

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

**2020–21 ANNUAL REPORT HEARINGS**



**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
THURSDAY, 31 MARCH 2022**

**SESSION ONE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**Members  
Hon Peter Collier (Chair)  
Hon Samantha Rowe (Deputy Chair)  
Hon Jackie Jarvis  
Hon Nick Goiran  
Hon Dr Brad Pettitt**

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**Hearing commenced at 10.36 am**

**Hon SUE ELLERY**

**Minister for Education and Training, examined:**

**Ms LISA RODGERS**

**Director General, Department of Education, examined:**

**Mr ALLAN BLAGAICH**

**Executive Director, Department of Education, examined:**

**Mr JAMES BELL**

**Deputy Director General, Student Achievement, Department of Education, examined:**

**Mr JAY PECKITT**

**Deputy Director General, Department of Education, examined:**

**Mr MARTIN CLERY**

**Executive Director, Department of Education, examined:**

**Ms MELESHA SANDS**

**Deputy Director General, Schools, Department of Education, examined:**

**Mrs PHILIPPA BEAMISH BURTON**

**Executive Director, Finance and Commercial Services, Department of Education, examined:**

**Ms RAEHELLE LEE**

**Executive Director, Strategy and Policy, Department of Education, examined:**

**Mr ROB THOMSON**

**Executive Director, Infrastructure, Department of Education, examined:**

**Mr CRAIG WARD, Executive Director, Professional Standard and Conduct, Department of Education, examined:**

**The CHAIR:** On behalf of the committee I would like to welcome you to the hearing. Today's hearing will be broadcast. Before I go live, I would just like to remind all parties that if you have any private documents, keep them flat on the desk to avoid the cameras.

Please begin the broadcast. The committee acknowledges and honours the traditional owners of the ancestral lands upon which we meet today, the Whadjuk Noongar people, and pays its respects to their elders both past and present.

You have signed the document titled "Information for Witnesses". Have you read and understood the document? Just a collective nodding of the head is fine. For Hansard's purposes, everyone nodded their head.

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[10.40 am]

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So with that, minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No, I am fine; thank you.

**The CHAIR:** First of all, I will just introduce the committee. Hon Jackie Jarvis, to my right; the deputy chair of the committee, Hon Samantha Rowe; Hon Nick Goiran, part of the estimates committee; Hon Dr Brad Pettitt is an apology for today's hearing; and Hon Donna Faragher is attending today as well from the Legislative Council.

I would just like to ask a few questions first in an area that is very important to me, and that is from page 20 of the report on a couple of areas there, in particular with regard to Aboriginal education. With regard to the Aboriginal cultural standards framework, as you all know, we were the first state to introduce an Aboriginal cultural standards framework, something I feel very strongly about. The intent of that framework was of course to embed Aboriginal culture within our curriculum to ensure that students within Western Australian schools were provided with an opportunity to learn more about Aboriginal culture, and that it would ultimately embed all areas of the curriculum. Can you please let us know whether that has actually occurred over the last five years?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I will get the director general to make some comments on that, and if we need Allan Blagaich to join us, we can do that.

**Ms RODGERS:** Absolutely. Thank you, minister. Thank you for the question. We absolutely are committed to ensuring that Aboriginal students succeed as Aboriginal people in our schools. Recently, I published the *Building on strength* document, which also reconfirmed our commitment that was outlined in the Aboriginal cultural standards framework, and it has been a key piece of work for us across the department.

The types of things that have been going on in terms of the department are, of course, the elders in residence program where we have two elders in residence that have been providing us both kind of operational and strategic support in regard to Aboriginal outcomes. There are a number of programs and things underway in each individual school and actually, over a number of our measures, we are seeing Aboriginal students succeeding in regard to their outcomes. We have currently got underway an additional program through the Leadership Institute where we are wanting to ensure that our principals can access particular Aboriginal cultural standards professional learning and development. That will be launched shortly, and I am just thinking of if there are other things.

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School-based specific programs: there is obviously an investment in Follow the Dream. This program enriches Aboriginal students in regard to celebrating their culture, supporting them in regard to their identity and language. That is delivered in partnership with us. Clontarf, of course. Clontarf deliver school-based programs for Aboriginal boys. We see a high degree of success through the Clontarf program. There has been additional funding. The minister might like to talk about the additional funding for the Aboriginal girls program. That has gone into schools. We now have a series of program providers on the panel—that is the new panel—that schools can access in regard to additional support for Aboriginal students in schools.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** If you had specific questions about curriculum, chair, do you want me to get Allan Blagaich? He is probably the best person.

**The CHAIR:** If you can value-add to that response. Thank you very much to the director general; that has been very helpful. Are there any specific areas of the curriculum that have been introduced, particularly over the last few days, that would be captured in the cultural standards framework?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Do you mean the last few years?

**The CHAIR:** Last few years—sorry! I am sure you have been very busy the last few days!

**Mr BLAGAICH:** If I go back a little, over the course of the past 12 months, we have commenced preparation looking at the languages curriculum specifically. You would be aware this is the first year that all year 7 students must study a language in Western Australia. One of the strategies that we hope will assist us in preserving languages, and Aboriginal languages in particular, is we are concentrating on developing Noongar language in the Aboriginal languages framework. That work has been commenced this year. We have employed somebody who is working with us and we hope to have that ready for release for schools next year. That is the first thing.

Secondly, we are working with 10 schools—all public schools at this stage—who are looking at introducing Noongar language as, basically, a verbal language, rather than the full languages framework. We believe that will provide us with an opportunity to pilot the preservation and, in some cases, perhaps revival. If we think of Derby, we might be able to work on the revival of languages.

Further, in terms of specifically the work that we are doing, we have provided serious feedback on the review of the Australian curriculum through the minister. As you may be aware, we have actually pushed back so that we would make sure that the work to do with dreamtime and Aboriginal histories is clearly evident and that we have determined where it should be introduced along the spectrum from P to 10. Those deliberations as to the work that has been done will be determined within the next short while by the minister —

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Tomorrow.

**Mr BLAGAICH:** Tomorrow—will be signed off. Western Australia's feedback has been rigorous in that area. We are looking at that piece, as well as the work that we have—it is the cross-curricular approaches that we are pushing really strongly. The notion of teaching a background in languages or histories is not just restricted in HASS and the languages, that it actually is evident in the arts, the technologies, the whole way through. We have been developing support materials—and they were loaded up last year, over 140 support materials—where we have exemplified how Aboriginal histories et cetera can be dealt with.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** If I can just add to that, chair, when I interjected and said tomorrow, tomorrow is the meeting of all the federal education ministers, and we will sign off, if everything goes according to plan, on the work that ACARA has done on the curriculum. Allan is correct: Western Australia, as is our wont from time to time, pushed back on some elements that were being proposed in that

curriculum around HASS and maths, in particular. Those issues have largely been resolved, but we have maintained the position that you took when you held this position, which is Western Australia will adopt and adapt.

**The CHAIR:** I remember it well.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** We will do the bits and the sequencing that fits us and suits us and our context. We are not going to be dictated to by other jurisdictions or by the commonwealth.

**The CHAIR:** I really like that! Adopt and adapt, yes—do not allow those terrible eastern staters to determine what we present in our schools, I tell you.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Correct. So, we are really popular, as you might imagine!

**The CHAIR:** I can imagine, yes. You just better hope the federal government is not in caretaker!

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Well, not tomorrow, they will not be.

**The CHAIR:** With that then, are we able to get a list or an identification of the programs that have been introduced since the implementation of the cultural standards framework? Are you able to provide that?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** We can probably do that. Yes.

[*Supplementary Information No A1.*]

**The CHAIR:** KindiLink, thank you, minister, for retaining that. I think that is a wonderful, wonderful program. I did notice you have now got 55 schools. When it started out, there were 38.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** A variation of that is CaLDEYLink, which is cultural —

**The CHAIR:** Which schools?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Maylands is one.

**Mr BLAGAICH:** Bentley. Bentley is the other one.

**The CHAIR:** Did you say Kalgoorlie?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** CaLDEYLink as in culturally and linguistically —

**The CHAIR:** I am aware of that. I thought you said Kalgoorlie. I thought you were pandering to me!

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** If that helps, I am prepared to consider it!

**The CHAIR:** Can we please get a list of the KindiLink schools? I know this is difficult, but —

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I think we can hand it up to you.

[10.50 am]

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I will give it to you on notice.

[*Supplementary Information No A2.*]

**The CHAIR:** Within A2, I know it is really difficult with this one, but just as a matter of interest, are you able to provide student numbers from KindiLink for that period? Is that possible?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I am not sure. Why do we not take the question on notice and if we are able to give you some indication of participation, we will try to do that.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. That would be handy. It is pushing it—I doubt that you would be able to—but I would be interested to know how many parents were actively involved as well, if you have any of those figures.

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**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I am happy to take it notice. If we can provide you something, we will. I make the point that because of the situation we are in with COVID, we have really gone hands-off with trying to make schools collect information that is just adding to their burden at the moment. If we can get you something, we will.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. I appreciate that.

Another great program is elders in residence. Colleen Hayward and Ian Trust are still the elders in residence. How active has their involvement been in the elders in residence program?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Pretty active. I meet with them I think twice a year. The director general is telling me that Colleen is now standing down. They meet far more regularly with the director general than with me. I meet with them I think twice a year. I have certainly used them as a sounding board and for advice on a range of matters when I need it, but perhaps the director general can add to that.

**Ms RODGERS:** Thank you, minister. I have been meeting regularly with Ian and Colleen. I have consulted them at a strategic level in terms of the organisation and the next steps and how we are faring in terms of Aboriginal outcomes. I have consulted with them quite heavily in terms of our strategic plan and our focus documents. You will see that we have had a continued and enhanced focus in regard to Aboriginal students. I also consult with them on specific matters. They are working with us and alongside us on our departmental reconciliation action plan. Colleen is stepping down. I think that is a workload issue. We are also interested in how we can further support and bolster the voice of Aboriginal leaders within the education department, so we are looking at next steps with regard to what that might look like.

**The CHAIR:** That is good to hear. Two things: first of all, when the elders in residence program was originally introduced, which was a number of years ago now, I originally intended to have more than just the two. We started off with two, and the intent was to broaden the expanse somewhat and have more elders in residence to provide that, dare I say, intellectual capacity. Has there been any intent to increase the number of elders in residence?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No, there has not, and I was not aware of that history myself. I am certainly not opposed to that. I think it would be a good thing to do because it is a big load for two individuals. Obviously, the breadth and depth of issues across the Indigenous spectrum mean that you need to have as many voices as you can. I am happy to ask the director general to look at how we might do that.

**The CHAIR:** That would be good. Just to give you a bit of history on that, I grew up in Kalgoorlie. I am not Aboriginal. The minister would not know, and a lot of people who are involved in the department are not Aboriginal, so it was so good to have that intellectual history there to provide that information. Ideally, we do not need an army of elders, but just a cohort of Aboriginal elders that can provide that feedback. With that said, do the elders have anything to do with the Aboriginal education unit within DOE?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, they do. It is also worth noting the appointment of Kevin O'Keefe as the principal adviser. That is a very senior position, and he provides a really solid sounding board. You might like to answer the question more directly.

**Ms RODGERS:** Thank you, minister. Kevin O'Keefe is our chief adviser on the corporate executive. He is a standing member of the corporate executive and is, obviously, an adviser to the executive and also across all matters of policy with regard to the Department of Education. He also has a key number of special projects that he is currently leading, one of which is consideration of AIEOs in schools and how we might further enhance their support in schools. Also, alongside that are the directors of education. We have fairly newly appointed directors of education with a new JDF.

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**Hon SUE ELLERY:** If I can interrupt, these are like regional directors.

**Ms RODGERS:** Through their appointment, one of the expectations was that our directors of education had key links and sustained links with their local elders because it was important for us to have that support of the executive, but it is the expectation that at a local level, our directors of education actually are getting the voice of their elders and, indeed, working in partnership with them on all local matters in regard to education.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. One final one and then I will hand over. This is not within page 20, but I notice one thing is missing. It is not technically the Department of Education, but I would be interested to know, minister, if you are aware of it, or certainly the director general, the PALS program, which was originally —

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** What is it called?

**The CHAIR:** The PALS program—partnership, acceptance, learning, sharing. Are you familiar with it at all? People from the department would be. Just to let you know, the previous Department of Aboriginal Affairs organised it. Schools would be provided with an opportunity to provide theatre, music or literature, or whatever, with regard to Aboriginal culture. It was fantastic. It was really, really good. They worked with DOE. We would bring them all up to Parliament House and we would invite all the members to come along. When I started out as minister, we had about 120, and by the time we finished, we had about 550 schools actively involved in the PALS program. It provided another avenue for schools to be actively involved in Aboriginal culture, and it worked really well. But I have not heard nor seen it since. I just wondered if it still exists.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** That is a good question. I do not know if anybody here knows, but, if not, I will take it on notice, because it might be something that I need to ask the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs about. Allan, can you add something?

**Mr BLAGAICH:** A lot of that work was done through Barking Gecko and several of the theatre companies that coordinated that. Over the past few years, the focus has gone away from that, but I know that schools are approaching individual people and organising incursions into school with elders and storytelling. For example, Gail Barrow and her son are doing work in schools and making sure that they are doing the cultural understandings. A lot of that work with the performances is not occurring as regularly unless schools are organising those incursions.

**The CHAIR:** So the PALS program in its former state does not exist anymore?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I think I have some more information, chair. I think it has just changed where it comes from. It is now in the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries. It is funding assistance of \$1 000 for schools to complete a PALS project. It still does exist.

**The CHAIR:** It still does exist, okay. That was really good, I have to say. The more schools, the better with that one. It is just another avenue. I am pleased to hear that.

One final one to finish off. I went and visited a program yesterday called Abmusic.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Abmusic?

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Down in Clontarf.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, I know.

**The CHAIR:** Do they have any connection with DOE at all?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I know the organisation. They are on the old Clontarf site. I do not think we fund them—Jay would know whether we do or not—but I can find out, if you like, if there any

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partnerships that exist. My recollection, and I might be wrong, is that they were in receipt of federal funds, but, anyway, I will see what I can find out.

**The CHAIR:** I would really appreciate it. They do training, I have to say. They were really good. I remember when I was minister, I went out there a couple of times. They are doing really good things, but, like everyone, they are really struggling.

[*Supplementary Information No A3.*]

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I might stay on page 20 with respect to some of the questions that have already been asked by the chair. With respect to KindiLink, I appreciate you taking on notice some details around participation by both students and parents if possible.

I also note it does refer to the fact that there are some sites that provide play and learn sessions for both Aboriginal children and non-Aboriginal children. As part of the question on notice that has been taken, are you able to provide me with a list of those sites that actually do provide those sessions for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students?

[11.00 am]

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, I can certainly take it on notice. I am not sure we would have a central list because I know from my visits with schools that there are individual schools that run their own versions of playgroups which include both. But we will take it notice, and to the extent we are able to provide information, I am happy to do that.

[*Supplementary Information No A4.*]

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** As I understand, yes, there are a number of schools that have the Playgroup WA program, but I am specifically interested in the KindiLink sites, if I can put it that way.

Further to that, brief mention was made with regard to the programs to engage female Aboriginal students. I recall when I previously asked a question to you, minister, with regard to this particular aspect, that a procurement process was underway. I am keen to just understand where that is at at the moment. Has that now been completed? Are the programs that are being referred to in this annual report successful in terms of being identified as a service provider? In addition to that, are there any others that are not listed?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I am just seeing if there is anything in addition to what is printed in there. It is the same number. I will see if I can get you some numbers. Numbers are up. In 2021, there was an increase in the number of Aboriginal girls participating in those programs. It went up by 100, from 2 600 to 2 711.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Are we able to get a breakdown of the participation across each of those services. I appreciate that would need to be taken on notice.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, it would be. I am sure they are required to provide that information as part of their contractual arrangements.

[*Supplementary Information No A5.*]

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** That would be helpful, thank you.

I now turn to page 23 with regard to language development centres. I suppose I have a general question first. With regard to each language development centre—and, again, I appreciate this will need to be taken on notice—are you able to provide me for each centre each of the primary schools that fall within the centre's catchment area? If there is a table or a map that would be available to assist in that process, that would also be appreciated.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, we can take that on notice.

[*Supplementary Information No A6.*]

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**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Further to that with regard to speech and language difficulties, minister, you would know that I have been advocating with regard to a proposal for a pilot to have speech pathology services provided directly into schools. Are you able to tell me—I appreciate it will be during this reporting period or anything you can advise—as to whether any proposal has been put to the department, either to you as the minister or to the department, with regard to at least piloting, or trialling, speech pathology services in schools?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I will see if anyone can say anything more specific. I am trying to cast my mind back. I meet with a lot of people who pitch a lot of things! I am not sure if I have spoken to speech pathologists or speech therapists. I think the question is about has somebody put a pitch —

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Have there been representations to either you as the minister or the department to establish at the very least a pilot program of having speech pathology services provided directly into schools?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I will take that bit on notice. I can tell you that the language development centres do outreach services and they are staffed by speech pathologists. Some of that work is already happening, but you would be well aware, I am sure, there is a significant workforce issue around the providers of those therapy services. There are not enough of them around. Anyway, I will take the question on notice.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Just to clarify, I appreciate your statement with regard to the outreach service. The proposal I am referring to is actually face-to-face speech pathology services directly with students at school. Because as I understand it, the outreach service is primarily professional development support for teachers; I am actually talking about that face-to-face support. If a proposal has been put, are you able to advise me when it was put to either the department or the minister?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Sure.

**The CHAIR:** That is all part of A7.

*[Supplementary Information No A7.]*

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Page 39—we are referencing child and parent centres. I am not sure if this can be provided, but I am going to ask it. Are you able to provide a list of programs that were offered to children and/or parents in 2020 and 2021 for each of the child and parent centres?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I expect we can. We certainly would not have that with us now.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I appreciate that will need to be taken on notice.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Let me see what I have got. You would appreciate they will all be slightly different. For some of them, a program might run for a defined period of time. So if we take a point in time, we will try to provide you with information that way.

*[Supplementary Information No A8.]*

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I am happy if you want to provide it for the 2021 school year. If that is helpful, that would be great. Then, with regard to that is the total number of children and/or parents who participate in programs at the centres recorded?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I would think they would have to as part of their contractual arrangements provide something. But I can tell you this: in 2020–21, the 22 child and parent centres provided 590 programs and services, with approximately 74 000 child attendances and 72 000 adult attendances. To break that down a bit, if we can do that, we will.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I am happy for it to be in that same period of time with regard to the other question that I have already taken on notice.

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Again, I recall asking you this question during the budget estimates period: is there any intention to increase the number of child and parent centres at this stage by the government?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I think we made a couple of election commitments and we are honouring those. Beyond that, there is not a kind of statewide plan, if that is what you were looking for.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** That is my question, thank you.

If I can go back to page 22, with respect to the boarding away from home allowance. Minister, I have it in my head that you have indicated that there was going to be a review after a period of time with respect to the BAHA; is that correct?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Not that I recall. There was a glide path, if you recall. Let me have a little look. That glide path was for a five-year period to the end of this year.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** The end of this current financial year?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** That is a very good question, because you know we operate on school years.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I know that makes it a bit difficult, always.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It looks like calendar to me.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Sorry; the 2022 calendar year?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Correct. There is no plan and I do not remember giving a commitment to review it. You can check on me and find it in *Hansard* if I did.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** That was my recall, but I am happy to corrected otherwise. So at this stage, there is no change with regard to the boarding away from home allowance?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Correct.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I am going to ask it here in terms of support for students with specific educational and engagement needs; it is actually in relation to CARE schools. Are you happy to take it at this point?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes.

[11.10 am]

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Minister, I asked you a question on notice, which I appreciate you providing me an answer to just last week, I think, with regard to funding provided by the state government for CARE schools. I asked it for 2018 up to 2021. I notice that the figures were increasing across every year, but has now decreased between 2020 and 2021—of around \$1.2 million—albeit enrolments have increased. I suppose I am just trying to get an understanding as to the reasoning as to why that has decreased.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Very good question. That is as a consequence of the National School Reform Agreement where the ratio switches between the state and the commonwealth contribution. They will still be funded; it is just who has responsibility for which proportion. CARE schools do a fantastic job and they are growing in number and where they are around the state as well. There is increasing numbers of kids who, for a whole range of reasons, are not able to continue in mainstream schooling.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Okay. Just so that I am clear on that—I appreciate your explanation—essentially, whilst the state component might have dipped in 2021, I am presuming on what you are saying the federal contribution would have increased.

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**Hon SUE ELLERY:** That is my understanding; just let me check so I am not misleading. Yes, that is the answer at an aggregate top level. I mean, if you wanted to go below that, school by school, that would take a fair bit of work, but at an aggregate level, it is that shift in the proportion.

**The CHAIR:** Can I just add to that. Things have changed considerably because back when I first took over, the feds cut their spending and we topped it up, so it is good to see that they have seen the light. Are we able to get a list of the current CARE schools?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Sure.

**The CHAIR:** I appreciate that there is a number of multitudes. I think Port has a number of campuses et cetera. Can we get a list of all the CARE schools now?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, we can.

[*Supplementary Information No A9.*]

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** I will ask one more question. It is on page 25 in the context of staff receiving training with regard to de-escalation and positive handling. Minister, can you explain to me who actually provides or delivers the training; is it the Department of Education or another body?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It is a contract and it is Team Teach Asia Pacific. The department signed a contract in January 2020 for three years with two one-year extensions. They provide training for graduate teachers and school staff in prevention, de-escalation and positive handling and, when it is appropriate, physical restraint. They also developed a blended online training module as well—or they will—to reduce the amount of time that staff are away from the classroom. But it is important to note that blended training model does include a face-to-face requirement of training. I can tell you in 2020—I do not know if this is in the annual report; yes, the 2 700—it was interrupted a little bit, I have to say, by COVID, as is everything, but it was rescheduled as required.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Okay. On that—it might need to be taken on notice—can you tell me what is the proportion of eligible staff who have actually completed the training to date?

**Mr BELL:** It is mandatory for all graduates; it is a mandatory module.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** So it would be for existing staff, I suppose.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** So, mandatory for graduates. We will see what we can provide you in respect of existing —

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Existing staff. That would be great.

[*Supplementary Information No A10.*]

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS:** I am referring to page 29, at the bottom of the page, about STEM classrooms. There was a commitment to convert classrooms in 200 schools to science labs. The wording of it is “200 schools with primary enrolments” to science labs. I am hoping that the term “primary enrolments” is then included in district schools as those small regional schools that do kindy to year 10.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** District high schools—is that what you are talking about?

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS:** Yes, sorry; apologies. My question was: how many of those 200 schools were in regional areas? I am interested in the south west in particular, because we have a lot of those small schools that are very old and whether that was a barrier to those STEM upgrades.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I can give you some information. In respect to those 200—so that was part of our 2017 election commitment—30 were in the south west. That commitment has been built on since then so that we are now doing STEM classrooms or STEM labs really in every facility, including

district high schools. In the first round, the primary component of district high schools was not captured. In the second round, as part of our current rollout, district high schools are captured.

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS:** But I assume those classrooms would be used dual purpose for students?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No, they are science —

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS:** Sorry, not dual purpose. I meant that primary students and high school students in the one school could use the same facility.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No, because they are a separate design and, obviously, honourable member, I do not know if you remember your physics and chem, but you were not doing it in year 2!

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS:** I did not do physics and chem at all.

**Hon SAMANTHA ROWE:** Minister, I am referring to page 24 and it is around student wellbeing, in particular school psychologists. As you would be aware, our government made an election commitment to provide additional school psychologists, and I am just wondering if you are able to advise the committee how many school psychologists are currently available for our public schools.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, that commitment was to add an additional 100, made up of psychs and lead and supervising psychs in public schools. I can tell you, at the start of this school year, we had employed 391 FTE, which was an increase from 376 in 2021. I think if the committee is interested in this, you should read two documents. You should read the report that Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson released about two weeks ago about mental health as well, because this is a growing issue. I do not know if it is a function of better diagnosis and that we are talking more about mental health issues, but it alarms me that teachers and principals are reporting some very young children demonstrating severe mental health issues. Teachers are not mental health professionals. They need to be able to teach, so we have got to make sure that we can provide schools and families with the resources to get the help that they need. School psychs are part of that, but they are not the sole solution; it takes a much broader solution.

**Hon SAMANTHA ROWE:** I would also like to ask a question and it is in relation to educational and engagement needs. It is on page 22 of the report. Are you able to provide details, minister, of funding allocations that are made available to schools to support students that have a disability?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** The way that disability funding is provided to the school is in two parts. There is an individual disability allocation, IDA, and then there is the education adjustment. There are two mechanisms. The first one, the IDA, is literally, as the name suggests, about the individual and that is based on a diagnosis and an assessment of what level of support that child needs in the classroom. The educational adjustment is a broader pool of money that schools can use to address the needs of those children who do not have a diagnosis.

[11.20 am]

Now, that could be for a range of reasons. There are some families for whom everything else is so complicated and so dysfunctional that the notion of them getting to appointments to get assessments and the like is just beyond them; it is not going to happen. There are other categories of parents—you can understand this—for whom coming to terms with the notion that their child might need some extra help is quite a difficult and confronting thing for them to come to terms with and they may not want to get a diagnosis, irrespective of what their child might be presenting with. So, schools have got to have capacity to meet the needs of all those children, and they do that using those two buckets of money. In addition to that is SSEN—the school of —

**Mr BELL:** School of special educational need.

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**Hon SUE ELLERY:** That is a centralised service that can provide and does provide schools and individual students with specific programs and assistance as required.

**Hon SAMANTHA ROWE:** How do schools access the SSEN?

**Mr BELL:** We have four schools of special educational need—one disability, behaviour, medical, and mental health and sensory. Schools access those through our statewide services division. As the minister said, the supports are for students, and often to build the capacity of teachers to deal with particular students they have whether it is a behavioural issue or disability or a sensory requirement or, indeed, medical and mental health.

**Hon SAMANTHA ROWE:** All right. Thank you.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Minister, can I take you to page 24 of the annual report? Again, dealing with the broader topic of student wellbeing, you will note there in the final paragraph in that first section, “Supporting student wellbeing”, it says —

For the 2020 school year, 100% of schools indicated that protective behaviours education was being fully implemented. Schools will continue to be supported to ensure full implementation during 2021 and beyond.

What is the name of the program that is being implemented by schools?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** The protective behaviours program?

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Yes.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I will get the deputy director general of schools to answer you.

**Mr BELL:** The protective behaviours curriculum is spread across the pre-primary to year 10 curriculum. So, for all areas from pre-primary to year 10—Allan may well be able to answer this or add further to this—there is varying content around protective behaviours for students, depending on their age of development. That content would range from understanding of self, understanding of how to relate with others and being respectful. It is often based in self-care and how we interact with others. But, again, it is graduates through P to year 10 depending on the age of the child and their stage of development.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I wonder, honourable member, if it is helpful to you, I referred earlier to the work that has been done by ACARA—the national curriculum body—on curriculum because that has captured some of this work as well, particularly around consent education and respectful relationships. So while we have what we have now in the curriculum, that will change. I cannot tell you exactly what it will look like because Western Australia will adopt and adapt what is going to be agreed on the national curriculum to suit our particular needs, but I think we will see some changes occurring in curriculum around that.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Okay. Is it definitely a program—this protective behaviours program—that is being implemented from pre-primary to year 10?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It is embedded in the curriculum, and so at various points along the curriculum—perhaps I will get Mr Blagaich to explain it—it is all-age related. So, it is built into the curriculum.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** I understand that, but the range that was provided in the early answer was pre-primary to year 10, and it just seems inconsistent with answers that I have been previously provided in question time when we refer to K–12. I want to be clear: is the protective behaviours program being implemented in Western Australia from K–12 or pre-primary to year 10?

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**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Curriculum is mandated, if you like, in K–10. In years 11 and 12, students obviously choose the particular course path that they want to take. But perhaps I will get Mr Blagaich to explain how it is accurate to say that protective behaviours are embedded across the curriculum.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Across K–12 or pre-primary to year 10—that is what I want to know, not across the curriculum. I want to know the years in which the protective behaviours program is being fully implemented in Western Australia. One hundred per cent of schools indicated that protective behaviours education was being fully implemented—that is what the annual report says.

**Mr BLAGAICH:** So protective behaviours is embedded into the health curriculum in kindergarten through to year 10. It teaches students, depending on their level of maturation, the needs that they need. So, we will teach the younger children about acceptance, permission, rejections—so, as simple as, “Can I borrow your pencil?” “Yes/no.” We talk to them about that kind of affirmation work. Depending on maturity, the curriculum progresses through to year 10, and some of the broader topics such as consent, acceptance, the right to say no et cetera are covered through that health curriculum all the way through. In years 11 and 12 the assumption is that that work has been covered through the K–10, because most students in years 11 and 12 choose a minimum of five courses—six in year 11 usually, but they drop down to five—but health may not be one of them. Schools, though, do support students because they have other programs that will be running in the schools, which are run as additional hours, where we are dealing with consent, drug education et cetera—topics that can be carried out.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Okay, but the point is that the protective behaviours education that is being fully implemented in Western Australia commences in kindergarten.

**Mr BLAGAICH:** Kindergarten through to year 10. If the content is in the curriculum, from kindergarten through to 10 —

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Sorry; I am going to interrupt there. It is not accurate to assume that that line that is written in the annual report—100 per cent of schools are fully implementing protective behaviours—it is not accurate to presume that years 11 and 12, for example, do not do anything about protective behaviours. That is an issue that every school will put in place—particular programs and ways of addressing that beyond the mandated curriculum that applies K through to 10, and the director general can add to that.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Well, before the director general adds to that, can I just ask about the kindergarten program, which is the one that I am interested in, because we are all clear now that it begins in kindergarten—through the health curriculum? What is provided to those students? Is that a program or a document that is capable of being tabled?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No. We can give you descriptors of the curriculum, but each school will deliver that curriculum in the way that they deliver the curriculum in their school. It might be that the director general can add some more to that, but if you were looking for a single document that says, “This is how every school will deal with the issue of protective behaviours in kindy,” there is not one single document.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** It does not exist. Yes; that is fine. Minister, how do we then know that every kindergarten student is receiving protective behaviours education?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Because schools have to report and because schools are required to implement the curriculum. What we do not mandate is how they deliver the curriculum.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Yes. Absolutely; I understand that, and you have made the point helpfully with regard to the “how”. I am just wanting to get an assurance that there is some data, or some audit has been undertaken, that gives the department sufficient confidence to say that 100 per cent of

schools indicated that protective behaviours education was being fully implemented. Now, that might be in the form of a survey in which somebody has ticked a box and says, “Yes, we are doing it.” Now, “Yes, we are doing it”, might mean they are doing it in year 10, but it might not mean they are doing it in kindergarten. So, on what basis is the department confident that 100 per cent of kindergarten students have received protective behaviours education in the 2020 school year?

[11.30 am]

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I will happily get the director general to provide you with information about how the survey is done. I guess I just make the point, honourable member, that curriculum is a very big beast and you can be confident that the curriculum is being delivered because it has built in within it the capacity for schools to make decisions about how they do that. I will get the director general to give you the information about the survey.

**Ms RODGERS:** Thank you, minister. You are right. Protective Behaviours education is mandated in the curriculum, so schools are required to deliver that. It is a curriculum, not a plug-and-play program. It is not a kind of unique specific program that is delivered to every child through every teacher. It is a very —

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Director general, just remember, I am just interested in kindergarten at this point in time.

**Ms RODGERS:** Yes. How do we know that all schools are implementing it? We run a survey every year, and the survey that we ran in 2020 told us that all schools are implementing Protective Behaviours.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Yes. Does the survey specifically require the person responding to the survey to give an indication as to whether that program is being delivered in kindergarten?

**Ms RODGERS:** Yes, it does.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Okay. Now, the curriculum, as you have indicated, is being tailored for each specific year, so for the K–10 range is there a specific portion of the curriculum that directs schools not how to deliver the Protective Behaviours program but what type of Protective Behaviours education is to be provided?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Because, obviously, the Protective Behaviours program that is being implemented in year 10 would be very different to what is provided in kindergarten.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes. I made that point. I thought Allan Blagaich did as well. It is age appropriate.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** That is right. So, for the school that is implementing it for the year 10 students, what is the document that guides them on what it is they are to do different to what they would do for a kindergarten student?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Perhaps I will get Allan to explain the way that the curriculum works as well. There is not a single booklet or document that goes and says, “This is how you will do it in year 10 and this is how you will do it in year 2.” Curriculum is much bigger than that, but I will get Allan to outline that for you.

**Mr BLAGAICH:** The Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline was developed from the curriculum that we adopted and adapted from ACARA. It is broken up in the eastern states. The health curriculum was done in bands originally, so 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. At the time of consultation in Western Australia, our health teachers and primary teachers particularly said, “This doesn’t work for us. We want it broken down into individual years.” So, we have taken the health

curriculum that ACARA has developed in bands and split it out into single years. Whilst the minister is correct that there is not a single program in there, topics and themes such as the consent topic in its variations all the way through—so consent as it is being dealt with, and it is proposed to be dealt with even more explicitly out of the revised Australian curriculum, is very different in the year 10 course. It tends to lead in in the secondary years into introductions around what is appropriate in terms of relationships between boys and girls—all genders and sexual preferences. That is dealt with there. But in the earlier years, it is made age appropriate. The content is spread out. If you want a copy of what that is, on our website is the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline. You would go in under health and it will be spread out and it will have the whole spread there from kindy, which are guidelines, and pre-primary, where it actually kicks in. But the kindy are guidelines. Pre-primary, it kicks in.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Thank you very much. Minister, the annual report says that schools will continue to be supported to ensure full implementation during 2021 and beyond. What does that support look like?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** That is the support that is provided by Allan Blagaich's agency, SCSA—the state curriculum authority. You would appreciate there are various subcommittees that are set up in SCSA that keep abreast of the information that schools need, and schools can seek assistance from SCSA on all sorts of matters related to the curriculum. Statewide Services as well, I am being advised.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Yes. We are talking about Protective Behaviours specifically.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It is the same. The same support is provided across the curriculum.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Sure, but the annual report could say that with respect to any topic—mathematics, science, I think you were referring to chemistry and physics earlier—but it does not do that. There is nowhere in the annual report that says schools needing assistance with respect to the implementation of the chemistry curriculum will continue to be supported. Someone has gone out of their way to specifically say Protective Behaviours is being fully implemented and we—the government—are supporting them. I would like to know what that support looks like rather than just, "Someone can pick up the phone and talk to a committee."

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Sure. Let me go back a step, honourable member. This is the report of the Department of Education. The Department of Education, under the headings of "Student wellbeing" and "Supporting student wellbeing", has identified that area of the curriculum, which plays into student wellbeing in particular. So, this is the same section of the annual report that talks about mental health, it talks about learning and disability, it talks about school psychologists and it talks about suicide prevention, so it is entirely appropriate in that section that it also talks about that area of the curriculum around Protective Behaviours.

You would also be aware, honourable member, in the kind of broader policy debate that is occurring and has occurred in Australia and Western Australia over the last few years, protective behaviour, the issue of consent and the issue of respectful relationships, for example, all of those things have been subject to public debate and kind of elevated in importance, so I think it is entirely appropriate that this section of the Department of Education's annual report reflects on that.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** I am not disagreeing; I am just asking what is the support, but no-one is able to tell me what the support is.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I do not think it is accurate to say that no-one is able to help you. I will get Statewide Services' description for you. Jim can probably give you that, but there are a range of ways that schools are supported.

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**Mr BELL:** Within our Statewide Services are a number of divisions that support teachers in the teaching and learning area. We also have our school psychologists. Every school has access to a school psychologist that can also work with teachers in terms of understanding the Protective Behaviours curriculum. Again, there are people that are quite expert in their field employed from their school into Statewide Services to go out and provide that coaching and mentoring and guidance support across a whole range of the curriculum.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Minister, somewhere in the annual report—I think it is page 32—talks about 217 public school reviews having been undertaken. Are they the reviews to do with re-registration?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Separate?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes. This is a quality assurance exercise, if you like.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Okay. So with the school reviews—the 217—would part of that be an assessment as to whether a school is undertaking or implementing the Protective Behaviours education?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It would be around the curriculum. I can get the director general to set out the things that a school review—it is a formalised process, the things that are set out.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** I do not want to know all the bells and whistles about school reviews; I just want to know whether a school review is going to be specifically looking at Protective Behaviours education.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Well, I can answer that question now. No, it will not be specifically looking at that. It will be looking at a range of things, and Protective Behaviours goes to the culture of the school, it goes to the curriculum, it goes to seeking feedback from the school board, the parent group et cetera, and they may pick up that there are issues around Protective Behaviours. But is there a —

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Sorry; not to misunderstand the question, if there is a disconnect there, I appreciate that the school review is going to be broad and is not a review specifically to do with Protective Behaviours. But as part of that broad review, in the 217 reviews, would it be the type of thing that the reviewer would go in and do some kind of audit or assessment with regard to Protective Behaviours, or is that perhaps too small a detail to be captured in a review?

[11.40 am]

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Certainly they would not initiate it, but it might be something that is raised with them in the course of doing the review.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Right. It is definitely not something on their, for example, reviewer's checklist. They do not go into a school and say, "How are we going with Protective Behaviours?"

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No, they do not.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Right. Might be an idea, because it might then support this notion that 100 per cent of schools are fully implementing Protective Behaviours if someone is actually checking.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** They are, honourable member.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** According to a survey.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes. To suggest that is not satisfactory would be to suggest that the people completing the survey, our hardworking public servants in our schools, are not doing it accurately, and that would not be fair.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** What is the question that is asked in the survey?

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**Hon SUE ELLERY:** We tried to go there, and you said you did not want to know that, honourable member.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** I am asking, then.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** We can get you the survey questions.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** No, no. What is the question that is asked in the survey with respect to Protective Behaviours education?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I think we are going around in circles, chair.

**The CHAIR:** If we can get that survey, it would be helpful.

*[Supplementary Information No A11.]*

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS:** I am just referring to page 33, the ICT upgrades. In the annual report it said there was an agreement with Telstra to increase broadband capacity to 800 public schools. In the six months to January 2021 to June 2021, there were 318 schools. I am just wondering how many have now been completed since June 2021. It mentions as well the flow-on benefit to regional communities surrounding the schools. I am just interested if there is any more information about how that works.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Sure. We started a project in January 2021 which ultimately will provide a total of 803 schools across 753 sites. As of this month, 719 schools have received a Telstra upgrade. That is 513 in the metro and 206 in regional WA. In respect to the flow-on benefit, I might be able to get Jay to talk a bit more about that.

**Mr PECKITT:** Thanks, minister. As part of the work to implement the increases to schools, that will often in the regional town result in additional upgrades to their local infrastructure. So, it might be their exchange or the physical fibre-optic cable that comes into the town. Once that capacity is in the town, we will not necessarily use all of it, from an education perspective, so it then allows local residents or other government agencies to be able to tap into that capacity that is created by the upgrades that are coming through from this project.

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS:** So in areas where the IT equipment is in town; okay.

**Hon SAMANTHA ROWE:** Minister, my question is in relation to page 39 of the annual report. I am wondering if yourself or someone is able to give maybe a little bit more information around the trial that is happening with the initiative of the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Early Years Link project.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, I can. So, I mentioned that before and I mentioned Maylands Peninsula Primary School and Bentley Primary School. I do think you have got to give credit where credit is due, and I have done this publicly before, but the previous Minister for Education before me introduced KindiLink and it was a very successful program and it continues to be. This is a variation on that. KindiLink was originally introduced to really try and engage at the earliest level possible those Aboriginal families who might otherwise not see school as a place that they were familiar with or that they wanted their children to engage with, and to really engage the parents at an early point. Some of those same difficulties were being experienced with members of the culturally and linguistically diverse community, where they really were not used to engaging with the schools and did not see them as particularly welcoming places. This is a three-year trial to provide supported playgroup for those families at those two schools. It started in the second half of last year at Maylands and Bentley. It is really to improve the capacity of the family to engage as well and then really connect them. It is about six hours a week of play and learn. The point of this is that the parents have to be there. That is the difference between it and a childcare service where the parent

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drops off the child. In Maylands, there were 10 languages and in Bentley, eight language groups, so it is a pretty diverse program.

**Hon SAMANTHA ROWE:** When does that finish, sorry?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It is three years, so 2024–25.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, I direct you to page 102, and this is essentially with regard to total income and services. What I am looking for here is a bit of, I guess, some information on the current funding model that is used, the student-centred funding model which was introduced in 2015. The intent of that was of course to ensure that the money followed the child and those that traditionally, for want of a better term, missed out. There were not any favourites in terms of funding, that there was more integrity behind the funding. The original funding model was based on a premise of P through 3; 4 to 6; 7 to 10; and 11 and 12. I gave 11 and 12 extra because we had the changes. With that, has that been retained, that criteria?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, essentially. I might get Jay to talk you through that if there is more detail that you need, but essentially that remains the same. There is probably more money now going into early years as well from a variety of other programs, but we tweaked some elements of the student-centred funding model. I thought at the time and I think now it is essentially sound, and in terms of school autonomy, it has certainly worked well and principals value their capacity to match the funding to the students at their school. There are always issues around—because you have to take a point in time at some point, and you do your census in term 1 and then again in term 3. So, there is always room for some argument from time to time that the student came the day after the census was done and that has changed the arrangements for the school. There are always some niggly issues around that, but I might just get Jay to confirm that my assessment of the bands, if you like, of funding for the years is —

**The CHAIR:** Just before you do, just essentially what I am looking for is: has the integrity of those bands been retained in terms of the implementation in 2015 to today? That was, as I said—I am almost certain this is right, but you might correct me if I am wrong—K through 3; 4 through 6; 7 through 10; and 11 and 12. If there has been a shift or change, what has it been?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It is just about right. It is K and then pre-primary to year 3.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, I meant pre-primary through 3.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I will let Jay add some to that.

**Mr PECKITT:** Essentially, as the minister said, the foundations of the model remain the same from when you were minister. We let the only few minor adjustments that we have made follow the evaluation of the model where we made a slight amendment to the locality allocation to recognise the additional cost up.

**The CHAIR:** That was the second part of my question, so I will get on to that. Just in terms of the vertical component, that has been retained, has it?

**Mr PECKITT:** Yes. The foundations of the model have stayed the same, including all those elements from kindergarten to year 12.

**The CHAIR:** If you have a look at the horizontal component there, where you had the mainstream, but essentially then you had rural, I think regional, socio-economic, disability, English as a second language and Aboriginality. They are the five, from memory, that existed.

**Mr PECKITT:** Yes, so we have Aboriginal allocation, social disadvantage, English as an additional language or dialect, the individual disability allocation, education adjustment, the enrolment-linked base.

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**The CHAIR:** Has that shifted at all, or have there been any changes in that?

[11.50 am]

**Mr PECKITT:** The only real changes that have been made are we adjusted the locality allocation just to recognise some additional costs that occur up in regional towns. The other main change we have made is around English as an additional language. We introduced a proficiency check into that calculation that allowed us to extend the distribution of those funds. Previously, if you were proficient in English, you received funding. Now we have implemented a change to check whether you are proficient; and, if you are not, we have used those funds to focus on those who are more in need. For example, we now include Aboriginal students who have English as an additional dialect. We have added an additional year of funding to go from two years to three. There was one other change. Now we have also included pre-primary to get funding that did not previously receive it.

**The CHAIR:** Have you got the funding per student for that vertical stream?

**Mr PECKITT:** I do.

**The CHAIR:** Are you able to provide that?

**Mr PECKITT:** Yes.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** We can read it out.

**The CHAIR:** If you can do it now, it will not take long.

**Mr PECKITT:** This is the 2021 allocation. For kindergarten—noting that is obviously only a part because they are not full-time students—4 914; pre-primary to year 3 is 8 538; years 4 to 6, 7 134; years 7 to 10, 9 335; and years 11 to 12 is 10 036. There is also a slight taper in there once you get above a certain size in secondary, so that brings the number down, for those that are above that limit, to 8 150 if you are between years 7 and 10 and then 8 851 if you are between years 11 and 12.

**The CHAIR:** In a generic sense, not taking away the student-centred funding model, one of the issues that was raised initially was that the larger secondary schools probably were advantaged more. Has there been any shift in that?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes. We did make a tweak—was it in 2019, I think?

**Mr PECKITT:** It was 2018, I think.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** We did adjust that balance a bit to recognise that the kind of proportions went beyond what might fairly be described as economies of scale and so there was an adjustment in the proportions. I might see if Jay can outline that.

**Mr PECKITT:** Yes, and this was supported by the review that we did. Once it gets to a certain point, the economies of scale kick in. That is in line with what I was talking about earlier. Once you hit a certain threshold, which is 1 200, the funding for students in those secondary schools is lower than what it would be otherwise, so there is basically a taper that comes in.

**The CHAIR:** Is there a threshold level for the economies of scale?

**Mr PECKITT:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** What is it?

**Mr PECKITT:** It is 1 200 students.

**The CHAIR:** Just very quickly, do we have available bank balances of the schools?

**Mr PECKITT:** As in individual?

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**The CHAIR:** Yes—individual schools.

**Mr PECKITT:** I have an aggregate number but not every school bank balance here with me.

**The CHAIR:** Secondary schools you do not?

**Mr PECKITT:** I may have a summary.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** That used to be a big issue.

**The CHAIR:** Yes; that is why I am interested to know if there has been any shift.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It has not got much attention lately.

**Mr PECKITT:** I do have it by school classification. At June 2021, there was \$396.9 million in school bank accounts. Primary made up \$151.691 million and secondary was \$160.338 million.<sup>1</sup>

**The CHAIR:** Do you have individual schools?

**Mr PECKITT:** I do not have them here with me, but we can provide that.

**The CHAIR:** Can you provide that?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, I can take that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Can you do it for primary as well?

**Mr PECKITT:** Yes. We have every school's bank balance.

[*Supplementary Information No A12.*]

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Minister, we are still on page 24 of the department's annual report, this time on the penultimate paragraph under the heading "Addressing concerning student behaviour"; reference there is made to the launch in late 2018 of the *Let's take a stand together* plan to address violence in schools. Interestingly, there it says the numbers of students suspended and excluded have increased since the launch, but then the very next paragraph demonstrates the opposite. What is the source of information that brings us to the conclusion that the number of students suspended and excluded has increased?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Just let me read the last paragraph on that page. In 2020, 15 000 were suspended compared to 2016. That is because there was less time at school. It goes on to explain that, honourable member.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** I understand the explanation is provided in the final paragraph, but what is the basis of the information that gives rise to the preceding paragraph? There is an assertion there.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** It is because they have, perhaps not in total aggregate but as a proportion. I get regular reports on the number of suspensions and exclusions that are occurring in schools. Before this policy was introduced, the regular number of students who were suspended was relatively high, but it is certainly higher now and the number of exclusions was actually very low and that is much higher now than it was. While the aggregate numbers over that particular period of time, honourable member, were disrupted, it is certainly the case that it is the practice now of schools to suspend and exclude a lot more than it was before the policy was introduced.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Would you have the 2021 figures available?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I might have. Exclusions, for example, in 2016 were eight. In 2021, they were 76. I will see if I have got the suspension numbers. Suspension numbers in 2016 were 30 484. In 2020— I do not have 2021 —

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** It was 15 943.

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<sup>1</sup> A letter of clarification about this part of the transcript can be accessed on the committee webpage.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** — suspensions were 36 203. There is a number of suspensions versus the students actually suspended. I hate to say this, but a student might be suspended more than once.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** So that we are comparing apples with apples, what is the number of students who were suspended in 2016 and also in 2020?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Sure.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Sorry; not 2020, because we know that—2021 if possible.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I do not have that here, but I can get that for you, honourable member.  
[*Supplementary Information No A13.*]

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Do you have the 2016?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** In 2016, actual students suspended is 12 649.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** But the information that will come back to the committee is the number of students suspended in 2021?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Correct.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Would you also be able to provide us with the number of students excluded in 2021? I think the number of 76 you gave earlier was possibly for 2020.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No; it was for 2021.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** We have already got it, then; that is fine.

Minister, this *Let's take a stand together* plan includes 10 actions, the first of which is that principals are to suspend a student who attacks other students or starts fights. The first bullet point in that action is "automatic suspension for students who attack other students or instigate fights". Who monitors adherence with that action?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** The district office and then, where necessary, the director general.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Was that action—that is action 1, automatic suspension for students who attack other students or instigate fights—implemented consistently during the reporting period?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I do not know that I could say "consistently". It was certainly implemented and that is why you have seen an increase in the numbers, because it is done school by school. I will see, honourable member. From time to time, people will raise issues directly with me or through their local member and I will get a report from the department on what occurred and whether or not suspension occurred.

[12.00 noon]

There is a view held by some, coming from the best possible intent, by teachers who know that the reasons that these kids are acting out is not because they are bad kids, it is because of what is going on at home or what is going on in their community. So sometimes I have experienced a reluctance by teachers and by school leaders to take that kind of action, when I might think on a bald reading of the facts out you go.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** That is then dealing with it on a case-by-case basis, and the action here is saying "automatic suspension"; it does not seem to indicate there is any scope for discretion. I appreciate you get these reports from time to time brought to you. How do you or how does the director general satisfy yourselves that this is happening automatically?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** There is some discretion around, for example, kids with disability. Now that may or may not be a disability with a diagnosis or not; that might be because the school knows that there are cognitive issues there. There is some room there to move. I do not think we could say

categorically every single time, every single school, every single acting principal, deputy principal, applies it in exactly the same way, because they do take account of the particular circumstances. But I can see from the numbers that I receive on a very regular basis that the number of suspensions has gone up and the number of exclusions has gone up. I am certainly satisfied that part of the reason we did this was not just about the actual violence but because teachers were saying to us they did not feel that the department was backing them and they did not feel that they could take action when they thought action was necessary. I think that culture has changed.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** Is there data kept with respect to how many occasions a student attacks another student or instigates fights? Is that kept?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** There is not a single source; no, there is not.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** So we do not know how many times a student attacked another student and therefore how many suspensions should have arisen as a result of that in accordance with this policy?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No, we do not. Frankly, it is not something I would ask schools to record, because the honourable member is a parent himself—I am sure his children are incredibly well behaved—but sometimes kids fight and a judgement has got to be made about the severity and all of those circumstances.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** In which case, it is not an automatic suspension.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Honourable member, there is discretion built in to make a judgement call and teachers and principals do that very well every single day.

**The CHAIR:** Just to conclude on this issue, the Midland Academy—is that still operational?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Yes, it is.

**The CHAIR:** How many students, say, on average are at Midland Academy?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** We will take it on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Are we able to get it over a period of time? I would be interested to see that, and for members' benefit, that is for disengaged students, and it was out at the old Midland Primary School. [*Supplementary Information No A14.*]

**The CHAIR:** With that, minister, on the back of the conversation, almost all disengaged students are good kids —

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Of course they are.

**The CHAIR:** — and are just a victim of their environment, and that is why I have an enormous amount of respect for CARE schools. I think they do an extraordinary job, but of course they are non-government schools. I used to hate this notion that—this is not a commentary at all; it is just an observation—somehow we would label them and therefore they would be off to a CARE school or any of the other CARE schools, Alta-1 or whatever it might be, whereas the academy was a state-run organisation. As you may be aware, we went into the 2017 election with two more—one in the north and one in the south—but that all went pear-shaped. I am just wondering: is there any intent at all on the part of the government to include the number of, dare I say it, facilities for disengaged students?

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Absolutely; that is a really good question. I make a point when I am talking that we can exclude a student, but frankly we have a legal obligation under the act, and a moral obligation, to ensure that that child's education continues. That is why we have alternate learning settings set up across the state and we will implement more of those—that was part of our election

commitments in 2021—as places where those students can go, generally for a short period of time. It is case management, but to find out what is the best thing to do for this child to continue their education. Is it we just need to break the cycle of the peer group and get them at another school? Is it, depending on their age, that we need to look at TAFE? What is it that this child and their family need so they can continue to have a full education? What is the best setting for that to occur in?

**The CHAIR:** Good; I am pleased to hear that. We are living in an increasingly complex society and it is not going to get any easier. There are going to be more of these kids, and labelling them or alienating them is not going to solve it. We do not want them to fall into a trap of incarceration at the age of 16 or 17, which is what is happening. If the state can provide more for those disengaged kids, because that learning academy was meant to be a vehicle for developing their strengths, but to understand that they were individuals, they were important, they were significant; their home in more instances than not was appalling and you have got people there that care about them. I hope we can go down that path.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Sure.

**The CHAIR:** Having said that, we will finish on it. I thank you very much for all attending.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Thank you, and I am sorry again that I was late.

**The CHAIR:** It has been noted. Thank you for attending today. Please end the broadcast.

A transcript of this hearing will be forwarded to you for correction. If you believe that any correction should be made because of typographical or transcription errors, please indicate these corrections on the transcript. Errors of fact or substance must be corrected in a formal letter to the committee. When you receive your transcript of evidence, the committee will also advise you when to provide your answers to questions taken on notice. If you want to provide additional information to elaborate on particular points, you may provide supplementary evidence for the committee's consideration when you return your corrected transcript of evidence. Once again, thank you very much.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Thank you.

**Hearing concluded at 12.07 pm**

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