



Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee

Inquiry: Inquiry into the state education system in Victoria

Hearing Date: 9 May 2024

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: Department of Education

Received Date: 30 May 2024

1. **Melina BATH, page 78**

Question Asked:

I agree – could not agree more. But these are not the experiences, genuinely. I have only got a few moments – genuinely, these are not the experiences. If you go back to read that testimony, there is another case example of where the education department said to a different parent, ‘File for an FOI.’ I want to understand – take it on notice if you please: how many FOIs has the education department told parents to go and access rather than providing information? And how many staff does the department have covering off on FOIs between either parents and teachers or the like? That is a question I have.

Jenny ATTA: Very happy to follow that up for you.

Response:

The Department of Education (the department) does not collect data on parent referrals by schools to the Freedom of Information Unit.

The department’s publicly available [Requests for information about students](#) policy provides advice to schools on how to manage requests for student information, including when schools can provide information or release documents directly and when to advise the person to make a freedom of information request to the department’s Freedom of Information Unit. Consistent with the policy, there are many types of documents and information that schools provide directly to parents including school reports, school communications and information about incidents that have occurred at school including where a student has been injured.

Schools have privacy obligations to protect personal and health information of students and employees. Requesting certain documents through the

freedom of information process allows for a thorough assessment of personal and health information relating to others.

The department has a dedicated Freedom of Information Unit that manages all requests on behalf of the department and Victorian government schools. The Freedom of Information Unit is staffed by 8 full time equivalent positions processing freedom of information requests.

2. **Melina BATH, page 79**

Question Asked:

Thank you very much; I appreciate that. Also, the Expert Advisory Panel for Rural and Regional Students – we know that part of the terms of reference is about regional disadvantage and socio-economic disadvantage. Again, on notice, there were some very good recommendations that came out of that, but it would be great to get an update on each of those recommendations and the sub-recommendations in there.

Jenny ATTA: We can do that.

Response:

A status update on recommendations from the Expert Advisory Panel for Rural and Regional Students is provided in the table below.

| Recommendation | Update |
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| <p>Recommendation 1: Planning & Strategy <i>1. Develop a comprehensive five-year strategic plan for rural and regional education that recognises and addresses the specific opportunities and challenges of rural and regional education and establish a Rural Education Consultative Group and a Regional Education Consultative Group to support the effective implementation of the strategic plan.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the delivery of the report of the Expert Advisory Panel for Rural and Regional Students, the department has engaged with a range of stakeholders to develop priorities and directions to improve regional and rural education in Victoria. A number of investments have been made which deliver on the priorities and recommendations in the report, and demonstrate an ongoing commitment to equity and excellence for rural and regional schools and students. These are set out in responses to the other recommendations. |

| Recommendation | Update |
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| <p>Recommendation 2: Wide aspirations, high expectations and informed choices</p> <p><i>2. Consider a range of options to support the development of wide aspirations, high expectations and informed choices by rural and regional students, their families, schools and communities, including additional support to ensure rural and regional students have access to VCE study resources; the development of a resource hub of case studies of successful programs linking local employer/industry with schools; and the recruitment of international students to rural and regional schools in order to expand the diversity of rural and regional communities and global awareness of rural and regional students</i></p> | <p>There are a number of initiatives which seek to progress the recommendation of wide aspirations and high expectations for rural and regional students and their communities. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invested \$13.2 million over 5 years from 2019-20 and ongoing funding to support rural and regional students access to VCE Revision Lectures. • Established Bellum Bellum Blended Learning Hub in Gippsland, to expand access to VCE subjects and specialist teachers via virtual and face-to-face learning for students from surrounding schools via a central hub in Morwell. • Invested \$116 million in 2023-24 to fund new Tech Schools including in Wangaratta and Warrnambool. • Invested additional \$14 million in 2024-25 for Tech Schools, including outreach for country students via regional STEM camps and support for rural and regional students to access Tech Schools' Virtual and Remote programs. • Established the Raising Rural and Regional Student Aspirations Initiative in 2019-20 to enhance learning, transitions, and aspirational mindsets, extended in 2023-24 for an additional 2 years. • Supporting high-ability students in rural and regional areas with \$132 million invested in the Student Excellence Program since its commencement in 2020. • Committed nearly \$750 million since 2018 for young people across |

| Recommendation | Update |
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| | <p>Victoria to engage in vocational and applied learning pathways that match their goals and set them up for success in life as part of the Senior Secondary Pathways Reform.</p> |
| <p>Recommendations 3.1, 3.2 & 3.3: School Resourcing</p> <p><i>3.1 Review the effectiveness and efficiency of the SRP design in relation to rural and regional schools, including the definition of ‘rural’ and ‘regional’ schools and other measures such as the introduction of a ‘deemed’ annual SRP over, for example, a three year cycle to reduce the impact of volatility of enrolments on staffing</i></p> <p><i>3.2 Examine the current funding arrangements for rural and regional schools, including maintenance funding and the effectiveness of the current VSBA service delivery model for rural and regional schools</i></p> <p><i>3.3 Consider whether the current Camps, Sports and Excursions (CSE) fund should be extended to include all students in rural and regional schools with indexation to reflect greater distance</i></p> | <p>There is continuing investment in school resourcing including responding to the specific needs of rural and regional Victoria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The department has identified opportunities within the Student Resource Package to better support rural and regional schools. This includes adjusting the Rural Size Adjustment Factor, and updating location-based funding lines to ensure that rural and regional schools are classified according to the latest available information. • A small-scale adjustment loading has been developed to support small schools which are often located in regional and rural areas to deliver Vocational Education and Training Delivered to School Students. • The delivery model for capital works and grants projects is the same for schools both in metropolitan areas and in rural and regional areas. All schools across the state receive consistent and high-quality support for all projects. • Schools are allocated SRP Maintenance and Minor Works funding to undertake routine and day-to-day condition-based maintenance. • To reflect the additional costs involved with sourcing trades outside of metropolitan areas, |

| Recommendation | Update |
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| | <p>campuses in rural and regional locations receive an additional loading to the Maintenance and Minor Works of 20-25% on top of the base rate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities-related Student Resource Package funding will increase to more than \$275 million in 2025. • Furthermore, \$19.3 million was allocated in the 2022–23 Victorian Budget for the Freeing Up School Staff to Lead and Teach Initiative. This initiative is rolling out to small rural and regional schools from 2022 to 2026 to help manage routine and condition-based maintenance, essential safety measures, OHS compliance and Return to Work obligations. • The department is committed to ensuring that Victorians both in metropolitan areas and in rural and regional areas have access to safe and modern learning environments. This includes improving the building condition and functionality for all government schools across the state. • The 2023-24 State Budget committed \$168.7 million to extend the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) for a further 4 years including an increase of the CSEF per-student rates by \$25 to reflect the increased cost of participating in camps and other activities. • The 2024–25 State Budget included \$280.1 million to fund a \$400 School Saving Bonus for all government school students in 2025 and disadvantaged students in non- |

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| | government schools. The bonus will be used by families to cover the cost of uniforms, camps, excursions and other extracurricular activities throughout the year. |
| <p>Recommendations 4.1, 4.2 (4.2.1, 4.2.2), 4.3, 4.4 & 4.5: Student Support</p> <p><i>4.1 Develop a strong culture and practice of ‘soft boundaries’ in the delivery of rural and regional services and education provision, both across sectors (for example, health and justice) and across locations, to ensure the interests of every student is placed at the centre of service delivery.</i></p> <p><i>4.2 Consider improved models of support for rural and regional schools to address student mental health as part of the response to the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System, including consideration of the following: 4.2.1 Expansion of mental health support services to primary schools; 4.2.2 Provision of trauma-informed training to all teachers in rural schools and regional schools where support services are difficult to access.</i></p> <p><i>4.3 Review and develop local plans for the provision of alternative settings in regional centres</i></p> <p><i>4.4 Examine steps to increase access to support staff, in particular paediatricians/ speech therapists, including the provision of facilities to enable the delivery of virtual support services</i></p> | <p>Significant work has been done to ensure every student has access to the supports they need across the state, regardless of where they attend school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every government school has been allocated a Health Wellbeing Key Contact to regularly meet with them to support the identification of student, cohort and whole-school health wellbeing and inclusion needs. This involves providing access to internal departmental health, wellbeing, and inclusion support, as well as connecting schools with external services to better meet student needs. • Student Support Services teams work as part of a multidisciplinary area team to support schools in the provision of integrated health and wellbeing, providing group-based and individual support, workforce capacity building and the provision of specialised services. • The Education Justice Initiative supports young people involved with youth justice to connect and reconnect with educational pathways that suit their needs and interests. • The Victorian Government invested \$200 million over 4 years and \$86 million ongoing for the Schools Mental Health Fund (the Fund). Rural and regional schools were allocated the Fund first in response |

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| <p><i>4.5 Consider the development of consistent access practices in special school enrolments in rural and regional special schools</i></p> | <p>to the Royal Commission findings, and they also receive an additional loading of 10%.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Victorian Government committed \$200 million over 4 years and \$93.7 million ongoing to expand the Mental Health in Primary Schools program to every government and low-fee non-government primary school in Victoria. • A \$121 million investment is delivering the Respectful Relationships initiative to every government school and participating Catholic and independent school in rural and regional Victoria. This investment includes \$6.7 million for Respectful Relationships professional learning delivered to early childhood educators in Victorian funded kindergarten programs. • The 2024-25 State Budget committed \$13.9 million over 4 years to continue Enhancing Mental Health Support in Schools with Headspace, including support for the Regional Phone Counselling Service and face-to-face counselling through headspace centres. • The department is building further consistency and clarity into the specialist school eligibility and enrolment process. This is reflected in updated content in the department’s Policy and Advisory Library. |
| <p>Recommendations 5.1 & 5.2: Inclusive Communities</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of programs and resources have been delivered to help schools |

| Recommendation | Update |
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| <p>5.1 Consider further steps that can be taken by rural and regional schools and communities to strengthen development of inclusive cultures for all students and staff.</p> <p>5.2 Develop common teaching and learning programs across clusters/networks of schools focused on Aboriginal knowledge, histories and cultures.</p> | <p>build intercultural capability and strengthen inclusion. This includes Student Leaders for Multicultural Inclusion, Refugee Education Support Initiatives, Schools Standing up to Racism and the Intercultural capability curriculum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2022-23 State Budget committed \$2.7 million over 4 years for Cluster Approaches to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' Curriculum. The Koorie Curriculum Clusters project focuses on strengthening partnerships between Registered Aboriginal Parties and cluster schools to improve teacher capability and confidence in teaching the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority throughout the curriculum. |
| <p>Recommendations 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 & 6.4: Curriculum Provision</p> <p>6.1 Examine how the provision of VCAL in rural and regional areas can be strengthened.</p> <p>6.2 Support and consider incentives for networks/cluster of secondary schools (all sectors) to develop timetables that enable delivery of VCE subjects across multiple schools.</p> <p>6.3 Review the design and delivery of virtual learning.</p> <p>6.4 Examine how access to existing digital platforms can be supported.</p> | <p>The recommendations on curriculum provision in rural and regional Victoria have been addressed by investments which seek to strengthen provision across Victorian schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senior Secondary Pathways Reform is implementing generational change to vocational and applied learning pathways for secondary school students, with nearly \$750 million invested since 2018. All local senior secondary government schools now offer the VCE Vocational Major and Victorian Pathways Certificate which provide high quality curriculum alongside work-related skills and personal development skills, in place of the |

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| | <p>former Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2021, the department has supported every government school with Jobs, Skills and Pathways Coordination funding to assist with the administration required to deliver the VCE Vocational Major and VET Delivered to School Student • The Curriculum and Collaboration Access Fund supports schools with small senior secondary cohorts to overcome barriers to providing access to the VCE Vocational Major and Victorian Pathways Certificate with additional preparation time for teachers to support the delivery of high-quality programs. • A pilot program is underway to test virtual work experience for students in rural and regional areas who are unable to access on-site workplace learning opportunities and enable students to learn more about work and different industries without leaving their local school. • The 2024-25 State Budget committed \$6 million to extend the Improving Curriculum Choice for Rural and Regional Students initiative, to expand the subjects on offer for rural and regional students, including by supporting collaboration and planning in clusters of schools. • The 2022-23 State Budget committed \$5.2 million over 4 years for the Bellum Bellum Blended Learning Hub to deliver a mix of virtual and face-to-face learning to |

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| | <p>expand access to VCE subjects and specialist teachers for students in Gippsland via a central hub in Morwell.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated Jobs, Skills and Pathways staff in the department’s region and area offices support government schools with the significant improvement to vocational and applied learning curriculum and activities. • Cost and travel barriers to VET participation have been removed via increased transport supports and course fees provided for every government school student. The establishment of VET clusters for senior secondary schools to collaborate in local networks to increase VET offerings for their students. • From 2019-20, the Victorian Government has invested \$3.7 million over 5 years and provided ongoing funding to abolish fees for Virtual Schools Victoria. • There has been continued investment for the Greater Subject Choice for Rural and Regional Students initiative to make almost every VCE subject available virtually, so students can study the subjects of their choice regardless of location. • The department has delivered bandwidth uplift initiatives to increase minimum speeds from 32kbps per student in 2019 to 1mbps per student. |
| Recommendations 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4 & 7.5: Attraction & retention of | Significant work has been done to address these recommendations and |

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| <p>principals, teachers and support staff</p> <p><i>7.1 Consider a range of incentives to attract high quality principals, teachers and support staff in order to provide the most appropriate locally-determined measures</i></p> <p><i>7.2 Examine the steps that might be taken to increase the pool of available CRTs for rural and regional schools</i></p> <p><i>7.3 Support the development by schools, in collaboration with local communities, of strong induction and welcome programs for potential or actual new appointments, including programs for partners/family members.</i></p> <p><i>7.4 Consider steps that can be taken to strengthen the support provided to new principals and teachers.</i></p> <p><i>7.5 Examine the feasibility of increasing the number of administration hubs for clusters/networks of rural and regional schools to reduce principal workload.</i></p> | <p>attract and retain principals, teachers and support staff in rural and regional schools, in the context of national workforce shortages. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invested \$45.2 million in 2019 to address teacher supply outside of Melbourne by attracting teachers and leaders to rural and regional Victorian schools and supporting them to stay including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$12.5 million for Targeted Financial Incentives of up to \$50,000 for teachers re-locating to country areas. An additional \$27 million was announced in 2023 to expand this initiative. ○ \$12.8 million to increase the number of high-quality teachers specialising in VET and VCAL so that more students from country areas can access and complete apprenticeships, traineeships and further education. • Provided \$32.2 million in the 2023-24 Victorian Budget to support pre-service teachers to undertake their placements in rural, regional, remote and specialist Victorian government schools. • \$5.7 million in 2022-23 to increase supply of CRTs in rural and regional areas, including the establishment of the CRT Travel Fund, enabling special payments of up to \$10,000 to attract CRTs. • Partnered with Country Education Partnership to deliver the Teach Rural pilot program to support groups of pre-service teachers to |

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| | <p>undertake placements across rural and regional schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established the Principal Advisory Service in 2021 (now ongoing) to reduce workload and support school leaders with policy and compliance. Committed \$19.3 million in the 2022-23 Victorian Budget for the Freeing Up School Staff to Lead and Teach, funding 16 coordinators to support small and regional schools to manage routine and condition-based maintenance, essential safety measures, OHS compliance and Return to Work obligations. Invested \$148.2 million in the 2021-22 Victorian Budget to establish the 7 Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership Regional Centres in Bairnsdale, Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Mildura, Moe and Shepparton, offering evidence-informed professional learning programs for Victorian teachers and school leaders. The Victorian Aspiring Principal Assessment, which supports the pipeline of new principals by identifying and preparing suitable future candidates. The assessment comprises leadership competencies, professional practice and behavioural and interpersonal skills to ensure new principals are prepared for the demands of the role. |
| <p>Recommendations 8.1 & 8.2: Professional Development <i>8.1 Examine measures to strengthen the delivery of and access to professional learning for</i></p> | <p>There has been further investment in professional development for school staff in rural and regional Victoria, including through:</p> |

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| <p><i>rural and regional staff, including access to VCAA virtual VCE Assessor Training and the delivery of Bastow-based programs.</i></p> <p><i>8.2 Review the role of SEILS/EILS/network chairs to ensure adequate support is available for collaborative professional development</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invested \$148.2 million in the 2021-22 Victorian Budget to establish the 7 Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership Regional Centres in Bairnsdale, Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Mildura, Moe and Shepparton, offering evidence-informed professional learning programs for Victorian teachers and school leaders. • Committed \$7.8 million in 2019-20 to expand professional development for teachers and leaders in rural and regional areas and, in 2020, the expansion of Virtual VCAA Assessor Training. • Invested \$10.1 million in the 2022-23 Victorian Budget for the Secondary Science, Mathematics and Technologies initiative, with half of the places assigned to rural and regional schools. • Committed \$17.1 million in the 2022-23 Victorian Budget for the Primary Mathematics and Science Specialist Initiative across 2023 and 2024, training an extra 100 government primary teachers as maths specialists, including 25 rural and regional teachers. An additional \$20.8 million was committed to continue the Primary Mathematics and Science Specialist Initiative in the 2024-25 Victorian Budget |

3. **Melina BATH, page 79**

Question Asked:

That would be excellent. Also, we have heard from many people that there is a teacher crisis – that some of the teachers are getting impacted in the classroom, but that they are not filling out forms, because they are an

onerous duty and the burden on them to complete all of that administrative work just takes away from their teaching time. We heard that – I think it was in Shepparton. Also, eduPay is broken. As a request from one of these teachers, could you please review eduPay? I mean, that is a simple, logistical kind of mechanical thing, rather than day-to-day teaching.

Jenny ATTA: I have to say: I would call eduPay many things but ‘simple’ is perhaps not one of them.

Melina BATH: I call it broken, based on this lady’s conversation.

Jenny ATTA: I understand what you are saying, and I am happy to follow up those issues.

Response:

Over the past 4 years, the department has worked closely with schools on transforming the eduPay HR/Payroll service, including a focus on the user experience. This work is continuing as a priority.

A number of improvements have been made through a 'human-centred design' approach involving school staff, including making eduPay accessible more easily on devices.

4. **Renee HEATH, page 82**

Question Asked:

Okay. Interesting. How did you go with that question you were looking at?

Tony BATES: Dr Heath, my numbers are that 23.7 per cent of government school students are either a concession card holder, or we also include students who are in foster care, so out-of-home foster care, and/or are refugees, but the foster care/refugee percentage is pretty small. I have got 155,391 students eligible for the camps, sports and excursions program, where the prime eligibility is that the family has a concession card.

Renee HEATH: Okay. Thank you. That data was from the 2024–25 department performance statement – where I got the 18 per cent. But obviously to take on notice: could you provide a breakdown of the students per government school?

Tony BATES: Yes, we can do that.

Response:

Parents and carers who are the beneficiary of a financially means-tested card are eligible for the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund. A special consideration category also exists for families on a bridging visa or temporary protection visa, families in community detention, asylum seeker families and students in temporary out of home care arrangements.

The department reports annually through the Department Performance Statement on the proportion of students supported through the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund. The 2023-24 statement indicates that 18 per cent of students across all schools (government and non-government) were supported by the fund.

A breakdown of the number of eligible students in government schools only in 2023 can be found at **attachment A**.

5. **Joe McCracken, page 83**

Question Asked:

Thank you so much. Firstly, I will start off: I have got a few documents that I would like to request from you. The first one is the La Trobe University study of structured literacy in six primary schools. Would you guys be able to provide the committee with that?

Jenny ATTA: Look, I am not particularly close to it, but –

Joe McCracken: You could take it on notice.

Jenny ATTA: I can certainly take that on notice.

Joe McCracken: Yes, sure. The next one – and I think it might have been mentioned before – is the Deloitte evaluation of the tutor learning program. Are you able to provide that one too?

Jenny ATTA: We can certainly look at what we can provide there.

Joe McCracken: And any documentation relating to the impact or the evaluation of, I think it is called, the school-wide positive behaviour initiative, which I think Dr Heath might have mentioned before.

Jenny ATTA: Yes, we were just talking about that. I am happy to look at what we can provide there too.

Joe McCracken: Yes. Any copies of any evaluations or impact statements or anything like that would be greatly appreciated. And the last one is statewide time line data over the Attitudes to School survey data: I think that was first done in 2017. Are you able to provide them to the committee as well?

Jenny ATTA: I am happy to look at the specifics of the request. When you say ‘them’ –

Joe McCRACKEN: The surveys from 2017 till now.

Jenny ATTA: I am happy to follow that up and see what we can provide.

Response:

La Trobe University study on Structured Literacy

La Trobe University is currently finalising the report and the department will provide a copy once it is available.

Deloitte evaluation of the Tutor Learning Initiative

The department 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.

Dandolo evaluation of School-wide Positive Behaviour Support

The department is currently finalising the 2023 School-wide Positive Behaviour Support evaluation report. The final report will be published and a copy will be made available to the Committee.

Attitudes to School Survey (AtoSS) results 2017-2023.

Students in Victorian government schools report their attitudes to school in the annual Attitudes to School Survey. Consistent with experiences in other jurisdictions, there have been a number of changes in results and areas of concern since the COVID-19 pandemic, including feeling connected to school, feeling confident in learning and feeling motivated and interested. At the same time, there have been improvements over the long term in areas including fewer students experiencing bullying and more feeling satisfied in life.

Note: In line with standard reporting practices, the reporting methodology was updated in 2023 to no longer include questions where the student did not respond (nil responses) in the denominator for the overall factor result.

| Parent Factor Name | Factor Name | Percentage Positive Endorsement | | | | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Effective teaching practice for cognitive engagement | Effective teaching time | 67% | 68% | 68% | 71% | 68% | 67% | 66% |
| | Differentiated learning challenge | 67% | 67% | 68% | 70% | 67% | 66% | 65% |
| | Stimulated learning | 62% | 63% | 64% | 66% | 62% | 60% | 59% |
| | Effective classroom behaviour | 64% | 65% | 65% | 68% | 64% | 63% | 62% |
| Emotional and relational engagement | Emotional awareness and regulation* | | | | | 69% | 67% | 68% |
| Individual social and emotional wellbeing | Life satisfaction* | | | | | 55% | 55% | 57% |
| Learner characteristics and disposition | Motivation and interest | 70% | 70% | 69% | 68% | 65% | 63% | 61% |
| | Attitudes to attendance | 84% | 84% | 83% | 84% | 82% | 80% | 79% |
| | Sense of confidence | 70% | 71% | 70% | 67% | 65% | 63% | 63% |
| | Perseverance*** | 65% | 66% | 66% | | 62% | 60% | 60% |
| | Self-regulation and goal setting | 72% | 72% | 71% | 71% | 67% | 66% | 65% |
| Not Experiencing Bullying (Parent Factor) | Not Experiencing Bullying | 80% | 84% | 85% | 89% | 85% | 84% | 85% |
| | Not Experiencing Bullying in the past year** | | | | | | | 75% |
| Not experiencing Racism | Not experiencing racism this term | | | | | | | 85% |
| | Not experiencing racism in the past year** | | | | | | | 83% |
| | I know what to do if I experience racism** | | | | | | | 65% |
| School safety | Advocate at school | 75% | 75% | 75% | 76% | 74% | 72% | 71% |
| | Managing bullying | 68% | 68% | 68% | 69% | 64% | 61% | 59% |
| | Respect for diversity | 57% | 58% | 58% | 62% | 56% | 54% | 51% |

| Parent Factor Name | Factor Name | Percentage Positive Endorsement | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| | Perceptions of LGBTIQ-phobic discrimination* | | | | | 39% | 37% | 37% |
| Social engagement | Student voice and agency | 55% | 56% | 56% | 56% | 52% | 51% | 50% |
| | Sense of connectedness | 66% | 66% | 66% | 69% | 64% | 61% | 59% |
| | School stage transitions (Y7 and New Students)*** | 71% | 72% | 71% | | 66% | 64% | 64% |
| | School stage transitions (Y10-12)*** | 60% | 60% | 60% | | 56% | 55% | 55% |
| | Sense of inclusion*** | 89% | 89% | 89% | | 89% | 88% | 88% |
| Teacher-student relations | Effort*** | 74% | 75% | 75% | | 72% | 71% | 69% |
| | High expectations for success*** | 77% | 77% | 77% | | 77% | 75% | 74% |
| | Teacher concern | 56% | 56% | 56% | 56% | 53% | 52% | 51% |

* Survey factor introduced and collected starting from 2021.

** Survey factor introduced and collected starting in 2023.

*** In 2020, the survey length was reduced to ease the burden on schools due to COVID-19. As a result, a selected number of factors were not collected in 2020.

6. **Joe McCracken, page 83-84**

Question Asked:

Okay, perfect. The first question I have got relates to education more broadly. I know phonics was mentioned before. Have you made the department's position clear to the government – what your position on phonics is?

Jenny ATTA: I might let Dr Howes talk to that, but we have a Minister for Education who is entirely engaged and supportive of work around phonics and explicit teaching in our system.

David HOWES: That is the case; he is. Definitely it has been one of the things that he has been asking us about, so we have been discussing with him what our position is now and how we will strengthen even further, lifting literacy results.

Joe McCracken: Was that advice provided as a once off? How was it delivered?

Jenny ATTA: Well, I think through ongoing discussions with the minister and advice around not only the teaching and learning strategy but the phonics check that now exists across year 1 right across our system; in all sorts of ways, we are engaging with the minister on these issues.

David HOWES: It is a regular point of discussion.

Joe McCracken: If you have got any briefings or advice that you can provide us with, that would be greatly appreciated as well.

Response:

Briefing notes provided to the Minister for Education regarding phonics have been deliberative notes to enable further discussion. No formal briefing for approval has been provided to the Minister on phonics.

7. **Joe McCracken, page 85**

Question Asked:

Tony BATES: Chair, I might just – so the number of staff who took packages from that savings round was 233.25 full-time equivalent.

Joe McCracken: Sorry, how many?

Tony BATES: 233.25 full-time equivalent, and they were mainly in central office. We reduced our corporate comms teams, we reduced some of our strategic policy teams, some of our project management areas. We had two big IT teams – we run IT for all the school system, we do not use a shared service provider – so we merged a couple of groups in there. So it was that central policy, central communications, project management, IT and some –

Joe McCracken: I have not got enough time to write all that down. Are you able to just send it through? Is that all right?

Tony BATES: Yes.

Response:

The number of roles reduced in 2023-24 was 233.25 full time equivalent (FTE) as at March 2024:

- VPSG2 - 9.7 FTE
- VPSG3 - 43.2 FTE
- VPSG4 - 37.2 FTE
- VPSG5 - 95.35 FTE
- VPSG6 - 46.8 FTE
- VPSG7 - 1 FTE

It is anticipated that the reduction will be 238 as at 30/06/2024.

The reduction was implemented by streamlining communications, administration and coordination, central governance, policy, strategy and project management functions, and consolidating information technology functions with a new service delivery model.

8. **Moira DEEMING, page 86-87**

Question Asked:

I am glad to hear it. I am just wondering how they are involved in writing our curriculum and involved in research that our curriculum is based on. That is what I am concerned about.

Next are parental rights. Lots and lots of parents have come before this committee and made submissions talking about how they feel cut out and they feel usurped and they feel that they are treated as the source of the problems in their children's lives and they are declared guilty when nothing has been proven, and one of the things that they reference in terms of policies is the 'mature minor' status that is now being implemented in schools on a much wider scale than, I would say, has ever been done before, having been a teacher myself. I have got it from the Minister for Education that there are no records kept whatsoever about who is declaring them mature minors, so I have a real concern about the legal transference of the idea of power of attorney from parents to children as mature minors and then about who is accountable if anything goes wrong. It says in a few of your documents that when there is a risk of imminent harm, then they are going to notify an adult. I do not know if it is a parent or someone else, but I think there is a very murky situation there where children are at risk systemically, because it does not seem that anyone is

accountable or responsible and you cannot trace the transfer of parental authority to the kids and to someone else if something goes wrong, so I would like to understand that situation better.

Also, in terms of due process and fairness, girls in schools, particularly Muslim girls and LGB children, have made complaints about feeling that their rights are being eroded by these gender identity policies, so I asked questions about this, and I was told that in the policy that we have, the needs of individual transgender students are the ones that are prioritised – so not girls and not Muslim girls. It does not seem like anyone else. I could be wrong, but I have looked around for policies where there is some kind of risk assessment or some kind of balancing attempt, and I could not find one. But if you have one, I would love to see it.

Then there is just my final question, on the evidence base for methodology. I have brought up before on this panel the traumatic role-plays about sexual abuse that our children are being asked to do. Also, on third-party providers for schools for curriculum delivery, I have asked about standards. What are the standards for those organisations? I would be interested in information on those topics. Thank you.

The CHAIR: I am happy if you take it on notice and get back to us. Or if you are happy to answer now, you can, if you like.

Jenny ATTA: Well, I am happy to see what information we can provide. Perhaps if I just make the point that our community is complex and our schools are operating in complex environments, the policy and guidance that we have in place for schools to help navigate a whole range of those issues do of course have to have regard to the legislative and regulatory environment that schools have to operate within. So with mature minors, for instance, I just want to be clear: it is not a Department of Education concept. It is not something that we are creating, but we are trying to support schools to operate within the legislative framework that they are obliged to do.

The other very important context for schools is their regulatory obligations, their minimum standard obligations. The child safe standards go to that, and they are very detailed in terms of protecting and keeping children safe from harm et cetera. It is a complex world. I think overwhelmingly our schools do an extraordinary job to navigate all of that to support students and to work very closely with parents. Now, I understand that there will be complaints where the experience is that that is not done as well as it might be. We are always happy to follow up and have a look at that. But I do want to, I guess, give a shout-out to our school leaders, who I think

overwhelmingly do a pretty amazing job in navigating all this.

Response:

The mature minor policy

The department's Mature Minors and Decision Making policy is consistent with the well-established legal principle in common law that as children and young people mature, they develop understanding and intelligence and may be entitled to make decisions about their own life.

The department's Mature Minors and Decision Making policy can be accessed on the Policy and Advisory Library:

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/mature-minors-and-decision-making/policy>

Policies around 'balancing rights' of different students

All students have the right to feel safe at school. This includes being free from discrimination based on race, religious beliefs, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. This is a protection afforded to all Victorian people, including young people in our schools, under Victorian law.

The department and schools have an obligation under anti-discrimination law to ensure students do not face discrimination, and to take reasonable steps to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation as far as possible.

Victorian schools are required to implement the Child Safe Standards, which are compulsory minimum standards for all Victorian schools to ensure they are well prepared to keep children and young people safe and protect them from harm and abuse.

Child Safe Standard 5 requires all schools to uphold diversity and equity in policy and practice, paying particular attention to the needs of a range of student cohorts, including students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with a disability, students who are unable to live at home, international students, Aboriginal students and LGBTIQ+ students.

Evidence base for the methodology of Respectful Relationships Education

The department supports schools to deliver respectful relationships education through the optional evidence based and age-appropriate Resilience Rights and Respectful Relationships and Building Respectful

Relationships teaching and learning materials, developed by education experts.

Standards for third-party organisations that deliver curriculum

The department's [Visitors in Schools](#) policy sets out the requirements for schools to ensure they have measures in place to effectively screen, manage and supervise all visitors. It includes specific requirements regarding visiting speakers and the content they deliver. The content in this policy on Visiting Speakers requires school staff to:

- ensure the content of presentations and addresses contributes to the development of students' knowledge and understanding
- ensure visiting speakers are directly supporting the school's educational programs
- ensure that visiting speakers do not use the school to campaign for or advance causes or beliefs, especially when speaking on controversial matters
- brief presenters about the nature of the school and its community
- ensure that visitors do not present information or programs that may conflict with the [Education and Training Reform Act 2006 \(Vic\)](#), policies of the department and the school
- ensure that the range of views held by students and their families is taken into account and respected when making decisions about visiting speakers.

Schools are also encouraged to refer to the [Teaching and Learning Resources — Selecting Appropriate Materials](#) policy for advice concerning the selection of lectures, speeches and performances that may be delivered by third parties

9. **Richard WELCH, page 87**

Question Asked:

That, I am presuming, is a net figure. Within that 5036, what is the attrition rate? So what is the actual acquisition rate, if you like, if we are going to use that term, for it?

Jenny ATTA: Yes, I am not sure if we have got that. We might be able to follow it up.

Response:

The 5,036 is the forecast shortfall of teachers in 2028. A shortfall (volume) estimate does not contain a (percentage) attrition rate.

10. **Richard WELCH, page 87-88**

Question Asked:

Do you know what you have assumed in that attrition rate? Is it a percentage, and how does that differ to previous ones?

Andrea DEL MONACO: I would have to take that on notice. Attrition fell for a couple of years through COVID as people chose not to move. We have seen an uptick after that period. It is starting to level off in a number of cohorts across our teaching workforce. Rural and regional have started to settle back down. Our principal class has started to settle down. Our older workforce has started to settle back down. We are still watching the younger cohort, but we are continuing to track and monitor that.

Response:

Within the forecasting models presented in the Victorian Teacher Supply and Demand Report, attrition of registered teachers from the teaching register is a subtraction from the projected supply pipeline of registered teachers.

Attrition of teaching registrants is forecast to be 5.4% for early childhood teachers, and 4.0% for school teachers. The number of teachers leaving the workforce is projected to grow in line with the increasing pool of total registered teachers. The forecast for total registered teachers is based on forecast Initial Teacher Education (ITE) graduates, forecast migration, and forecast deferred registrants. Further detail can be found on pages 55 and 56 of the Victorian Teacher Supply and Demand Report, available at <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/profdev/careers/2022-Teacher-Supply-and-Demand-Report.pdf>.

11. **The CHAIR, page 90**

Question Asked:

I understand. For example, one of my kids is at a school that is doing that program, but for that program, compared to actually a selective school, there is a big difference between the two – between service delivery and excellence. So I am just saying: are we as a state catering for all the demand. I am just throwing it out there to the education department. We

need to look forward and focus meeting the demands of our populations. Take it on notice or come back or whatever. If you need more funding or need more advocacy related to what the government need to do, please let us know and we will make a recommendation in that area.

Response:

At this time there are no plans to expand the number of government schools exclusively targeted to high-ability students – instead the intent is to ensure that all government schools provide an environment in which high-ability students are supported to excel and reach their full potential.

To this end the Student Excellence Program provides funding to all primary and secondary schools to expand their support for high-ability students, including the appointment of high-ability practice leaders to drive whole-school approaches for high-ability. This is complemented by a toolkit of teaching resources and guidance to improve differentiation within every classroom.

Beyond these opportunities at the school level, the program is providing up to 200,000 places in extension and enrichment activities across the curriculum from prep to Year 12 through the Victorian Challenge and Enrichment Series. It will also provide up to 100,000 places for Year 5 to 8 students in the Victorian High-Ability Program, a 10-week online enrichment program in English and Mathematics offered through Virtual School Victoria.