

## **HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**Monday, 23 June 2025**

### **ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A**

**Chair:**

Hon. A. Piccolo

**Members:**

Hon. J.A.W. Gardner

Hon. D.G. Pisoni

Ms N. Clancy

Mr M. Cowdrey

Mr A. Dighton

Ms D. Wortley

*The committee met at 09:00*

*Estimates Vote*

**DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION, \$3,645,914,000**

**ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION, \$611,862,000**

**Minister:**

Hon. B.I. Boyer, Minister for Education, Training and Skills.

**Departmental Advisers:**

Prof. M. Westwell, Chief Executive, Department for Education.

Mr C. Bernardi, Chief Operating Officer, Department for Education.

Mr B. Temperly, Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Corporate Services, Department for Education.

Mr P. Kelly, Deputy Chief Executive, Schools and Preschools, Department for Education.

Mr A. Creek, Executive Director, Finance, Department for Education.

Ms M. Elliott, Executive Director, People and Culture, Department for Education.

Ms C. Feszczak, Executive Director, Student and Pathway and Careers, Department for Education.

Mr D. Humphrys, Executive Director, Support and Inclusion, Department for Education.

Mr L. Fraser, Acting Executive Director, Strategic Policy and External Relations, Department for Education.

**The CHAIR:** Before I declare the examination open, I welcome members of the committee, as well as the minister and his advisers, to today's Estimates Committee A. I respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of this country throughout Australia and their connection to land and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to elders both past and present.

The estimates committees are a relatively informal procedure and, as such, there is no need to stand to ask or answer questions. I understand that the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition have agreed on an approximate time for the consideration of the proposed payments; is that correct?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, I believe so.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Sure.

**The CHAIR:** Changes to committee membership will be notified as they occur. Members should ensure the Chair is provided with a completed request to be discharged form. If the minister undertakes to supply information at a later date, it must be submitted to the Clerk Assistant via the Answers to Questions mailbox no later than Friday 5 September 2025.

I propose to allow both the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition to make opening statements for up to 10 minutes, should they wish to do so, but there is no requirement to do so. There will be a flexible approach to giving the call for asking questions. A member who is not on the committee may ask a question at the discretion of the Chair. All questions are to be directed to the minister and not the minister's advisers. The minister may refer questions to advisers for a response.

Questions must be based on lines of expenditure in the budget papers and must be identifiable or referenced. I remind members that it is estimates and not question time. Members who are unable to complete their questions during the proceedings may submit them as questions on notice for inclusion in the assembly *Notice Paper*.

I remind members that the rules of debate in the house apply in the committee. Consistent with the rules of the house, photography by members from the chamber floor is not permitted while the committee is sitting. The minister and members may not table documents before the committee; however, documents can be supplied to the Chair for distribution. The incorporation of material in *Hansard* is permitted on the same basis as applies in the house; that is, it is purely statistical and limited to one page in length.

The committee's examination will be broadcast in the same manner as the sittings of the house, through the IPTV system within Parliament House and online via the parliament's website. I do not have last week's ratings yet, but I must check them out to see whether the green team or the red team did better last week. Last year, the House of Assembly won every day, not because I was chairing but I think because of the quality of the ministers we had.

The minister appearing is the Minister for Education, Training and Skills. I now proceed to open the following line for examination: the portfolio of the Department for Education. I note that the minister is going to be here for the whole day, so aren't we are lucky? I call on the minister to make a statement, if he wants to, and introduce his advisers.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** There is no opening statement from me, but I will introduce the people to my right and left. I have the Chief Executive, Martin Westwell, on my left; the Deputy Chief Executive, Ben Temperly, on my right; and the Chief Operating Officer, Chris Bernardi, on the far left.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I refer to page 174, ministerial office resources. Can the minister identify how many staff have been seconded into the ministerial office from the education department or from other departments or ministerial offices?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I believe the answer is none.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can the minister provide how many public servants are in the ministerial office as opposed to the separately appointed political appointments?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will have to take that on notice, I think.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Are you able to provide the figure for each of the last four financial years?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I am happy to go to the next page on the workforce summary. There was a fairly substantial change from the 2023-24 actual figures in the Department for Education and the estimated result for 2024-25, and then it was pretty much stable for the budget. Is the minister able to identify the reason for that change? Is it purely a reflection of estimated staff based on budget changes or is there a difference in headcount, effectively?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I might pass to Mr Bernardi to answer that one.

**Mr BERNARDI:** A key reason for the difference is that there are vacancies that we have in the 2023-24 financial year. I will take more of the detail on notice through the minister; however, one of the reasons is as a result of there being staff vacancies. We have a policy that where there are staff vacancies we reinvest that money into priority areas; for example, maintenance. But for the specific details, I will come back on notice.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you very much.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** If I may, I might just add to that in terms of some of the programs that we have funded. There is an increase in staff FTE estimates relating to the operational cost of three-year-old preschool delivery, there is an increase in staff FTE associated with the five new technical colleges, and I believe there is an FTE component as well for the Tailored Learning program—the new iteration of FLO—in the disability space. In addition to the answer given by Mr Bernardi, there are also obviously some programs that we have commenced or that are ongoing that also contribute to those FTE numbers.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I have a very similar question that could wait until administered items but, seeing as we right here, there is a similar change in the headcount on administered items. Is that able to be explained: 38 to 50 on that line?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will take that on notice, member for Morialta.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** While we are talking about vacancies, is the minister able to advise how many staff vacancies the department currently has and, if possible, whether these can be grouped into categories, such as administrative, teaching and so forth?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Member for Morialta, are you referring to teaching position vacancies or vacancies outside of that?

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I was actually interested in both, but I am specifically interested in teaching and I was going to go into that in my next question, so feel free to provide me with what you would like. You might save us some time.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Indeed. At the beginning of the 2025 school year there were 57 positions that were unfilled as teaching positions. This compares to 68 the year before, 71 the year before that and 86 the year before that. Although there are still vacancies that we would ideally like to be filled, the pleasing news is that number has gone down year on year and I think if we were to compare how South Australia is faring compared to other states and territories we are in a much better position, even when taking into account population.

Obviously the majority of the vacant roles that were not filled were in country areas, which has traditionally been harder to staff, but we have done quite a lot there and I would point to particularly the work we did in the last enterprise bargaining agreement around the return of the Country Incentive Zone Allowance, making it ongoing for staff who were currently receiving it, but also bringing it back for those staff who had lost it some time ago. Hopefully those things are starting to contribute to that position of vacancies dropping year on year.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can I ask how many staff vacancies are being carried in non-teaching roles and I am wondering if that can be done in non-teaching roles within schools and non-teaching roles within the department outside of schools?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will have to take that one on notice.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. How many special authorities to teach have been granted to staff working in those schools at the beginning of each of the years that the minister identified? There were 57 vacancies at the beginning of this year, 68 the year before, 71 the year

before and 86 the year before that. I am just wondering if we can have the number of special authorities to teach granted to staff in each of those years.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We have Marina Elliott here who is Executive Director of People and Culture who might be able to help us answer this question.

**Ms ELLIOTT:** We currently have 145 special authority teachers teaching in our public education schools. Those 145 teachers are on contracts and they are predominantly teachers who are in their final year of their initial teacher education program and the vast majority of those 145 are in our hard to staff locations.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** That was the number as of today?

**Ms ELLIOTT:** As of 6 June, I believe.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is it possible, if not now then potentially on notice, to get the equivalent numbers on the first day of school for each of the last four years up to this year?

**Ms ELLIOTT:** I can do that. I do not have that with me, but we can get that on notice. That number is from 6 June, so you are asking for the beginning of the school year?

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Yes, the beginning of the school year, so it is equivalent with the number of vacancies at the beginning of the year.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** What I can say, though, in terms of the 6 June figures for the last couple of years, as Ms Elliott said, 2025 is 145, 6 June 2024 is 198 and 6 June 2023 is 159, so it is down on the last two years this year.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I would be grateful for 2022 and 2021 in due course, whether the 6 June figure is to complete this set or alternatively the beginning of the school year, as with all five figures.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We can do that. I point out, too, that it is not only the public system that is using special authorities to teach. The global figure that I think has been used in the public domain includes all those SATs across the three schooling sectors in South Australia, but these are the numbers specific to the public system.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** My recollection is that up until probably 2023—or it might have been 2022 or it might have been earlier—in smaller numbers, special authorities to teach were usually reserved for people with specialist skills, not necessarily teaching qualifications or even teaching students. They were people like Arabic teachers or with other special abilities. The 145 special authorities to teach currently employed in our public education system: are all of those teaching students in the final or second to last year of their degrees, or are any of those in the specialist category? I imagine there are some that are Teach For Australia as well.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, you are correct that some are in what you might refer to as a specialist category, but I might take it on notice and come back to you about how many fall into that category. I think there was also a special category during COVID as well, from memory.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Yes, I think we were bringing back some retired teachers, from memory.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** The other question I had was in relation to vacancies in non-teaching positions. Did you take that one on notice already?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, we can take that on notice.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can I ask how many of those FTEs are in the technical colleges program? The minister identified that as one of the reasons for the increase in the last financial year. How many are in the technical colleges program?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I can provide somewhat of an answer for you here, member for Morialta. Because Findon is the only one that is open yet, I am advised there are 20 FTEs there, but

we have appointed the leads for the other four technical colleges. So I think it is in the vicinity of 25 or 26 currently, but obviously that number will grow as the other colleges open.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** You have identified 6 June figures for the special authorities to teach. I think the minister quoted beginning of term 1 figures earlier for vacancies. Do you have current or 6 June or beginning of term 2 figures for vacancies?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We do not have the exact number, so I can take it on notice. We believe it is pretty similar to the figures at the start of the year, but we can come back to you.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I believe, Ms Elliott, in response to the earlier question about the pre-service teachers with special authorities to teach, you suggested most of them were in the hard-to-staff schools, presumably in more rural or remote areas. Is there a capacity to identify the numbers per region in relation to how many of those SATs were in each region within the department?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am sure we can take that away and get that data for you. We do not have it on us today.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. Is there a program to support those pre-service teachers in their roles? One of the concerns that we often have is in relation to burnout of teachers who have had their full qualification—these teachers in remote areas, presumably, many of them far from home. I am sure that we would be very concerned about whether they would have a negative or a positive experience. Can the minister explain what support is being provided to make sure they have a positive experience and are going to be with us for many years to come?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, thank you; I appreciate the question and it is a good opportunity to talk about perhaps some of the upsides of having special authority to teach. Of course, in an ideal situation we do not have any unfilled vacancies—and I am not suggesting otherwise, but we have been tracking this very closely around how our SATs have been going. The department has provided a lot of wraparound support and that has included mentoring, release time at 0.1 FTE for lesson planning and professional development, and flexibility for completing their studies. Some work is also underway to design employment-based ITE courses that embed SAT employment as part of supported and effective preparation for teaching as a graduate.

What we have seen, I think I can say anecdotally, so far is that given nationally the attrition rate we are looking at for teachers in the first five years of teaching is something like 50 per cent—which is astronomically high—we are seeing success in terms of those coming through as an SAT and spending obviously more time earlier in the classroom and having more of this individual wraparound mentoring support than we have done in the past. We have seen that they are doing well once they finish their final year of study and go into the classroom as a fully qualified teacher.

Although I am not suggesting that SAT is preferable to having all our vacancies filled, I think there is something to be said about a model where those still studying spend more time in the classroom with professional development and support around them. The feedback that I certainly hear all the time—and the feedback is the same across all states and territories, and this is what contributes to that 50 per cent attrition rate—is that when they get into the classroom they are just not prepared for it and it is overwhelming, and it leads to them quitting and not coming back.

So I think there is a case to be made that some more exposure to the classroom in the way that the SATs are getting it, where there is a lot of mentoring and support to make sure they are given every opportunity to succeed, does really have merit and is proving beneficial.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** One of the categories that has special authority to teach is the Teach For Australia students, I assume. Is the department still progressing with Teach For Australia in a program, and if so, what is the nature of the current program? How many associates, I think they are called, are we talking about?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Teach For Australia is still a part of our system and has been since 2019. In terms of actual numbers, though, I am pretty sure that we have not seen a great deal of growth in terms of the use of Teach For Australia. The fifth cohort of masters students commenced

in 2025, 18 have completed the program since appointments started in 2021 and the retention of graduates is at 77 per cent.

So there is a place for it, I think, in those hard-to-staff locations, but I do not think we have seen the kind of growth in the use of Teach For Australia that other jurisdictions have, particularly Victoria where the numbers are very high. That is not to say that we are not open to using it; I think we have shown that we are willing to do some innovative things to try to make sure we have teachers standing in front of our students, but I would say that at this stage the numbers that we are seeing through Teach For Australia are pretty consistent at the level they have been for a number of years.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Still on the same budget line, is the minister able to identify how many schools in South Australia are currently seeking to recruit a principal or have an acting principal and will soon be going through the recruitment process?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am advised that all our principal positions are filled currently, but I will have to take on notice the second part of your question around how many we have in acting positions; but all principal positions are filled, I am advised.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I understand that; that makes sense. In addition to that, can I ask how many principals are in the last year of their appointment? I guess automatically that assumes that they have not, at this stage, had confirmation they have been rolled over because otherwise they would not be in the last year of their appointment. So how many are currently in the last year of their appointment?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** There is an opportunity here for me to mention the recent changes that originally came about through the enterprise bargaining negotiations, where we put on the table the proposition of extending the tenure of principals to 10 years, which has now been agreed to after a pretty thorough piece of work between the department, the principal associations and the union. We have agreement now that as those tenures come up, as they are rolled over, they are rolled over into 10-year tenures instead of five.

I think that is an important change for us to make given we know that it is not just hard finding teachers at the moment, it is hard finding leaders as well. I thought the timing was right for us to have that conversation and we went through a pretty thorough consultation process with the Secondary Principals' Association and the Primary Principals Association about how they thought it should work and this is the model that we landed on. I might just pass to Marina, who can give you a bit of detail specifically around your question about how many are sitting in that period to rollover.

**Ms ELLIOTT:** There are approximately 160 Band A leaders who are in their final year of their tenure who are going through a process currently of tenure renewal under the 10-year tenure.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** What does that process entail?

**Ms ELLIOTT:** The process entails the education directors working closely with our principals and having a conversation about their intention to stay in the position that they are in. If the principal is keen to continue and there are no performance concerns, then the principal is renewed for a further 10 years under the new policy position.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Who determines whether or not there are performance concerns? Is that a matter for the education director?

**Ms ELLIOTT:** The determination of performance concerns occurs through a process that is outlined in our guidelines across the department. That conversation occurs between an individual and their line manager and there are rigorous requirements to adhere to to go through a performance process.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** How many principals are therefore now on 10-year contracts?

**Ms ELLIOTT:** The 10-year contract will not come into effect for leaders until term 3. Term 3 will be the first period of time when principals will be under a 10-year tenure. There are a small number who will come into play for the beginning of term 3. The majority of those approximately 160 will begin at the beginning of 2026.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** If I can get this clear in my head: the target for this year then is for those principals who are in the last year of their contract, the 160 or so for that cohort, to be on 10-year tenures by the beginning of next year and then for the rest of the principal cohort, the other 340 or so, those positions will become 10-year contracts whenever they come up naturally as a result of the end of the previous tenures?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, that is correct. That was the arrangement that we came to—or the agreement that we came to—with the principals' association. That was the model that they preferred and the model that we went with.

**Ms CLANCY:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume, page 187. How is the government supporting more children with disabilities to access special options in our public schools?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Elder, for that question. Yes, of course, this is a very important issue for all education systems, but one that we have made a concerted effort to make a priority of this government. Supporting children with disabilities is obviously critically important for any government. Recently, we announced a commitment of \$3.5 million over four years to establish new special options, and that is both specialist classes and disability units. This will better meet student demand and ensure all South Australians can enrol in their local school.

You would know, as a local member—as would all members of this place—that one of the challenges that we have had in the system for many, many years is around being able to provide special options places close to where the family and the child with disability lives. We have not always got it right in terms of the speed with which we can find a placement and give that family certainty that their child will have an appropriate special options place at a school that is convenient to them.

The number of students in special classes has been steadily increasing, but previously we saw that no specific budget existed to support medium or long-term planning for the infrastructure needed for a school to be able to provide a special class. That might be things like buildings, toilets or other works that are necessary to accommodate that.

Areas such as northern Adelaide have experienced significant population growth over a number of years. We know that because we are building new schools—I know, Chair, you know that all too well—and we have seen demand outstrip the available places. Of course, that can be a traumatic thing for families to go through as they are struggling to get certainty about where their child will go, and often we see that acutely in the transition period between a primary school and a high school.

The \$3.5 million per year that we announced this year will assist the department to assess future expected enrolments and to work with sites to plan for infrastructure where it is most needed. Fifty-two new special options have been created since July 2022 to meet demand, but the focus now needs to be on strategic planning to cater for future needs.

I also want to point out a couple of specific examples, member for Elder, that have come about through country cabinet processes that we have had. The first was in Naracoorte. A staff member of one of our schools stood up in front of the audience and asked a question of me around why there were no special options places available in Naracoorte, and we got a similar question when we had our country cabinet in Victor Harbor. I can say that in both those cases, we have been able to offer special options basically for the first time in Naracoorte and Victor Harbor. There is still a lot more to do.

Combined with that, we made a very big change to the Inclusive Education Support Program (IESP) funding—the one to nine steps. We removed the application process that schools needed to make to access the first three of those nine steps and put an extra \$50 million in to do it to try to make it possible for schools to provide that extra support to a child with disability rather than having to go through what could sometimes be a pretty onerous application process to head office.

I am not for a second suggesting that all the work is done, but there are a lot of things we have done in the three-and-a-bit years to try to offer more places and be able to offer those places faster for families.

**The CHAIR:** I will go back to the opposition. Member for Morialta, I will give you three questions and then the member for Kavel.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. I am on the same budget line as before. How many teachers exercised their right of return after teaching in the country for the required period of time last year?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will take that on notice, member for Morialta.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** If you are taking it on notice, can I ask for each of the last five years, please?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you very much. Does the department have a target or an anticipated number of how many will exercise that right this year and next year and so on?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am not aware of a target, no.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** What are the subject specialties with the highest vacancy rate or roles not filled, or however you want to characterise it, in country schools? If it makes it easier, I am happy to take in all schools. I assume most of them will be country schools.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We might take the detail on notice, although just talking to Professor Westwell, I think anecdotally we can say that design and tech has been an issue for a number of years and would remain an issue, and probably some of the STEM subjects as well.

One of the commitments that we made was a commitment of just short of \$7 million for a Specialist Teacher Workforce Plan between 2023-24 and 2027-28. That commitment was to create a workforce plan that places teachers in subjects they are qualified to teach and creates incentives for teachers to gain qualifications in specialist subjects. That includes incentives such as highly accomplished and lead teachers which, of course, as you know, member for Morialta, would mean a higher salary, investment in retraining, support to get more specialists working in schools—and some of that has been done in Teach For Australia—and an increase in the number of specialist teachers in maths, English, languages, the arts, science, and design and technology.

Although this has been a longstanding issue and, as you rightly pointed out in your question, is often felt far more acutely in regional areas of South Australia, we have put some serious dollars behind trying to address it and trying to incentivise teachers to take up a specialisation, particularly a specialisation in the areas where we most need it.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is the minister able to identify how many unsuccessfully advertised places there have been for teachers where the school has advertised for the position for three years in a row or more?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** While we get you that bit of information, perhaps I could regale you with a success story of where we have managed to get a specialist teacher. Valley View Secondary School had struggled to fill their food technology vacancy through the traditional recruitment process since 2022, so quite some time. As a new strategy, the school sought interest from permanent and contract teachers for retraining within this subject area.

There was one teacher who had a background in English and HASS who showed interest. The school, in consultation with the department, were able to identify an experienced food technology mentor to facilitate retraining for the teacher. The mentor was employed to support the teacher in the classroom two days per week for one term, as well as assist with curriculum planning during non-instructional time. The teacher also attended the Orbis Design and Technology training program with a focus on food.

This support successfully enhanced the teacher's skills and confidence in a new area and, as a result of that, the retrained teacher has been appointed to a contract for 2025 to teach food technology, and has become a valuable addition to the faculty. I am told we will endeavour to get the data you are after. It is not necessarily particularly easy to get that, but we will try.



**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can the minister outline what percentage of the department's teaching workforce currently holds permanency?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** As you no doubt know, member for Morialta, we made a commitment around increasing teacher permanency. I can tell you that over 1,800 teachers on temporary contracts have been converted to permanency since the election, including a focus on preschool teachers and younger teachers to support job security.

This one was of particular importance to me because I had been quite taken aback by the number of parents, and sometimes grandparents, who would come up to me at street-corner meetings or events and talk about the fact that they had a son or daughter or granddaughter or grandson who was new to teaching and had not yet been made permanent, but there were overtures being made by perhaps other schools or other sectors, and why would the public education system not do everything in its power to make sure we could keep this young teacher on an ongoing basis.

As the number of permanent teachers in 2022 was 12,184, the number of teachers converted to permanency since the election has exceeded 10 per cent of this figure. I think I have it here somewhere. What I want to particularly point out is the number of conversions that we have made for early childhood teachers or preschool teachers. Conversions actioned for the 2025 school year, in terms of conversions for preschool teachers, were greater than the total converted in the 10 years prior, which I think is fantastic work by Marina and her team to not just focus on conversions to permanency for primary and secondary staff but also focus on conversions for preschool staff as well.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** You are trying to double the size of our preschool workforce, so I would have thought that was obvious. The minister identified the election commitment. The quote from the minister's election commitment in their schools policy was that the government would increase the percentage of permanent teachers by at least 10 per cent. I seek from the minister the percentage of permanency within the teaching workforce in 2022, the election of the government, and the percentage of permanency among the teaching workforce today, or this year.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I can repeat the answer I have given, member for Morialta, which is—

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** That did not answer the question I have just asked.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** That is fine. We can take that on notice if you want, but I will just repeat it nonetheless. The number of permanent teachers in 2022 was 12,184.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** And what percentage was that as a proportion of the teaching workforce?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will take that on notice and come back to you on that.

**The Hon. D.R. CREGAN:** If I can take the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 177, the investing expenditure summary, can the minister provide an update on the program to deliver a new preschool and primary school in Mount Barker in terms of this year's allocation, and any comments he might have on the project overall?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, member for Kavel. Let me say from the outset, thank you for your fantastic advocacy on this over a long period of time. One of the first bits of work that we did upon coming to government was to look at those areas of growth and, of course, two areas very much stood out in terms of where we were seeing the biggest population growth and the greatest need. They were the northern suburbs of Adelaide and, of course, Mount Barker.

It goes without saying that successive governments have left it too late to build that infrastructure, particularly in Mount Barker, and that has caused issues in terms of families in that area being able to find good public schooling options. I should point out that the process we went through was a pretty rigorous process. Deloitte was engaged to deliver the business case identifying primary schooling, secondary schooling and/or special options education. That was completed in late 2023.

The recommendations of both business cases were considered by the government. We then funded \$61.1 million in the previous budget for a new preschool and an R-6 school. That is a 100-place preschool and a 350-place primary school. Funding in the last financial year is for land purchase. The land negotiations are progressing well, I am told, and we are working very closely with Renewal and the Mount Barker council.

I want to point out and acknowledge the work of the Mount Barker council, as well as you, member for Kavel, in terms of working with us really constructively here to try to not just make sure that we get a new primary school and preschool actually built but to put it in a location that best serves the community, which is something that we have not always done particularly well. I can tell you that they are due to open in 2028. Thank you again for your advocacy and I look forward to having more positive news once we have got the land purchase and other things all sorted.

**The Hon. D.R. CREGAN:** Thank you, minister, our community very much appreciates that investment. On the same budget line, can the minister provide an update in relation to the refurbishment of Oakbank school?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, I can. One of the things that we have tried to make a priority since being in government is what we have referred to as Every School a Great School. I think a trap that all previous governments have probably fallen into, to be perfectly honest, is to sometimes take what is the easy option and continue to expand and grow existing schools that are incredibly popular that have waiting lists, instead of doing the work to actually uplift those schools that have not been schools of first choice for the local communities and have latent capacity.

I do not have the figures to hand, but there is some pretty incredible data that shows the number of students, at both primary school level and high school level, in South Australia who actually go to their zoned school. Off the top of my head, it is something like 22 per cent in one of those categories and 36 per cent in the other category, which shows not only that a lot of South Australian families are not choosing their local school but it means that they are often travelling across the metropolitan area or elsewhere to get access to a school that they feel comfortable to use.

What we have done is targeted uplift. One of those schools that was targeted for uplift was Oakbank, which had vacant enrolment capacity. In fact, the capacity is currently 562 and enrolments are at 350, so there are 200-odd places that are not being used. The \$15.9 million that we put in in the 2024-25 budget is designed to give that school an infrastructure refresh. We were both there recently for the opening of their new ICT lab, which was very impressive.

I think I commented at that opening that I think the secret formula at schools that have perhaps had long-term available enrolment capacity that has not been met has often been new leadership, investment from the state government for some new infrastructure and a specialisation. There are a few schools like that that I could point to that stand out: I think Plympton International is one, The Heights School is one, Valley View is probably one and I think Oakbank now will be one of those as well.

We are going to have concept designs due in November. I will be very keen to sit down with you and show you what they look like. I think it is an exciting time for the school because it is one of those schools that I think has not had the kind of investment it needed, and I expect to see those 210 vacant enrolment places get used up quite quickly once we have this upgrade complete.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I go to infrastructure projects. The member for Kavel's line on page 176 will do for the next series of questions for me as well. For the \$70 million new birth to year 6 school in northern Adelaide, can the minister provide some details of this project: how large is the school meant to be, how many classes, how many students, are there any special facilities that are expected?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, earlier this year I had the pleasure of announcing a new secondary school for the northern suburbs, which will be in the suburb of Eyre. We have secured the piece of land there, and \$155.3 million was announced in the 2024-25 state budget to do that. It is expected to be open in 2028 but, as the Treasurer has foreshadowed, we are also currently looking at whether it might be a PPP.

The location is the corner of Andrews and Petherton roads in Eyre, currently a vacant piece of land. It has capacity for 1,300 places for students from year 7 to year 12, and we have chosen that quite deliberately. I can refer to previous comments that I have made publicly around spending a bit more time thinking about what the right size of a school might be. Obviously, we went through a period of building what were referred to as 'super schools' and I think in some cases they were probably bigger than they should have been. I think the fact that what we have decided upon here, being 1,300 places for years 7 to 12, I hope is taken as an indication that we will—

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I apologise, minister. My question was in relation to the new one in this year's budget, the birth to year 6 school.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** My apologies.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I am happy for you to take a moment if you like.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Sorry, member for Morialta, I understand your question. There was \$70 million announced in the most recent budget and planning is to commence shortly. We have not yet announced the location; that is still underway. It is expected to be open in 2031. It will be a new preschool and primary school co-located, with capacity in the preschool to be 60 places and capacity in the primary school to be 400 students from reception to year 6.

The project budget is \$70 million, which is inclusive of land costs. The planning will commence shortly. We also had Deloitte engaged on this to deliver a business case to identify primary schooling, secondary schooling and/or special education options for the area. That business case was completed in late 2023. The government considered the recommendations, resulting in a new preschool and school being announced.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can I ask, and it is perhaps fortuitous that the minister started his answer in relation to the secondary school, expressing concern about super schools, which is a term that I have never intentionally used. I always thought it was a term that journalists used rather than education people. My understanding of the reason why birth to year 12 schools were favoured for a period of time was to reduce transition risks, to increase connectedness and a range of other educational benefits. Is there a particular reason why the government has decided to go with separate secondary and primary schools to serve what ostensibly strikes me as the same growing community, or does it relate to concerns about schools being too large, as the minister was starting to talk about?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will pass over to Mr Temperly to provide an answer on this one.

**Mr TEMPERLY:** Through you, minister, there has been no policy decision to move away from birth to 12 schools where the community context and the demand for enrolment space deems that they are appropriate. In the case of the new northern suburbs secondary school in Eyre, when we did the demand analysis compared to existing supply we had sufficient primary school capacity in that particular part of the northern suburbs. Similarly, whilst we have not announced the location of the new primary school that has been announced, it will be in a different part of the northern suburbs where, again, the demand forecasting shows that that is the most immediate priority for new capacity in the system.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Are you able to identify which part of the northern suburbs, if not the specific suburb, the new primary school is required to be in as a result of the department's analysis of demand?

**Mr TEMPERLY:** The business case that the minister referred to earlier, which has been the basis upon which the investment decision is made, covered a large geographic span. It was a much greater area considered than, say, the Mount Barker business case, which was more contained. The region covered stretches all the way from the west, sort of that Riverlea, Virginia area, all the way through, but not quite as far as Gawler, and some of the new housing developments out there. When we did that forecasting demand across that large geographic spread, in some cases we saw demand for secondary schools, and in some cases, as I mentioned, primary school was the most immediate demand. But we have not actually purchased the land for the new primary school at this stage.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** My question is not in relation to the business case, which I imagine had to go to cabinet, but in relation to the demand analysis that was conducted by the department: is it possible to release that publicly?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will take that on notice and see if we can provide that. I think it has been provided in some cases under freedom of information in the past, I understand, but we will get advice on that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. On the estimated completion date of June 2031: I think the minister may have said it was due to open at the beginning of 2031, and I understand that sometimes there can be a lag, but either way that is six years from now and that strikes me as a fairly lengthy runway for a 400-student school. Is there any particular factor that has led us to this six-year project when I think the substantially larger project of the new secondary school is due to be completed within the next 2½ years?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am advised that the immediate demand, as the business case showed, was for high school places. There were enough primary school places to get us through until the opening of the new primary school.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** When is work anticipated to commence on the primary school? By 'work', I mean shovels in the ground. Take the milestones that you like, but when are we expecting to have architects appointed? When are we expecting to have concept plans and builders doing work?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** In terms of shovels in the ground, it is estimated at 2028-29.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Do you have a date by when you want to acquire the land?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The project budget, which is inclusive of land costs, is \$70 million. That commences in 2027-28, so a bit earlier, but that of course will be dependent on us being able to find the ideal site.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In relation to the second dot point on page 176, there is \$53.9 million over four years for five schools: Fairview Park, Fraser Park, Oakbank, Tapparra and Two Wells. We have heard a bit about Oakbank already. Is the minister able to clarify the process of how these schools were chosen and what factors drove these five schools? I assume that they were all recommended to cabinet by the education department. Was the recommendation for just these five schools, or were these chosen from a larger menu?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I can confirm all those schools were the priorities of the department.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Does the department have other priorities that are at the same level of urgency as these five?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** As you are no doubt aware as a former Minister for Education yourself, the list of schools that need infrastructure upgrades is long, but these projects to which you refer are the ones that the department recommended as the top priorities.

I might use this opportunity to furnish you with a bit more information around what we are trying to do in this space because I know you are aware that we have released a 20-year infrastructure plan where we are trying to provide, as best we can, some kind of certainty to schools that have been waiting for a long time, in many cases, for some investment from the state government towards buildings that are not in great shape. We have 900 public sites and 5,700 buildings across those sites, and I think the average age of 44 years is actually probably more like 46 years now because I have been saying it for at least a couple of years.

The 20-year infrastructure plan is designed to, I guess, lock us in as best we can to lifting up those schools that have not had the same kind of infrastructure investment that other schools have had, so that as best we can we can give them some kind of certainty around when we might get to them but also to guide the decisions we make over a longer period of time around what is on the priority list. I think there has been, in years gone past, certainly a sense from some schools that the decision-making is ad hoc and lacks a cohesive structure to it and that we are just picking at will.

We have tried to put this 20-year infrastructure plan together so that we can lay out exactly and in a public way, too, the work we need to do and where our priorities are, and also what will drive those priorities in terms of not just areas where there is enormous enrolment growth but also schools that might have very big enrolment capacity available that have been overlooked, because one of the things that I really think we need to address is those statistics I referred to earlier that show such a small number of South Australians are choosing to send their children to their local school. That, to me, says there is a low level of confidence in many cases that the local public school is suitable for them.

I think in some cases I can absolutely see why families have made that decision because we have a school that is, from an infrastructure sense, not in very good shape and then down the road elsewhere is a school that has had infrastructure investment that looks world class. We are asking families to choose the school that does not look as good as the brand-new one, and of course parents are not going to do that nine times out of ten. So part of this 20-year infrastructure plan is also making sure that we do more to lift those schools up where there is enrolment capacity available instead of us taking the easier road, which we have done in the past, of just adding more enrolment capacity onto schools that are already totally full and have a waiting list.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** The minister talks about the 20-year infrastructure plan that he has. Will he publicly release it, including the schools that can therefore have transparency over upgrades they may expect in the coming years?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I can say, member for Morialta, the plan itself is already public but the list that sits behind it changes constantly because, as you no doubt remember, things come up where infrastructure falls apart in some cases or is damaged and that will, of course, change the position of that school on the priority list quite quickly. That happens very regularly because of the age of our stock, because the age of our stock is above 44 years per building and in a lot of cases we are still using demountables, which were never designed to be used for as long as they have.

I can also say that the amount of money we are spending on breakdown maintenance has increased a lot because we are patching buildings up that are beyond their useful life. That list is kind of a very fluid list, depending on what happens to our stock, but the plan itself is public.

**Mr DIGHTON:** Minister, I want to go in a slightly different direction. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 182, the targets and dot point 5 under the targets. Can the minister provide the committee with details on how the department is ensuring primary school students are being taught the basics in literacy and numeracy?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I have to say thank you to the member for Black for his very strong advocacy very early on in his career in this place for his own schools. It is great to have a teacher with such recent experience in the parliament. I have greatly enjoyed the conversations I have had with the member for Black already around this particular issue that he is actually asking about today. It is always topical around the back to basics and fundamentals.

As the Minister for Education, I often see on social media and elsewhere people asking why education systems have moved away from what they see as the fundamental literacy and numeracy work of schools. Our position here is that we have certainly not done that. In fact, I think South Australia in particular has a very good story to tell. Going back to the phonics screening check, the trial that was done by Susan Close, the Deputy Premier—and I have acknowledged before the work of the member for Morialta in continuing that rollout—we have seen excellent results because of those phonics checks.

It is amazing to think that was 2017-18 and there are still some jurisdictions in Australia that are arguing over whether or not there is any benefit in having phonics. We have certainly backed it in. That piece of work that led to phonics being introduced was around a survey of sorts of thousands of students in the system to see if they were at the minimum standard. The data that came back, if I recall from that time, was pretty alarming. The test might have been of year 3 and year 4 students and it showed a very high number of them were not at the minimum level of proficiency for literacy.

The screening check was put in place and we saw immediate results really, which is fantastic. In South Australia we are the first movers in terms of introducing a numeracy check. We will be the

first state to do that, although since we have announced that we are doing that, I note that New South Wales and Victoria are also introducing a numeracy check. But South Australia, as of next year, will be the first jurisdiction in Australia to have both a phonics check and a numeracy check.

I have to say I find it a bit frustrating to be honest that we always have a bit of pushback about whether we need things like phonics checks and numeracy checks, but then when we actually do the work in terms of a survey or test a portion of students at years 3 and 4, whether it is on their literacy or their numeracy, and the data comes back and shows that it is actually not in good shape, it seems we are sometimes a little bit slow to do the work in terms of getting a really good accurate assessment of where our students are at. We did it with numeracy as well.

The startling thing was that the numeracy check trial from 2024 involved 7,000 year 3 and year 4 students from 95 schools—so it was a really big trial. The data that came back, from memory, was almost an exact mirror of the data that came back in phonics from previous years. We have responded quickly to that, and we will have the numeracy check introduced in all public schools in South Australia from 2026.

As I said, we will be the first state in the country to have both literacy and numeracy checks for year 1 students. This is important to note in the context of the argument that you referred to in your question, member for Black, around those who say we have moved away from explicit teaching. That could not be further from the truth when you look at the fact that not only do we have phonics and kept that but we are the first to introduce numeracy.

I might also add that the work we are doing in South Australian schools in terms of positive behaviour for learning is essentially explicit teaching of positive behaviour. It will strike some as incredible that that is something that we have to do, but it is currently being rolled out in 40 schools. The benefits that we are seeing of positive behaviour for learning in terms of showing students our expectations around being at school, behaviour in class, relationships they have with their classmates and with their adults, has seen really impressive reductions in the kind of bad behaviour that has otherwise been seen.

I would point to all of those things as examples of where we are actually very focused on what you might refer to as the basics of literacy and numeracy. We should be proud that South Australia finds itself in a place where the bigger Eastern States like Victoria and New South Wales are actually looking to us as leading the way, not just on these things but on a number of things, and taking their lead from us.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I return to page 176. I have just a couple more questions on the expenditure summary. Can I clarify: the third dot point talks about \$10 million from 2025-26 onwards to support existing infrastructure at government schools and preschools; is this new money? Where does this fall in? Is this capital or operational?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** It is new and investing money into our capital budget.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is there a current budget for what is described as sustaining the existing infrastructure at government schools and preschools or is that just a way of describing new money coming into the education department?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Member for Morialta, this is an additional amount of money into the education budget that we will be targeting towards the replacement and upgrade of heating, ventilation and cooling systems and toilets. They are the two things that we have identified to prioritise with that extra \$10 million that is coming into the education department budget, courtesy of the budget, across the next four years. I can possibly go through the schools that are getting them, if you wish.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Yes, sure.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** This is under the HVAC, under that heading ventilation and cooling upgrades: Banksia Park Primary School R-6, East Torrens Primary School, Flagstaff Hill R-7 School, Henley Beach Primary School, Hewett Primary School, Kilkenny Primary School, Mitcham Girls High School, Underdale High School. That is pretty much the full list, but I know that we are also doing

toilet upgrades at Coromandel Valley Primary School, Goodwood Primary School and Renmark West Primary School. At Karcultaby Area School, we are doing a design and tech upgrade because we had concerns regarding the condition of the main buildings, particularly the design and tech spaces there, and we are providing a new design and technology area as part of this \$10 million in the first year of those four tranches of \$10 million.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can the minister clarify if the \$40 million—about six lines from the bottom of page 176—is fully utilised with the list of schools and upgrades that he has just listed? That is the full \$40 million worth.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** This is just the first \$10 million. That is \$10 million worth, and then the department will provide its suggestions or its priorities next year for the \$10 million, and that will be the process across the four years for whoever is sitting in this seat.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** The minister has said four years a couple of times. Is this a four-year limited program or is it ongoing funding that is now coming into education going forward?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Four years.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** The minister clarified that the department has chosen these schools, presumably based on their urgent needs at the moment. A number of these sorts of programs have traditionally been funded out of the school's RES. Some of them have then sought extra support from the department, and that has been provided or not, as the case may have been over the years. The minister just said next year the department will come up with a new priority list ahead of next year's budget. Can the minister confirm that this budget line will not be used to fund promises made during elections, for example, and that the department will indeed be given the opportunity to provide a priority list in the immediate lead-up to next year's budget for the expenditure of those schools that are seen as highest priority at that time?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** My answer to the member for Morialta would be that to this point, I think, I have been pretty clear about taking department advice on where all this money has been spent. I think I have made a point of doing that. I cannot see into the future, and I cannot make decisions for others who may have a say in things either. That would not be fair of me to do that, but I would refer to my track record, I think, including in the schools that are listed in this most recent—

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I am interested in your first budget. This line was entirely devoted to meeting election promises, hence my concern.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I think I have given you my answer. My intention has always been to follow department priorities, and that is the thing that underscores the 20-year infrastructure plan, too, because you and I both would remember there are schools that felt that they were constantly overlooked, even though they should have been high on the list for political considerations. Without being able to predict the future, or speak for others, my intention remains to use the department's priority list.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Did all of the schools that have received funding under this program this year, under this 10 million, request support for these projects, or were some of them identified through some other departmental analysis as being a priority?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** In terms of the schools listed under this program, these were all very much known problems, to put it that way, or known infrastructure issues, that were known to the department.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Does the department therefore have a list of other schools with very much known problems that it anticipates potentially seeking funding for in the future, and, if so, will that be released?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will pass over to Mr Temperly.

**Mr TEMPERLY:** Through the ongoing engagement we have with schools and preschools, we obviously work to develop an understanding of the condition of things, like air conditioning, toilets and that sort of thing. Where either a school or the Ventia business partner identifies that there is an asset that is not performing as it should, they submit what is called an asset performance assessment

report, and that gets fed into the department's processes in terms of looking to allocate the funding that is available to the projects that are identified as being most in need.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** How many APARs, asset performance assessments, are currently outstanding and, as yet, unfunded?

**Mr TEMPERLY:** I would have to take that on notice to be exact.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Will the minister release the list of those APARs publicly so that we can have confidence that this budget line will not be used by his colleagues, if not by him, for political purposes during an election cycle?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** No, I do not have any plans to do that, and my reason is that the list changes so frequently because of the state of our stock and something unforeseen happening, which unfortunately happens almost on a daily basis. If we have a problem with a roof, or whatever it might be, then the list changes based on changed needs. I do not think it would be right for me to release a list and then give an expectation to schools about where they might be, only for that to change.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I guess that gets back to the problem of why we were hoping that this money would be kept in reserve until after the election. If the minister is unable to do that, I will move on, sir. Can the minister provide on notice a budgeted list of expenditure for all projects for each year of the forward estimates, as he has done in the past?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, we can do that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In relation to the technical colleges, I am happy to go to the highlights on page 182, if you would like, although I am sure that we can stay in investing expenditure if it is easier. How many students are now enrolled in the Findon Technical College?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will just make a quick personnel change. Can I introduce Clare Feszczak, who is the executive director responsible for the creation of our technical colleges. In terms of Findon, which was our first technical college to open, I can confirm that it is full. As of 5 May 2025, there are 329 students enrolled, including year 12s. That is 129 full time and 200 part time.

The member might already have a question in mind on this. The way that Ms Feszczak has characterised it to me is that expressions of interest for the remaining four technical colleges, which are The Heights, Tonsley, Mount Gambier and Port Augusta, have exceeded what we originally had for Findon Technical College, so we are confident that they will also be full. I must say that it has helped with the other four to have an open and functioning technical college to actually show people, which was not something that we had with Findon. It was hard for people to envisage what it was we were talking about, given we had not built it yet.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In relation to that enrolment, which I think you said 200 are part time, what is the nature of those enrolments? When you say part time, are we talking about somebody who attends for a day, for a short course or a week? Or are we talking about students who are students of Findon High School who are potentially just doing one subject and therefore not attending as full-time students?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will pass over to Ms Feszczak to give some comments and then I will add to that.

**Ms FESZCZAK:** Through the minister, students who attend the tech college part time attend on a whole range of different attendance patterns. We have students attending part time to participate in the VET program, so they might attend one day a week as part of the VET activity. We have students attending for week blocks and we have got students attending for several days over a period of time. It really depends on what part of the program the students are attending for.

A full-time industry training program in a technical college involves curriculum, which is SACE curriculum. It also involves work experience activities and connections with employers. It also involves VET training. Students are attending for a whole range of different patterns according to the part-time nature of the program.



**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** The minister added those up together and got us a figure of 200 part time along with 129 full time. Are we able to get a breakdown of the 200? I am happy for it to be on notice if that is easier.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We can try to do that, but I would also point out that the arrangement to which Ms Feszczak refers was put in place on the back of demand in the community. There was a lot of demand in the community to have access to Findon Technical College, but not everybody wanted to move their enrolment from their existing school to Findon. They wanted to stay at their home school but also access the fantastic facilities at Findon.

I think that model has worked really well and that is the model that we are also making sure we can use in the regional technical colleges, because we have had specific requests at those regional technical colleges for non-government school students to be able to use the tech colleges as well. In at least one case and maybe more, they have written to me to make sure that we can put a model in place where their students can access it.

One other thing that I would add is that the split between full-time and part-time in the first year compared with the second year has changed. In 2024 there were 85 full-time and 150 part-time students—of course, there were not year 12s yet because it was the first year—and then in 2025 we have gone up to 129 full-time and 200 part-time students. We think what we are starting to see is a bit of a movement towards more taking up those full-time places. But it is important to still offer a part-time option so that what we have built, which is a \$35 million technical college, is accessible to as many people as possible.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can I ask: are the 129 full-time students all therefore students of Findon High School's further enrolment and the 200 part-time students are a mix of students of Findon and other schools? Is that correct?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Have enrolments at Findon High School of students who are not part of the technical college remained stable, or have they subsided since the introduction of the technical college? I guess I am asking: are these 129 students at Findon largely new to Findon or do they include a significant cohort of those who were already at Findon?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In relation to the other four schools, the minister said that globally, and each individually, they are on track to be fully enrolled. Is the minister able to identify, as at whatever the most recent convenient date is, how many expressions of interest each have had?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am informed that in the case of Port Augusta Technical College the capacity is 200 and last week 212 offers went out, based on expressions of interest. That would have it as oversubscribed.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** And the other three?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** In relation to Tonsley, I can say that the target for the first year is 120. We have had registrations of interest of 68, applications of 19 and conditional offers of 37, which has it tracking very well.

With The Heights, we have again a target of 120, which was essentially what we aimed for with Findon in its first year. The registration of interest was 44; applications, 42; conditional offers, 21; confirmed offers, one. Again, that would have us on track to meet the target. In the cases of The Heights, Tonsley and certainly Port Augusta, all those numbers are significantly stronger than Findon was at that point.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** And Mount Gambier? It is the same question.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Mount Gambier I might need to take on notice because we are still in the school engagement process there, so I will have to come back with something on Mount Gambier. As I said, interest in these compared to interest at the same point with Findon is a long way advanced and it looks like we are on target for basically all of them to hit our target number.

for the first year. Certainly at Port Augusta it looks like the number of conditional offers that have already gone out exceed the capacity of the technical college.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Torrens.

**Ms WORTLEY:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 182, general area. Can the minister update the committee on outcomes for students in our technical colleges, including the various career pathways into apprenticeships and traineeships and, of course, university?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Torrens for your question and it was great to have you there yesterday at The Heights school as we announced that Boeing are going to be one of the industry partners.

**Ms WORTLEY:** It is very exciting.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** It is very exciting indeed. It was a proud day. I think what I might provide here in response to your question is some actual case studies, which of course we now have and which we did not have when we were opening Findon, but we can now talk to some real success stories of students who have chosen that pathway. There are a few here in particular that I would like to read out.

One is about a student named Ivy. I had the pleasure of meeting Ivy at the Jobs Expo at the Showgrounds where she was on the tech college stall, speaking to students who were coming in and seeking information about what a career through a tech college might look like. She is currently completing her Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care while she is finishing her year 12. She completed her work experience placement at Goodstart Early Learning. They are one of our partners at Findon and they will be a partner with us at The Heights as well.

Ivy was then offered a school-based traineeship with the centre in 2024. Ivy plans to continue her studies after school and pursue a long-term career in early childhood and community care, driven by her passion for nurturing children and giving back to her community.

I can also add that I had a chance to have a good chat with Ivy at the Jobs Expo and ask her what it was about Findon Technical College that appealed to her. She was quite honest and said that school was not working for her, she was not enjoying it, she was probably at risk of dropping out and she did not want to be there anymore. She is now invigorated and excited and loves going to school to the point that she is now an ambassador for us at public events where she talks to other young people and tries to convince them about why they might want to consider a future at a technical college.

Another success story is Hana. While in year 11, Hana achieved a merit in her SACE industry connection subject. She is now in year 12 and working part-time at Precious Cargo early learning centre in Lockleys while completing the first year of her university degree at the technical college. She graduated into her final year of school through the technical college's flexible Career Focus Module.

Cooper is another success story. Cooper says he has learnt more at the tech college than in all his metalworking classes at his old high school. He says he has gained special insight into the work that SA defence companies like BAE Systems and Axiom do, as these employers partner with the college. This year in year 12 he is undertaking a school-based machinist apprenticeship as part of his year 12, working full time at BAE Systems at Edinburgh Parks and training in a Certificate III in Engineering—Mechanical Trade.

He is on his way to a career in defence, and once he has finished his apprenticeship he has indicated he may go on to a mechanical engineering degree apprenticeship. Of course, we have a couple of degree apprenticeships in South Australia. I think we are the only jurisdiction to have them. That will further his trade as well as provide a university education.

There are just a couple more I might share as well. I had the good fortune of meeting Patrick recently. He is a First Nations student studying in the health and social support stream at Findon. He is the first school-based trainee at the Women's and Children's Hospital. He is gaining practical paid experience in areas such as speech therapy, hydrotherapy and hearing screening and casting and is on his chosen career pathway in paediatric health.

Emma was the first student at the technical college to gain a school-based apprenticeship in 2024, which of course was very early. The technical college only opened in 2024. This was in an engineering field typically not seen as attractive for female students, and we know we need to do a lot more to change that perception. She is now in year 12 and well advanced into her career with Axiom engineering, which is a partner at Findon, an employer partner at the college.

Those are some good examples, I think, member for Torrens. Even in the infancy of our technical college, there are already students who have gone through there and are quite quickly finding work, paid work and those pathways through into not just secure jobs but jobs that are a real priority for our state.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In relation to the technical colleges, we were discussing before that at Findon Technical College the full-time students are students of Findon High School. I assume Port Augusta Secondary School will be the public school taking enrolments for the Port Augusta Technical College, notwithstanding that you have made it clear that there will be some potential for non-government school students also to do courses there. The Heights is obviously connected to The Heights School. Can the minister clarify which public schools will have the enrolments for Tonsley and Mount Gambier?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Both the country tech colleges are part-time models, which was how they were envisaged to be delivered so that we could offer places to non-government school students, and we have also built accommodation at both of those. There is 44-bed accommodation at both Port Augusta and Mount Gambier because, as we announced at the time, those technical colleges particularly are designed to be for the Limestone Coast area and the Upper Spencer Gulf area, not just for Mount Gambier and not just for Port Augusta. To be able to accommodate that so that students can travel and stay, which is the reason we built the accommodation, the two country models need to be part-time models. For Tonsley, the school with which it is attached in terms of enrolments is ASMS, the science and maths school.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** So Mount Gambier and Port Augusta are technically not attached to any public schools; is that correct?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** That is right.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I have a couple of questions I will get to on the accommodation, but prior to that I just want to unpack, if we possibly can, the funding arrangements therefore for those two technical colleges. My understanding is that The Heights, Tonsley and Findon under this model, as technically parts of those high schools, are funded through an extra allocation to those schools, effectively, and that money is eligible for consideration under the Gonski model. Are the Port Augusta Technical College and Mount Gambier Technical College students considered public education students and therefore eligible for allocation to funding under the Gonski model as public students?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** For public school students who will be attending the technical colleges, yes, they are eligible for Gonski funding. We have been in discussions with Catholic Education and, to a lesser extent, independent schools around what the fee will be for non-government school students to attend. They were supportive of there being a fee, but we have not yet landed on what that will be.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is it the intention of the government that it be a cost recovery fee-for-service model, or are you seeking to do better than that in terms of making a bit of a profit?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We would be looking at cost recovery.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** From that point of view, then, is there a budget allocation within the education department for staff specifically allocated to the five technical colleges, and if so, how much is that budget, how many staff and how many teachers next year, for example?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will take it on notice and come back to you.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In relation to the accommodation, I think the minister said earlier that there were 33 and 44—I cannot remember which—

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I meant 44.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Both of them were 44?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** What is the nature of that accommodation? Are they boarding houses, are they attached to the school adjacently or separately in the town, or are they run by the school or by some other provider? How is that working?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will pass to Ms Feszczak to give a bit of detail on how the accommodation will work.

**Ms FESZCZAK:** Each of the regional technical colleges has accommodation for 44 overnight students. The accommodation for students is laid out in 11 rooms, so four students per room. Each student has a king single bed and their own area which is private with a privacy curtain. There is a shared shower facility and a toilet facility for each room for the four students.

Students arrive on a Sunday evening and they leave on a Friday afternoon, so they stay for block weeks. The delivery of the industry training programs at the regional technical college is a block week delivery model specifically to accommodate students from a large regional area who can take advantage of the facilities and the training and come in for the full week.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** How many weeks of the year are you anticipating these 44 places being filled?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Depends on the year level and the program and will vary. I am not sure we can give you an answer on that yet.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Are these set to be open next year?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Port Augusta will be open in six weeks and Mount Gambier at the start of next year.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I assume whoever is managing these services is making some sort of plans for how they are to be staffed. I would assume, therefore, that there is some level of expectation of how often they are to be used. Can I ask: who is managing these facilities? Who owns them? Are they government department or are you contracting to the private sector?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** They are all government owned and run. I might just add: I think this is the first time that we have built accommodation, you can correct me if I am wrong, in the public education system since maybe Lucindale in the 1970s. I could be wrong, but it is a long time since we have built accommodation in the public education system.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Are they owned by the education department? Who are the staff? From which department are the staff?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Department for Education staff.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Are they considered part of the technical colleges project or is this a separate project? I am particularly thinking in relation to acquittal for Gonski purposes.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will hand over to Mr Bernardi to provide an answer on this one.

**Mr BERNARDI:** Thank you, minister. Costs of employees will be paid for by the department. There would be other costs, like cleaning as well, where we contract out. For other schools, we pay for cleaning contracts and there will be other costs for VET providers. For public school students, those costs will be paid out of Gonski funding but, as the minister indicated prior, we will also be looking to charge on cost recovery for non-government students who attend the college.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** What is the anticipated cost for government school students using the accommodation?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** There is no charge for government students.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** How many times is it anticipated to fulfil one of these courses that a government student will be using the accommodation?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** It will depend on year level, it will depend on where the student is coming from. There are a lot of variables in terms of what the answer might be.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Does the accommodation provide meals?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** What is the staffing model for each of these facilities? How many staff are we talking about? We are now talking about cooks and cleaners—cleaners, I think, are outsourced—but there are 44 students there. It is larger, as I understand it, than Burra or Lucindale or Cleve where the department had existing experience with boarding schools. This is a pretty substantial new program. What is the anticipated staffing model and budget?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will take that on notice, but I think it is worth me just pointing out that if we are to build these brand-new technical colleges not just in metropolitan areas but in regional areas like Mount Gambier and Port Augusta as well then, if it is to be an asset for the Limestone Coast and the Upper Spencer Gulf area, we really need to have accommodation so they can actually access it, otherwise we are really only building technical colleges for those towns. So in terms of making sure that we can give as many young South Australians who live in those regional areas the opportunity to actually use the facility, having the accommodation is vital.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Minister, you said that the Port Augusta one is opening in six weeks. Are the staff who are going to be providing supervision to students and meals and managing that service already employed or in place? If not, when do they start and how many will there be?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Five of the FTE, including the lead, are already in place and the remaining are in progress but to be there in time for it to commence.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can I request, though, that the aspect in relation to the full profile in the budget be taken on notice if we do not have that here?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, we can do that.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Torrens.

**Ms WORTLEY:** I would like to ask a question on the national school funding agreement. As a former teacher, I have a great interest in this and have done over a number of years. Minister, are you able to update the committee on the negotiations and the outcomes on the national school funding agreement?

**The CHAIR:** Can I have the budget reference, please?

**Ms WORTLEY:** Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 182.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** It is appropriate that we have been talking a bit this morning around The Heights Technical College, because that was where we gathered earlier this year to sign up to the National School Reform Agreement to finally get public schools in South Australia to 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard. That will mean for South Australian public schools alone over \$1.3 billion of additional money invested into public schools across the 10 years of the agreement.

As you would know, and as other members of this place would know, it was not an easy process. I want to acknowledge the support that South Australia received, in particular from the ministers for education in Victoria, Ben Carroll, and New South Wales, Prue Car. We stuck together and pushed hard for the federal government to come to the table with the full 5 per cent, which we thought was fair, given that states were already doing the vast majority of funding for public schools, and it was not unfair to ask them to chip in the full 5 per cent. It was, I think, a moment of great pride for all of us to be able to stand there in what is soon to be a brand-new public technical college and sign up to that agreement.

Of course, we know where that money needs to go. I think one of the pleasing things about what was a very protracted negotiation—and a difficult negotiation—was the fact that we were not actually arguing over where the money needed to be spent. I think the federal government and states were largely agreed on that. We were just arguing over who would pay it. Having that extra money

now, which will come online, will mean we can do a lot more of the things that we need to do, and there are a lot of those things. We are actually meeting this Friday, in fact, as education ministers. It is the first time we have had an opportunity to meet post the federal election, and I think we will all look forward to being able to talk about not so much how we actually found our way to agree on the 100 per cent money but about what our priorities are and where that money should go.

I think an argument has been put for many years, generally by the conservative side of politics, that it is not about money, that money has been poured into the system for years and years and we have not seen results improve. It is funny, whenever you go to schools and you talk to teachers or you talk to parents, and indeed when you talk to students about what is needed, it is so often more individualised support for them in the classroom, whether it is more teacher availability, more SSOs or more allied health support from outside the classroom. All these kinds of things actually do take money.

I am pleased that what we have now is a 10-year agreement actually locked in that gets us that \$1.3 billion so we can do more of that: more support in the classroom; more investment in numeracy and literacy education; investment in our workforce, which I know we have already been discussing this morning; issues around teacher vacancies; and more that we can do on wellbeing, which we have sought to make a focus of this government as well.

These are all things that were not a source of disagreement at the national education ministers' cabinet table. All states and territories really came with the same list of issues that needed addressing. The question was how we were able to invest the money to achieve them, and I am pleased to say that we are now in a position where we will be able to do that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** On the same line that we were pursuing a little earlier, can I ask what was the cost of the construction? I assume these were new builds from how they have been described. Were they new builds? What was the cost? Where are they located, the two boarding houses?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The accommodation?

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Yes.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** They are both inside the technical colleges.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** So they are inside the technical colleges, and I am guessing that maybe the minister could confirm that the cost was met from within the \$35 million per technical college infrastructure build. What was the specific cost of the infrastructure for these accommodation blocks or is it unable to be desegregated?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am told we cannot break it down because it was part of a complete package at both the Port Augusta and Mount Gambier technical colleges, but they are co-located, built, within the technical colleges, but in what you would describe as a secure wing.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** What is the age range of the students that will be able to access these facilities?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Ten, 11 and 12, and it will be governed by the department's existing camps and excursions policy.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Who is going to be the person on site with responsibility for the accommodation?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The principals of both Port Augusta and Mount Gambier technical colleges will be ultimately responsible.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Actually, that is a useful point, so can I clarify? These two technical colleges, from a governance point of view, are they effectively new public schools with their own principal and staffing structure separate to the existing public schools in those cities?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will make a quick personnel change and welcome back Professor Westwell.

**Prof. WESTWELL:** Through you, minister, the country technical colleges are not schools. They are added to the system, so they are a value-add in the system. There are some parallels with something like Arbury Park, which is a government-run facility. Students will go there from their home school to do specific learning, and these are the same. For example, in Mount Gambier students will go there on a part-time basis and it is a value-add into the system. It is better to have them on the sites where they are so that students can go and visit rather than being attached to a particular school in those instances.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I understand that, professor. Minister, the thing I am seeking to clarify is earlier you said that the principal of the school or of the technical college would be the person with the on-site responsibility should there be an issue. With 44 15 to 19 year olds on site, away from home, I can only imagine that there may be issues at some time, and going back to the Flinders Street camps and excursions officers will not be a satisfactory immediate response. Is it a person of a principal-level of appointment who is going to be responsible for supervising them? Is there going to be a person of seniority living on site who is able to provide supervision to these students?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** In terms of your question about the principal, the answer is yes. In terms of 24-hour supervision, there will be appropriately qualified staff there to maintain that supervision.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Are there going to be arrangements in relation to gender segregation or curfew arrangements, particularly when we are talking about minors? How late are these students allowed to be out and are there going to be restrictions on adult students?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The answer is yes to both those questions, and that would be as per the existing camps policy that we have.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I will move on to a different line in relation to the South Australian Curriculum, for which I am certain there must be a dot point on page 182, under targets, I believe. Can the minister identify how much funding allocation goes towards this project? I understand that there is a cohort within learning improvement, or whatever curriculum learning may be called now, in terms of people looking after this. What is the budget allocation each year for this program? For clarity, I am talking about the South Australian Curriculum for Public Education.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will pass to Martin Westwell.

**Prof. WESTWELL:** Through you, minister, we will have to take that on notice for the actual figure. Of course, the people we are talking about, it is not as if the whole group is ring fenced to just work on the South Australian Curriculum for Public Education. There is a curriculum team who are certainly developing that, but there are also people involved in supporting teacher practice and supporting that use of the curriculum. We would be doing that if we were just doing the Australian Curriculum without any modifications or if we were doing the South Australian Curriculum for Public Education. There is no additional cost for the South Australian public education curriculum.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I appreciate the point that these are public servants who were there already but previously they were doing a different job that presumably is no longer being done. My understanding is they were working on resources for teachers—content and scope and sequence of ways to assist teachers in delivering the Australian Curriculum—and now they are doing this project instead. Can I ask how many of those staff there are, and has there been any budget spent on external contractors to assist the project?

**Prof. WESTWELL:** Sorry, are you asking how many there are in total or how many there are who we would otherwise not be employing?

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Forget what was happening before. How many people are in the team that is working to deliver this project on an ongoing basis?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** There are a couple of things I would say, member for Morialta. There is a new curriculum, so that would have to be prepared and rolled out regardless. Those staff will be doing that. I just want to reiterate that there is no additional cost, but in terms of the actual numbers of staff in that area, we will have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is the government making the materials they are developing available to non-government schools in South Australia—the non-government schooling sectors—or is it being kept solely for public education? I could ask: have there been any non-government schools that have asked for it?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The short answer is yes. We are still working through it, but it will be made available and, yes, I think it was most likely the sector heads who made that request. I think we have a pretty good track record of sharing our work, and that is the intention here as well.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is the department paying for professional development for teachers or providing other support for teachers to assist them in getting on top of these 19 dispositions and other novel features, if we like, of the South Australian Curriculum for Public Education as opposed to the more traditional approach to teaching the Australian Curriculum?

**Prof. WESTWELL:** Through you, minister, professional learning is being provided and, of course, we would be providing professional learning regardless of whether it be in the Australian Curriculum without any modifications or these modifications that we have made. But we have made these modifications in response to what teachers, students, parents and employers were telling us about our students and what supports them to be successful.

For example, in mathematics students can be good at answering tests, but when they get into some future learning or some future training or when they get into a situation where they have to use that maths what we find is that if they are only good at doing tests they can be quite fragile. One of those dispositions about resilience is really important for students. As I say, the community has told us that it is not enough for our students just to have the knowledge and skills in mathematics; they have to have this disposition as well.

It is not like we have added a whole level of new maths content. We are not saying, 'You were teaching this before and now we are asking you to teach more content.' That is not what it is. In something like mathematics, we know how important it is for our young people to develop these dispositions if they are going to be successful in their future learning and their lives. We are going to say, 'This level of resilience is important for all students to develop and, not only that, we are going to support you through professional learning.' One of the things that we have seen when we started to do that and incorporate that into our classrooms is it helps teachers in lots of different ways. It helps teachers in terms of the differentiation in the classroom.

I will give you one example around a particular piece of work that a school did. They were talking about a student with autism in a classroom. When they were doing English, they would normally focus on the content, and they are still focusing on the content and they are still focusing on the skills, but they are changing the way in which they are teaching it.

This particular student I am thinking of started off, and they had a cortex that they were looking at and as part of that they were drawing a picture of a tree. The student drew a picture of a tree and it was only just a tree, it was barely recognisable. The teacher gave the student some feedback about it to help the student to have more of that ability to take on feedback and to respond positively, so the student redrew his tree after some specific feedback. The teacher was trying to help the student to develop that disposition as a learner.

When somebody has visited the school and gone to talk to this student, the student has taken the visitor by the hand and taken them over to this picture of a tree to say, 'This is my best tree.' What you are seeing in that is this intention of the development of the disposition coming through in the student and coming through in the pride of the student and their ability to access the knowledge and the skills of the curriculum in a way that is really meaningful for them.

We are seeing these examples right across the system. Yes, we are providing professional learning, but, as I say, it is not like it is more content; it is supporting people in the way that they do their teaching.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I might just add to that that a lot of this work behind the dispositions has been led by feedback from industry employers around what they want to see. We have a big opportunity in front of us in South Australia at the moment in terms of big projects—I will not list them, everyone here knows the ones I would be talking about. I think if we do not collectively as the



education system provide the skills to our young people who are graduating out of our high schools that those employers are going to need—and the one that keeps coming up is resilience—then we are not exactly succeeding or doing our young people justice in terms of making sure they leave school with the skills they need to not just get the jobs that are available but to be successful in those jobs as well.

There is a bit of a suggestion somewhere that this is all simply just led by us in the education department, when in actual fact a lot of work is actually done listening to those who might end up being the employers of our students about what they are seeing that might be lacking from our graduates and some things that we should focus on more. I personally think that is the right thing to do. I have said this on many occasions: the biggest test of any education system is how it gives its graduates the skills that they need for the world that they enter. The world is changing at a rapid pace and we need to find a way of changing with it.

I would say the kind of posture that we have taken on artificial intelligence is a very good example of that, where we decided instead of doing what every other state and territory did at first blush, which was just to ban it, we said, 'Instead of doing that, how about we actually teach young people to use it in a safe and productive way,' given that it was going to be something that would be needed to be used in the future.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can I ask one more question: how many chronic truancy referrals has the department received so far this year, and how does that compare with previous years, and is the minister currently considering any prosecutions?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** If you would allow us, member for Morialta, Professor Westwell is going to add something to the last answer, and then I have an answer for you on your other question.

**Prof. WESTWELL:** I just want to add that when we talk about dispositions, it is easy to characterise them as almost like you are either doing maths or you are doing dispositions, that there is a choice here, an either/or, and that somehow this is not contributing to students' achievement. What the research shows is that that is absolutely not true. The student dispositions have a big impact.

If you look at Australia's and, indeed, South Australia's PISA results from the last PISA round that had a focus on mathematics, and you look at how sensitive student performance is to things like curiosity and perseverance, those are the two factors where students with curiosity and with perseverance, if they were a country on their own in PISA, would be up there challenging the likes of Singapore. South Australian students have this curiosity, they have this perseverance, and their achievement as a consequence is much higher.

So the dispositions are really important alongside the instruction and the development of knowledge and skills, which of course our students need, but what we are finding more and more is that it is just not enough. It is not sufficient. It always has to be a both/and, never an either/or. For all the work we have done in Australia, for example, in the early years around literacy and numeracy, one of the things that the TIMSS data, an international comparison of four year olds and eight year olds around the world—for Australian four year olds, the gap in performance in mathematics between male and female students is bigger than almost anywhere in the world.

There was a study that was done in *Nature* that came out a couple of weeks ago that shows it is about girls' dispositions towards mathematics. If you do not keep your eye on these dispositions, what you can find is that it drives student achievement down. If you do keep your eye on these dispositions, what you find is that, all the way through from year 4 right up to our 15 year olds in PISA, you put effort into these dispositions and it drives student achievement up. So it is never an either/or: it is always a both/and.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** And on truancy?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to give you an update on truancy. The first point I would like to make is that we have seen attendance rates go up by 2.4 per cent since 2022. There is still a long way to go, but there are positive signs. I think we are actually above the national average now for the first time in a long while, although that is also in part because other states—

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I guarantee we were above the national average during the COVID pandemic.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, that is probably true. But in terms of chronic truancy, I can tell you this: since coming to government, to May of this year, we have reviewed 112 families, involving 166 children. Of the 112 cases, 49 cases, which involve 71 children, are currently being closely monitored, are under assessment or investigation or have been referred for legal advice. Of the 63 cases, which involve 95 children, where prosecution will not be pursued at this time, 40 are cases where an improvement in attendance and engagement was seen. I think it shows that, in some cases, if we are willing to push it and show that we are serious about potentially taking the matter all the way through to prosecution, it does often result in improved attendance.

In the remaining 23 cases, prosecution was not pursued due to a range of factors, including complex family situations or family moving interstate, obviously cases in which a prosecution would not have actually changed the behaviour. We have done a very big bit of work here that I have driven myself around making sure that we show we are willing to follow these all the way through to the point of getting the legal advice and prosecution. I think it has yielded, in a lot of cases, some positive results.

**The CHAIR:** The allotted time having expired, I declare the examination of School Education complete.

*Sitting suspended from 11:34 to 11:45.*

#### **Departmental Advisers:**

Prof. M. Westwell, Chief Executive, Department for Education.

Ms K. Little, Chief Executive, Office for Early Childhood Development.

Mr B. Temperly, Deputy Chief Executive, Department for Education.

Mr C. Bernardi, Chief Operating Officer, Department for Education.

Ms N. Atkinson, Executive Director, Participation, Integration and Inclusion, Office for Early Childhood Development.

Ms B. Curtain, Executive Director, Workforce and Quality, Office for Early Childhood Development.

Ms N. Lynch, Executive Director, Policy and Provision, Office for Early Childhood Development.

Ms K. Jordan, Lead Director, Schools and Preschools, Office for Early Childhood Development.

**The CHAIR:** The portfolios are Early Childhood Education and the Office for Early Childhood Development. The minister appearing is the Minister for Education, Training and Skills. The proposed payments remain open for examination. Unless the minister wishes to make a statement, I call on him to introduce his advisers and then I will call on the lead speaker for the opposition to make a statement or go into questions. I have not been notified of any changes in committee membership. Minister, are you ready to rock and roll?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, thank you, Chair. I introduce on my right Kim Little, Chief Executive of the Office for Early Childhood Development, and on my left Martin Westwell, Chief Executive of the Department for Education.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Colton, I assume you are taking the lead?

**Mr COWDREY:** It would be awkward if I was not. Minister, I will start at Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 178. For each of the years 2022, 2023 and 2024, are you able to provide the committee with some information, in particular around prohibition notices, enforceable undertakings

and show cause notices that the Education Standards Board has issued to early childhood education and care providers in South Australia?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Member for Colton, that is—

**Mr COWDREY:** Administered items.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes. They will be here and you can go your hardest.

**Mr COWDREY:** Sure. Perhaps I will start with new infrastructure projects, then, at pages 176 and 177. Given the nature of the way that the numbers are provided in the budget paper, are you able to provide a breakdown in terms of the total estimate in regard to capital infrastructure that is specifically for early childhood education infrastructure over the next four years?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I think I understand your question. I might pass to Kim.

**Ms LITTLE:** Thank you for the question. In terms of the reform effort that flows from the royal commission—it is part of what is now known as the Flying Start Reforms—there is \$253.3 million between 2023-24 and 2028-29 that has been allocated to infrastructure investment. That is a mix of investment through the Department for Education, which I will defer to my colleagues on, and investment through grants to not-for-profit providers.

**Mr COWDREY:** Are you able to give an indication of how many preschools or early learning services are to receive infrastructure upgrades under the program?

**Ms LITTLE:** I can start with the areas that are involved and work backwards from that in terms of that sort of indication. There was a really significant piece of work that was done in the wake of the royal commission, including sector surveys, to determine the parts of the state where it would be likely that in future years there would be, without further intervention and investment, a gap between the demand for three-year-old preschool, and indeed four-year-old, looking at the two together, and the supply that was available, where the supply comes from multiple different sources.

The supply obviously comes from government preschools, it comes from non-government preschools and it comes from the long day care sector. There were 38 statistical area 2s. A statistical area 2 is an ABS designation. There were 38 statistical area 2s that had estimated unmet demand by 2032, so that is over the life of the rollout, which is out of 172 SA2s in the state of South Australia.

So we are working really closely with our colleagues in DfE and also we have run a grant process. We have released those areas as part of an infrastructure strategy. There are maps available. We have recently closed the first round of the Flying Start Infrastructure Grants which is looking for projects where we can co-invest with not-for-profit providers to create more three-year-old preschool capacity. I cannot comment on that grant round at the moment because that is under active consideration, but there would be a first tranche of announcements available before the end of the year and I will defer to my colleagues in DfE about the work that they are doing on that side.

In terms of the specific number of projects, the answer is: it depends on the appropriate mix of new builds and extensions, which is what we are working through through those processes. In some cases, an existing service may be able to be expanded, so it may be able to have a larger footprint for that service, and in some cases there may be an entirely new service needed in the space. That is what we are getting more certainty on over the course of the year as we are working through that with the sector. But that 38 SA2s gives you some idea of the sort of volume of projects we would be looking for in those areas in order to drive out more supply over future years.

**Mr COWDREY:** How many places is that infrastructure program looking to support holistically?

**Ms LITTLE:** We are looking at around 800 additional approved places across those areas in order to meet demand. Again, the reason I cannot directly answer the question about exactly how many construction projects that will involve is because it will depend. You might have two small expansions for the sake of one larger build, for example. But that gives you some idea of the sort of metric we are talking about.

**Mr COWDREY:** I know you specifically said that you cannot answer directly in terms of projects under consideration through the grant round, but in terms of applications to this point, are you able to give an idea of how many applications were received by existing providers?

**Ms LITTLE:** I will take some advice on that matter about whether or not I could advise during the course of the hearing. I will also flag as part of that that our investments are, of course, intended to create new supply, whether through our DfE colleagues or through working with the not-for-profit sector, local councils or others. There is also new supply coming on board from within the sector more broadly.

This is from memory, and I am sure my colleague in the ESB will correct me if I have not got it quite right, but there are around 20 to 30 applications for new long day care services that come in every year in South Australia from a mix of for-profit and not-for-profit service providers. We are also very carefully monitoring that and monitoring that as well so that we do not duplicate supply when new supply is going to be created in any case.

**Mr COWDREY:** Of the 38 geographic areas that you identified, did you receive submissions in relation to all of those 38 areas where there is a gap that has been identified by the department?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I understand that some of those areas will be serviced by long day care providers and some will be serviced by DfE. We would not expect applications from all of them, because there will be a mix as per the recommendation of the royal commission around the mixed model of delivery—if that makes sense?

**Mr COWDREY:** Yes, to a degree. In terms of prioritisation of those funds, if delivery or expansion is available within existing long day care settings or the ability to expand those, is it essentially the intention that if there is no opportunity provided through that means in going out to market to support infrastructure grant projects through that that the Department for Education would then backfill the need, based on essentially a first preference, going to long day care to expand?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Obviously, there will be some parts of the state—and this will be largely regional/remote parts of the state—where only DfE can offer the provision, so the infrastructure work there would have to be done by DfE. But in areas where there could be an offering by the Department for Education or a long day care provider I think that, in terms of infrastructure, the grant could go to the long day care provider.

**Mr COWDREY:** So additional government infrastructure is essentially the second consideration in your hierarchy of how this is going to be rolled out. The first preference will be the expansion of existing long day care providers for the delivery of year 3 preschool as opposed to new Department for Education places or facilities?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I think the answer to the question, member for Colton, is that there will be concurrent infrastructure projects in DfE and in long day care.

**Mr COWDREY:** You have identified, as part of an earlier session, the new B-6 school in the northern suburbs. It goes to the nature of these portfolios where they overlap in certain areas. Have there been any other additional schools that have been highlighted to this point as being potential sites for B-6 or B-12, for instance?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I think the answer, member for Colton, is there are none of those under active consideration at the moment beyond the schools that we have already announced and spoken about this morning.

**Mr COWDREY:** In an earlier answer, you discussed the complexity of rolling this out. In regional South Australia, in particular, there are certain challenges that exist to ensure equity of access. Are you able to provide some information on the government's initial thinking as to how equity of access is going to be achieved across regional South Australia?

**Ms LITTLE:** Through the minister, one of the things we were very careful about when government was deciding on the way that three-year-old preschool would be rolled out is paying really close attention to those regional and rural communities. So for the rollout, in what I will call the sessional preschool sector, which is the traditional preschool sector, which is largely obviously

government operated, although there are some non-government operated services, the rollout for those services is geographic and it does start in rural and regional communities.

It starts with what you might think of as your smaller communities in 2026-27, growing to your larger regional towns in 2028 before it moves into the metro locations. At the same time, we are also building out the long day care sector. Obviously, there are long day cares, particularly in regional centres, but the preponderance of long day care services are in the more populated areas, which is why we deliberately designed for the government rollout to start in those regional and rural communities, so that focus to start first.

While I cannot share with you the detail of the outcomes of the expression of interest process that we have just run for services to stand up in 2026, I can tell you at a high level that across the sector as a whole, 25 per cent of the services that will be turning on to offer funded universal three-year-old preschool next year will be in rural and regional areas, and 75 per cent will be in Greater Adelaide, which is actually slightly better than population share. We have been very, very attentive to not only building out the government offer in those communities first, which often do not have other early childhood services in them, but also working very closely with long day care services where they do exist in those regional centres, so that they have opportunities to be fairly considered to come into the reform in 2026.

**Mr COWDREY:** How has the government engaged with local communities and councils to this point, in terms of identification of potential sites and design and those aspects of potential builds? Is that too far gone from where the process is at, at the moment, or has there been significant consultation undertaken in regard to local communities and councils, in particular, again with greater understanding of the regional aspects?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** If I could just perhaps clarify, member for Colton, are you asking specifically about the infrastructure projects or more broadly than that in terms of the rollout?

**Mr COWDREY:** I am happy if you want to address both.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I can give you a bit of detail on that, which may help. Just short of \$506 million is being invested over six years from 2023-24 to support the staged rollout of universal three-year-old preschool, with a further \$118.6 million to support the workforce and quality required. A further \$48.8 million over four years from 2025-26 to 2028-29 will be invested to align support available for four-year-old preschool to the new three-year-old model and offering.

Three-year-old preschool will roll out from 2026 as we know. More than 200 long day care services will partner with the government to deliver a three-year-old preschool program in 2026, including a non-government demonstration hub in Elizabeth Vale, which I had the pleasure of visiting just last week. Forty-five government sessional preschools will begin offering three-year-old preschool in 2026, mainly in regional areas for the reasons that Ms Little just outlined, that in many cases there is no other option there in terms of having a for-profit or not-for-profit long day care provider. We will also have a demonstration hub in Port Pirie West.

More than 6,000 three-year-old children are expected to participate in a preschool program in the first year of the rollout. That is up from what we had previously thought would be around 4,000, keeping in mind that, in any given year in South Australia, I think it hovers around 18,000 three year olds. It is a pretty positive sign in terms of interest from the long day care sector that will actually enable us to offer a three-year-old preschool offering to close to a third of three year olds in South Australia from the very first year.

During the rollout, hours of delivery, or the standard delivery, will be 15 hours per week. Of course, we are offering in some cases at Preschool Plus, which is the term we have used, a 30-hour dosage, so a double dosage, up from 15 to 30. Again, that was a recommendation out of the Gillard royal commission. By 2032 every child in South Australia will have access to 15 hours per week of three-year-old preschool. The staged implementation approach provides time to build the preschool workforce. We know that this is the key challenge.

The Hon. Julia Gillard gave us very specific targets in her royal commission report in terms of what we need by way of early childhood workers, early childhood teachers and preschool directors. That has been very helpful in terms of the planning that we have needed to do, but they come online

in a staged way as our offering increases. It is not that we need, for instance, the whole 880 early childhood workers in the first year because we are offering it to 6,000, but eventually it will grow to that figure, which gives us the time across the six years of the rollout to build the workforce we need to deliver on our commitment to have 15 hours' access to all three year olds by 2032.

**Mr COWDREY:** You have just addressed workforce, so I will skip to a question in regard to that in particular, but I may come back to infrastructure in a second. You just mentioned in a previous answer that 25 per cent of the places that are coming online as of 2026 are going to be in regional South Australia.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes.

**Mr COWDREY:** While not always the case, one of the primary issues that has driven the shortage of places in regional South Australia has been workforce as opposed to infrastructure. What has the government done, or what is the government going to do, to ensure that the appropriate workforce to staff that 25 per cent of places is going to be available but also there to actually provide those places?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** That is a very good question, and you are 100 per cent right. Workforce is the big challenge and particularly workforce in regional parts of South Australia. There are a number of things that we put in place, many of which were based on recommendations from the royal commission. As of 30 May 2025, the QualifySA financial support program, launched in July 2024, has supported 319 students to study early childhood courses and support the rollout of universal three-year-old preschool.

Grants for early childhood education and care services and partner organisations to bolster workforce capacity and foster collaboration among early childhood professionals were awarded in May and announced on 19 June. Additional grant rounds will be provided in late 2025. Of course, some other things that we can mention that we have done include having early childhood education and care on the fee-free TAFE list. In fact, I think because I inquired recently, the current allocation of early childhood education and care places in fee-free TAFE is currently maxed out. There has been really big interest in that, which has been very good.

We have had scholarships as well. Fifty-seven of the 309 that I mentioned before are from outer regional or remote, which is a pretty impressive number. When I was talking about the QualifySA financial support program, launched in July last year, that supported 319 students to study early childhood courses, 57 of those were from outer regional or remote areas, which is good. I think we are providing scholarships as well in terms of upskilling for those who might want to move up from a cert III to a diploma to an early childhood teacher.

We are trying to tackle it from a range of different angles. I can say that, given that we are in a position now to be able to offer three-year-old preschool to 6,000 three year olds next year, we are on track to meet our workforce targets. However, we are going to have to remain vigilant to make sure it continues to grow as our offering grows. If it is okay, member for Colton, I might ask Ms Little to add a few more things.

**Ms LITTLE:** In addition to the focus on outer regional and remote area students receiving that financial support, aka scholarships, in order to support them to study, whether to do a diploma or to do a teaching qualification, we also just last week announced, as part of the broader workforce strategy, the Flying Start Workforce Grants. They are up to \$100,000 each for regional, rural and hard-to-staff locations, and they are to support communities to attract, retain and sustain their early childhood workforce.

One way to think of these is that these are local innovation and action grants. When you are doing a large-scale workforce strategy, obviously you have these big tentpole initiatives, like the financial support, the scholarships, but it is also really important that you have local tailored initiatives where people who know their communities, who know the specific challenges they are facing, are able to develop their own ideas and have them supported and funded. So that is that stream of work around the workforce grants.

We are really looking forward to seeing what happens out of those grants, which ones thrive and are really successful in what sorts of communities. That then gives us an opportunity, as the

workforce strategy progresses, within the \$118 million we have available from the start of this reform to 2028-29, for this workforce strategy. We are really interested in seeing what things really fire and work and in what communities and to be able to respond flexibly to that, because we know that big picture wholesale strategies, like scholarship strategies, for example, financial supports, are fabulous and they provide great base load supply, but we also need those really local tailored initiatives, particularly for our rural and remote communities.

Our colleagues in DfE in many cases in the really remote communities are the employer. They are the ones who have the workforce and they have been working very closely on ensuring that there is enough workforce supply as the rollout progresses, including in the communities you are talking about.

**Mr COWDREY:** So the government has no concerns, in terms of those initial 25 per cent of places being turned on in 2026, about having the workforce to support those?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** What we can say is that the services in question have indicated that they have the workforce that they need to be able to offer that provision. If there are any that are having difficulty in doing that, we will work with them directly to try to address that, but the signs are confident.

**Mr DIGHTON:** My question relates to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 201, under targets, the second dot point. Can you explain how the Preschool Boost program will help address levels of developmental vulnerability in South Australian children and why this is so important?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** This is an important question, because one of the things that gets a bit lost when we are explaining as a government why we are doing three-year-old preschool is the very first recommendation that the Hon. Julia Gillard made was around us reducing the levels of developmental vulnerability amongst our five year olds. When the royal commission was handed down, that was 23.8 per cent and it has since gone up in the most recent AEDC data that was just released last week.

In fact, that data was interesting. All states and territories deteriorated. I think South Australia deteriorated by the least, so we are actually in a better position on the league table now than we were, but it is not really something to celebrate. What we have seen, particularly post COVID, is that the stats in Victoria were pretty astonishing around growth in developmental vulnerability across now the five domains of cognitive, language, emotional, social and physical.

That very first recommendation was to get it down from the current figure to 15 per cent across 20 years. Of course, just having a provision of 15 hours of preschool a week for three year olds is not in and of itself enough to do that. There are all those other offerings that we need to make that will actually go towards addressing that developmental vulnerability in those different areas.

Preschool Boost, which you referred to, is an additional program that will allow the preschools participating to select additional supports that will assist their children in those five domains of the AEDC. It will be set up as an online menu of preapproved quality allied health and other evidence-informed supports that will be tailored to the needs of three-year-old and four-year-old children, their families and their communities.

The Preschool Boost program is in addition to preschool teaching and learning funding, and enables allied health, family supports and inclusion capacity-building. It complements commonwealth inclusion funding and ensures continuity into four-year-old preschool where needed. The Department for Education will use Preschool Boost funding to expand existing supports—including student support services and the Inclusive Education Support Program—for universal three-year-old preschool, ensuring a consistent approach to supporting children in its services in the two years before school.

Preschool Boost will also fund sector-wide training in Aboriginal cultural safety and trauma-informed practice to embed safe, predictable and culturally safe environments that support all children to thrive. I think that is of particular importance when you look at levels of developmental vulnerability amongst Aboriginal children and the amount of work that we have to do there. In years gone by, I do not think we have really done a particularly good job of providing that training for our

staff at preschool level. I think it has been the case that we have had a good focus on it at primary level and secondary level but it has been a bit of an afterthought for preschool.

Addressing developmental vulnerability is all about setting up children to succeed through their preschool years into primary and secondary schools and beyond. The example I often give, member for Black, is because the measurements are taken as a sample by teachers of five year olds at the start of their first year of primary school, the data basically shows that on average the South Australian five year old sitting down for their first day of reception is not as ready to learn as the Victorian five year old sitting down for their first day of prep. The truth is that some of those students catch up; some of those students never catch up.

Unless we do something about making sure that when they get there for that first day of school they are ready to go—in mind and in body, how big is their vocabulary, what is their ability in terms of being able to regulate themselves because we know this is a huge thing in primary schools now, how do they go making friends and things like that—then they are starting behind compared with their Victorian neighbours. It is a very big piece of work, and obviously a very challenging thing to consider a decrease from, I think, 24.8 or something like we are at now down to 15, but if we can do it it will mean that we see great results right from the start of primary school.

In terms of that most recent data that showed that violent incidents in high schools are on the decline for the first time in five years but a big increase in violent incidents in primary schools, which were largely around dysregulated kids, I think in large part the solution to that is the work that we are doing right here in terms of reducing developmental vulnerability so when they land at school for the very first day they are actually ready to go.

**Mr COWDREY:** I will go back to infrastructure briefly, if that is alright. The budget papers set out on page 177 a range of projects with budgets and estimated completion times. We have obviously had a period of time pass between the budget papers being printed and where we are today. Are you able to provide any advice to the committee in terms of early childhood projects in particular, like the Brahma Lodge kindy or the LCA children's centre and, specifically, the Two Wells Community Children's Centre and the Hackham West Children's Centre? Are you able to advise that all of those projects remain on track, as indicated, with the timeframes outlined in the budget?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I can advise that they are all on track as per the timeframes indicated in the budget papers. In fact, I had the pleasure of driving past the Brahma Lodge project just last week and saw it in full swing.

**Mr COWDREY:** Finally, on infrastructure, has the government considered any PPP arrangements in regard to the rollout of some of the infrastructure projects that have been discussed at this point in early childhood?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I think the answer is: not in this area, member for Colton. Certainly not at this stage, is my answer.

**Mr COWDREY:** I will shift to workforce on page 175, the budgeted numbers, particularly in regard to the Office for Childhood Development. The budget for 2024-25 has not been included in this document, but the actual in 2023-24 is obviously the scale-up of the office coming online. I cannot remember the exact number that was originally intended when the budget measure came through early on, but there has obviously been significant growth in terms of FTE numbers. Are there going to be any further additions to the Office for Early Childhood Development moving forward, and are you confident that those numbers are accurate in terms of forward projecting numbers?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will pass to Ms Little to answer this question.

**Ms LITTLE:** Through you, minister, thank you for the question, and the member is exactly right: the reason for both the budget and the FTE increase is because the office has been under establishment. It was, in effect, a startup as of late 2023 and has been in a growth period across 2024 and into the start of 2025. We have only one significant tranche of additional recruitment to do and that relates to what we call our local teams. We have eight local teams that work out directly with services. This intersects a little bit with a question that you asked earlier about what our levels of engagement were with local government, with communities, with other services.



Between the OECD central and those nascent local teams we have done 500 site visits and visits out to communities and have consulted with 700 people across the state, including all of those major stakeholders and community members. At the moment those eight local teams, as I say, cover metropolitan Adelaide but also cover all the other parts of the state, in terms of working with what is a very large and diverse sector, with over 500 long day cares as well as close to 400 DfE services currently. They have about half of their staffing in place currently. Those teams are about five or six people each, so there will be one more tranche of recruitment that is on foot at the moment in order to fill out their staffing, so those little teams can be formed up and then, effectively, we will be at steady state for our ongoing staffing.

We have also been working really closely on building out the ICT foundations for the reforms. As the member would appreciate, being able to appropriately track and monitor investments of this scale, and understand how the reform is performing, means that we have also been working through building out those underpinning systems and foundations. So that is a growth area that we have been working through as well. Effectively we are almost there in terms of our setup for the office. I would anticipate that within the next couple of months—two, possibly three at the outside, recruitment being what it is—we would be at our steady state in terms of our staffing, noting some of those positions are project positions, so they will be in place for a period and then they will phase out and some will be more ongoing roles. I hope that is helpful.

**Mr COWDREY:** Yes. So the budget amount for this year at 144 is essentially going to be the operating FTE moving forward, or is that inclusive of project-based staff, as you have outlined?

**Ms LITTLE:** Yes, the 2025-26 figure is 144.3 FTE. This year's figure was 112.8 FTE and that will be our standing army, if you like, noting that we may have periods of time in future in terms of those project-based staff. The project-based staff come in and out because they are doing particular things, but that is what we are funded for in next year's budget and that will be roughly the level that we are at.

Obviously, when we get to the end of the rollout period—that is 2032—the government will doubtless look at how the resourcing works. A lot of our effort is put into standing up the reforms, when you are going from where we were at the end of 2023 to being able to stand up reforms of this magnitude. Of course, there will still need to be those key ongoing roles, but doubtless government will consider some of those other roles as we move into the end of the reforms. It is probably too soon for me to get into that at this stage.

**Mr COWDREY:** If I shift over to the other side of the table, early childhood education, are you able to advise how many positions of the budgeted FTEs are currently not filled for preschool educators and directors across all government sites?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am advised that currently there are no vacancies. All positions are filled.

**Mr COWDREY:** We discussed earlier the rollout of additional places, kickstarting in 2026. Are you able to advise how many additional preschool educator positions within the Department for Education have been identified to facilitate that rollout this financial year?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am advised that, because we staff based on enrolments and the enrolments open next term, we do not know right now exactly what that staffing component needs to be, but we are confident that we will be able to meet it. As those enrolments come, then we will have a more precise idea of exactly what staff we need or how many additional staff we need.

**Mr COWDREY:** Given the way the FTE numbers are reported in the budget, perhaps this may be one to take on notice; if you are able to provide it now, that would be fantastic. Are you able to give a breakdown of the FTEs in relation to early childhood services: the number of early childhood educators, support workers within early childhood, directors, essentially all the components of the FTEs and workforce for early childhood? If you are able to provide that for this year and perhaps the preceding two years.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We can do that. We will take that on notice.

**Mr COWDREY:** Just as a follow-up to the question around director positions being filled, are any of those positions that are filled at the moment being done in an acting capacity?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will take that on notice, member for Colton.

**Mr COWDREY:** Does the department track retention rates when it comes to preschool staff in terms of the percentage of the workforce that leaves early childhood education services within the department each year?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will endeavour to get that data for you. I am not 100 per cent certain how it is tracked but, if we can, we will provide it to you on notice.

**Mr COWDREY:** Okay—and perhaps, again, the preceding two years if that is possible.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes.

**Mr COWDREY:** Again, it might not be something that you have with you, but I will ask the question anyway. In regard to director positions, do you have a breakdown of how many directors are on fixed-term contracts as opposed to permanent positions?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will endeavour to get that data for you, but what I can say is that we have converted more than 100 early childhood teachers—and a number of those would also be directors at centres—to permanency in 2024 which is, I think, as I said in an answer to an earlier question from the member for Morialta, as many as were converted in the last 10 years combined.

**Mr COWDREY:** Has the minister received any feedback on workload issues from preschool directors?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, I have received that, and it is not uncommon. I have received feedback from both preschool directors and primary school principals about what they would refer to as a lack of leadership density—meaning in the preschool setting, of course, you have a director who would also have a teaching load and they might not have, in many cases, other leaders around them to support them, and a similar situation is true of primary school teachers as well. It is something that we have committed to both the Preschool Directors Association and the South Australian Primary Principals Association to have a look at.

I think particularly in terms of that data that I referred to earlier around the increases that we are seeing in dysregulated young people, it shows the complexity of the job of a primary teacher and also a preschool director. Particularly post COVID, with a lot of increase in dysregulation and young people coming not toilet-trained and quite behind in terms of their social and emotional skills, there is a case to be made that we do need to try to wrap a bit more leadership support around the early years. Yes, it is something that is brought up with me quite regularly.

**Mr COWDREY:** Does the government have any plans in particular in the broader context of the year 3 rollout that may see additional spaces allocated to existing sites or larger sites coming as a result of the rollout? Are there any planned changes to the role description or responsibilities of preschool directors in the context of your most recent answer?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** It might be an opportunity for me here, member for Colton, to refer to what came out of the enterprise bargaining agreement insofar as it pertained to not just school staff but preschool staff as well. As part of that, we delivered increased pay, greater classroom support, fewer workload pressures and more support for country educators.

Over the life of the agreement, teachers will receive a 13 per cent salary increase and principals and preschool directors will receive a 16 per cent salary increase. Teachers in the categories of schools and preschools of greater disadvantage, categories 1 and 2, and special schools have already received funding for an extra hour of non-instruction time, phased in by 2028 for all those other schools of the higher categories. We have also provided funding to preschool directors to assist them in reducing their workload.

One of the things that we inserted into that enterprise bargaining agreement that I think some people thought was a bit odd at the time but I now see is being included in enterprise bargaining agreements all over Australia and the world was the right to disconnect. That was certainly something that was brought up with me by all our education staff, including preschool staff, who felt that an

expectation had been built up from parents that they should be reachable at all hours of the night on all manner of things.

We have also provided three additional days for mentoring for early career teachers. That is obviously important in the sense of the data I explained earlier this morning around the attrition rate in the first five years for teachers being something like 50 per cent nationally. We know that if we are going to address that we need more mentoring in those early years. We have actually done quite a few things already and have a focus on preschool as well.

An amount of \$17.5 million has been provided to standalone preschools in the 2025 school year to manage the administrative workload of preschool directors. That was something that was raised with me very early in my time as minister by the Preschool Directors Association. This funding equates to 0.5 FTE of a teacher in a fulltime preschool and it can be used flexibly by the preschool director to reduce their face-to-face teaching to the level of a small school principal. That was one of the things that was raised with me a lot, that it was very hard for the preschool director to manage their own teaching workload and do all the administrative tasks that a preschool director is required to do.

There are a number of things that we have done. I am not suggesting that it is fixed or that it is something that has stopped being raised with me, but I think we have made a pretty good effort at prioritising it.

**Mr COWDREY:** Perhaps I will move on to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 178, highlights. There is a dot point that references the kindy care trials that occurred, as I understand it, across 20 preschools both in metro and regional South Australia. Are you able to advise if there is any evidence to suggest that the trials will be able to be scalable and sustainable moving forward, especially in regional South Australia where there is already a struggle to attract and retain staff in early childhood services?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Kindy care, as we call it—which is the equivalent out-of-school hours care for preschool or kindy kids—is a new initiative. We have been trialling it. Those trials commenced in 2024. There are 16 kindy care programs currently operating across the state: 11 are department operated and five are third-party provider operated. An evaluation of the trials to date is in progress, with the report due back by the end of July this year. We will await that evaluation to see what our next steps will be. To be perfectly honest, there have been sites where it has worked very well and there have been sites where it has not worked quite so well, so we will take away the feedback that this evaluation gives us and look at where else we might roll it out.

There was additional money provided in this most recent state budget, \$2.9 million, to extend the trials in up to 20 sites until the end of 2026. That will give us a better and more fulsome kind of picture of where it works well and where perhaps it does not. I have spoken to parents who have been at sites where a kindy care trial has been underway, and they have spoken really positively about having those opportunities in mornings and afternoons at a kindy or preschool-specific out-of-school-hours care service.

There are some primary schools—in fact, the school that my own kids go to is one of the few where they offer out-of-school-hours care to preschool kids as well. That is a good thing, except, often, preschool kids do not feel particularly comfortable being in an out-of-school-hours care service with grade 6 kids. So I think there are lots of benefits of the kindy care trial in terms of having something that is specific for those age groups. We are persisting with the trial and, once we have that evaluation back by the end of July 2025, that will inform further steps.

The other complexity in it has been working with the commonwealth on making sure that the childcare subsidy applies. The childcare subsidy (CCS) applies to OSHC. As we currently know it, there have been some complexities that have been quite frustrating, to say the least, around getting the CCS also to apply to kindy care. I am hopeful that we can be successful in that because OSHC is, in the scheme of things, incredibly affordable really and I would want to make sure that kindy care remains like that too.

**Mr COWDREY:** In your answer, you alluded to the fact that some of the sites have been troubling, yet at the same time you committed that the trial will continue at all 20 sites until the end of 2026. Is that the case?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** There are some sites where it was not as popular as we thought it might have been, and we are no longer continuing the trial. We have added other sites that expressed interest in being a part of the trial. That was based on parent demand, essentially, to use the service. I am also told that some of the third-party providers asked us to take over the running of their services, which we have done in some cases as well.

**Ms WORTLEY:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 178. My question to the minister is: how is the government supporting communities like Kingston in the South-East in addressing childcare shortages?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about the work that we have done in collaboration with the federal government in Kingston SE, and particularly give some acknowledgement in this place of the incredible advocacy that has been provided in Kingston SE from the parent community there who really stood up and said it is not good enough. They had, I think, an established waiting list for long day care of something like 50 students or 50 young people, which was a high number, yet despite that there was no interest from a for-profit or not-for-profit long day care provider to come in and offer long day care.

Of course, the ramifications of that flow on to all sorts of things, particularly when we know we have a skills crisis around the country, and that is often felt more acutely in regional areas than anywhere else. We are talking about parents, predominantly women, who are often affected most by that if they cannot get childcare arrangements to be able to either get back into the workforce or increase their hours in the workforce.

We have come up with what is a pretty unique model around finding a solution, and it started with a commonwealth contribution, I think, of \$3.5 million from the Albanese government, growing from an earlier commitment of \$1.8 million. This, along with some philanthropic support that we got as well, and support from the state government, will allow the building of a larger childcare centre with 53 places, which should make sure that there is adequate supply, not just now but into the future as well. It is also being co-located with the school, which is another important initiative, I think, in terms of the ease for parents, but also to try to support ongoing enrolments at Kingston Community School there as well.

We talk about childcare deserts a lot now, and South Australia is a jurisdiction which is particularly affected by childcare deserts because we have a large metropolitan centre and then the next biggest regional centre is 25,000 people, so we are essentially talking about market failure or thin markets everywhere, and there just is not the incentive there for for-profit or not-for-profit long day care providers to go and offer something, and these communities are being stuck. I think there has been a welcome shift in the attitudes of regional communities to say it is no longer acceptable just to say that because we live in the country that we cannot get access to child care.

I also think we are just not in a position as a state where we have all these enormous projects in front of us that all share the same challenge, which is finding skilled workers, that we are disincentivising those who might be ready to take one of those jobs from doing so because they cannot get child care for their children. It is requiring us to do things as a state government that we have not done before.

This has typically been the purview of the federal government more than the state government, but we are now increasingly stepping into this space because if we do not, there is nothing for the communities to do, although I have to acknowledge the commitment that was made by the Albanese government federally around the commonwealth Building Early Education Fund (BEEF). I think there is \$1 billion in the BEEF, and we are certainly in the process of trying to access as much of that as we can for some of the other childcare deserts that we have. Kadina is one that springs to mind, but there are a number.

I think the future is brighter in the sense that although it was a painstaking job to bring the Kingston SE project together, in terms of who pays for the staffing and who pays for the building, we

did find way of doing it. With that federal support out of that Building Early Education Fund, that should provide the money to actually build the physical infrastructure, so we are doing innovative things. I just want to put on the record the commitment of Kirsty Starling, Kristen Wilks and Fiona Rasheed from Kingston SE. They just kept at us for years and years, and it was their advocacy that really got us across the line, and I want to acknowledge that here today.

**Mr COWDREY:** Just going back to the kindy care trial: are you able to outline how many kindies, and which particular kindies, dropped out of the trial?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The three concluding are Adams Road Children's Centre, Ocean View College Children's Centre and Salisbury Heights Preschool. Sites continuing under the third party provider model are Clarence Park Community Kindergarten, Fairview Park Kindergarten and Magill Kindergarten. I think the third-party operator in all three of those cases is Gowrie SA. Sites transferring from the third-party provider operator model to the department-operated model are Dernancourt Kindergarten, Lantana Kindergarten, Wattle Park Kindergarten.

Sites continuing under the department-operated model are Bridgewater Kindergarten, Cumberland Preschool Kindergarten, Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre, Gawler and District College B-12 Children's Centre, Gladigau Park Kindergarten, Loxton Preschool Centre, Millicent North Kindergarten, Renmark North Preschool and Seaview Downs Kindergarten.

**Mr COWDREY:** How were the sites picked to participate, if 15 per cent of the sites that took part dropped out due to lack of demand?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Open expression of interest. We did an open expression of interest and had sites put their hand up to be a part of it, then we trialled those sites. At some there was more interest from the parent community than others, so we have adjusted that, but the numbers are still strong. Once we get that full evaluation back in July, I think we will have a much more accurate idea of where we go to from here, but that money is in this year's budget to continue that trial.

**Mr COWDREY:** Will the results of that evaluation be released publicly?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I do not know the answer to that. I shall wait until I see the evaluation, I think.

**Mr COWDREY:** I will shift to early childhood and one of the targets and also highlights with regard to the program. Given the preparation underway for the rollout in 2026, why has the government not released a clear cost breakdown for infrastructure and staffing at the initial 45 sites?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I have an answer to an earlier question of yours, which I might give you now if you wish, and then perhaps you would be so good as to repeat your last question to me. The current preschool staff retention rate is 92 per cent. If you would be so good as to fire your question at me again, I will have a go at that one.

**Mr COWDREY:** Given the preparation underway for the rollout of three-year-old preschool in 2026, why has the government not released a clear cost breakdown for infrastructure and staffing at the initial 45 sites?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The answer is that we do not ordinarily publish staffing breakdowns, I am told. What I can tell you in terms of funding for the department rollout is that the department was allocated \$9.5 million in investing expenditure and \$4.5 million in operating expenditure in 2024-25 to support the introduction of universal three-year-old preschool.

The department was allocated \$6 million in operating in 2025-26 to support the government's reform in the introduction of three year olds into preschool. This includes funding for suitability works to ensure government preschool infrastructure is suitable for three year olds and funding to support expanding capacity, that is, the department has established a small number of temporary roles to support that rollout.

**Mr COWDREY:** On the same topic, has a statewide infrastructure audit been undertaken to assess the readiness of existing public sector sites?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The short answer is, yes, an audit was done I think in 2023, and planning studies are underway. So, yes, an audit of those sites has been done.

**Mr COWDREY:** Have any results of that audit been released publicly? I am not saying specifically a breakdown by each site, but general readiness for public sector sites for the rollout. Has there been any information that has been released publicly from that audit?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Not at this stage, member for Colton.

**Mr COWDREY:** Will any results from that audit be released publicly?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The answer is that we were not intending on doing that. It is something that we can consider, but ordinarily it is just put together for our own internal purposes on understanding where work needs to occur.

**Mr COWDREY:** How were the initial 45 centres for the 2026 rollout chosen?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will pass over to Ms Little.

**Ms LITTLE:** Through you, minister, one of the major pieces of work that came out of the royal commission and that we worked very closely with DfE to do in the early days of the founding of the OECD was in thinking about that broad sketch that I provided to the committee earlier of starting the traditional sessional preschool rollout in rural and regional areas, then moving it in to those more populous areas as the rollout progresses.

A big part of the reason for that was not only, as I mentioned earlier, that we wanted to get service delivery to those regional, rural and remote communities as quickly as possible but also because we knew that they, as a general proposition, had the space and the infrastructure because of the size of the population in those places. That does not mean the infrastructure did not need to be upgraded and that there did not need to be minor works done on it, but as a general proposition they are not growth areas. They do not have really significant services bursting at the seams.

We made sure that when we did the modelling we modelled in places where we could realistically turn on three-year-old preschool in the government preschool system in 2026 and then 2027 so that we gave a longer lead time for the places and communities that might require more significant infrastructure works, including potential expansions and new builds.

The way those services were selected was in close consultation with our colleagues in the DfE, with the general overarching principle that we wanted to take the traditional sessional preschool out to these communities as the first port of call, for the normative reasons I gave earlier. We did analysis with the DfE to identify the services and communities which would be in a good place to commence early in the rollout. That analysis was done service by service in those communities and drew on the audit that was spoken about earlier.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Chair, are we able to correct an answer?

**The CHAIR:** Of course.

**Mr TEMPERLY:** Through you, minister, we were asked a question as to whether any project completion timeframes had changed since the publication of the budget papers. I advise there is one. When the Hackham West Children's Centre was originally commissioned through the 2023-24 state budget process, it was a rebuild of an existing children's centre. The budget and timeframes for that project have changed. Through the partnership with OECD, that centre will now become a 2027 hub, capacity will increase to the minimum preschool requirements of 44 places and the revised anticipated completion date is October—so about a three-month change in dates there.

**The CHAIR:** The allotted time having expired, I declare the examination of Early Childhood Education and the Office for Early Childhood Development complete.

*Sitting suspended from 13:01 until 14:00.*

#### **Departmental Advisers:**

Ms M. Bensley, Chief Executive, SACE Board, Department for Education.

Mr B. Temperly, Deputy Chief Executive, Department for Education.

Mr C. Bernardi, Chief Operating Officer, Department for Education.

Ms M. Elliott, Executive Director, People and Culture, Department for Education.

Mr L. Fraser, Acting Executive Director, Strategic Policy and External Relations, Department for Education.

Mr S. Heffernan, Acting Chief Executive, Education Standards Board.

Mr G. Mackie, Chief Executive Officer, History Trust of South Australia.

Mr J. Nguyen, Acting Registrar, Teachers Registration Board of South Australia.

**The CHAIR:** With no changes notified in the membership of the committee, we will go straight to the portfolio items for examination, which is the administered items. The minister appearing is the Minister for Education, Training and Skills. The proposed payments remain open for examination. If the minister does not wish to make a statement, he can introduce his advisers and I will then call on the lead speaker for the opposition to either make a statement or go straight to questions. Minister, the floor is yours.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, Chair. To my right I have Luke Fraser, who is the Acting Executive Director for Strategic Policy and External Relations and to my left I have Mr Sean Heffernan, who is the Acting Chief Executive of the Education Standards Board. I do not propose to give an opening monologue.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Morialta, you are the lead speaker?

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. I am happy to go straight to questions.

**The CHAIR:** Go ahead, the floor is yours.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** All the questions for this session relate to the dot points on the first page of Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, identifying the administered items.

I start in relation to the Education Standards Board, which is responsible for, amongst other things, reporting on the standards and assessments of childcare centres. For each of the last three years, how many prohibition notices, enforceable undertakings and show cause notices has the Education Standards Board issued to early childhood education care providers in South Australia and how are those figures tracking to date in 2025?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I might pass over to the acting chief executive to give an answer to this question.

**Mr HEFFERNAN:** Thank you. Through you, minister, I have the data for 2023 and 2024 and then the financial year to date. In 2023-24 we issued three prohibition notices, entered into two enforceable undertakings and sent and issued nine show cause notices. In this financial year to date we have issued three show cause notices, we have issued five prohibition notices and entered into nine enforceable undertakings.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** The second set of figures is this year to date, so it is already quite a substantial increase compared to last year. Has there been any analysis of the basis for that increase? Is there a higher level of compliance activity, or are there alternative explanations?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am advised it is due to an increase in compliance activity and the \$7.11 million that was provided to the ESB across the three-year period ending 31 December 2025. As you will no doubt remember, member for Morialta, this was a recommendation of the royal commission report.

That money has gone towards: the number of authorised officers across quality and compliance doubled, with an increase from 18 FTE to 39 FTE, and the number of assessments and ratings in 2024-25 as at 31 May 2025 compared with 2023-24 increased by 19 per cent, with 157 assessments and ratings undertaken compared with 132 assessments and ratings undertaken for the year 2023-24, a 48 per cent increase compared with 2021-22. The number of visits to early childhood education and care services increased by 72 per cent on previous years, with 2024-25

seeing a further 23 per cent increase on top of 2023-24 through increased assessments and ratings and introducing some proactive monitoring. I might leave my answer there; I am sure you have more questions.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I note there are a number of key regulations that are often used related to compliance: exceeding educator to child ratios—that should be child to educator ratios, depending on how you read it—employing staff not with the relevant qualifications, unsafe sleep or rest practices. Is there a breakdown available of which key regulations have been most used in relation to those show cause notices, enforceable undertakings and prohibition notices? I assume that more than one regulation may be breached in relation to any specific cause, but if there is data on how many times each of them are used, I would be very grateful.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We can provide that on notice to you, member for Morialta.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In that same context, is it possible to get potentially a list of the relevant services that have received those?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am told that if they are publicly available, yes, but if not, we might need to seek some advice on whether we can do that.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Alright. Just to wrap up on this chain, we have talked about this year to date so far in 2024. Are we able to get the couple of years previous to that as well in the same information being taken on notice?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** If we are able to, yes.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I understand that about 96 per cent of early childhood services have a quality rating, which by my maths suggests there are 4 per cent that do not have a quality rating. Does that mean that they have never been assessed, or is there some other explanation for that? Are they new services?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am informed that the only services that do not have a rating are those that have commenced within 18 months, and that is in line with the existing policy.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** So it is 18 months after a service commences operation before they would receive this sort of assessment, or is that just the acceptable target?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Not in all cases. Sometimes it might be sooner than that, but 18 months is the upper limit of how long before they need to have their A&R. I understand that quite a number would be done within that time.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I understand that, according to fairly recent data, 16 per cent, which would equate to about 200 services, are currently rated as 'working towards the National Quality Standard'. Does the Education Standards Board have any analysis, or does the minister have any analysis, of whether that figure is reasonable by national standards, and what is the approach being taken to ensure those services come up to an improved assessment in the future?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will pass over to Mr Heffernan to provide an answer on this one.

**Mr HEFFERNAN:** The percentage of services that have a 'working towards' is higher than the national average. The national amount is around 9 per cent. There are a couple of reasons for that, though. The reasoning includes that there has been such a big gap between assessment and rating visits, so where there has been a service that has not been assessed or rated for potentially between eight or 10 years, up until we received the \$7.11 million. We were able to then increase the frequency of assessment and ratings.

What we were finding, though, for a large number of services at that time, given the gap between the assessment and ratings, was that 50 per cent of those were receiving a 'working towards'. What we have done is introduced a pre-assessment and rating visit which is around three months before their assessment and rating actually commences and which then determines areas of compliance or areas that might need focus, and what that has done is reduce that significantly down to around 17 per cent.



**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I might just add to that if I may, member for Morialta. The Office for Early Childhood Development has a quality uplift program as part of what they are doing as well to try to boost the results of those A&Rs up to a higher level than they might currently be.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Very good. I will move on to non-government schools. Can the minister provide any update that is available on discussions he may have had with the commonwealth regarding their discontinuation of the non-government schools reform support fund? This was some funding that I think was removed by the commonwealth after the election of the Albanese government the first time around. In previous estimates, I am fairly sure we have discussed that the state government was advocating for that to be reinstated and the commonwealth was saying that they would be seeking agreement of the full SRS prior to considering any further things for non-government schools. Has there been any further movement on this source of funding so valued by non-government schools?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Perhaps just a point of clarification, member for Morialta: are you referring to the money that went to midyear intake, or a different—

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** No, this is earlier. My next question is going to be on the midyear intake. This is funding that has not been with us for a few years; it was going to the AISSA and SACCS, from my recollection. It was a modest but appreciated sum of money. I think it was called the Non-Government Reform Support Fund.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, I think I do recall. Yes, we did advocate for it and you are correct: it has not been reinstated at this point, I think.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Another fund, then, that the minister alluded to that the minister told us he was advocating for a couple of years ago was commonwealth support for non-government schools for midyear reception entry. What stage is that up to?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** You are right. That was a long and protracted negotiation because the support from the federal government contribution towards midyear intake for both the non-government system and the government system in South Australia was removed. We advocated hard on behalf of ourselves, obviously, but also the non-government system and particularly the Catholic system, which offers a lot of midyear intake and I think it is a really good thing. We had some success close to the federal election whereby I believe the federal government has reinstated a year of funding for midyear intake, but only for the non-government system. So the money that we previously received in the public system has not yet been reinstated, but that is something I will be raising very early in the piece with—

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** So how much does the federal government owe us annually that they are refusing to pay us?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am advised, member for Morialta, that at the time it was estimated that the funding from the Australian government was about \$7.7 million for two terms of schooling.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** And the funding the federal government is now providing to non-government schools, did I hear you say it was for one year only or is that now ongoing?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** At this stage it is for one year.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can I move to the SACE Board now.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Chair, if I could introduce the Chief Executive of the SACE Board, Michaela Bensley, to my left.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Can the minister provide an update on the SACE Subject Renewal road map?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I might make a few opening remarks and then Ms Bensley might like to add to those. The SACE Board is committed to a comprehensive program of subject renewal as a key deliverable of its strategic plan. The board have identified key curriculum and assessment innovations after gathering emerging learning from working with school leaders, teachers and students through the last strategic plan.

It is the intention that the new learnings be applied to all subjects so that all students have the benefit of a modern and responsive curriculum that better supports students to thrive in complex and volatile post-school pathways. The SACE Board has also identified a possible increase in payments to panellists who undertake setting, vetting, marking and moderating activities.

A budget bid has been put in for this. It has not been successful at this point. The board has developed contingencies to ensure they create awareness and desire amongst the education community. I will pass over to Ms Bensley to give a bit more detail, if she wishes.

**Ms BENSLEY:** New to this initiative, with the 60 subjects that we are hoping to renew, was to go through a complexity matrix to understand the degree of change, the volume of change, and the appetite for change. We have now grouped those subjects into three distinct groups and their pace will differ depending on the appetite. We have held over 60 workshops. There are over 500 teachers who are involved in the subject renewal groups. We are working in a co-design with those groups who are working on their subject blueprints, their mission statements and vision statements now.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Are those groups groups of teachers who have come together from within those subject specialties for the purpose of this project or are there other existing groups that you are tapping into?

**Ms BENSLEY:** Both. Firstly, we wanted diversity of experience, so we went to the system for an expression of interest for teachers to nominate to be a part of the reference group. Obviously, we then worked on those groups having a composition of metro, country experience, less experienced teachers, and socio-economic composition because those groups are going to be the ones who test in the classroom with students some of the innovations that we want for this subject.

But in addition to that, we are working with Educators SA, the subject associations and particularly those leads there or the chairs there, as well as the schooling sectors and others in terms of the input. Also an important group is our lead practitioners, those ones who are responsible for, say, setting the exam and helping us with the marking and moderation.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. In terms of resourcing for the project, are those groups that you are engaging with doing so out of the goodness of their hearts, donating the staff time from their schools or have other employers let them go or are there any groups that are charging SACE? Is SACE having to pay external contractors or organisations for their time and their work?

**Ms BENSLEY:** There is a lot of excitement, as you would expect, in the system for the changes. Both the teachers who are in the reference group as well as that broader community are very engaged in the process and are happy to donate their time at this point in time. I think where we will look at releasing teachers in terms of TRTs is when we get to implementation, particularly focusing on professional development workshops, but at the moment it is in kind.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In terms of the SACE Board's own budget, can you give us a sense of the resourcing bit from within SACE's resources that has been expended there? I do not know if there is a financial budget line allocated or a number of staff that are focused on it so far and, secondly, prospectively going forward?

**Ms BENSLEY:** Yes. We have been able, within our existing resources, to provide additional what we call education consultants, who are the key conduit for this work associated with those renewal groups. There are an additional five of those, and we feel with our own efficiencies we should be able to continue on with that work but, as we move through the next financial year, we will have a better sense of the subjects in terms of the degree to which they are going to be ready for implementation and the resourcing that will be required from then on.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** What is the SACE organisation's headcount and FTE?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** As per the budget papers for 2025-26, it is 113.1.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is that the number of people working at SACE or is that the estimate based on the budget allocation?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am told it is the total number working at SACE.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is that expected to move in the coming financial year?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Not at this moment and we do not expect that, no.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Have there been any significant movements in staffing over the last financial year?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am advised there have not been.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is the deputy chief executive role currently filled?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am told it is currently vacant.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is there a recruitment process underway? Is there information that can be provided about how that is working?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am advised that the board feels there is sufficient capability internally at this stage, and for that reason will not be going out and looking to fill that role externally at this time.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Why did the previous deputy leave?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Apparently, I am told, he missed working in schools and the connection with students and wanted to go back and do that, and that is what he has done.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Fair enough, but how much was spent on the recruitment for that appointment?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will take that on notice, member for Morialta.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. For how long has it been vacant?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am told two months.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I am happy to move to the Teachers Registration Board. Thank you very much, Ms Bensley.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thanks, Michaela. I introduce Mr Joseph Nguyen to my left, who is the Acting Registrar of the Teachers Registration Board.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you very much. I am wondering how many teachers or educators have been suspended this year and, perhaps as a comparison—is it easier to do by financial year or calendar year?

**Mr NGUYEN:** I only have data for the 2024 calendar year.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** In that case, my question can go to calendar years. How many in 2024, and how many so far of this year?

**Mr NGUYEN:** In 2024, there were a total of eight teachers suspended as a result of the registrar's actions, a total of one suspension as a result of disciplinary proceedings, a total of nine as a result of the teacher becoming prohibited and a total of 165 as a result of the teacher not renewing their working with children check.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is it possible to identify, minister, if any teachers have cancelled their membership or, indeed, what is the data on how many have not renewed their membership in the most recent year that we have figures for?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I can tell you that the number of teachers who did not renew their registration is 75, and they expired on 31 January this year.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Is there correlating data for the last couple of years? Is that a figure that is growing or decreasing? I realise that there was a change in the number of years that people were renewing for, so that may have skewed the data somewhat, but is there any analysis from the TRB on what sort of direction we are heading in?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will take that on notice.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** How many teachers have had restrictions placed on their registration in the last year, and for what reason, inasmuch as you are able to provide?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Of impositions of conditions due to disciplinary proceedings the number is two.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Do we have any information about the reasons for those two?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** No.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I think it is Greg Mackie's last week in the role, so it would seem a shame not to invite the History Trust to enter the proceedings.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Chair, if I could introduce Mr Greg Mackie, the Chief Executive of the History Trust of South Australia.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Don't get attached.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** For a little while longer, anyway.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I am sure he will be around. Can the minister provide an update on capital works at the Migration Museum, both the work that has been completed since he and I visited a couple of years ago, and what works may still be ongoing, and what future capital plans the government has for the site?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will pass over so Mr Mackie gets the opportunity in his last one of these to say a few words and get something on *Hansard*, but the History Trust did secure a \$6.3 million budget allocation for urgent structural integrity, compliance and accessibility works on the site. The project managers for that are the Department for Infrastructure and Transport, who are managing the works, and SA Heritage architects Hosking Willis were awarded the master plan tender. Master and concept planning is nearing completion, and planning submissions are due by October 2025, but I might give Mr Mackie the opportunity to perhaps add a few extra words to that important project.

**Mr MACKIE:** The master planning for the repurposing or extended purposing of the lying-in hospital precinct is underway. As the minister mentioned, Hosking Willis have been appointed and are undertaking that work in order to ensure that not only are we fixing broken things but that we are fixing them so that they will be useful to the future purposes of the Migration Museum. We undertook an extensive stakeholder consultation with the leaders and movers and shakers in the CALD communities, and they absolutely reinforced that the Migration Museum is not only a special place for the keeping of and sharing of stories, but also for gatherings. The courtyard and the amenities surrounding the courtyard, including, of course, disability-compliant toilet facilities, have been long in need of the next upgrade, and that work is due to commence later next year.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** Thank you. If we can move on to skills, sir.

**The CHAIR:** The allotted time having expired, I declare the examination of the administered items completed.

#### **Departmental Advisers:**

Ms F. Champion, Executive Director, Students, Strategic Planning and Policy, TAFE SA.

Mr G. Rix, Acting Chief Executive Director, Operations, TAFE SA.

Ms N. Caon, Senior Director, Finance, TAFE SA.

Mr B. Naylor, Director, Corporate Finance, TAFE SA.

**The CHAIR:** We now go to proposed payments for TAFE SA. The minister appearing is the Minister for Education, Training and Skills. The proposed payments remain open for examination. When the minister has his advisers ready, he may wish to introduce them. Then, I will call on the lead speaker for the opposition, the member for Colton.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will introduce the people I have here at the table, from left to right: Fiona Champion, Executive Director, Students, Strategic Planning and Policy; Graham Rix, Acting Chief Executive Director, Operations; and Natalie Caon, Senior Director of Finance. I was going to make a break from tradition and make a small opening statement here, Chair, if I may.

**The CHAIR:** Go ahead.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** As I said, I would not normally give an opening statement, but I think it is of value to run the committee through the progress our government has made to rebuild TAFE SA over the past few years. I am sure what I will run through will be relevant for questions from the opposition, because the government has been making a concerted effort to rebuild TAFE SA to give South Australians access to the best quality public provider they deserve.

I am proud of the progress that the government has made over the past three years to improve TAFE, and those improvements include that TAFE SA's total number of students in 2023-24 was 49,473. That is a 5 per cent increase on 2021-22, when the numbers were at 47,227. The number of new enrolments was 35,497 in 2023-24, a 15 per cent increase on 2021-22. There has been a 38 per cent increase in the number of apprentices and trainees, 8,460, up from 6,124 in 2021-22.

Fee-free TAFE has opened the door to over 17,000 students from across South Australia. Regional students are benefiting from the Regional Skills Development Fund, which has supported the delivery of 137 additional classes across 18 regional locations. Funding for TAFE SA is higher under this government after adjusting for inflation. The funding to TAFE SA is 10 per cent higher than the level inherited from the former government. Since 2021-22, the cost per hour to government and training delivery through TAFE SA has been reduced by an estimated 17 per cent. We have seen TAFE SA given the longest possible ASQA reaccreditation as a higher education provider, which is seven years.

We have reversed the decline in staff numbers at TAFE SA. The former government budgeted for TAFE SA to have 1,759 full-time roles, but it is currently funded for 2,124 in 2024-25, an additional 365 full time staff. We have significant infrastructure investments going on at TAFE SA. There is a 30 per cent increase in planned investing in infrastructure in 2025-26, building on the 30 per cent increase in 2024-25, including a \$5 million upgrade underway at Mount Gambier, and student engagement hubs at Victor Harbor, Whyalla and Port Pirie. There has also been a 39 per cent increase in planned asset replacement and equipment, compared with 2023-24.

We have seen consistently strong metrics, including graduate satisfaction rate at 89.9; graduates who improved employment circumstances after training, 65 per cent; and graduates employed or in further study after training at 86.4 per cent. TAFE SA was awarded Australia's Large Training Provider of the Year Award last year, which is a fantastic endorsement. It is an award they have not won for a very long time.

I want to acknowledge the work of David Coltman to improve TAFE. He was instrumental in a lot of the things that I have just mentioned and he has done a fantastic job. I know TAFE SA is much better for his contribution. I have introduced the witnesses alongside me and I am happy to take questions.

**Mr COWDREY:** I will begin at Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 114, apprentices and trainees studying at TAFE SA. How many apprentices and trainees are undertaking or making use of fee-free TAFE courses?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The latest release of the National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, published in March of this year, shows the number of apprentices and trainees in training at TAFE SA has remained stable for the previous three years. Although, since 2020, TAFE SA has seen apprentice numbers grow approximately 22 per cent. In the latest data available from NCVER reports, as of September 2024, TAFE SA has 9,150 apprentices and trainees, marking a significant increase from 7,515 (22 per cent) compared to the same time in 2020.

Over the past year, private providers have seen a decline of 14 per cent. TAFE SA's market share across South Australia of apprentice and trainee numbers has increased by 8 per cent. As at

the end of September of last year, TAFE SA accounts for approximately 38 per cent of all apprentices and trainees in South Australia. I will leave my answer there, member for Colton.

**Mr COWDREY:** I will take it as a response, because again I will pose the question: how many apprentices or trainees studying at TAFE SA are making use of fee-free TAFE?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I might take that on notice. I can give you broad numbers about fee-free TAFE but, understandably, they will not all be apprentices; I appreciate that. However, there are 17,140 fee-free TAFE enrolments as at 28 February 2025, and we have added an additional allocation of fee-free TAFE in construction of 940 funded places between January 2025 and December 2026 across four semesters targeting critical trade and infrastructure skills. That was in addition to the original allocation that we were given by the federal government.

**Mr COWDREY:** Is there a reason why the minister is having difficulty outlining to the committee how many apprentices and trainees are making use of fee-free TAFE? Is that number very, very low, minister?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** No, I am not necessarily suggesting it is very, very low. We can get you the numbers that you are looking for; I just do not have them for you now. Obviously, not all the fee-free TAFE places that have been made available to South Australia are apprenticeships. A lot of them are certificate III, for example, in areas like early childhood education and care. I probably have a lot of other examples in here as well of courses that are not apprenticeships or traineeships but are certificate III or diplomas, for example. I can come back to you with a more fulsome answer to your question.

**Mr COWDREY:** In that case, minister, I will take you to page 111 of the same volume that references goals for TAFE. One of those dot points references that TAFE is looking to increase the number of commencements and completions of apprenticeships and traineeships in South Australia, particularly in areas of skills shortage. The dot point falls short of outlining exactly what the detail is that sits behind that, so by how many is TAFE looking to increase apprenticeships and traineeships in South Australia?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** While we get an answer for you on that question, I might just refer to some of the latest data available from NCVER reports as at September 2024 in terms of the percentage of TAFE SA apprentices and trainees who are actually completing their training contracts. The figure is 52.4 per cent. That is above the percentage for non-government SA-based RTOs, above SA as a whole and above the national TAFE average as well. Figures for the percentage of training contract completions in 2024-25 were: TAFE SA, 52.4; non-government providers, 49.5; South Australia total, 50.3; national TAFEs, 45.1. I am just endeavouring to get a figure on the apprenticeships themselves, but we do have a very good completion rate which outstrips other training providers. The agency statement says 8,500.

**Mr COWDREY:** The 8,500 is the projected number that TAFE is wanting to take place this year; that was the exact same projection as last year. If the dot point says 'target is to increase the number of TAFE places' then one would assume that the number needs to increase. Are you able to outline for the committee by what number TAFE is looking to increase apprenticeships and traineeships in South Australia, by when and versus what baseline?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I can tell you this: since 2020 TAFE SA has seen apprentice numbers grow by approximately 22 per cent. I am not saying we are going to see that again in the next year, but we are seeing big growth and I think that answers the question I would imagine you are getting to here about whether we are anticipating further growth in our apprentice numbers. I would say yes.

I do not have an exact figure for you, but 22 per cent growth since 2020 is an extraordinarily big number. I think completion rates that outstrip TAFEs around Australia and other training providers in South Australia shows that we are doing some pretty good work as well. On top of that, of course, 17,140 people are enrolled in fee-free TAFE.

I might just reiterate to this committee while I have the opportunity that I think we could all agree the real test of the benefit of fee-free TAFE—and the benefit of anything when we are giving something to people for free—is whether we are incentivising people to get into training who would

not otherwise be able to if it were not free or whether we are simply making something free that people could afford regardless.

When we pulled the data on that for South Australia, we saw that the highest enrolment figures in fee-free TAFE in South Australia were in suburbs such as Davoren Park and Andrews Farm, which I think actually speaks to the importance of the program and the importance of fee-free TAFE in terms of actually lifting up people who might currently be unemployed but might come from families with intergenerational unemployment.

**Mr COWDREY:** I note the minister's reluctance to again answer that question. I will shift on if that is the case to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, regarding the performance indicators on page 114. There is a footer here in regard to TAFE SA qualification completion rates. Are you able to provide an explanation to the committee beyond the footer that is in the budget paper itself and explain whether TAFE internally collects any information around completion rates that is undertaken and why? Perhaps an explanation can be provided as to why internal data could not have been used rather than NCVER data if it is the government's position to move forward in a situation where completion rates are no longer going to be presented as part of the budget process moving forward.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Colton. NCVER's latest data release shows completion rates for students who started in 2019 and completed by the end of 2023. TAFE SA's rate is 40.2 per cent. Historically NCVER has published actual completions four years after commencement, as well as projected completions two years after commencement. These projections were what we included in our agency statement.

In 2024 NCVER ceased providing projected completion rate outcomes, which would have shown anticipated outcomes for the 2021 cohort, which cites challenges with the methodology. NCVER now only publishes actual completion rates four years after the commencement. Due to the lag in this data we are not able to use this rate as a target in our annual agency statement.

Skills SA has also removed this rate from their agency statement for the same reason. The number of qualification completions metric has also been removed to align to the metrics in the agency statement, so it was an NCVER decision to change how they have reported it. That is the reason.

**Mr COWDREY:** I understand that, minister. So the position is that this government, with TAFE SA and Skills SA, are not going to provide any data in terms of completions in budget papers from this point forward; there is no internal data that exists?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I have to say I do not accept the premise, because in the 3½ years that I have done this job and been fortunate enough to be the minister responsible for TAFE, I have been out talking about exact completion rates for TAFE, both within the fee-free TAFE cohort and outside it for the best part of three years giving exact figures and I am happy to do it again now.

NCVER, which is an independent body independent of us, has changed its reporting methodology. I have no control over that. If there is any insinuation here that I have not been up-front and honest about the completion rates in TAFE, then I do not accept that at all and I am happy to tell you what the completion rates are for non-fee-free TAFE courses and for fee-free TAFE courses. We do track that, because when the federal opposition made a song and dance or an FOI about claiming that fee-free TAFE completions were at 13 per cent, we were very quick to come out here in South Australia and say that our number was much bigger than that and that, in fact, the completion rates for fee-free TAFE in certificate II and below courses in South Australia are higher than the completion rates for non-fee-free TAFE courses in South Australia.

**Mr COWDREY:** There was no insinuation, but for the one that you have installed yourself. The question is, if those figures exist, why are you not putting them in the budget papers moving forward?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I understand your question. I will pass over to Fiona Champion to answer that.

**Ms CHAMPION:** To the premise of your question that the agency statement is no longer going to have any indicators of student progression and completions, noting the NCVER change that

came out late last year, we did work to ensure that we do have an indicator in there that we closely monitor at TAFE, which is the load pass rates. The load pass rates give a really good indication of the completion rate for individual subjects or units of competency that students are undertaking. We have seen an increase in our load pass rates compared with the previous year. That is in Agency Statements, Volume 4, page 114.

**Ms WORTLEY:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 112. It is a follow-on from what you mentioned earlier, minister, perhaps with a little bit more information: can the minister advise which groups in South Australia have benefited from fee-free TAFE?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Torrens. I am very happy to give you an answer to this question. As I mentioned earlier when I was talking about fee-free TAFE, I think the true test of it in terms of anything that the government offers anyone for free is whether or not it is going where it is really needed. That was certainly my concern around fee-free TAFE. I did not want to see us offering free courses to people who could have easily afforded to pay for a full fee or a subsidised course because that would defeat the purpose of the program.

We have done a lot of work in South Australia trying to map exactly where the highest uptake of fee-free TAFE has been. As I said before, the fact that we have seen it in Davoren Park and Andrews Farm I think speaks to how important fee-free TAFE actually is. As the Minister for Education more so than the Minister for Training and Skills, I see quite regularly feedback from school leaders in those northern suburbs. What happens if you are to put a cost on a school excursion of \$5 or \$10? It will mean a lot of families will not take up that opportunity. So for some of us who might think that a subsidised training course that might bring it down to, say, \$1,800 is achievable, to people on much lower incomes, it is an absolute barrier to getting the qualification.

I have to say that the people in Davoren Park and Andrews Farm are not accessing fee-free TAFE and undertaking the courses just for a bit of fun: they are doing it because they can see that it is a qualification that leads to a job. I might also point out that as of 27 February, more than 74 per cent of fee-free TAFE enrolments were from priority cohorts, as well: 4 per cent were First Nations Australians, 22 per cent were people who speak a language other than English at home, 10 per cent were people who self-identified that they live with disability, 21 per cent—and this is very dear to my own heart—were regional students, and 32 per cent were unemployed. That is a very high figure for a training organisation, to have 32 per cent of people accessing fee-free TAFE currently not having a job.

Five per cent were women in non-traditional fields. We know how hard it is, particularly in areas around building and construction that are traditionally male dominated, to encourage women to go into those areas. Twenty-five per cent were young people aged 17 to 24. There is one case study I would like to quickly mention. Ashley Bawden, 37 years old, has two children and has been a stay-at-home mum for 10 years. Fee-free TAFE enabled Ashley to study a Certificate III in Individual Support for aged care and gain valuable skills to re-enter the workforce. Ashley was able to complete a work placement at Wirraminna Aged Care in Williamstown as part of her training and has now been employed by that organisation.

I must say there are lots of stories just like Ashley's. As I have made my way around the state, gone to a lot of TAFE campuses and met a lot of TAFE students, as best I can, I always have a really frank conversation with them about what difference a fee-free course has made to them, because I want to know how important it is. The stories always come back about how it was the difference between them deciding to take up that course or not.

Yes, the state is in a position where we have some big projects that we talk about all the time, but really the true benefit of us having all those kinds of projects—whether it is AUKUS or the Women's and Children's Hospital or whatever it might be—is only truly felt by our state if, as best we can, those jobs go to South Australians, and particularly South Australians who might not have a job and whose parents and grandparents might not have a job. It would be a crying shame if in 10 or 15 years, historians looked back on this period in South Australian history and saw that we wasted the opportunity, with a job market like we have now, to actually lift people like that up into employment for the first time.



**Mr COWDREY:** Minister, the previous answer insinuated that load pass rates is essentially a similar metric to completions, but we know that is not the case. Just because I pass my subjects for a course does not mean that I then continue to undertake that course the next year and finish it. Those are two entirely different metrics, hence why there is a near 40 per cent difference in them contained in the budget paper today.

Again, I ask the question because you only have to look at the performance indicators of many other aspects of the budget where internal data is used. If the minister's commitment is to be open and transparent, and has been so from day dot, why then are completion rates not going to be included in budget papers moving forward? If, as you say, you are happy to be open and transparent, why not put fee-free TAFE completion rates and standard completion rates from TAFE into the budget papers moving forward? You have just said that they are available and that you have access to them readily, but there has clearly been a decision to omit them moving forward.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I accept what you are saying, member for Colton, but I will have another go at answering it and hopefully do a better job this time. Because of the methodology that has changed with NCVER, the data that we are getting from the projections that we are getting is older. That was not a decision made by this government; that is a change that NCVER have made. You are asking me why we would not put in data that would be old and out of date.

**Mr COWDREY:** No, I am asking you: why not put in your internal data that you have for completions?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** To be perfectly frank, I would have absolutely no problem with including our completion rates for TAFE, both fee-free and otherwise, in the budget papers. I have said those publicly for three years.

**Mr COWDREY:** If you are happy to commit to doing so, I think that is a vast improvement in terms of transparency for the state.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am very happy to do that.

**Mr COWDREY:** Very good. Moving on to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 111, one of the projects outlined in that table is in regard to the upgrade at the Mount Gambier campus. Going back and looking at previous budget papers, the revised completion date is now two years past the original expectation. Why is this the case, and when are you planning on delivering the facility?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I can tell you that the reason that there has been a change in the delivery date on this is because of the intersection between the Mount Gambier TAFE SA campus upgrade, which I think is now actually underway, and the building of the Mount Gambier technical college. We wanted to make sure that it works as a precinct and I think we are on our way to doing that. I appointed a Department for Education independent precinct leader at Mount Gambier: that is Mr Gandolfi, who is doing an excellent job there to develop a master plan. I think there was a risk that had we not done that and had we rushed in with the TAFE Mount Gambier upgrade first before we had our planning done on exactly where the new technical college would be situated, it might not have worked well and it would not have been of benefit to the broader precinct there.

So the only reason we have pushed that back is to make sure that what we are doing aligns with what is going to be offered in the technical college. It is an exciting proposition now, I think, to have a TAFE, a university and a technical college that all work seamlessly together.

It is now underway. I was down there not long ago to see it. It is exciting too because the technical college is being built from cross-laminated timber, which is being produced in Mount Gambier. I think it will be one of the first public buildings that will be constructed in that way. I am confident that because we took the time to do this, because we took the time to appoint a precinct lead in Mr Gandolfi, the finished product will be something that really serves the community well. Otherwise, if we did it in an ad hoc way there was the risk we would not get the best benefit out of what is a pretty considerable amount of money that is being spent on that precinct.

**Mr COWDREY:** Again, Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 112, targets, there is a reference there to supporting you as minister with the TAFE SA Act reform bill. In evidence last year, you provided that you expected the bill to be introduced reasonably soon. There have obviously been a

full 12 months that have elapsed since that commitment. Are you able to give some indicative understanding of when the bill is going to be introduced?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We are currently out on consultation for it now and I hope, depending on the will of the house, that we will have it passed by the end of the year. We are currently consulting, as I am sure you would agree is the right thing to do on the changes. We will then wade through what comes back through that consultation, introduce it to this place and hope to have it passed by the end of the year.

**Mr COWDREY:** How long has that consultation process been ongoing?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Consultation on the draft bill commenced on 19 May, with submissions via a survey due by close of business on 10 June. So consultation is now complete. Stakeholders were provided with a copy of the draft bill and an accompanying detailed explanatory guide. Ten survey submissions were received within this timeframe, so we are now going through the feedback that we have received. Feedback provided through the survey submission process will inform development of the bill before finalisation for introduction to parliament.

**Mr COWDREY:** Will there be any changes to the commercial principles in the TAFE Act? It is something that has been raised, I believe, with not just this side of politics, but yours as well, I imagine, in regards to the access of non-government training providers to TAFE facilities and the rates that are currently being deployed being uncommercial for training to be undertaken, that that therefore renders facilities that are not being utilised to their full extent effectively worthless in the context of not being able to deliver further training. Is the government considering changes to commercial principles to negate some of those issues?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Let me just say from the outset: in terms of what is being considered as part of the potential changes to the act, in no way do I have any desire to remove levels of performance, oversight or accountability from the organisation. I think we can all agree that is not a good idea. In my time as minister, I have sought to maintain if not strengthen that oversight.

I cannot foreshadow the decision of cabinet. Of course, once we have the consultation period—which is now done and we have the surveys—it will then have to go back through the cabinet process, and I cannot foreshadow what will happen. As I said, I do not want to water down in any way the pretty strong levels of accountability and performance monitoring that have been put in place at TAFE for a number of years.

I do think there is an argument to be made that, because TAFE is the public provider and because TAFE gets funded at a different level to other training providers—which is often the source of consternation and which we discuss in this place and elsewhere—I have very high expectations around what I expect the public provider to do that I would not expect for-profit or not-for-profit training providers to do. In a state like ours, which is essentially full of thin markets outside the metropolitan area, we are constantly trying to expect for-profit and not-for-profit training providers to step into places where it is not profitable or viable for them to do so.

The problem is, if it was not for having a public training provider like TAFE in those places, then a lot of those regional places will have absolutely no training available to them at all, and that is of course the death knell for a town. Once employers cannot find the skilled workers that they need, and shut up shop, then so, too, goes the town. My point has been one of not watering down oversight on TAFE, but expecting more of TAFE because of how TAFE is funded. It is funded at a higher rate to do some of the things that our state needs TAFE to do that we just cannot ask not-for-profit and for-profit training providers to do, because it is simply unfair of us to do that. So I think some more latitude is needed for TAFE to operate in that way.

If we simply force TAFE to operate in the same way as every other training provider, then how do we get TAFE to go and perhaps offer, for instance, training in emerging areas that might not yet be particularly profitable for for-profit or not-for-profit training providers to operate in? If we cannot have our public training provider doing that, then South Australia does not get the training and we do not get the skilled workers. So that is my position on this, but it will all depend on what comes out in the wash with the surveys and the decision-making of cabinet, and no decision has been made on that yet.

I just want to reinforce that I accept that TAFE gets funded at a higher rate than other training providers. Because of that, there are things that I expect TAFE to do that other training providers cannot do and I want to make sure they have the ability to do that for the benefit of the state, particularly in country parts of the state.

**The CHAIR:** The member for Colton and then the member for Elder.

**Mr COWDREY:** One of the targets is to engage with industry and community to develop TAFE SA. Has there been any feedback to the minister around the suitability of some of the short courses offered at TAFE? I have had a couple of instances of businesses, in particular, raise issues around the suitability of short courses—things like TIG welding, B-class electrical licence, electrical tag and testing courses—and the availability or non-offering of those courses around industries, advanced manufacturing and others that are seen to be priorities for the state government as we understand it. Does the minister have any response in terms of how well TAFE is addressing the suitability of short courses that are offered?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** What I can say is that, yes, sometimes I have feedback from industry and specific businesses around the quality of the training that they received from TAFE and, whenever that comes up, I have made an effort to personally offer a meeting with me, to sit down with whomever it is who is providing the feedback and listen to it and see if it can be addressed. In some cases, we have been successful in that sense in getting some employers who used to use TAFE but who then stopped using TAFE to go back to use the TAFE training, particularly in regional parts of South Australia, which I think is ideal.

In terms of short courses, I cannot say that I have had as many bits of feedback as I would have around, particularly in regional campuses, the ability to offer all the courses at that regional campus that businesses want, for instance, because, as I am sure you appreciate, it is harder to get TAFE lecturers now, just like it is harder to get teachers now than it has ever been. Part of the reason is that the money that people are earning on the tools, so to speak, is of such a rate that people do not want to leave and come and be a lecturer. It used to be a very attractive thing because the pay was reasonably good and you would get holidays, but we are finding now that people are choosing not to do that anymore, and it is making it very hard for us to find lecturers. Sometimes that is a challenge for us in terms of being able to offer the full range of courses at regional campuses that we would like to be able to offer.

I think one of the good things that we are doing in this sense is investing in some of those regional campuses, and not just Mount Gambier. I know we have invested in Whyalla, and probably some other ones as well, in terms of upgrading the equipment that we have there, so some of the courses that used to be offered that stopped being offered can be offered again. I have tried to be as responsive as I can be in terms of when we get negative feedback around TAFE, around actually hitting it front on and sitting down and letting people tell me the full range of issues. I have found that on a number of occasions we have actually been quite successful at getting those employers to use TAFE again.

In fact, asset refurbishment and replacement upgrades have occurred at the following campuses in 2024-25: Adelaide, Adelaide College of the Arts, Barossa, Berri, Ceduna, Coober Pedy, Elizabeth, Gilles Plains, Mount Barker, Mount Gambier, Noarlunga, Port Adelaide, Port Lincoln, Port Pirie, Regency, Salisbury, Tonsley, Victor Harbor and Whyalla. There are some major projects—you have already touched on one, of course, the Mount Gambier upgrade, which is a total investment of \$5 million—and also student engagement hubs. The estimated result includes an investment of \$2.5 million to provide new student engagement hubs at Victor Harbor, Whyalla and Port Pirie campuses, consisting of \$2.2 million of investing expenditure and \$300,000 of operating investment. The budget for 2024-25 was reallocated from contemporary digital student learning systems and support services projects and carryover of unspent moneys from 2023-24.

**Ms CLANCY:** Referring to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 112, can the minister please provide an update on the Centre of Excellence in Early Childhood Education and Care?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, I am very happy to do that. This was, of course, a partnership between the state government and the federal Albanese government. In particular, I would like to acknowledge not just Andrew Giles, the current Minister for Skills and Training, but the former

Minister for Skills and Training federally, Brendan O'Connor, who was a great champion for South Australia, I must say. It was Brendan who was here to sign our record \$2.3 billion National Skills Agreement.

There have been some other excellent announcements as well around early childhood education and care centres of excellence, and I think we are well placed to do that in South Australia, of course, because we are rolling out three-year-old preschool. As we have already discussed at length this morning in previous sessions here, the big challenge for us in terms of that rollout is having the workforce and being able to host the TAFE SA Centre of Excellence in Early Childhood Education and Care, which receives \$11.5 million from the commonwealth through the National Skills Agreement, with a matched amount of \$11.5 million from the state government, and then an additional \$5 million in funding through the Turbocharging TAFE Centres of Excellence measure.

It will mean that really we get to be the epicentre by way of the work that is done in terms of the training packages that are created for early childhood education and care not just here in South Australia but nationally. A very good example was given to me about some of the opportunities that that actually presents for South Australia, which includes, amongst other things, an opportunity to have a real focus on autism in terms of what we build into those training packages. Obviously, better education and care for kids with autism has been a priority of this government. I know that where I get feedback more and more often is from early years teachers around them wanting more support to be able to care and educate neurodiverse kids. I think the opportunity for South Australia to be the host of the Centre of Excellence in Early Childhood Education and Care means that we can put those kinds of things into the training packages and lead the way, not just in South Australia but nationally as well.

**The CHAIR:** The allotted time having expired, I declare the examination of the proposed payments for the Department for Education and Administered Items for the Department for Education completed.

*Sitting suspended from 15:16 to 15:30.*

#### **Departmental Advisers:**

Mr A. Reid, Chief Executive, Department of State Development.

Mr C. Baker, South Australian Skills Commissioner, South Australian Skills Commission.

Mr C. Markwick, Acting Head, Skills SA.

Mr C. Zielinski, Director, Skills Planning and Purchasing, Skills SA.

Ms D. Tembak, Executive Director, Portfolio Delivery, Department of State Development.

Mr M. Smith, Director, Finance and Investment Services, Department of State Development.

Ms P. Savage, Acting Director, Policy and Strategy, Department of State Development.

**The CHAIR:** The portfolio is Skills SA. The minister appearing is the Minister for Education, Training and Skills. I declare the proposed payments open for examination. We have no changes to the committee. Minister, would you like to introduce your advisers?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, thank you Chair. From my left, Callan Markwick, the Acting Head of Skills SA; to my immediate left, Adam Reid, the Chief Executive of the Department of State Development; and to my right, Cameron Baker, the South Australian Skills Commissioner.

**The CHAIR:** You do not wish to make any remarks?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** No introductory remarks from me, Chair.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** The omnibus questions are:

1. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive appointments have been made since 1 July 2024 and what is the annual salary and total employment cost for each position?
2. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive positions have been abolished since 1 July 2024 and what was the annual salary and total employment cost for each position?
3. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what has been the total cost of executive position terminations since 1 July 2024?
4. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister provide a breakdown of expenditure on consultants and contractors with a total estimated cost above \$10,000 engaged since 1 July 2024, listing the name of the consultant, contractor or service supplier, the method of appointment, the reason for the engagement and the estimated total cost of the work?
5. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister provide an estimate of the total cost to be incurred in 2025-26 for consultants and contractors, and for each case in which a consultant or contractor has already been engaged at a total estimated cost above \$10,000, the name of the consultant or contractor, the method of appointment, the reason for the engagement and the total estimated cost?
6. For each department or agency reporting to the minister, how many surplus employees are there in June 2025, and for each surplus employee, what is the title or classification of the position and the total annual employment cost?
7. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what is the number of executive staff to be cut to meet the government's commitment to reduce spending on the employment of executive staff and, for each position to be cut, its classification, total remuneration cost and the date by which the position will be cut?
8. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what savings targets have been set for 2025-26 and each year of the forward estimates, and what is the estimated FTE impact of these measures?
9. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
  - (a) What was the actual FTE count at June 2025 and what is the projected actual FTE account for the end of each year of the forward estimates?
  - (b) What is the budgeted total employment cost for each year of the forward estimates?
  - (c) How many targeted voluntary separation packages are estimated to be required to meet budget targets over the forward estimates and what is their estimated cost?
10. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how much is budgeted to be spent on goods and services for 2025-26 and for each year of the forward estimates?
11. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many FTEs are budgeted to provide communication and promotion activities in 2025-26 and each year of the forward estimates and what is their estimated employment cost?
12. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what is the total budgeted cost of government-paid advertising, including campaigns, across all mediums in 2025-26?
13. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, please provide for each individual investing expenditure project administered, the name, total estimated expenditure, actual expenditure incurred to June 2024 and budgeted expenditure for 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28.
14. For each grant program or fund the minister is responsible for, please provide the following information for the 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28 financial years:
  - (a) Name of the program or fund;

- (b) The purpose of the program or fund;
  - (c) Budgeted payments into the program or fund;
  - (d) Budgeted expenditure from the program or fund; and
  - (e) Details, including the value and beneficiary, or any commitments already made to be funded from the program or fund.
15. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
- (a) Is the agency confident that you will meet your expenditure targets in 2025-26? Have any budget decisions been made between the delivery of the budget on 5 June 2025 and today that might impact on the numbers presented in the budget papers which we are examining today?
  - (b) Are you expecting any reallocations across your agencies' budget lines during 2025-26; if so, what is the nature of the reallocation?
16. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
- (a) What South Australian businesses will be used in procurement for your agencies in 2025-26?
  - (b) What percentage of total procurement spend for your agencies does this represent?
  - (c) How does this compare to last year?
17. What percentage of your department's budget has been allocated for the management of remote work infrastructure, including digital tools, cybersecurity, and support services, and how does this compare with previous years?
18. How many procurements have been undertaken by the department this FY. How many have been awarded to interstate businesses? How many of those were signed off by the CE?
19. How many contractor invoices were paid by the department directly this FY? How many and what percentage were paid within 15 days, and how many and what percentage were paid outside of 15 days?
20. How many and what percentage of staff who undertake procurement activities have undertaken training on participation policies and local industry participants this FY?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, they can be taken on notice. Thank you, member for Morialta.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** I direct the minister to page 86, Description/objective. Can the minister advise how many reports from registered training organisations to SafeWork SA—

**The CHAIR:** Sorry to interrupt, member for Unley. You said page 86. I did not quite hear the—

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, I did not hear that either.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** Sorry, the reference is Agency Statements, Budget Paper 4, Volume 4. How many reports from registered training organisations to SafeWork SA have there been for the period 2023-24 and 2024-25, which are periods covered in the budget papers, for general complaints relating to work health and safety issues, incident notifications that did not meet the defined or notifiable incident, notifiable dangerous incidents that have occurred, notifiable serious injuries or illnesses, including things such as crushes, fractures and so forth, in that period?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I mean this with all respect, but that is a question for SafeWork SA, I would think, rather than the department.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** The Skills Commission would be aware of those details.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I might get the commissioner to respond.

**Mr BAKER:** I can report on apprentice and trainee safety notifications. I cannot report on NTO activity, if that is with an employee of a nominated training organisation/registered training organisation. We definitely—

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** At their training place.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Unley, give the commissioner a chance to answer the question first.

**Mr BAKER:** What I am trying to unpack is the interaction that we have with SafeWork, and the reporting that we share with SafeWork relates to apprentice and trainee training and safety only, it does not relate to RTO operations and the staff contained within those organisations.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** In answer to a question to the parliamentary committee inquiring into empowering work health and safety representatives, the CEO, Glenn Farrell, brought back answers to the committee last week where he says:

Since 2013, when WHS laws were introduced in South Australia, SafeWork SA has received:  
this is from TAFE alone—

- 26 general complaints relating to work health and safety issues at TAFE SA locations;
- 16 instances of notifications that did not meet the definition of a notifiable incident;
- 52 notifiable dangerous incidents which include:
  - 34 electric shocks;
  - five uncontrolled escapes of gas or steam;
  - four uncontrolled implosions, explosions or fire;
  - five falls or release from a height of any plant, substance or thing;
  - three uncontrolled escapes, spillages or leakages of substance;
  - one collapse or partial collapse of a structure; and
- 24 notifiable serious injuries or illnesses which include:
  - seven serious lacerations;
  - four loss of body functions;
  - two fractures;
  - two crush injuries;
  - two medical treatments within 48 hours of exposure to a substance;
  - one serious eye injury;
  - one head injury;
  - one serious burn;
  - one separation of skin from underlying tissue.

Are you able to advise how many of those instances were from the 2023-24 budget period, at TAFE as a provider?

**The CHAIR:** Can I just clarify something? Member for Unley, what you just read out, was that from evidence given to a committee by the CEO of SafeWork SA?

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** That is correct, about a training provider that is funded by this department.

**The CHAIR:** The minister has already outlined his understanding, unless the minister has a different understanding?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I think the only thing I can do, Chair, is to take it on notice and see what information we hold. I might need to refer it to the Attorney-General, who is responsible for SafeWork, but I can take it on notice and do my best to bring an answer back.

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** Can you also advise how many health and safety representatives are recorded for SafeWork at TAFE SA campuses?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Can you just repeat that question, sorry, member for Unley?

**The Hon. D.G. PISONI:** How many health and safety representatives do we have at each of the TAFE campuses?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I shall take that on notice.

**Mr COWDREY:** I might begin at Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 88, the performance indicators, the first at the top of that table being around apprentices and trainees in training. I note that the target for 2024-25 was 26,500 apprentices and trainees; the estimated result for the end of financial year coming in a few days' time was 21,500 apprentices and trainees. Is the minister able to outline why there has been such a significant drop in apprentices and trainees in South Australia and why the government, in terms of setting a target for next year, has been happy to see such a steep decline?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to have a go at that. There are a couple of points I would like to make. First of all, I think what we are endeavouring to do is what I would refer to as a 'structural change' in terms of the areas in which we are getting growth and the areas in which we are getting completions. If we have a look at some of the data you referred to on page 88 around 2023-24, that was certainly on the back of the BAC, the federal program to pay the wages of apprentices and trainees. I am not criticising the program, but it was a time-limited program and it saw enormous increases in commencements. But it largely saw those increases in commencements in areas like retail and business. In fact, I think we saw Certificate III in Retail across that period grow enormously as well as Certificate III in Business.

Since then we have seen Certificate III in Retail decline by 84.1 per cent since 2022, after increasing by 55 per cent between 2019 and 2022. Certificate III in Business has declined by 74.8 per cent since 2022, after increasing by 116.9 per cent between 2019 and 2022, and Certificate IV in Leadership and Management has declined by 78.3 per cent since 2022, after increasing by 239.5 per cent between 2019 and 2022. What we are trying to do is get our growth in priority areas. I am not saying that there was not a place for a program like BAC during COVID, but the truth is that it did not get us growth in areas that were the highest priority for the state.

Between 2019 and 2021 the proportion of students in training in the priority area of apprenticeships and traineeships actually went backwards, from 57.4 per cent to 52.8 per cent. Under this government it has now increased to 68.6 per cent. In 2021 there were 13,165 apprentices and trainees in training in priority areas; in 2024 it was 15,420. So we have added that measure in the budget papers quite deliberately. I know you are fond of us adding a bit more reporting into budget papers and I am doing it here, to talk about where we are actually seeing the growth.

It is one thing to have skyrocketing commencements in areas like retail, and as important as it is you actually do not need a Cert III in Retail to work in retail. But we have a big challenge ahead of us as a state right now in terms of the projects we have, such as: AUKUS; Women's and Children's Hospital; North-South; second year of preschool; and building thousands of new homes. They all share the same challenge, that is, finding the workforce. We need growth in those areas and the changes we are making are to make sure that that is where we see the growth. But, yes, it is seeing declines in some areas, particularly those that had enormous increases during that period of the BAC.

**Mr COWDREY:** I noticed, minister, that you used percentage terms with those increases rather than real numbers. I have heard you put this argument a couple of times in the last number of years as to this supposed recalibration of apprenticeships and the fact that priority areas are being targeted.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I actually used raw numbers as well in my answer.



**Mr COWDREY:** For the increases in retail there was no whole number used.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, you are right.

**Mr COWDREY:** The increases that you referenced essentially are trying to instigate an interpretation that the huge increases were in those areas; you used percentage terms rather than real numbers to aid your argument. Having taken what you have said on face value, I would like to look at, for instance, the construction industry, which I would have assumed to be a target area for the state, given the projects that you have just listed and the need for construction jobs to be able to deliver those.

You only need to take a cursory look at the latest NCVER data to see—let's for instance take commencements in the construction industry: to year end 31 December 2021, an annual total of just under 2,500 commencements; year end December 2022, just under 2,500 commencements; and then, under the changes made by this government, year end 31 December 2023, down to 1,800; and just over 1,900 in the preceding year in 2024.

So while the in-training numbers are still relatively strong based on the previous commencements, you have used this argument a number of times, saying that you are seeing a greater number of apprenticeships and traineeships in supposed priority areas, yet the data, certainly by way of the construction industry, seems to say the opposite, that we have had far fewer people take that pathway

Again, what is the government doing in the construction industry to start to rebuild the pipeline? It seems to have dropped off considerably under this government.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thank you, member for Colton. I accept your point about using a raw figure, so perhaps I can correct that now and read out the figures in Certificate III in Retail since 2019. In 2019, Certificate III in Retail, 1,090; 2020, 1,470; 2021, 1,715; 2022, 2,050; 2023, 1,220; and 2024, 520. So in raw terms, we have seen an enormous change in terms of a peak through that BAC program in 2022 of over 2,000 in retail. There are similar stories in Certificate IV in Leadership and Management: 145, 470, 765, 885 at peak, then 530, then 330.

I will also address your question more specifically in terms of what we are doing in those priority areas. There are a few things that I would like to point out. In addition to those first couple of tranches of fee-free TAFE places that South Australia secured, we committed to 1,340 additional fee-free places, including up to 340 pre-apprenticeship places, which have been available from January of this year. This is the first time apprenticeships were included on the list, including carpentry, bricklaying, painting, plastering and glazing. This builds on the over 2,300 enrolments in fee-free TAFE courses related to the construction sector between 1 January 2023 and 30 June 2024. I want to acknowledge the support we have had there from the federal government as well.

Since coming to government in 2022, the government has invested more than \$40 million in vocational courses aligned to construction and infrastructure. This is in addition to the \$75 million invested by TAFE SA in building and construction courses since 2022, with over 13,000 students commencing. Almost 2,000 of these have been fee-free training places, including in building and site management. From 2025, TAFE SA is offering a certificate II in electrotech as a pathway towards an apprenticeship as an electrician. I might just pass over briefly to the commissioner, who has a bit more data from his end as well.

**Mr BAKER:** Just looking at various trades that obviously roll into the construction workforce as well, we have seen an uptick in plumbing for commencements. That is 330 from the same time, quarter 4. The dataset that I am referring to, to assist, is in relation to December of last year, the NCVER figures that we are using. That is up 23 per cent, or in full numbers 330, so to 405.

We have already spoken about flooring technology. That is up 76.2 per cent but, I think to your point, of small numbers. So that is from 10 to 20, a bit over that. In relation to wall and ceiling lining, that is up 53.5 per cent. Of course, wall and ceiling lining is actually plastering. We are seeing the finishing trades and one of the licensed trades actually lift. We are seeing some decline in carpentry, which is notably evened out by the in-training numbers as well.

**Mr COWDREY:** We can go back and pick out specific ups and downs, but the broader trend here is that the commencements in the construction sector generally are down significantly over the last two years across the board, down 500 or 600 places. The numbers that the minister referenced earlier in his response are in regard to those specific industries that he often runs to in terms of making the argument of why the employer incentive program was not helpful.

Again, I think the total reduction number that was referenced there is somewhere in the order of, give or take, 1,000 to 1,500. So it is clear that of the remaining areas—and I am assuming that we are categorising those as priority. That is one of the questions I have for the minister, but I will put that to the side for now. Is there an acceptance that construction commencements have dropped considerably under this government?

**The CHAIR:** The next question will come from the member for Black.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I will perhaps just point out a couple of key areas. First of all, I would say no, I do not accept your point, but if you look at some of the areas that are key to building and construction, plumbing is up, electrotech is up and carpentry is up.

**Mr COWDREY:** Yes, but broader construction is down. You can call black white and I can call white black, but at the end of the day the figures are pretty clear, minister, that commencements in the construction industry are down by a significant amount under this government in terms of apprenticeships. What would be helpful to me is the number that has been put in the budget papers around priority areas, again at page 88. The number that you have referenced in press releases over the last little while references priority areas. Are you able to step out for the committee today exactly what you are including in priority areas?

**The CHAIR:** Member for Colton, I did indicate the next question would come from the member for Black, but I will take that as a supplementary on this occasion. I did actually say the next call would go to the member for Black.

**Mr COWDREY:** Sorry, I did not hear you; I apologise.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am happy to point out the government's priority areas. I doubt they will come as a surprise to you: health and care, building and infrastructure, defence and manufacturing, clean energy, education and technology, and artificial intelligence, to name a few. I will point out also that we are obviously getting closer and closer to a state election and I am sure we will have policies from both parties soon on these things, but I certainly would not be advocating on my side of politics for a return to a BAC program if all it resulted in was enormous commencement increases in the same kinds of areas that we saw inflate those figures previously.

**Mr COWDREY:** Construction?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** If the federal government were interested in a wage subsidy program in areas like that, I think that is a conversation we would certainly like to have with them, but that was not the result of the previous BAC program. We have that data very clearly about what that resulted in and it was not in the areas that were at the highest priority for the state.

**Mr DIGHTON:** Referring to exactly the same row that the member for Colton was referring to in terms of that target, the government has a target to increase the number of apprentices and trainees aligned to priority areas. Has the government had success in this area previously?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Thanks very much, member for Black, I appreciate your question. As I have said already in this session, we came to government at a time when the only focus on apprenticeships and traineeships was almost solely on commencements and there was very little talk or focus on completions. Nationally, when we take into account all forms of training, whether it is a certificate III, an apprenticeship or a traineeship, I think we have a completion rate hovering around the 50 per cent mark, which is not a very efficient training system. We have sought to do something about that.

Between 2019 and 2021, the proportion of students in training in priority area apprenticeships and traineeships declined from 57.4 per cent to 52.8 per cent. As I said before, it has now increased to 68.6 per cent. We have spoken already about the BAC program and what that resulted in. We had

skyrocketing commencements, but not in areas of priority for the state, and in the case of retail, in areas where you did not actually need to have a certificate III to work in that area.

I will give the Skills Commissioner the opportunity to speak in a second around some of the other negative consequences that we saw out of that BAC program. It is important to note the federal government has the main levers when it comes to controlling apprenticeship and traineeship numbers and we have been working very closely with them since coming to government to focus on priority areas.

We have also taken the deliberate approach of focusing our grant programs on priority areas and this has seen areas such as bricklaying, electrical and civil getting a strong focus in the Skill Shortage Solutions funding and I know that has been well received by those training providers. As I said just before, we have added apprenticeships to the fee-free TAFE construction, which will again encourage enrolments in priority areas.

The technical college pathways have been deliberately selected in all cases to focus on priority areas as well. I think we have made good on a commitment we made before the state election to put added focus on not-for-profit training providers and to support them to grow their capacity in areas of priority. Just last week I think it was, I had the pleasure of going to Lonsdale—and I think the member for Black might have been there—to see the opening of the new ATEC facility there, a carpentry facility. Thanks to some support from the state government, they were able to build that facility, which will in turn allow them to increase the number of students they have studying to be a carpenter.

Through the focus we put on TAFE, the Mount Gambier investment, and the \$5 million, we have funded a number of mentoring programs where we have partnered with industry, most notably Born to Build, that have proven to be really successful in growing enrolments in areas where we need them. Also, Born to Build are very successful in encouraging younger high school students, who are at that point where they are trying to decide what they might do post school, to consider a career in a trade.

I also make mention of the fact that we have now announced that we will host WorldSkills in South Australia. I know there is bipartisan support for that. I was pleased to travel to Lyon with the member for Morialta and the Skills Commissioner to see that in action. I think it is a very powerful demonstration, particularly for the school students who get to come along and watch their peers competing for a gold medal and the opportunity to represent their country overseas, to inspire them to take up a trade as well. Before finishing, I will give the Skills Commissioner the opportunity to talk about some of the other things that we saw, some of the negative consequences that came out of that Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements program.

**Mr BAKER:** Through you, minister, I think it is very clear that a lot of the investigative work that the commission has done focused in on the inappropriate use of the Certificate III in Retail, particularly in fast food industries. That culminated in the prohibition, the banning of Team Van Diemen Proprietary Limited who ran over a quarter of the Domino's stores in our state. Through that work—this is me acknowledging, too, that I am also contributing to the non-completion numbers, because I cancelled a significant number of training contracts as a result of those individuals not actually being able to access training, and being prevented from accessing training.

To put some more definition around that, out of the 269 contracts that we reviewed I terminated 144 of those. Predominantly, 132 of those were in the Certificate III in Retail and 12 were in Certificate IV in Leadership and Management. We have done additional work at the commission looking at fast food industry alignment to retail. I am also able to disclose that one of Australia's largest enterprise registered training organisations, McDonald's, has come to speak to the commission as well around pulling out of using the Certificate III in Retail across their training operations, and they will be moving to another pathway.

So I think what we are demonstrating is really a recognition there, too, that during the BAC a lot of industries, particularly in fast food, were using that pathway not to be able to enable someone's training progression to actually skill them up. In particular, when you think about a qualification that can be used in JB HiFi or in any other retail situation, is it really the qualification that you would undertake to make a pizza and then sell it? So this is the conclusion that the commission

has come to. We actually have other investigations on foot that relate to the BAC and also to the fast food industry, so there is a bit of a tail to this work. We do not have a statute of limitations from the commission's perspective around looking at behaviour that was driven during the BAC, and we intend to make some further announcements about that in the coming months.

**Mr COWDREY:** Minister, are you able to outline for the committee how many paid trainees there are currently in certificate III in aged and disability care, and how many were in training when you came to government?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will take that on notice and come back to you, member for Colton.

**Mr COWDREY:** I have a similar question. How many paid trainees were in place, or are in training at the moment as enrolled nurses, as opposed to when you came to government?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will take that on notice.

**Mr COWDREY:** The same question: how many paid trainees in regard to the cybersecurity certificate III or IV are in place in training at the moment compared to when you came to government?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will take that on notice.

**Mr COWDREY:** Again, the same question in regard to SSOs, school support officers?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will take that on notice.

**Mr COWDREY:** Minister, has the government pursued or opened any new apprenticeship or traineeship pathways since you came to government?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Yes, we can give you some information on this. One example I can give you is the introduction of a cert III in pipe fitting. South Australia is also the only jurisdiction in Australia now that has degree apprenticeships, and we have two of those: a degree apprenticeship in software engineering and in mechanical engineering, but there are a few other ones that the Skills Commissioner will add.

**Mr BAKER:** We have also expanded the dual trade offering in the state. We have expanded Certificate III in Light Vehicle Mechanical Technology. We have coupled that with auto-electrical. We have also expanded that with heavy vehicle, Cert III as well, again coupled with auto-electrical, and we have also declared plant along with auto-electrical as well. Those are three specific pathways that were done in partnership with the Motor Trade Association.

**Mr COWDREY:** I will come back to apprenticeships and traineeships in a little bit but firstly will turn to the National Skills Agreement. Are you able to provide an update to the committee in terms of the number of training places for this year and for future years across the agreement?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I can tell you that as part of the National Skills Agreement that we signed, \$2.3 billion in total across the five years, I think total training places are in the vicinity of 160,000, and training places will increase by around 35 per cent over the life of the agreement. I have already listed the areas of priority, and they are the same here in terms of where we are prioritising putting those 160,000-odd training places. In terms of a further breakdown, are you looking for precise—

**Mr COWDREY:** Year-on-year targets or allocations.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** As I said, about 160,000 over the life of the agreement, 32,300 in 2024-25, and then next year we release the target for that year and then so on. I can tell you the figure for 2024-25 is 32,300 out of 160,000, and then we update it for the next year and then so on across the life of the agreement.

**Mr COWDREY:** Over a four-year agreement?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The agreement is five years.

**Ms WORTLEY:** Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 79: can the minister update the committee on the work the South Australian Skills Commission has done around accelerated apprenticeships?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I can. I will make some comments, but then I will pass over to the commissioner perhaps to add some comments as well. We announced on 30 April this year what we have termed the Industry Accelerated Apprenticeship Pilot, which is going to be introduced in 2026 to fast-track up to 1,000 new apprentices across seven critical trade pathways to help build the state's skilled workforce. Driven by industry, and in partnership with select group training organisations, the pilot will facilitate innovative delivery of training while still maintaining quality and safety standards. It will lead to a formal trade outcome much earlier and enable the rapid development of the workforce in skilled occupations to support major infrastructure projects. Apprentices and employers participating in this pilot have the same eligibility to receive current commonwealth and state-based incentives which support living, work and training expenses.

The 2024 South Australian skills outlook predicts that 78,000 vocational qualifications will be needed by 2028, with the majority to meet the demand for construction skills in large-scale infrastructure projects that are planned already for South Australia. I will not list those because we have already spoken about them at length. The trades that we have chosen to be part of the apprenticeship pilot, there are seven of those trade pathways. They are Certificate III in Carpentry, Certificate III in Painting and Decorating, Certificate III in Civil Construction, Certificate III in Civil Construction Plant Operations, Certificate III in Engineering—Mechanical Trade, Certificate III in Engineering—Fabrication Trade and Certificate III in Commercial Cookery.

The pathways will utilise innovative delivery of on and off-the-job training to accelerate the learning. Civil construction trades will be halved from 36 months to 18 months. Engineering and construction trades will be reduced from 48 months, or four years, to 36 months, or three years. Commercial cookery will be reduced from 48 months to 30 months. Mainstream pathways will still be available, and the South Australian Skills Commission will declare new trades with a shorter duration to support this program.

Before passing over to the Skills Commissioner, I want to thank him for his work on this. I think we are the only jurisdiction doing this. It is pretty unique, it is pretty bold, but I think the way that we are approaching it, by doing it as a pilot with 1,000 apprentices, is the right way to do it to make sure that we can still deliver the high-quality training and not take any shortcuts in terms of standards or safety. I will pass over now to the commissioner to talk a bit more about how he imagines this will work.

**Mr BAKER:** Thank you, minister. In working through this process, we started this process in February last year of actually going through looking at the pathways that the minister has already outlined. Particularly with carpentry, we have had competency-based completion available to us since roughly 1997. From an administrative perspective, jurisdictionally we have not really put a stake in the ground to say, 'Look, we are prepared to look at a change in that duration around special circumstances'. That is why we have selected group training organisations as our primary partner in that process.

To give some context around the size of the market for group training organisations in, say, South Australia versus Victoria, we are running at about 20 per cent here in South Australia. It is only 8 per cent to 9 per cent in Victoria, so they are already a partner that is embedded well and truly in these particular trade areas. Nominal duration and completion for carpentry is coming in at about 34 to 36 months as well, so we are not talking about a massive cultural shift for industry to look at carpentry. I want to assure everyone that, in working through this work with the Industry Skills Councils, we have worked with the employer peaks, we have worked with the industry associations, we have worked with unions and regulators to select these pathways.

Particularly in relation to commercial cookery, that has come about because of a preference from particularly the Hotels Association, Clubs SA, and Restaurant and Catering. We really need to look at a reduction in that duration. We can see that it is not industry's preference to use that apprenticeship pathway versus institutional training. There are literally thousands of people in South Australia doing Certificate III in Commercial Cookery outside of a training contract. We need to actually look at that process with the Industry Skills Councils, use the Industry Accelerated Apprenticeship Pilot as an alternate offering to industry to demonstrate that the apprenticeship pathway is the most appropriate way to support that industry.

We also need to ensure that we stop that institutional substitution that is occurring with industry. That is something that we have also done in partnership with Skills SA, where we have ensured, particularly from January this year, that the state is not supporting subsidised places for training that occurs outside of a training contract when it has been declared an apprenticeship.

I know that is a bit of a technical spiel there, but it is really important to make sure that we focus in on the importance of apprenticeships and, with these pathways, even though they are reduced duration, successful completion at the end of these pathways will result in the issuance of a trade certificate from myself and they will have exactly the same trade status as someone coming through the mainstream pathway.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Member for Colton, if I may, on a previous topic in terms of construction trades, I had brought to my attention the latest in NCVER data in regard to commencements across construction trades workers. If we look at the 2023 figures, 1,290; 2024, 1,305, which is a 1.1 per cent increase; and 2020 compared to 2024, which is the other data set they do, is a 9.6 per cent increase. In actual fact, across that last reporting period, although it is not a huge increase, it has gone up.

**Mr COWDREY:** Again, minister, depending on how you look at the NCVER data, I have used just the broad ABS categorisation of the construction industry and I have come up with very different numbers to you.

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am reading directly off the commencements time series for trade occupations, South Australia, 12-month series, 12 months ending 31 December, which are construction trades.

**Mr COWDREY:** So you still do not refute that there is a decline from 2022 to 2024?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** What this data tells me here, member for Colton, is that between 2023 and 2024 we saw an increase, and across the time span of 2020 to 2024 we have seen a 9.6 per cent increase. Of course, in the intervening period there was the Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements, which pumped those numbers up.

**Mr COWDREY:** I will move on to the question that we were at in terms of the National Skills Agreement and the number of training places for this year. Are you able to provide an understanding in terms of the breakdown of those places by occupation or sector? Are they reserved for a particular one? Are there minimums around particular areas of priority or is it just first in best dressed? As long as you meet or fall in to one of those categories you are assigned a place?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I am told that we will be releasing the new Jobs and Skills Outlook in September and that will have the updated data in terms of what places are provided where. This will come as no surprise: it is demand driven. That is not too far away and it will be the latest data that we have.

**Mr COWDREY:** Are you able to provide an understanding of last year's?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** We will try to get that.

**Mr COWDREY:** The breakdown that you are about to provide, did that meet the expectation that you set in terms of your expected breakdown by sector or area of priority, however we wish to classify it?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Sorry for the delay, member for Colton. Yes, I have the targets or the places as set aside per area for 2024-25. I am happy to read those out: in the care sector, 8,100; building and infrastructure, 4,200; education, 4,200; defence and manufacturing, 3,650; food, wine and hospitality, 2,000; clean energy, 1,800; technology and AI, 1,600; foundation skills, 1,500; and in the 'other' category, 5,200. I believe that adds up to the figure I used before of 32,300.

**Mr COWDREY:** Is there any expectation of realignment of those categories? Is there anything that was deficient in terms of numbers—anything that was overegged—on feedback from industry?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** I might point out that this data here is publicly available but, because the year is not over yet, we are not going to know until we give that update in September. When the

update comes in September, obviously there will be a comparator there between these areas and courses and what we are proposing in the next iteration.

**Mr COWDREY:** Perhaps, then, I will just finish with a question in regard to next year. Again, in terms of proportion and breakdown between TAFE SA and non-government providers, what is the appetite in terms of the continuation or otherwise of the current breakdown of places between the two streams?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** Sorry, I will endeavour to get you an answer on this. In terms of the funding that comes from the federal government, it is tied to 70 per cent to TAFE. We are below that in terms of state funding. I would have to get you the exact figure, though, but I can take that on notice and do that.

**Mr COWDREY:** And next year: maintain or any changes?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The federal one will stay the same next year.

**Mr COWDREY:** Yes, understandably; the state—

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** If I am able to get next year's I will get it for you. I cannot be 100 per cent sure, but I can certainly get you what the existing state split is for TAFE, which I know is beneath the 70 per cent for the federal. The federal is locked in for next year. I will see if I can get you both of those.

**The CHAIR:** The member for Elder.

**Ms CLANCY:** I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 86, targets, the second dot point. Can you please update the committee on funding provided to non-government training providers?

**The Hon. B.I. BOYER:** The member for Elder, I appreciate your question and I have tried to make a real commitment in terms of lifting up all training providers in South Australia. I think if we are to have any success in actually delivering the skilled workforce that we need for all these different areas, it has to be a team effort and that is across the public training provider, not-for-profits and for-profits as well. We have certainly supported and rebuilt TAFE, but we have also provided a lot of other funding to other organisations as well, partially through that \$2.3 million over five years from the National Skills Agreement and the 160,000 subsidised training places that it provides. In terms of funding to private training providers, over the last few years:

- in 2019-20, \$53 million was provided;
- in 2020-21, \$69 million was provided;
- in 2022-23, \$106 million was provided;
- last year, \$112 million was provided; and
- this year it looks like we will come in at about \$110 million.

So we have not just increased funding for TAFE and we have not just increased funding for not-for-profit training providers but we have also substantially increased funding towards private training providers. I think it is the right thing to do, because we all have to be working in concert, instead of competing or cannibalising each other's students, if we are to have a chance at really growing the workforce that we need to deliver on all these great projects that Australia and South Australia have in front of them at the moment.

**The CHAIR:** The allotted time having expired, I declare the examination of the proposed payments for the Department of State Development and the Administered Items for the Department of State Development adjourned until 25 June. I thank the committee, committee members, the minister, and his advisers for their contributions.

At 16:32 the committee adjourned to Tuesday 24 June 2025 at 09:00.