

Education
Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Inquiry into the 2024-25 budget estimates hearings

Response to Question on Notice

Portfolio	Education
Witness	Jenny Atta/Tony Bates
Deputy Secretary	Tony Bates
Committee member	Bev McArthur
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Excerpt from transcript

Bev McARTHUR: What services are funded under the student health and wellbeing program? How will they be impacted by the reduction in funding?

Anthony BATES: Again, Mrs McArthur, I will just have to check the details of the Commonwealth program that lapsed, and I can potentially come back with what that one was.

Bev McARTHUR: Take it on notice; that is fine.

Bev McARTHUR: ...Well, can you provide a list of all the specific initiatives within the student health and wellbeing program and how much is allocated to each of them across each year in the forward estimates? Happy to receive it on notice.

Answer:

Commonwealth funding of \$2.1 million for *Student Wellbeing Boost* which ended in 2023-24 currently forms part of the Wellbeing Supports for Students output. This funding was a one-off payment for social cohesion and student wellbeing support.

The major changes responsible for the variance between the 2023-24 Budget and the 2024-25 Budget is due to:

1. Realignment of:
 - *Visiting teachers in schools* program to Additional Supports for Students with Disabilities output \$14.7 million.
 - *LOOKOUT Education Support* program to Promoting Equal Access to Education output \$6.5 million.
 - *LOOKOUT Education Support* program to Early Childhood Sector Supports and Regulation output \$2.2 million.

2. Sunsetting Commonwealth initiative:
 - Commonwealth initiative *Student Wellbeing Boost* \$2.1 million.

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The Programs below are part of the Wellbeing Supports for Students output over the forward estimates:

Program	2024-25 \$million	2025-26 \$million	2026-27 \$million	2027-28 \$million
Mental Health in Schools	71.9	99.2	105.3	105.3
Student Support Services	72.9	69.7	68.2	68.2
Health and Wellbeing Programs	62.5	56.9	56.7	56.9
Navigator Program	37.1	33.7	30.0	30.0
Travelling Allowances	42.0	42.0	42.0	42.0
National Student Wellbeing Program	17.3	12.8	12.8	12.8
Swimming and Water Safety Education	14.4	4.7	4.7	4.7
Doctors in Schools	12.2	12.6	12.6	12.6
Respectful Relationships	9.7	9.3	8.6	8.6
School Focused Youth Services	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9
Engaging At-Risk Youth	4.4	4.6	2.3	
Anti-bullying Supports for School Students	2.5	2.4	3.0	2.6
School-wide Positive Behaviour Support	2.1	4.2	4.3	4.3
Other	21.1	21.3	21.2	21.0
Total	375.9	379.3	377.4	374.8

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Witness	Jenny Atta
Deputy Secretary	David Howes
Committee member	Nick McGowan
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Excerpt from transcript

Nick McGOWAN: Perhaps while you are looking for that, Secretary, can I just ask also in respect to the tutor learning initiative, are we able to get a copy of the Deloitte evaluation?

Jenny ATTA: I will have to see what we can provide, Mr McGowan.

Nick McGOWAN: Can I take that as a yes?

Jenny ATTA: I will go away and see what is possible. It is advice provided into cabinet, but I am happy to look and see what of that we can make available.

Nick McGOWAN: Sure, what you can of that advice. Thank you, Secretary, that would be appreciated. Also in respect to that, if you are able to provide a breakdown by year of how much funding from the initiative has been directly paid for the wages of school tutors, that would be much appreciated.

Jenny ATTA: Of the initiative? Well, yes, it effectively all goes to pay for tutors.

Nick McGOWAN: Any breakdown you can provide in respect of the funding for that would be great.

Answer:

The Department of Education has published key insights from the Deloitte evaluation of the Tutor Learning Initiative (TLI) on its public website:

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/tutor-learning-initiative/resources>

These insights have been used to develop and refine guidance to schools, including the Tutor Practice Guide, which is updated annually. The detailed report was developed to support government decision making and is not publicly available.

The TLI is supported by multiple international studies into the effectiveness of this type of intervention, including the most recent Grattan Institute's 2023 report which shows it is an effective way to support student learning and which recommended this model be adopted in all states and territories.

More than 90% of funding for the Tutor Learning Initiative goes directly to government and low-fee non-government schools to employ tutors to provide small group tutoring to students needing additional support in literacy and numeracy. The remaining funding is used to provide coordination and support for schools in delivering the program, including professional learning, resources and regionally-based staff who work with schools on implementing the initiative.

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Portfolio	Education
Witness	Jenny Atta/ Andrea Del Monaco
Deputy Secretary	Andrea Del Monaco
Committee member	Nick McGowan
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Excerpt from transcript

Nick McGOWAN: Any breakdown you can provide in respect of the funding [TFI] for that would be great. Secretary, while I am speaking with you and we are just waiting for the answer there, is it also possible to get a list of the specific initiatives that the department takes in regard to teacher shortages and the initiatives that aim to increase the number of teachers in Victoria?

Ben CARROLL: It is about, what is it, \$1.6 billion? There are a lot of initiatives and they cover all over the state.

Nick McGOWAN: Perhaps if it assists –

Jenny ATTA: That is right. There is a comprehensive strategy, five pillars. I think that information is readily available, and we can provide the link to that.

Ben CARROLL: Yes, \$1.6 billion.

Nick McGOWAN: Thank you, Secretary. If you could provide the link to that, that would be appreciated.

Nick McGOWAN: Are you able to give me any visibility over principals being permitted to make a special payment not exceeding, I think, \$9000 per annum in terms of essentially attracting and retaining? Is there anyone who can give us visibility over what that means for the last budget and going forward to this budget.....I suppose what I am asking is: can you provide a breakdown to us of what actually has been expended?

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Answer:

Workforce initiatives

The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring a strong and sustainable school workforce and supporting every school to attract and retain the workforce it needs.

Since 2019, the Victorian Government has invested more than \$1.6 billion in school workforce initiatives. The Government's investment across 5 priorities — attraction, recruitment, supporting early career teachers, retention, and career development — provides a comprehensive and long-term approach to growing and supporting the school workforce.

Further information about the Government's investment in workforce initiatives can be found here <https://www.vic.gov.au/ensuring-strong-sustainable-and-supported-school-workforce> and here <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school-workforce-initiatives.pdf>.

Special payments

Ministerial Order No. 1388 enables a special payment to be paid to employees in the teacher, paraprofessional or education support classes for the following purposes:

- undertaking a task that is additional to the responsibilities that can be required of the employee at their respective classification level and salary range
- as an attraction and, or retention incentive
- other purposes determined by the Secretary

Special payments may range between \$925 and \$10,000 per annum (as a fortnightly payment or in one or more lump sum payments).

Further details on the number and size of special payments are included below. Based on current data collection arrangements, it is not possible to provide a breakdown of the number of special payments paid as an attraction and retention incentive compared to the number of special payments used for other purposes.

Table One – special payments made to Victorian government school employees

	2022	2023
Number of employees receiving payments	9,777	12,211
Average annual payment amount	\$1,961	\$2,231
Total expenditure on special payments	\$19,173,707	\$27,238,302

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Witness	Tony Bates
Deputy Secretary	Tony Bates
Committee member	Avi Puglielli
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Excerpt from transcript

Aiv PUGLIELLI: ...I might just start with a technical question for the department if I may. Up to 4 per cent of the state school resource standard share each year is made up of costs contributing to the provision of education in schools. I would just like to ask: what is the current estimate of the total cost of that 4 per cent and regulatory costs in each year from 2024 to 2028, and what proportion of that is capital depreciation and what proportion is school transport costs?

Anthony BATES: I do not have the forward estimates projections at hand.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: You are welcome to take it on notice.

Anthony BATES: It is in the order of \$500 million for the 4 per cent, and because of the very significant capital program that the minister has been referring to, our depreciation expense has been growing quite rapidly. So just about the entire amount will be taken up by the depreciation. I have got some figures from 2022, which I can pull up in a moment if that is helpful.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: That would be useful, maybe at the end if that is possible.

Anthony BATES: Yes.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: I might just move on. For the further projections – I know you do not have them to hand – could they be provided on notice?

Anthony BATES: Yes, we can do the 4 per cent across the forward estimates.

Answer:

The department's estimates of these items are as follows:

	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m
4 per cent of Schooling Resource Standard*	551	575	601	629	657
Curriculum and regulation activity costs	81	83	86	88	90

* Based on the 2024 Quarter 1 Funding Estimation Tool provided by the Commonwealth Government.

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Portfolio	Schools
Witness	Tom Kirkland
Deputy Secretary	Tom Kirkland
Committee member	Nick McGowan
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Excerpt from transcript

Nick McGOWAN: ...And while I am talking about that, if you are able, Secretary, to look at Mullauna secondary college and Heathmont East in terms of their next stages of funding. ...Heathmont East and Mullauna – they are due for second stages.

Nick McGOWAN: ...Marlborough Primary School also is a school I am particularly passionate about. It is probably one of the least – perhaps I will put another way. It is one of the oldest schools we have, and it certainly is in need of some upgrades – so anything you can do on that front.

Answer:

The Victorian Government is committed to growing educational opportunities for all Victorians. While we have allocated \$16.9 billion over the past 10 years to build, upgrade, and maintain school infrastructure across Victoria, it remains true that it will take some time to address the entire asset portfolio. Our ongoing responsibility is to balance and prioritise the needs of over 1,580 government schools, all with varying requirements.

In the 2015–16 State Budget, Mullauna Secondary College received \$2.2 million to undertake an upgrade and modernisation project. The school also received \$1.47 million in the 2014–15 State Budget. This project was completed in the fourth quarter of 2017 and created a more integrated campus, with better teaching spaces and improved street frontage. In the 2021–22 State Budget, the school also received \$5.23 million to further upgrade the school. This project modernised Block F and was completed in the first quarter of 2024.

As part of the 2023–24 State Budget, the school received a share of \$24 million to continue with the design of Stage 2 of the school’s masterplan. The school’s planning project is currently in the design development phase, with planning to be completed in June 2024. The Victorian School Building Authority will now work with the school to advance its project to the Tender Documentation phase of design. This ensures that the project will be fully designed, documented, and ready to go to market as soon as funding is confirmed in a future State Budget.

Heathmont East Primary School received \$5.44 million as part of the 2023–24 State Budget for an upgrade and modernisation project to provide better learning opportunities for students. This project will deliver a new administration and staff centre. The works are currently at the schematic design phase and are expected to be complete in the first quarter of 2026.

Developing and delivering a masterplan is a significant investment and capital works projects can involve a number of stages to ensure that public money is invested in the right place at the right time. I understand that future stages for this capital works project include building new

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school learning hubs and a library, and the construction of a new gymnasium and community hub. Any future stages are subject to State Budget funding.

In 2019 Marlborough Primary School received \$200,000 under the fifth round of the Inclusive Schools Fund for a sensory and passive play garden. These works were completed in the second quarter of 2021.

When schools receive capital works funding through the State Budget, they develop an Asset Management Plan (AMP) in partnership with the Department of Education. The AMP comprises 2 distinct stages. The first stage outlines the school's educational directions, including a basic facilities analysis. The second stage involves the development or review of a masterplan.

The needs of all schools, including Mullauna Secondary College, Heathmont East Primary School, and Marlborough Primary School will continue to be considered when determining future priorities for the capital works program. The department will continue to use all available data, including pre-existing masterplans, when recommending funding in future State Budgets.