

Question 1 – In seeking to combat bullying, please indicate:

- a. **if a school wished to implement a RULER program or a program similar to this which matches or exceeds the outcome measures of the Safe Schools program, would you redirect funding to such a program**
- b. **why the Safe Schools Coalition was chosen as a priority to fund over the RULER program or similar programs.**

Government is committed to ensuring that education contributes positively to society in many ways, including through the building of lifelong skills required to be a well-rounded, resilient member of the Victorian community.

The Department of Education and Training provides the Building Resilience model (www.education.vic.gov.au/resilience), which provides advice and resources to support schools in implementing a multi-faceted approach to student resilience. The model was developed by experts at the University of Melbourne, and is underpinned by strong evidence. The literature review undertaken as the first step in developing this work is available for school staff as part of the model, which demonstrates a strong commitment to the sort of evidence-based practice Yale promotes with RULER. The Building Resilience model focuses on a Social and Emotional Learning, similar to the approach of the RULER program.

A key component of Building Resilience is a suite of Social and Emotional Learning materials to be delivered from Foundation through to Year 12, which focus on key skills such as emotional awareness, decision-making, help-seeking and relationship skills. These resources have been developed particularly for the Victorian context, and are mapped to the Victorian curriculum. They are also freely available for schools to utilise. To support the implementation of measurement and building of young people's resilience, the Department is in the process of implementing a Building Resilience in School Communities (BRISC) grants process. This will provide \$5,500 to 85 government schools to undertake a survey of their students' resilience, implement relevant interventions (including the materials provided through Building Resilience), and monitor student progress.

Some schools may elect to not utilise the freely available resources through the Building Resilience portal, and instead spend some of their budget allocation having staff trained in RULER and associated curriculum. Given that RULER has a strong evidence-base, we would be supportive of schools that elect to implement this if it meets the particular needs of their school community.

However, both Building Resilience and RULER are very different in focus to the work of the Safe Schools Coalition Victoria (SSCV). As I noted in my response at the hearing, the work of the SSCV is to ensure that school environments are safe and supportive places for same sex attracted and gender diverse members of the school community. Combatting homophobic and transphobic bullying in a targeted way is of great importance to government, in that research shows that of the 11 per cent of students who identify as same-sex attracted or gender diverse, 75 per cent experience verbal or physical abuse and most of this abuse occurs in our schools. Suicide rates for same sex attracted young people are higher, and government has an obligation to ensure that our school environments are more supportive for this significant portion of our young people. Further, the number of potential beneficiaries of the initiative is broader than just same-sex-attracted and gender diverse young people. Membership of Safe Schools Coalition Victoria supports more inclusive and safer school environments which benefit all students, including young people within same-sex and gender diverse families.

ATTACHMENT A

Question 2 – When available, please supply a list of relocatable classrooms (including the schools at which these classrooms are located) which will be replaced as part of the asbestos removal program.

The school allocation of the \$42 million asbestos removal program announced in the 2015-16 State Budget is still being finalised. This information should be available in March 2016, and the Government will subsequently update the Committee.

Question 3 – When available, please indicate to the Committee the additional Gonski-related funding for each Victorian school (on a school-by-school basis) for each of the three funded years, and the methodology used in the calculation of this funding.

Indicative 2016 school budgets are due for release on 17 September 2015. After this time, the Government will be able to update the Committee on the funding provided to schools to meet the Gonski commitment for the 2016 school year.

Question 4 – Please advise the Committee about any work to review the funding available for homeschooling, especially in the context of the Bracks review of education funding.

The Victorian government funds schools to offer students high quality education and support for individual needs.

No state or jurisdiction provides per capita funding (Student Resource Package or equivalent) for the purposes of home schooling.

Parents who choose to home school their child assume responsibility for ensuring that their child receives a quality education. This includes the planning, implementation and assessment of their child's educational program.

Regardless of the schooling option they choose all parents contribute to the cost of their child's education. Parents are expected to ensure their children are equipped with essential education items and to pay for other associated costs such as excursions and school uniforms.

To support parents who home school, a wide range of online resources including current curriculum frameworks and material to support teaching and learning, are available on the Department's website.

The Distance Education Centre of Victoria also makes its teaching and learning materials available for a nominal fee.

Students who are home schooled are able to be partially enrolled in their neighbourhood government school for specific activities.

Participation in the NAPLAN assessment is one way that student learning and progress can be monitored. Home schooled students are able to sit the test at their local school.

The Review of Government School Funding led by the former Premier, the Hon Steve Bracks AC is investigating how to achieve a funding system that supports schools and promotes excellent educational outcomes for all Victorian Government school students. Consideration of home school students is not part of the Terms of Reference of the Review.

I remain committed to continue the current support provided to those parents who choose to home school their children.