

CHAPTER 3: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT HEARINGS

3.1 Introduction

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is responsible for the administration of two portfolios:

- Children and Early Childhood Development; and
- Education.

3.2 Key budget themes for 2009-10

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development advised the Committee that its key budget themes are centred on the *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development (2008)*. The Department identified that the initiatives in the *2009-10 State Budget* focus on the priorities identified in the *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development (2008)* to:¹¹

- increase access to high quality early childhood health, education and care services;
- strengthen public confidence in a world-class school education system, with a strong and vibrant government school sector at its core;
- integrate services for children and families; and
- improve outcomes for disadvantaged young Victorians.

3.3 Key assumptions that have been used to develop the Department's projections for 2009-10

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development identified the following five key assumptions upon which its projections for 2009-10 are based:¹²

- output appropriations. Student enrolments for 2009-10 and projected future enrolments have been considered. Output appropriation is also indexed at the *Department's Funding Model* rate for the total appropriation budget;
- Teacher's Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA). The EBA, finalised May 2008, and the Education Support staff EBA finalised September 2008, establish the salary increases for school staff over the next three years. This has been factored into the budget estimates;
- Federal Government grants. Any additional Federal Government funding received as part of the 2009-10 Federal Government Budget will be reflected in the Department's forward estimates post-budget;
- employee leave provisions. These provisions are forecast on the basis of staffing profiles and current salaries and conditions. For the forecast period, employee benefits are adjusted for approved wage agreements and known oncost rates. Oncost rates are set to cover anticipated payments to employees; and

¹¹ Department of Sustainability and Environment, *Response to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee Budget Estimates Questionnaire*, May 2009, p.3

¹² *ibid.*, pp.4-5

- depreciation and amortisation. All infrastructure, building, plant and equipment and other non-current physical assets are depreciated on a straight-line basis, at rates that allocate the asset's value, less any residual value, over the estimated useful life to the Department. Permanent buildings are depreciated over 60 years, relocatable and other building improvements are depreciated over 40 years and plant and equipment is depreciated from three to 33 years.

3.4 Major Expenditure Policy Shifts in the 2009-10 Budget

The Department advised the Committee that there have been no major expenditure policy shifts in 2009-10.¹³

3.5 Education Portfolio

3.5.1 Introduction

The Committee received evidence from the Hon. Bronwyn Pike MP, Minister for Education on 13 May 2009. The Minister provided an overview of the Education portfolio at the start of the hearing, assisted by Professor Peter Dawkins, Secretary; Mr Darrell Fraser, Deputy Secretary, Office for Government School Education; Mr Jim Miles, Acting Executive Director, Office for Resources and Infrastructure; and Mr Tony Cook, Deputy Secretary, Office for Planning, Strategy and Coordination, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The Committee thanks the Minister and accompanying officers for their attendance and assistance.

3.5.2 General comments

At the budget estimates hearing, the Committee raised various matters concerning the budget estimates for 2009-10 (see Volume Two for the transcript of proceedings). Transcripts of the budget estimates proceedings are also accessible on the Committee's website at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/paec. Documents provided at the hearings of the budget estimates (see Section 3.6.4) are available on the Committee's website. Written answers to questions on notice should be submitted to the Committee by 22 June 2009. These answers will be considered by the Committee for inclusion in a further report.

3.5.3 Key matters raised at the budget estimates hearing

Key matters raised at the budget estimates hearing included a standard question on Federal Government grants and the following (page references refer to the transcript in Volume Two, Section 3.2):

School infrastructure and asset investment

- the *Victorian Schools Plan* (pp.6-7);
- support provided to bushfire affected communities, including rebuilding schools (pp.9-10 and pp.21-22);
- school maintenance programs and policies (pp.18-19);
- school regeneration projects (pp.23-24);
- computer-to-student ratios in Victorian Schools (pp.24-25);
- development of school sustainability plans (p.27);

¹³ *ibid.*, p.25

- expenditure on, and development of, the Ultranet (p.28);
- rural schools replacement program (pp.32-33); and
- school closures including annotated receipts in respect of land sales (pp.19-21 and 31).

Improved educational outcomes in schools

- strategies to improve school retention rates in rural Victoria (pp.10-13);
- programs to support Aboriginal students in schools (pp.14-15);
- initiatives to improve technological literacy among students (pp.15-16);
- services for students with a disability (p.26); and
- literacy and numeracy in Victorian school students (pp.30-31).

Education workforce matters

- initiatives in the *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* including workforce reform (pp.7-8 and 25-26); and
- improvements to the quality of teaching staff and the use of teaching and learning coaches to improve student performance (pp.31-32).

General funding issues

- security of Federal Government funding (pp.16-18);
- administration of Federal Government funding provided to Victorian primary schools (pp.29-30);
- funding for non-government schools (pp.28-29 and 33-34); and
- *Primary Schools for the 21st Century* funding allocations; (pp.22-23).

Other issues

- general efficiencies in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (pp.8-9);
- performance against *Growing Victoria Together* visions (pp.13-14);
- development of trade training centres in Victoria (pp.27-28); and
- development of school-community partnerships (p.33).

3.5.4 Documents tabled at the budget estimates hearing

The Minister provided an introductory slide presentation at the budget estimates hearing. The slides are available on the Committee's website.

3.5.5 Questions taken on notice at the budget estimates hearing

A number of questions were taken on notice by the Minister at the budget estimates hearing (see Appendix 2 - Questions on Notice, and the transcript in Volume Two) relating to:

- Federal Government grants;
- regional and rural school performance data for year 12 completions;

- narrowing the gap between city and rural year 12 completion rates;
- depreciation and amortisation over time associated with school maintenance and rebuilding;
- details of school regeneration projects;
- computer-to-student ratio output targets;
- Federal Government funding to provide a computer for every secondary school student;
- comparison of students who require disability support compared with those receiving support;
- investment in non-government schools;
- possible land sales as a result of school closures; and
- prioritisation system for determining infrastructure funding to address inequality or inequity.

A written response by the Minister to the Committee on these questions is due by 22 June 2009 and will be considered for publication in a further report.

3.6 Children and Early Childhood Development Portfolio

3.6.1 Introduction

The Committee received evidence from Ms Maxine Morand MP, Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, on 21 May 2009. The Minister provided an overview of her portfolio at the start of the hearing, assisted by Professor Peter Dawkins, Secretary; Mr Tony Cook, Deputy Secretary, Office for Planning, Strategy and Coordination; Ms Jeanette Nagorcka, Acting Deputy Secretary, Office for Children and Early Childhood Development; and Mr Jim Miles, Acting Executive Director, Office for Resource and Infrastructure, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The Committee thanks the Minister and accompanying officers for their attendance and assistance.

3.6.2 General comments

At the budget estimates hearing, the Committee raised various matters concerning the budget estimates for 2009-10 (see Volume Two for the transcript of proceedings). Transcripts of the budget estimates proceedings are also accessible on the Committee's website at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/paec. Documents provided at the hearings of the budget estimates (see Section 3.5.4) are available on the Committee's website. Written answers to questions on notice should be submitted to the Committee by 22 June 2009. These answers will be considered by the Committee for inclusion in a further report.

3.6.3 Key matters raised at the budget estimates hearing

Key matters raised at the budget estimates hearing included a standard question on Federal Government grants and the following (page references refer to the transcript in Volume Two, Section 3.2):

Child capital funding

- *Cairnlea Community Hub*; and
- accountability mechanisms for child capital funding (pp.5-6).

Kindergarten services

- kindergarten participation rates (pp.6-8);
- kindergarten participation of children from a disadvantaged background (pp.8-9);
- increased demand and funding for kindergarten places (p.9);
- new funding model for kindergarten places (p.9); and
- access to kindergarten services by indigenous children (p.11).

Maternal and child health services

- expansion of maternal and child health services (pp.9-10);
- number of children aged zero to one receiving enhanced maternal and child health services (pp.11-12); and
- funding for the delivery of integrated children's centres (p.13).

Other matters

- *Young Readers* program (p.6);
- closure of ABC Learning childcare centres (pp.10-11); and
- students with disabilities (pp.13-14).

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The Minister provided an introductory slide presentation at the budget estimates hearing. The presentation is available on the Committee's website.

3.6.5 Questions taken on notice at the budget estimates hearing

A number of questions were taken on notice by the Minister at the budget estimates hearing (see Appendix 2 - Questions on Notice, and the transcript in Volume Two) relating to:

- Federal Government grants;
- Cairnlea Community Hub funding; and
- families receiving enhanced maternal and child health services.

A written response by the Minister to the Committee on these questions is due by 22 June 2009 and will be considered for publication in a further report.