comparisons. Is that data available to be provided on notice for the 2016–17 year, though?

Hon SUE ELLERY: NAPLAN is a national process and the data is published. My School, the website, will give you that data. In terms of “Is it centrally held in the department and then comparisons made?”, I do not think that that is the case, but I will get the director general to make some comment on it.

[11.40 am]

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Just if that data could be provided —

Ms O'NEILL: I am just trying to get some advice about how useful it would be anyway or, in fact, how meaningful it would be. We have a list of IPS schools—we have 524 of them. They have all come in at different times. I am just trying to work out whether we could provide a list of 524 schools and their results from May last year. We could probably provide that but what it does not tell you is anything about—my concern is that it draws a parallel between two things —

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: With respect —

The CHAIR: Director General, if you just have a think about that. Member, would you like to explain what you are actually looking for? There might be a different dataset that could explain what you are looking for.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Sure. What conclusions I might draw from that data is of my own concern, I would think, but if that data cannot be provided or it is too difficult to provide it, that is okay; I can refer to those NAPLAN results in any case. That is okay.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes. Can I draw your attention, if it is of some assistance to you, to the public debate that is happening now about, “To NAPLAN or not to NAPLAN?” which you might have observed in the last few days. I think New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia came out saying they think it is time for a review of NAPLAN. That has been subject to discussion at ministerial council. I do not want to put words in those jurisdiction’s mouths but, essentially the message, I think, from the public commentary in the last few days is that NAPLAN, which is supposed to be a snapshot at one point in time to assess how a child is going so that then teachers can use that data to adjust their teaching to pick up where the gaps are has been used to draw conclusions that need to be made based on a whole range of other factors, not just the NAPLAN results. That debate is going on. There has been a lot of material published about that; there will be a lot of material around on that if you just google it. We can give you a list of the IPS schools—happy to do that—but the data is more generally available on the My School website. Every year—is it SCSA or ACARA who publishes the kind of state-by-state analysis?

Ms O'NEILL: ACARA.

Hon SUE ELLERY: ACARA is the national curriculum body and they publish material every year about how states are going, year 9s are up and year 5s are down, and that sort of thing as well.

The CHAIR: Do you want that list of schools, member?

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Sure; if you could provide that, it would be handy. For now, let me move on to something else, if I still have time, Chair?

The CHAIR: We will take the list of IPS schools as A6.

[Supplementary Information No A6.]

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: In reference to page 27, you mentioned the Follow the Dream program. I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit about what that program is and I am also interested in the cost of that.

Hon SUE ELLERY: There are a range of programs that are provided by not-for-profit organisations—you might be familiar with Clontarf as well—that are specifically directed at, in this case, Indigenous kids. They look at engagement and supporting their performance through school. I will get the director general to give you some specific information about Follow the Dream. They are in receipt of grants from the Department of Education. I am sure we would be able to find that number for you for the period of the annual report that is before us.

Ms O'NEILL: As a little bit of background, the program provides after-school tuition and mentoring support for aspirant secondary Aboriginal students to assist them with their focus on obviously their learning and also what they might like to do when they leave school—whether they are interested in university training or other sorts of employment. The operation has 25 host schools across the state and a further 53 schools in the 2016 calendar year were supported by that program. For students to be in there, the cohort that we are targeting is those who meet the program's school attendance and academic scope; they are selected. The funding for the program includes tutoring, some program coordinator salaries and contingencies, and a grant for the Polly Farmer foundation who co-manage the program.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Sorry, when did that program commence?

Mr HALE: It is over 20 years now.

Mr BAXTER: It has just had a significant celebration, actually, for that 20 years, I think.

Ms O'NEILL: In terms of the funding that you asked for—2016 I am referring to—for salaries, contingencies and grants, it was \$3.6 million; and for more of the tutorial support paid directly to schools, it was \$1.3 million for a total of \$4.9 million.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I have a point of inquiry fixated on pages 16 through 19 of the annual report. It concerns functional structure and then the responsibilities of corporate executive. I want to understand, in terms of this particular report, which part of the department's structure and which particular executive is responsible for specialist education needs.

Hon SUE ELLERY: In respect to children with —

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Children with special needs, yes, and disability.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Sure—where the function sits?

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Where does the function sit in here? Which of the corporate executive outlined is responsible for that function?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is Statewide Services; Lindsay Hale is the member of corp exec who is responsible for that.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Okay. Owing to their being an elapse of time and MOG changes, which I am not going to dwell on, is that position effectively still as it was and is Mr Hale still responsible for the administration of that?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I might get to a point of the annual report which a member dwelt on earlier; it is on page 63 and, in particular, table 15. I ask in relation to the specialist services line with footnote (h), which states that it includes a variety of services, more particularly, “some schools of special education needs”. Can I understand which schools with special education needs are being referred to there?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask Mr Hale to provide that.

Mr HALE: If I have understood correctly, you are focusing under (h) on “some schools of special educational needs”.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Correct; yes, sir.

Mr HALE: What that refers to is what we call Schools of Special Educational Needs that are based in our Statewide Services Centre in Padbury, but also there are people located around the regions to support schools and students with particular needs.

There are four so-called SSEN schools. One focuses on disability, one on medical and mental health issues—that includes the schools hospital service—and one that focuses on sensory, primarily impairment of hearing or vision. The relatively new partner, because those three have existed in some form for some time, is the behaviour engagement SSEN. I should just observe that, by and large, although we describe them as schools, because they have a principal and they are largely staffed by teachers and provide things like visiting teachers services and so on, in the case of SSEN behaviour and engagement, they also oversee the engagement centres, where kids are not enrolled, because they are enrolled in their home school, if you like, and return to that school, but there is one small exception. We have the Midland Learning Academy, at Midland obviously, where we have a small number of students—roughly, off the top of my head, about 20 students—with very high needs, usually to do with matters of anxiety and challenges about getting to school. They are the small number of kids who are actually enrolled in SSEN behaviour and engagement. Otherwise kids remain enrolled in their home school.

[11.50 am]

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I see. This is not to be pedantic; my desire is to be accurate and to draw the right inference.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I would never accuse you of being pedantic.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Many thanks, minister. The qualifier—this is not to be pedantic—is that you have mentioned some schools of special educational needs in this particular line item. “Some” denotes not all. Can you outlined which schools are excluded from that categorisation?

Mr HALE: If I can direct your attention to the line above in the table for specialist services, we refer to education support, and that would be our education support schools and centres. I think that is why we have had to qualify some schools as special educational needs, because education support schools and centres are schools of special needs, just a slightly different name. There is a slight complicating factor here because of course we also have students with special needs in the whole range of our mainstream schools, some with high needs support, some with modifications in classrooms. Those children with special needs are represented virtually across our whole system.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: With respect to particular facilities, though, I just want to understand—you might be familiar with the Landsdale Farm School. How does the department categorise that particular facility?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask the director general to comment. It is not a school, as you might understand.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I have a pretty good idea of that, but where does it fit?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The best advice I am able to provide you is that it is in (h).

Hon TJORN SIBMA: In (h)—special services? I appreciate, and I am in a mindset of sweet reasonableness, that that is the most accurate categorisation that the department and the minister have the opportunity to provide me with, and I am prepared to accept that, but if there is a need to correct that, it will be done in the customary way I suppose.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Honourable member, can I just get the director-general to make some comments.

Ms O'NEILL: Just so that we can be clear, the category (h), as you can see from a range of different things there, is a group of different things that have to be put in a category, so they are categorised there. This is not to suggest that they necessarily have something in common.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I appreciate that that is a convenient categorisation for the purposes of reporting, and that there is a degree of diversity within any group that you present for these purposes. I will focus in on the specialist services line. You might refer me to the budget papers, and, if so, fine, but is there, in this annual report, a table that outlines the appropriation that is appropriate to specialist services? For example, here you have outlined the number of staff. Is there a corresponding cost to that?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Not in this document.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I take it I should refer to the budget papers of that year?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not even know that you would find it specifically at that level in the budget. If you cast your mind back to the way that that section of education in the budget is laid out, there are appropriations against primary schools and appropriations against secondary schools.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: And the constraints of space do not allow for granularity in the presentation of data.

Hon SUE ELLERY: That is right.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Nevertheless, is that something that the department is able to provide by way of supplementary information for the year in question?

Hon SUE ELLERY: So you want the allocation to —

Hon TJORN SIBMA: The budget allocation for specialist services for the financial year 2016–17.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am sorry, we are not going to be able to provide that. You could ask us specifically for each component, and we would have to manually go and find it for each component, but there is not a collated—if it can use that expression—item in respect of appropriations.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: That is fine. I phrased the question that way because I thought that it would actually be probably an easier data point to elicit, rather than getting really granular. Perhaps, if it is going to take that time anyway, maybe I should be a bit more specific. Would the department, for the year 2016–17, have the budget information relating to the operation of Landsdale Farm School?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We would have that, and I could take that question on notice.

[Supplementary Information No A7.]

Hon TJORN SIBMA: This is a longwinded way of getting to other information, but in an earlier discussion during this hearing, I think Hon Donna Faragher sought supplementary information concerning the net cost to government of, effectively, running the services outlined in table 15. Might I seek by way of a supplementary supplementary, what the net cost to government in the year 2016–17 was for, effectively, keeping Landsdale Farm School on the departmental books?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We can take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No A8.]

Hon TJORN SIBMA: In relation to table 15, and effectively what it represents in terms of the departmental estate and its myriad services, in the year 2016–17, was any review undertaken by the department into the cost effectiveness of maintaining education support services and specialist services, as identified in table 15?

[12 noon]

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not sure that there is anything I can provide you. There is ongoing—you would be familiar obviously for budget purposes—examination of matters. But I am not able to provide you with any specific review or examination of the sort that you are seeking.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Thank you, minister. Just to clarify that response, your response is that, as we are situated now in this hearing, the best advice you have is that you are unable to confirm whether any review of the cost-effectiveness of the departmental estate and services encapsulated in table 15 was conducted for the year 2016–17.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not able to today, but what I might do is take it on notice and I will check as to what might be available.

[Supplementary Information No A9.]

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Relatedly, and I would anticipate a similar response, my specific area of interest is whether or not there was any internal departmental review into the cost-effectiveness or the function or the appropriateness of retaining the Landsdale Farm School as part of the Department of Education's estate.

The CHAIR: Just to remind members of the scope within the 2016–17 year, was there any —

Hon TJORN SIBMA: In the 2016–17 year.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I thought that is what he was asking anyway.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: That is what I was asking, Chair. This is not to be cute, but obviously the scope of these hearings pertain to data as presented in these annual reports. There is obviously an elapse of time between when the documents are compiled and then tabled in Parliament. Sometimes there can be a three-month period, as was the case, I think, in this particular report. It was tabled somewhere in the middle of September last year.

The CHAIR: All reports are required to be tabled by then.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Indeed. For the purposes of that inquiry, my curiosity extends also to the period of time between 30 June 2017 and the point at which this document was tabled.

Hon SUE ELLERY: For the purposes of this hearing today, I appreciate you are asking me two things. You are asking for within the period of reporting was any investigation done. I will find out; I will take that on notice. The second part of your question goes beyond the period of the report that we are dealing with. You are asking, into financial year 2017–18, was any internal inquiry done up to the point of this annual report.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Correct.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will take that on notice. I do not give you a guarantee that I will provide you an answer to that.

[Supplementary Information No A10.]

The CHAIR: Within the requirements of the committee about when answers are not able to be provided that we are given an explanation as to why that is not able to be provided.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: You will appreciate that this has been a phenomenon which has been consistent across these particular hearings just by virtue of when we have had to hold them. Obviously, the purposes of these hearings are to focus on annual reports and bear proper scrutiny on how they are presented. This committee, however, has a supervening term of reference, which is to inquire into the financial administration of this state, and obviously a measure of discretion must be applied. Minister, obviously you and your department have had a pretty big summer, hence the curiosity. I just want to say that, by virtue of qualification—I am not trying to be cute here—there is an expanded period of time between when this is presented and the point at which we find ourselves now. It would be a diminution of my responsibility if I did not inquire into the full scope of data that the department, through you, can provide.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I understand that.

The CHAIR: I think the minister understands that, and we explained that at the beginning of the hearings for the purpose of the minister and all the witnesses.

Hon SUE ELLERY: But, equally, if I can qualify why I may not be able to provide you with what you want.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Sure. Reasonable people, despite our partisan differences, can disagree on what is possible and what is not.

Hon SUE ELLERY: It might not be possible. I do not know; I have to go back and have a look. There were budget processes going on during that period of time as well, so I may not be able to provide you with the information that you seek.

The CHAIR: And even if it a short answer, minister, an answer will be welcome and keeping in mind the confines of budget processes and cabinet processes. We all understand that.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Among the facilities—I will call them institutions—listed at the “Education support” line and the “Specialist services” line, are any of those institutions open outside of school hours?

Hon SUE ELLERY: You know that Landsdale is.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I do. But are these institutions also given some departmental guidance in terms of possibly increasing their opportunity to provide remittances back to the state government?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Camp schools are open outside school hours. VacSwim happens outside school hours. Was there something in particular that you were looking for?

Hon TJORN SIBMA: No. I know it has been put in public domain outside of this, so this is my way of asking the question and not being ruled out of order.

Hon SUE ELLERY: You have just revealed that, though!

Hon TJORN SIBMA: My purpose here is not an ambush; it is actually to elicit the information, if I can get it. Is any instruction or inducement or otherwise guidance provided to, say, a facility like Landsdale Farm School to broaden their appeal to outside of traditional school groupings? Is

revenue obtained by, say, ticket sales on a Saturday or Sunday one way remitted back in some form to the department to offset the cost of running that facility?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I can perhaps answer your question this way: I suspect things have just developed over time. I am advised that no specific direction or instruction has been issued to that effect. I suspect that things have evolved —

Hon TJORN SIBMA: As a practice.

Hon SUE ELLERY: — as practice over time. But I do not think that there has been a strategic framework applied to that.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Unlike the previous honourable member, I did get a chance in the first half, but I have only one or two lines of questions and it is all to do with STEM, on page 25. I have concerns about STEM generally, because in this state we are heading towards possibly another increase in mining activity; there may be a boom—who knows. We see now that we have a shortage of not only sometimes students wanting to take up these non-cool subjects, we also now have a shortage of teachers. My first question is: how many teachers are we short in these subject areas?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I guess I would make the general comment that there is nothing new about the difficulty of attracting specialist teachers into the STEM area.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: But it is really important because of the jobs that will become available in the next few years in those areas.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Perhaps I will make some general comments about a couple of things that we are doing to address the situation while the officers look for whether or not we have got any numbers here. So there are a couple of things. We know that not enough students are doing science in secondary school and not enough then doing it in university and then we do not have enough wanting to teach science coming out of university. A couple of things that we have done to address that is, first, our election commitment about science labs in primary schools to provide a more authentic learning environment. Along with that, we will need more specialist teachers to teach in those primary schools. There is a range of things that the department has put in place. I will get the director general to talk you through those things.

I am not sure that we can say that at this date or at that date in 2016–17, there was a shortage of X number. I am not sure that that is counted. The courses are taught according to a curriculum, by teachers. It is whether or not they are specialist teachers. I will get the director general to add some comment to that.

[12.10 pm]

Ms O'NEILL: That is right. The challenge for us and every education department around Australia is the supply and demand balance. With STEM, how many we need is very hard to forecast, because it is entirely dependent on which kids choose the courses. What we know—the first fact—is that we had a teacher in front of every class for the start of the year, including our science and maths teachers. It is true to say that in every year there will be some teachers who had a minor in science or maths and they might be teaching that—that has been forever thus in Western Australia. We have a particular program called LEAP. It is a tailored training program. People who have been around for a while might be familiar that we had a program called Switch previously. It is similar to Switch, for those who know. We now call it LEAP, because it is specifically around specialist learning areas where there is limited supply. As at 30 June last year, just as an indication, we had 1 694 teachers who expressed an interest in that program, and at that point, at June last year, we had more than 1 000 teachers who had been supporting that. Not all those teachers will go on to teach in those areas.

The other important thing is that when most people think about STEM, they think about senior secondary. It is also to develop primary teachers. We have primary teachers, some of whom we found in the last few years might have a doctorate in chemical engineering or something and they decide to be a primary teacher, which is great, and some of those people might want to do some retraining, or additional training, to be secondary. It is really important also to note, though, because there has been a misunderstanding, that there is no differential in terms of primary and secondary training. Primary teachers can teach in secondary; their qualification allows them to do that, but what we are making sure is that they have the appropriate skill base. It is a different setting, dealing with secondary teachers. We also have a really good program with Scitech. We give over \$4 million for a partnership with Scitech to do an integrated STEM program, so they get around the state as well.

Just to go back, there is no definitive number that we are short, which is the difficult balance that we have to do. But we know that we have a bunch of people who are undertaking that training and may decide that they want to go down that pathway. Again, we can train them, and they might decide they do not want to go on and teach in those areas, but we try to make sure that there is a really good pool of trained people who can move into those spaces.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Thank you for that. I understand that there is no figure as to exactly what you would need or what you are short of, so we are trying to recruit, as you have mentioned. I notice also that you have been talking to the universities and teacher education. It is interesting to me what the universities are saying. What are they saying to you? What is the main problem for them in getting their students to take up those subjects?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Can I perhaps add some general comments about one of the things that I found quite frustrating. When I was in opposition—I am not going to reflect poorly on either side of this; I decided this from what I saw—I went to a conference organised, I think, by WAPPA, which is an organisation of primary principals. They had each of the five Western Australian university presenting. I was the kind of outsider in the room at this event. It was like this. The five universities each stood up and did a presentation, and they each said, “We produce product X”, and the question from the floor from the Western Australian primary principals was, “We need product Y.”

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: So media studies is what they wanted to teach, and everyone else wanted engineers?

Hon SUE ELLERY: They were not talking about the same thing. So I do think there is a bit of a disconnect in that sense.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: We do need industry and education to work together.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes; we need to add that into the mix as well. One of the other roles that I play is I chair WAHEC, which is the council that provides ministerial advice on higher education, so the universities are around the table, and we are having conversations about how we can do this much better. Government agencies are big ships, and so are universities. Some of the very best education academics come from Western Australia. Bill Loudon is well renowned, for example, but there are many others, such as Lorraine Hammond. I am hopeful that we can get a much better dialogue about how we do it. But there is still a degree of random interaction, I reckon, between what the universities produce and what schools say they need.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Thank you. I also notice that young ladies are very rarely or not well represented in these subjects, so that must be a frustration also. The figures say that they are poorly represented in the STEM subjects. The other thing is—you could probably answer this better,

minister—will you be recruiting overseas or interstate for these kinds of teachers that you feel you are short of?

The CHAIR: If you just want to bring it back to the scope, minister, feel free.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Sure. No; I am relaxed about it. I will get the director general to talk about this, but there are no specific programs that I am aware of where we are doing that kind of targeted recruiting. Teach for Australia is a fantastic program, which I support. It started internationally as Teach for America. It is bringing professionals who have achieved well in their respective professional careers and have qualifications in all sorts of areas into a pretty intensive training course where they are supported to teach in schools of high economic need. Teach for Australia has been happening in Western Australia for a number of years now and is doing some absolutely sensational work. I might get the director general to talk a bit about girls and STEM. There are schools that are doing a program called GEMS, such as one of the schools I saw in Geraldton yesterday. I think it means girls in engineering and maths. That school is doing a specific STEM program for girls. I know that there is a range of other programs as well. The director general might be able to add than that.

Ms O'NEILL: You might be interested to know that on that issue about gender and maths and science, which is discussed around Australia, Western Australia is probably in a better position than other states around that in some data. It is also terrific to know that the Beazley Medals have recently been won by girls taking on those sorts of subjects. So, yes, school by school, it varies greatly. There is a lot of talk about the take-up of maths and science. It is different in different schools. But we would always be encouraging, obviously, boys and girls, or young men and young women, to take up those subjects. Historically, there have been more boys in those subjects, I think, when you look back over the years. I did read something recently, and I do not have it in front of me, that would suggest that there is a shift in that. If I can find it, I will mention it.

[12.20 pm]

Mr BAXTER: Very strong representation in chemistry, for instance.

Ms O'NEILL: For example, more girls are doing chemistry than ever before. It is something we have been looking at recently.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: It is an important one because the big mining companies are very active in trying to recruit ladies to their workforce. We know it is a male-dominated workforce generally. I get a feeling there is going to be another skill shortage coming up in the next three or four years and that is very annoying for all of us when we have the skilled children out there and young men and women who could take these positions.

Hon SUE ELLERY: In my other portfolio, which is not before the committee today, so I will not take too long, in respect of being Minister for Training, we are doing our very best to make sure we in fact do not end up with that kind of skill shortage you are envisaging.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Minister, I want to ask a few quick questions regarding income for the department first of all.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Are you looking at a particular page, Madam Chair?

The CHAIR: I am just going to it—page 85. There is a figure there for services received free of charge from the state government, which is around \$13 million, but that is a significant decrease from the previous financial year. Can you talk to what those free services might have been and why there is a significant difference to those year on year?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask Mr Peckitt to provide an answer.

Mr PECKITT: On page 111 there is a list of the services received free of charge. The key difference is to do with a change in the funding model for Building Management and Works. Previously, maintenance services were funded through a transfer of appropriation between the two departments. But for the 2016–17 year there is a fee for service model introduced, which is essentially no change in the cost to the department, but just a change in the way we do the accounting.

The CHAIR: Also on page 85—that financial year, the department had a comparatively small surplus of practically \$114 million, compared to \$2.4 billion in 2015-16. Can you talk to the variance in those figures? That is really quite significant.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask Mr Peckitt to explain.

The CHAIR: If it is solely devaluation of assets, that is still significant.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: \$2.9 billion.

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr PECKITT: The surplus for the period, excluding the impact on changes in asset valuation, was \$113 million.

The CHAIR: Sorry; I am having a hard time hearing.

Mr PECKITT: Sorry; I will talk a bit louder. When you exclude the impact of the asset revaluation, the surplus was at \$113.8 million. That is artificially high because of accounting treatments to the way schools use their funding. Sometimes they use their money for capital purchases. When you take that into account, our surplus was about \$30 million for the year. However, the other question you had in relation to the \$ 2.4 billion was to do with the revaluation of assets in that year. The department went through a process with audit and Landgate to revalue all its buildings, using a different approach and through that process the valuation of buildings decreased because of that. That then caused that larger deficit you see there.

The CHAIR: What prompted the revaluation or the change in the way in which land and buildings are valued?

Mr PECKITT: It was to do with findings from the Office of the Auditor General. When it went through the annual audit it identified the need to be more consistent with other government agencies and through that, we now line up with most agencies who use Landgate as their valuer for all land and buildings.

The CHAIR: That had a significant impact on the bottom line of the agency.

Mr PECKITT: It did from more of a non-cash, I suppose, perspective. Obviously, it affected the balance sheet and then our depreciation being lower, but it did not really have an impact from a cash perspective on the agency.

The CHAIR: In terms of accounts receivable, I go to page to 129. It is a note in relation to accounts receivable that I wanted a little bit more explanation on. During the financial year there was \$1.95 million accounts receivable written off. I wanted an explanation as to the type of the accounts and the variation over the previous year. There seems to have been a lot written off the previous year but less so this financial year. The note is on page 129.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Mr Peckitt will attempt to answer that question for you.

The CHAIR: I am happy to take it on notice.

Mr PECKITT: The write-offs would largely be to do with salary overpayments where there has been an attempt to recover funds that have been overpaid, but through various circumstances they cannot be recovered. There are also, I believe, charges from schools where, once again, there has been an attempt to recover but there has been no ability to do that. I would have to probably take it on notice to explain the variation because I do not have that here.

The CHAIR: It is a significant enough variation to warrant an explanation, so I would be happy to take that.

Hon SUE ELLERY: We can take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No A11.]

The CHAIR: I go to note 38 on page 126 about the present value of finance lease liabilities. There has been a significant increase year on year. Can I get an explanation?

Mr PECKITT: That is to do with the new public–private partnership arrangements where we are now constructing schools and maintaining schools through a PPP arrangement. That then has a flow-on impact to finance lease commitments and has to be presented like that. This was the first year in the 2016–17 year that they were shown in the financial statements. They were not in there for the 2015–16 year.

The CHAIR: There were some in there for the 2015–16 year, so the dramatic increase is as a result of the private partnerships?

Mr PECKITT: Yes.

The CHAIR: All of it?

Mr PECKITT: The large majority. Approximately \$80 million was due to the finance lease being reflected in the 2016–17 year, which is the difference.

The CHAIR: Great, thanks. Is there a similar explanation for non-current liabilities borrowings on the same page, 126, up to about \$91 million?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Can you just draw us to where on —

The CHAIR: Page 126 non-current liabilities.

Mr PECKITT: That would be the main reason, yes.

The CHAIR: So, it is the same explanation?

Mr PECKITT: Yes.

The CHAIR: A bit of an expensive exercise. That should do me for the time being. Hon Donna Faragher.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I go back to page 63, table 15. I want to refer back to the specialist services. I appreciate this might need to be taken on notice. Would I be able to get a breakdown of the staff whether it relates to a camp school or other services that fall within that category? I am essentially wanting a breakdown for each individual school or otherwise. There is the full 897 but under each: teaching, support, cleaning and gardening, administrative and clerical. Could I take that on notice?

[12.30 pm]

Hon SUE ELLERY: As I understand the question, it is in respect to each of the categories—the entities—captured in (h) and then by the categories that are set out across the top of the table. Is that what you are seeking?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Yes.

Hon SUE ELLERY: We can take that on notice for 2016–17.

[*Supplementary Information No A12.*]

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I am sorry to go back on this, but I just want to seek some clarification with respect to the camp fees and the earlier questions that I asked about that. Can I get some clarity around the setting of charges for those camp fees. Are those fees set by the department or are they set by the individual camp school? As I understand, obviously depending on which camp school, there are different programs that are provided. The cost for those programs or the cost per child—I want to get some clarity as to whether the costs are set by the department or by the individual camp school.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The advice that I am getting is that they go through the normal process for the setting of government fees and charges. What I am trying to establish is: are they published or are they gazetted? I am trying to get advice on that now. We might take it on notice so that we get it right.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Okay. My first question is: are the fees set by the department or by the individual camp schools? As a follow-up to that, can you advise me, for each of the camp schools, what the cost of the programs is? If there are differences, I would like a greater breakdown in terms of the cost of those programs and whether it is a cost per student irrespective of how many programs—abseiling and various other things—they might do. Is it a cost per child or is it a cost per program? There are a couple of things in that.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I can tell you some of that now. For each school group, there is a cost per child and a cost per adult. For each non-school group, there is a cost per child and cost per adult. The fees are set centrally, if you like, through the department as part of the normal fees and charges. We need to use the right language here because the cost, as in what does it cost the department to provide those schools, is different to the charges, so I need to be clear about what you are asking.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Okay; sorry. I am referring to the charge. I am requesting information with respect to the charge per child and per adult—did you just say as well?—and just clarity, because if I understand the minister correctly, she said that irrespective of the number of activities that the students might participate in, it is not separated by program as such; it is simply by child. Is that correct?

Hon SUE ELLERY: To make sure we give you accurate information, I will take that bit on notice as well, and provide a caveat as well that because the fees are set centrally, those fees will change.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: That is understood.

The CHAIR: For clarity, can we get a summary of the data that will be provided to the committee?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Can I also just add a further caveat over the top of that. For some schools, the way they use those camp sites, is that they will use them as their base, and then they will go out and do other activities, so there may be other fees that are charged to participate. They might go to Scitech; they might go other places where they have to pay other fees to participate in those events. We will give you the information that is available to us, but it may not be the full charge that it costs to participate in all the activities that happen while they are staying at that camp site.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: That is understood. Could I also add in, with respect to my request regarding the camp schools, Lansdale Farm School as well in terms of charges? Can we add that to the list, please?

The CHAIR: Could I get a summary of the data that the —

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is publicly available but I will provide it, sure.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: If you could just provide that, that would be good.

The CHAIR: Perhaps I just need to ask: is the department clear about the data that is going to be provided to the committee under item A13? Are you clear what you are providing?

Ms O'NEILL: It would be helpful if you could restate it.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: We have traversed about four or five different elements. What I am seeking is the charge per child and per adult for each of the camp schools, including Lansdale Farm School as well, for 2016–17. In addition, I want absolute clarity within that that you are not referring to individual programs that are delivered at the site, if I can put it that way. You are not charging for those; you are simply charging per child. I would like the cost per child. I presume that is per day. I would like to know the rate, as such, because I presume it is a per day rate.

Ms O'NEILL: Are you asking for when people stay, not just come for day?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: For both, because, as I understand, there are some who come for the day, obviously, and then there is an overnight stay, and that would be an overnight charge, I presume. So, I want to a complete breakdown of actually what is being provided.

Hon SUE ELLERY: We will endeavour to give you as much as we possibly can.

The CHAIR: Various data, A13.

[Supplementary Information No A13.]

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Just one other clarification, and this perhaps can be added to another question that has been taken on notice with respect to the funding to WA agricultural colleges. I am of the understanding that the agricultural colleges, as part of their funding, would receive additional funds for plant, equipment and all those sorts of things. Are you able to provide a breakdown as to how much was provided for the years that I have requested—I think it is 2015, 2016 and 2017—with respect to allocations through that departmental funding for plant, equipment and the general maintenance issues that arise through agricultural colleges?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We can provide that on notice.

The CHAIR: I do not want to open up a previous one, so we will just allocate that A14. My advice is that it is A1.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to page 30 and the final paragraph that refers to eight students who were excluded. I note that that is significantly fewer than in the previous two years. I recognise there is going to be sensitivities around making sure that you are not giving me identifying data; nevertheless, I am going to see how much data I can get around this. How many of these students had already been provided with intensive behavioural support before they were excluded or did any of them effectively have to be subject to summary exclusion?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will provide a general comment, which is: it literally is the end of the line. So it is not the first call to action. There will always have been a range of interventions, perhaps even over a long period of time, before that happens. I make that caveat. I am also advised that we do not have the information, obviously, about those eight individuals here. I will get the director general to make some comments.

[12.40 pm]

Ms O'NEILL: Just by way of background, the authority to exclude resides with the director general. It is very unusual that a student is excluded on the basis of a one-off terrible incident. In my experience, that is highly unusual. Obviously, the child is excluded for that incident, but I am just talking about in the history; it is unusual that they come as a first timer into that process. There is

typically extensive interventions. Very often there are suspensions that have occurred beforehand. One of the things that I look at in being the decision-maker about exclusion is the extent to which there has been support and intervention. It is one of the important pieces of information that I think sits before me. By way of general commentary, it is highly unusual for anyone to be excluded where there have not been interventions and there have not been ongoing issues at the school, from my perspective. In terms of the eight cases, obviously we did not come to this hearing today with information about eight individuals, nor would we, as you know, talk about the individuals, but I do not have general information even about the eight individuals; it is just not something we would have brought with us today.

Hon ALISON XAMON: In that case, can I move to page we to the MOU with the Department of Corrective Services which was reviewed to provide better education outcomes. How many students were supported through this agreement?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask the director general if she is able to provide any information about that—or perhaps Mr Hale.

Mr HALE: I can comment in a general way. I will try to be helpful, minister. We do not have that figure. In fact, the figure would be the support we provide. We do not deliver the educational services in, for instance, Banksia Hill—Corrective Services does that—but we do work with them, we do provide some resources and we do provide some support such as professional learning in kind, and we have a number of areas where we attempt to work together, particularly in transitioning young people as they come out of Banksia Hill and re-enter the community and the education system. Broadly speaking, the numbers of young people would be whatever the day-to-day figure of young people in Banksia Hill is. I could guess that, but I would probably get it wrong, so I will not. Broadly speaking, we do not provide that service but we provide assistance and support in providing it, and we provide assistance and support to those young people as they move back into the community and typically into our schools.

Hon ALISON XAMON: You have touched on one of the questions I wanted to ask; that is, is there any intention to remove education services from being delivered by the Department of Corrective Services and introduce the Department of Education to be able to deliver those services in the same way as they are talking about changing it around mental health and AOD

Hon SUE ELLERY: There is no discussion that I am aware of. I will make this point though: the TKI report was released earlier this week. We had a briefing on that, and we had some of the officers of the Department of Education at that briefing. I think there are really good opportunities available for all the agencies across government that deal with young people at risk to work with TKI about how we might do things better. I think there is an opportunity there. Is there proposed to be a shift of who delivers that service in Corrective Services? No.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I move to page 37, which is teaching students with a disability, and the comments about the prevalence of middle ear infections and conductive hearing loss amongst Aboriginal students. Has there been a review or an evaluation of the 2010 Kimberley initiative?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think we might take it on notice because nobody is able to give me a direct answer right now.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Flowing from that, I wanted to know whether there is still ongoing professional development of teachers in this area.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The answer broadly is yes, but we will take it on notice.

The CHAIR: We will take that as A14. Do you want to give a summary of what you are looking for?

Hon ALISON XAMON: I want to find out whether there has been an evaluation and assessment since the 2010 program, and also the scope to which professional development in this area is still being rolled out. I suppose a quick comment: of course, everyone is talking about FASD at the moment, which is great—I am thrilled it is finally getting the attention it deserves—but of course I want to make sure that we are not going backwards in terms of some of these core areas. I want to make sure that that is still firmly on the agenda.

Ms O'NEILL: Part of the reason why it is hard to answer is that we have a range of programs and partnerships in place around these things. I just want to make sure that we are answering the specific question that you are after. Sound field systems and all those things that we are running there, we continuously monitor, but as to whether there has been a formal evaluation, we will need to get that answer for you.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I might follow up with additional questions later about the scope to which those services are still being delivered as well.

[Supplementary Information No A14.]

The CHAIR: My closing statement will include information on those unasked questions that you have.

On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your attendance today. The committee will forward the transcript of evidence which highlights the questions taken on notice with any additional questions in writing after Monday, 26 February 2018. Responses to these questions will be requested within 10 working days of receipt of the questions. Should you be unable to meet this due date, please advise the committee in writing as soon as possible beforehand. The advice is to include specific reasons as to why the due date cannot be met. If members have any unasked questions, I ask them to submit these via the electronic lodgement system on the POWAnet site by 5.00 pm on Friday, 23 February. Once again, I thank you all for your attendance and participation today.

Hearing concluded at 12.47 pm
