

**Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Inquiry into 2020–21 Financial and Performance Outcomes**

Responses to Questions on Notice

1a.

Portfolio:	Schools
Witness:	Stephen Fraser
Committee member:	Danny O'Brien
Page/s of transcript:	3

Relevant text:

Mr D O'BRIEN: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Secretary and team, for being here this afternoon. Secretary, you mentioned just a moment ago the mental health practitioners program. Are you able to provide data on the number of Victorian students per education region that sought mental health support through their school or otherwise through their educational facility?

Ms ATTA: Mr O'Brien, we will have some data for particular programs. There is a range of different supports through schools, including referrals to tertiary services and dedicated programs within the schools. There is funding for Headspace counselling. We have got some data across those programs, so I am happy to look at what we can put together.

Mr D O'BRIEN: If you could provide it on notice—I guess whatever you have got would be good, but I am specifically interested in the mental health practitioners program that you mentioned, which as you said was run through secondary schools.

Answer:

In 2020–21, 23,975 Mental Health Practitioner (MHP) consultations were provided, with more than 5,300 individual students receiving support. This support included direct student counselling, interventions and related activities including family support and referral to specialist services.

Region	Number of students receiving support from a MHP in 2020–21 (rounded)
North Eastern Victoria	400
North Western Victoria	1,700
South Eastern Victoria	1,450
South Western Victoria	1,750
TOTAL	5,300

Please note that the Mental Health Practitioners Initiative has been incrementally implemented across DET Areas and regions. The North Eastern Victoria region implementation occurred later in the rollout which is reflected in the student intervention figures.

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1b.

Portfolio:	Schools
Witness:	Stephen Fraser
Committee member:	Danny O'Brien
Page/s of transcript:	3

Relevant text:

Mr D O'BRIEN: If you could provide it on notice—I guess whatever you have got would be good, but I am specifically interested in the mental health practitioners program that you mentioned, which as you said was run through secondary schools. Was there data for primary students who were seeking mental health support?

Ms ATTA: Within primary schools the mental health in primary schools initiative is a key initiative that we have expanded, partly of course in response to the challenges through the pandemic. That is a program that looks at training up a specialist teacher within the school in terms of mental health literacy et cetera to be able to identify concerns and guide the school's response to those, including external referrals. Again, I would have to see if we have got specific data. A lot of that response within primary schools is within that program.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Yes, if it is kept, if you have data on the level of support that was sought by students, that would be good.

Answer:

Individual primary school student consultations are not reported, given the need in primary schools is typically more focused on prevention and early intervention work that can be delivered to classes or groups of students.

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2.

Portfolio:	Schools
Witness:	Tony Bates
Committee member:	Danny O'Brien
Page/s of transcript:	4-5

Relevant text:

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay. Thank you. Sorry to bring you forward, because I am now going to move on. Secretary, the questionnaire details also the Bridging the Digital Divide program and the announcement by the minister in December that all the laptops and dongles provided throughout the remote learning period could be kept by students and families. I believe the government announced \$24.5 million to compensate schools for those that they had to effectively hand over. Was every school fully reimbursed for any loss that occurred?

Ms ATTA: Thanks, Mr O'Brien. I will ask Mr Bates to talk to the detail of that.

Mr BATES: Thanks, Mr O'Brien. Yes. So we have made payments to I think 999 schools. There is a group of about 24 or so that we are still in discussion with where, when we did the reconciliation between their computer inventory, can I say, and the amounts they were claiming, some of them had overclaimed, some of them had underclaimed. But we have spent I think about \$17.5 million worth of payments so far to those—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Seven and a half?

Mr BATES: Seventeen point five. And I think as I have spoken to the committee about before, we have done payments to those schools. We had a number of schools who had leased devices, and we did work with a number of them who were having trouble with their lease companies, and we have managed to resolve all those issues. So there are no schools that are reporting they out of pocket. And there are—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Sorry, that was a question I was coming to. So on the leased issue, no schools are out of pocket for having to break leases?

Mr BATES: That is right. No. Occasionally we had to intervene with the lease company, but when we did we were able to make sure that the reimbursement under the Bridging the Digital Divide program was sufficient to pay out the lease.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Right.

Mr BATES: And then there is a group of a further 20 schools where we have provided about 1000 devices. So a number of the schools rather than taking a cash payment asked if we could give them a new device to replace the one that they had given to the children. So we spent a bit over \$1.2 million providing devices to those 20 schools.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Right. So of the \$24.5 million does that mean there is still \$7 million left?

Mr BATES: Yes. So there has been about \$17.5 million in payments. There was about \$1.25 million for the devices. So we have got about \$2 million to \$3 million. I will just check the numbers. We have got some

money that we still need to deploy, but as I said, we are still in discussions with about 50 schools reconciling their claims.

Mr D O'BRIEN: So subject to discussions, which obviously will be about whether or not this has been a cost of the school, can the department guarantee that no school will be worse off, as it were?

Mr BATES: Yes, we can guarantee that.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay. Thank you. Perhaps if you can give me the figures on what is left over, Mr Bates, on notice, that would be good.

Answer:

To date \$19.5 million has been expended, with \$5 million remaining in the fund. The Department is working with 77 schools to finalise allocations and asset data to enable final payments to be made.

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3.

Portfolio:	Schools
Witness:	David Howes
Committee member:	Danny O'Brien
Page/s of transcript:	5-6

Relevant text:

Mr D O'BRIEN: Right. A constituent has forwarded me an advertisement on seek.com for Executive Security Solutions for armed security officers. Literally the title was 'Armed Security Officer (Schools)', and the detail goes to: ... *positions are based in the south-eastern suburbs with the majority of work being Monday - Friday 0700 - 1700.* Would that be for state government schools?

Ms ATTA: I am not aware of that—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Sorry, I should add my constituent actually inquired with the company and said, 'Was this public or private?', and the response was 'Public and private'. So I am just wanting to know whether the department is advertising for armed security officers in schools.

Ms ATTA: No, the department is not. I am just seeing if Dr Howes can add anything there.

Dr HOWES: No, not to my knowledge. No schools have requested armed security guards.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay. The ad, I have got a hard copy of it, because the ad has been updated and removed the reference to schools, but it is still the same ad. Does the department advertise for security officers, full stop, for any schools?

Ms ATTA: No, again, not to my knowledge, Mr O'Brien. We have got the central capacity to oversight schools. There may be some independent schools that employ security. I think, for instance—and it may have been over the past year—some of the Jewish independent schools with concerns about security may have sought staff, but for—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Yes. It was the fact that the response came back from the company saying that there were public and private. You have said not that you are aware of. Can I ask you to check that and come back to us on notice just to confirm whether there are any schools—state.

Ms ATTA: Yes. Certainly not on any kind of regular basis do we seek to employ security guards at schools, but I will check in terms of the questions that you have asked.

Answer:

The Department does not employ or engage any armed security staff.

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4.

Portfolio:	Higher Education and Training and Skills
Witness:	Lill Healy
Committee member:	Danny O'Brien
Page/s of transcript:	6

Relevant text:

Mr D O'BRIEN: So continuing on the theme, obviously international student enrolment has been an issue; we just have not had them. Are you able to provide a list, or do you know a list, of how much revenue was lost by each TAFE due to the loss of international students?

Ms ATTA: To look at it for each TAFE, we could see what information we could provide for you.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Yes, if you could provide that.

Answer:

TAFE international delivery consists of onshore and offshore delivery. In 2020, the TAFE sector reported \$99.9 million in fee for service international revenue. This was \$32.5 million lower than 2019 (\$132.3 million) as shown in the table below. In 2020 the Victorian Government provided \$68.9 million in crisis support to assist Victoria's public training providers manage the impact of declining domestic and international fee income. TAFE international revenue for 2021 is not yet available.

Fee For Service International revenue by TAFE 2019-2020

	Total
	Increase/Decrease in Service International Revenue (\$,000)
Box Hill Institute	-4,032
Bendigo Kangan Institute	-3,421
Chisholm	- 5,517
GOTAFE	- 77
Holmesglen	-4,475
Melbourne Polytechnic	-6,427
SuniTAFE	-185
SWTAFE	0
TAFEGipps	-223
The Gordon	-231
William Angliss Institute	-4,889
Wodonga	0
Total	-32,487

Source: Extracted from Note 2.2 (Revenue from fees, charges and sales) of each TAFE's published 2020 Annual Report.

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5a.

Portfolio:	Higher Education and Training and Skills
Witness:	Lill Healy
Committee member:	Danny O’Brien
Page/s of transcript:	7-8

Relevant text:

Mr D O’BRIEN: Okay. Right. We will wait and see. Just turning to vocational education and training, the questionnaire showed that the completion rate for VET in 2020 dropped dramatically to 71 000, down some 22 000 completions. Are you able to tell me which courses were most impacted by that, or which courses were the main reason behind it?

....

Mr D O’BRIEN: Yes. The original question though was about which courses were most affected. Do you have—

Dr BOOTH: I do not have a breakdown, so I will have to go away and we can have a look at which courses were most affected.

Answer:

Declines in completion rates for VET in 2020 were counter to the trend of improved completion rates in previous years and directly related to travel restrictions, business constraints and training limitations arising from the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

For the BP3 measure “Two-year completion rate for non-apprentice commencements in government subsidised AQF qualifications”, the top five courses with the largest percentage point declines in their two-year completion rates in 2020 when compared with 2019 (that had at least 100 commencements in 2019) were –

- *Certificate III in Civil Construction Plant Operations*
- *Certificate III in Travel*
- *Certificate III in Carpentry*
- *Certificate II in Meat Processing (Food Services)*
- *Diploma of Digital Media Technologies*

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5b.

Portfolio:	Higher Education and Training and Skills
Witness:	Lill Healy
Committee member:	Danny O'Brien
Page/s of transcript:	8

Mr D O'BRIEN: If you could provide that on notice, that would be good. Likewise, there was a decline in disability, unemployed learners and Indigenous people participating in VET. Perhaps on notice, have you got how much funding was spent in those sectors in 2021 and what the reason for the decline might have been?

Dr BOOTH: On those particular learners?

Mr D O'BRIEN: Yes, in that cohort.

Dr BOOTH: Yes. I think the overall declines for those learners were consistent with the overall declines for all students. My answer there would be we saw all student commencements drop to some level—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Or completions, I am talking about, but yes.

Dr BOOTH: Oh, in relation to completions. We can take a look at that.

Answer:

The BP3 measure "Two-year completion rate for non-apprentice commencements in government subsidised AQF qualifications" declined by 4.9 percentage points in 2020 when compared to 2019 (as published in the 2021–22 and 2020–21 Budget Papers), counter to the trend of improved completion rates over recent years. Declines in the completion rates for specific groups were in line with overall decline in completion rates:

- *Indigenous students experienced a 3.4 percentage point decline in completion rates*
- *people with a disability experienced a 4.7 percentage point decline*
- *the unemployed before training experienced a 6.0 percentage point decline.*

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6.

Portfolio:	Schools
Witness:	David Howes
Committee member:	James Newbury
Page/s of transcript:	14-15

Relevant text:

Mr NEWBURY: Just while we are on that topic, you said that there was some employment of local people. Are you saying that there was no employment of any person who could be characterised as a professional in relation to security? I mean, you made it sound like it was a local dad.

Dr HOWES: Mr Newbury, are you referring to Richmond specifically?

Mr NEWBURY: Yes, continuing on.

Dr HOWES: Certainly the ongoing arrangement for—

Mr NEWBURY: No, that specific period of time you were talking about I am referring to.

Dr HOWES: I would have to go back and check whether there was an instance where a professional security guard had been employed—

Mr NEWBURY: So there could have been a professional security person employed at Richmond.

Dr HOWES: I will have to go back and check on that

Answer:

The Department has not employed professional security contractors at Richmond West Primary School. The contractors employed at the school are Community Liaison Workers.

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7.

Portfolio:	Higher Education
Witness:	Lill Healy
Committee member:	Ms Bev McArthur
Page/s of transcript:	28

Relevant text:

Mrs McARTHUR: Thank you, Chair. My first question is to the Deputy Secretary of Higher Education and Skills. Victoria’s universities cut numerous jobs last year. Was the department advised or aware of the cuts and the numbers?

Ms HEALY: Thanks very much for the question. The department works closely with universities through the partnership agreements that have been established, and these were established as part of the higher education state investment fund. That partnership approach to universities was enacted deliberately to support universities through the pandemic.

Mrs McARTHUR: Are you aware of the cuts?

Ms HEALY: Well, those agreements recognise the impact of the pandemic on universities and have deliberately gone to invest in state outcomes through research and capital et cetera. So in that process we have a strong relationship. We understand the commonwealth funding models, and universities of course keep us apprised of their intentions from time to time.

Mrs McARTHUR: So you know the figures?

Ms HEALY: The annual reports for the universities would be the place that we would go to for that information.

Mrs McARTHUR: So you do not have them offhand?

Ms HEALY: I do not have them offhand.

Answer:

Victorian-based universities are regulated and funded by the Commonwealth Government, and operate as independent, self-governing education organisations. They are not required to report job losses to the Minister for Higher Education or the Victorian Department of Education and Training. In line with the Financial Management Act 1994 and the Financial Reporting Directions, Victorian universities include workforce data in their annual reports. Universities are requested to provide headcount and full time equivalent (FTE) data for the current and previous year for all employees, including ongoing, fixed term and casual combined. This workforce data provides insight into each university’s overall workforce for the current and previous year, but is not necessarily indicative of job losses.

The 2021 State Budget provided \$350 million Victorian Higher Education State Investment Fund in recognition the critical role that our universities play in driving productivity and the economic recovery of our state.

University	2019 FTE	2020 FTE	Change %
Deakin University	4,535*	4,259	-6.1
Federation University	1,258	1,238	-1.6
La Trobe University	3,339	2,877	-13.8
Monash University	8,347*	8,018	-3.9
RMIT University	6,976	6,112	-12.4
Swinburne University	2,957	2,590	-12.4
The University of Melbourne	9,514*	9,189	-3.4
Victoria University	2,123	1,872	-11.8
TOTAL	39,049	36,155	-7.4

** 2019 figures are different to those reported in the 2019 Annual Report due to adjustments to the data extraction for the 2020 Annual Report.*

While the University of Divinity is established under Victorian legislation, it is a private and self-governing university as per the Higher Education Support Act 2003 and its activity has not been incorporated into the sector analysis above. Australian Catholic University has not been included as it is a multi-state university with operations in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

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8.

Portfolio:	Higher Education
Witness:	Lill Healy
Committee member:	Ms Bev McArthur
Page/s of transcript:	28

Relevant text:

Mrs McARTHUR: Maybe take it on notice, if we could? Thank you. And also, how much in revenue by each of Victoria’s universities was lost due to the loss of international students? Do you want to take that on notice too?

Ms HEALY: Again, I would need to take it on notice for detailed university by university—

Answer:

Data on the loss of revenue from international student fees for Victorian universities is detailed in the table below. As the University of Divinity is a private, self-governing institution the university’s data has not been incorporated into the sector analysis.

Note that the Commonwealth Government retains primary responsibility for funding universities. The Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions through Global Victoria is the responsible Department for international students.

Table: 2019 and 2020 total revenue changes in international student fees by Victorian university

University	Increase/Decrease Internation Student Revenue (\$,000)
Australian Catholic University*	3,593
Deakin University	-16,828
Federation University Australia	-58,062
La Trobe University	-41,689
Monash University	-21,346
RMIT University	-68,106
Swinburne University of Technology	-29,955
The University of Melbourne	-59,140
Victoria University	-8,892

Source: [2020 University Finance Summary Information - Department of Education, Skills and Employment, Australian Government \(dese.gov.au\)](https://www.dese.gov.au/2020-university-finance-summary-information)

*Australian Catholic University is a multi-state university with operations in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

