

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Inquiry into the 2020-21 Budget Estimates - 2 December 2020 8:30-10:30

Education

Responses to questions on notice

S1.

Portfolio:	Education
Witness:	Hon. James Merlino
Committee member:	Mr Richard Riordan MP
Page of transcript:	p.4

Mr RIORDAN: Okay, all right, so there will be no delays. For example, the details around the vertical school in North Melbourne—there will be a full breakdown of the costs for the development of that project?

Mr MERLINO: Yes, in the normal way. That is correct.

Mr RIORDAN: Do you have a cost at the moment on what that particular school is going to cost to build?

Mr MERLINO: Vertical schools obviously are more expensive than a greenfield standard construction—

Mr RIORDAN: I understand that

Mr MERLINO: so for example the two vertical schools that I visited in recent weeks, they are in the order of a \$70 million to \$80 million build, but I might ask Mr Keating if he can add to my comments.

Mr KEATING: Yes, we do have an estimate for it. Until it is market tested we do not have a confirmed price. That number is part of the new schools number that is listed in budget paper 3.

Mr RIORDAN: So as the department who is going to undertake what the minister has said is an extraordinarily expensive build—and we understand why—you do not have any costings around that for now?

Mr KEATING: We do have detailed cost estimates in terms of quantity surveying estimates design work that we have done. Until it is formally market tested we do not have a contracted price, so we will seek to move to contract as quickly as possible.

Mr RIORDAN: Is that able to be made available to the committee?

Mr KEATING: Yes, that would be.

Mr RIORDAN: Okay, if we could take that on notice. Thank you.

Mr MERLINO: That is following the usual tender process. You know, there are periods of time where tenders come in and they are quite favourable in terms of not just the main part of the build but additional items, and there are other times in the year or times in the cycle where the tenders are less favourable. But we will have that confirmed once the tenders are out.

Response:

The new primary school for the North Melbourne community will cater for the growing enrolment demand within this inner-city precinct. Scheduled to open in 2023, the new North Melbourne Hill Primary School (interim name) will be a standalone entity.

In the 2018–19 State Budget, \$2.15 million was allocated for the initial planning of this educational facility. A further \$5 million was provided through the Infrastructure Planning and Acceleration Fund to maintain the momentum of development. Now, the school will receive a share of the \$122.4 million New Schools Construction program in the 2020-21 State Budget, receiving at least an additional \$36.12 million to undertake its construction in readiness for 2023.

S2.

Portfolio:	Education
Witness:	Hon. James Merlino
Committee member:	Mr Gary Maas MP
Page of transcript:	p.7

Mr MAAS: Still referring to those same budget paper references previously, just a direct question: are we building enough classrooms, Deputy Premier, for future growth?

Mr MERLINO: Thanks, Mr Maas. Our \$3 billion investment includes an unprecedented investment in new schools, school expansions, land for future schools and relocatable classrooms. They all play a part in delivering that capacity. The Victorian government is well on its way to meeting the growth challenge, with the total school-aged population expected to increase by 110 000 over the next five years. This \$3 billion investment in school infrastructure will create space, as I said, for 22 700 students. This investment in new schools means the Victorian government will now open 69 schools between 2017 and 2022, 48 as part of our commitment to open 100 schools and that one further school funded to open in 2023. So in 2016 not one new school opened its doors, and as I said, that is a reflection of the investment of the previous government, because it takes a couple of years. In 2017 we opened 10 new schools; 2018, 11; 2019, 9; 2020, 11; 2021, 14 schools; 2022, 14 new schools; and this budget has our first school for 2023. And for clarity, during the election we committed to open 45 new schools between 2019 and 2022. I am pleased that we are now on target to open 48 new schools in this same period, three ahead of schedule. Our \$3 billion package includes 10 new schools to open in 2022 and further in 2023 and funding to acquire land for 11 new schools. The 10 new schools in 2022: Melton, Bridge Road, a couple in Clyde North, Endeavour Hills special school, Gisborne South Primary, Grasslands Primary, Greater Shepparton Secondary, Greenvale Secondary, Kalkallo Common Primary School, Wollert East, North Melbourne. I have got a long list. I will not take up the committee's time, but I am happy to provide the list across all of those schools.

Response:

A total of 48 new schools will now open between 2019 and 2022, with one further school funded to open in 2023:

- 2019 – 9 new schools opened
- 2020 – 11 new schools opened
- 2021 – 14 new schools will open
- 2022 – 14 new schools will now open
- 2023 – 1 new school will now open

This is in addition to 10 new schools opened in 2017 and 11 new schools opened in 2018. In terms of new facilities, the following 14 schools will open in 2022:

- Bridge Road (Melton) Primary School (interim name)
- Clyde North Station Primary School (interim name)
- Clyde North Station Secondary College (interim name)
- Endeavour Hills Specialist School (interim name)
- Fishermans Bend Secondary School (interim name)
- Fitzroy Gasworks (Senior Campus) (interim name)
- Gisborne South Primary School (interim name)
- Greater Shepparton Secondary College
- Grasslands (Deanside) Primary School (interim name)
- Greenvale Secondary School (interim name)

- Kalkallo Common Primary School (interim name)
- McKinnon Secondary College (new campus)
- Wollert East Primary School (interim name)
- Wonthaggi Secondary College (Junior Campus in San Remo)

The 2020-21 State Budget also provides additional investment to ensure existing Victorian government schools have enough classrooms to meet the growing enrolment demand.

The Budget provided \$114.5 million to purchase and refurbish relocatable school buildings, to provide an additional 12,775 spaces for Victorian students in the 2021 school year, as part of the Relocatable Buildings Program.

The Budget also invested in upgrades to provide additional capacity at 16 schools in established areas of Victoria as part of the Established Areas Program. This investment will help to meet the growth challenge by providing more 2,700 additional places for the 2022 and 2023 school years at the following schools:

- Avondale Primary School
- Carlton Gardens Primary School
- Footscray North Primary School
- Glenroy West Primary School
- Meadows Primary School
- Preston South Primary School
- Rosebud Primary School
- Strathmore North Primary School
- Windsor Primary School
- Ascot Vale West Primary School
- Box Hill North Primary School
- Dromana Primary School
- Footscray Primary School
- Reservoir Primary School
- Ruskin Park Primary School
- Templestowe Heights Primary School

S3.

Portfolio:	Education
Witness:	Hon. James Merlino
Committee member:	Mr Danny O'Brien MP
Page of transcript:	p.11

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay, thank you. I am running out of time. Just a quick one: Minister, you talked about the \$70 million minor capital works project that was announced this morning. Are you able to provide today a copy of the breakdown by school?

Mr MERLINO: Absolutely, yes. We can definitely provide that to the committee.

Response:

This list was tabled during the COVID-19 hearing on 2 December 2020.

S4.

Portfolio:	Education
Witness:	Hon. James Merlino
Committee member:	Mr Danny O'Brien MP
Page of transcript:	p.12

Mr D O'BRIEN: If that can be provided, that would be great. Thank you. I have another question. Budget paper 3, page 174, says there are 157 partner schools aligned with or with access to one of the new tech schools—or newish tech schools. How many days did each child at those partner schools attend the tech schools?

Mr MERLINO: Thank you, Mr O'Brien. Just bear with me. I will see if I have that information on hand. Otherwise we will take it on notice.

Mr D O'BRIEN: If you do not, a couple of follow-up questions: how many days per year are the tech schools fully utilised, and how are outcomes measured for these tech schools?

Mr MERLINO: Thank you. Mr O'Brien, if you are happy, I can provide that detail on notice.

Response:

In 2019, 157 partner schools accessed programs at their local Tech School.

Tech Schools operate in line with the school calendar, that is 9.00am – 3.00pm, Monday to Friday during the term. Core programs primarily target years 7 to 9 and vary in length; typically onsite learning takes place over 1 to 3 days. Partner schools book a program to align with particular units of study. Tech Schools are able to tailor their programs to meet a specific school need and work with partner schools to offer pre and post learning activities for teachers and students to integrate Tech School and classroom learning.

Tech Schools also provide professional learning programs that are available to all Victorian teachers. In addition, some Tech Schools provide after-school and holiday programs and events outside school hours to extend the opportunities available to local students.

More than 57,000 student and teacher program days were delivered through 2019, exceeding the goal of 47,350 program days in the network's first full year of operations. Program delivery is planned to grow each year as the initiative matures, taking into account the number of students in the catchment area and capacity of these high tech facilities.

An evaluation has commenced as part of the Tech Schools initiative. The evaluation will assess the achievement of outcomes including student and teacher attitudes and engagement in STEM, and Tech Schools' collaboration with partner schools and industry.

S5.

Portfolio:	Education
Witness:	Hon. James Merlino
Committee member:	Mr David Limbrick MP
Page of transcript:	p.16

Mr LIMBRICK: Thank you, Minister. You might need to take this next question on notice, because I do not expect you to be able to provide it immediately, but some of the things in the education budget appear to be to remedy problems that have happened during the pandemic and other things are normal and new initiatives. Would it be possible to provide a breakdown of what parts of the budget are remedies, or how much of the budget is for remedies, and how much of it is not—is normal things?

Mr MERLINO: Yes, I am happy to provide that, to break down the budget in a different way to give you a sense of that, Mr Limbrick. Happy to do that.

Response:

Question 4 of DET's 2020-21 Budget Estimates general questionnaire identified the 2020-21 Budget initiatives that were announced as part of the COVID-19 response. These are summarised below. All remaining 2020-21 Budget initiatives are other new or continuing initiatives.

Name	Objective	Amount
VET Provider viability package	TAFEs and the community training sector will continue to be supported so every Victorian can get the skills they need. Funding has been provided to lock in training funding at pre-pandemic levels. The funding also includes \$68.9 million in crisis support to ensure Victoria's public training system could respond and recover from the coronavirus pandemic.	\$744.456 million over two years
TAFE and training driving economic recovery	Funding is provided to meet anticipated demand for eligible students to undertake training to enhance their skills and employment opportunities, including for Victorians impacted during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Support for subsidised training places and Free TAFE in priority areas will be boosted. Three courses have been added to the Free TAFE course list and one additional skill set identified to be free at TAFE	\$631.437 million over four years
University support and contribution to economic recovery	Funding is provided to support Victorian universities through the Higher Education State Investment Fund, which will contribute to capital works, applied research and research partnerships. This reflects a new partnership model between the Victorian Government and universities, to support economic recovery.	\$350 million over two years only
Tutors deployed to bring students up to speed: Government schools	Funding is provided to enable government schools to deliver small group learning support to students who need it, to address the impact of interrupted face-to-face schooling on their learning	\$219.873 million over two years

Supporting families with children in kindergarten	Free kindergarten programs will be available in eligible services in 2021. This will support kindergarten participation, service viability, employment in the early childhood education sector and women's workforce participation.	\$169.617 million over two years
Skills for women, young people, migrants, vulnerable Victorians and retrenched workers	Make the training system more accessible for people who need flexible and targeted training and skills support in order to obtain new vocational skills due to the economic disruption caused by COVID-19 (regardless of their prior qualifications) and equip vulnerable people with the digital, literacy and numeracy skills required for social and economic participation, and in particular for successful participation in vocational training and in work.	\$155.422 million over four years, and \$0.715 million ongoing
Increasing the availability of outside school hours care (OSHS)	Grants will increase the availability of OSHC to Victorian families and help establish new services, providing support for costs including resources or equipment, setup and administration, facility upgrades, small service viability and transport.	\$81.646 million over four years
Skills for resilient and emerging industries	To support people to successfully move into high priority industries and available jobs as part of the economic recovery from COVID-19	\$74.7911 million over four years
Supporting Victorian kindergartens	Funding is provided for free sessional kindergarten in eligible services during 2020 and to support the transition to school in 2021. The initiative will also support enrolment growth, kindergarten viability	\$67.656 million over four years
Enhanced school cleaning	Funding is provided for enhanced cleaning of government schools in 2020.	\$60.000 million in one year
Supporting Families in Need	Support the State Schools' Relief – Affordable School Uniforms program and the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund to enable full and equal participation in schooling and to reduce the financial burden for many struggling families across Victoria.	\$31.570 million over two years
Big Build Apprenticeships	Funding is provided to expand opportunities for jobseekers who have been adversely impacted by COVID-19 to access apprenticeships and traineeships through a flagship Victorian Government Big Build training pathway that leverages Victoria's infrastructure program to create high-quality skills pathways for apprentices and trainees. It will help to support more Victorians to access these opportunities, including women and disadvantaged Victorians	\$33.165 million over four years
Tutors deployed to bring students up to speed: Non-government schools	Non-government schools will be provided with funding to employ tutors to support students who need it, to address the impact of interrupted face-to-face schooling on their learning	\$30.000 million over two years
Youth mental health support	Funding will expand existing supports for the wellbeing and mental health of students	\$28.492 million

		over two years
Bridging the Digital Divide and Supporting Connected Learners during COVID-19	To ensure Victorian Government school students, including those from low-income families, have access to technology at home to support learning now and into the future.	\$24.538 million over two years
Creating jobs in education through innovative and accelerated pathways to teaching	Funding for innovative Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs that accelerate the training and employment of high-quality teachers into our schools and early childhood services.	\$15.492 million over four years
Responding to COVID-19 impacts in early childhood	Early intervention will support families and children experiencing increased or more complex vulnerability as a result of the public health response to the coronavirus pandemic.	\$6.189 million over two years
Higher Apprenticeships and Traineeships	Sought to support new learn and earn traineeships to upskill workers in the social service sector. This includes expanding the existing higher apprenticeship pilot in the sector.	\$5.970 million over three years
TAFE Digital Learning	The network of TAFEs and dual-sector universities (TAFEs) to more efficiently deliver high quality training while Stay-at-Home Directions and physical distancing requirements remain in place.	\$5.000 million over two years
Coronavirus (COVID 19) safe training for hospitality businesses and local government	Funding is provided for free online training through the Government's Return to Work portal to support hospitality businesses to safely resume operations, and training for local government staff	\$2.500 million in one year

S6.

Portfolio:	Education
Witness:	Ms Jenny Atta
Committee member:	Ms Bridget Vallence
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Ms VALLENCE: A question to you, Secretary. We know that in education there is employment of a lot of casual staff for a range of needs. How many casual staff are there across the state school network, and do you expect the department will be included as part of the government's new secure work scheme?

Ms ATTA: Excuse me, Ms Vallence. I may have to follow up with you around whether we have actual numbers of casual FTE across the school workforce.

Ms VALLENCE: I presume you would be paying them, so in terms of payment to casual staff you would have their bank details to pay them. Could you provide that perhaps on notice if you do not have it today?

Ms ATTA: Sure. I can look at what we can provide on notice. It is important just to note that, while we do report total FTE in terms of our school workforce—the schools employ their teaching workforce; all of the teaching workforce we have specific data on—they do through local payroll employ other supplementary staff, some of whom might be part time or casual. But I am very happy to take that away and see what level of breakdown we can provide.

Response:

As announced by the government, the design of the pilot scheme - including sectors to be included - will be subject to consultation with industry, workers and unions.

As at June 2020* government schools paid 7,897 (2,227.1 FTE) casual staff through local payrolls.

	Headcount	FTE
Casual Relief Teacher	3,611	959.2
Casual Education Support	3,398	1,074.0
Other casual	888	193.9
Total School Local Payroll casual staff	7,897	2,227.1

* across the fortnight 08/06/2020–19/06/2020

S7.

Portfolio:	Education
Witness:	Hon. James Merlino
Committee member:	Ms Bridget Vallenge
Page of transcript:	p.20

Ms VALLENCE: No? That is good. And in terms of the financial literacy, how much does that cost, that scheme? Will you take that on notice?

The CHAIR: Sorry, Ms Vallenge, your time has expired.

Ms VALLENCE: The minister just nodded yes.

Response:

Curriculum-aligned resources for teachers focussed on improving financial literacy education will be developed across December 2020 and January 2021. Any costs associated with the development of these resources will be internally funded by the Department of Education and Training. No additional budget will be required.