

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
Monday, 23 November 2020
ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Chair:

Mr M.J. Cowdrey

Members:

Mr T.J. Whetstone
Mr B.I. Boyer
Dr S.E. Close
Mr F.J. Ellis
Mr S.P. Murray
Mr L.K. Odenwalder

The committee met at 13:00

Estimates Vote

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION, \$3,353,642,000
ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION, \$171,543,000

Minister:

Hon. J.A.W. Gardner, Minister for Education.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr R. Persse, Chief Executive, Department for Education.

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

Ms J. Riedstra, Chief Operating Officer, Department for Education.

Dr C. Croser-Barlow, Executive Director, Early Years and Child Development, Department for Education.

The CHAIR: Good afternoon. I remind members that, following the adjournment on 18 November, pursuant to standing order 268 I requested the Speaker to vary the sitting schedule in accordance with the statewide lockdown order. The committee resumes today in accordance with the revised schedule issued by the Speaker on 20 November 2020. I advise members that the following proposed payments the committee was considering on Wednesday 18 November remain postponed until a further date: the Department of Treasury and Finance and administered items for the Department of Treasury and Finance.

I remind members that 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 to an approximate time for the consideration of proposed payments, which will facilitate a change of departmental advisers. Can the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition confirm that the timetable for today's proceedings as previously distributed—recently, I may add—is accurate.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: As I understand it.

Mr BOYER: Yes.

The CHAIR: It is agreed by both. Changes to committee membership will be notified as they occur. Members should ensure that 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 February 2021.

I propose to allow both the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition to make opening statements of about 10 minutes each, should they wish. There will be a flexible arrangement and approach given to the call for asking questions based on about three questions per member, alternating each side. Supplementary questions will be the exception rather than the rule.

A member not of the committee may ask a question at the discretion of the Chair. Questions must be based on lines of expenditure in the budget papers and must be identifiable and referenced. Members unable to complete their questions during the proceedings may submit them as questions on notice for inclusion in the assembly *Notice Paper*.

There is no formal facility for the tabling of documents before the committee; however, documents can be supplied to the Chair for distribution to the committee. 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.

All questions are to be directed to the minister, not the minister's advisers. The minister may then refer questions to the advisers for a response if necessary. The committee's examination will be broadcast in the same manner that sittings of the house are broadcast, through the IPTV system within Parliament House via the webstream link to the internet and the Parliament of South Australia video-on-demand broadcast system. I will now proceed to opening statements for the lines of examination. Minister, if you would like to make an opening statement, please proceed.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Yes, thank you, sir. I will introduce the officers that are in the room and then make some very brief opening remarks in relation to the environment that our school system is in today. Firstly, to my right, is Rick Persse, the Chief Executive of the Department for Education. Immediately behind me is Chris Bernardi, the Chief Financial Officer. To Chris's right is Julieann Riedstra, who is the Chief Operating Officer of the department, and behind Chris is Caroline Croser-Barlow, who is the Executive Director of the Early Years and Child Development division of the education department. I will hopefully be able to call upon their assistance if necessary.

I want to briefly make some remarks about the extraordinary work that has been done across 900 school and preschool sites through the Department for Education and indeed across 200 non-government schools and hundreds more childcare and early childhood services across South Australia. On Wednesday last week, of course, we received the news that there would be a full lockdown of all schools and preschools in the state except for the provision of supervision to the children of emergency and essential services workers and indeed those very vulnerable children in our community for whom the best place to be was at school.

Our site leaders, supported by staff in their sites, were absolutely exemplary and outstanding. They supervised the remainder of the school day to an extraordinarily high level of dedication and professionalism and supported our students to be able to go home in a reasonable manner and indeed so that that day was not lost. It could have been problematic, but across our state those sites handled it really well.

They were expecting to have today and tomorrow as pupil free days in which to plan for whatever arrangements would be necessary for the four days' lost education over the period of the anticipated lockdown; potentially online learning, although we were always hoping to be back on site on Wednesday, but even that would have required some adjustment. Then the news on Friday: it was absolutely outstanding that we did not have to remain in lockdown with those harsh restrictions for a moment longer than necessary, but of course it was a further set of adjustments for all of our staff across South Australia.

The chief executive and I provided all of those staff with that information as soon as possible—the great news that we could be back on Monday with learning programs and only two days lost to our schools and preschools. But while that is great news, the feedback I have had from

our sites is that our staff are extraordinarily happy to be getting on with teaching and learning again in our schools and our sites, they are very pleased to see the children and young people, and our students are extremely happy to be out of that lockdown and back at school.

It is a fairly significant adjustment. In a year that has been recognised for adjustment after adjustment, every time we have asked our educators to show leadership in our communities and support for our children, they have unquestioningly responded with dedication, grace and enthusiasm and with the children and young people of South Australia as their focus. We are so grateful for that work they have done. They have been flexible and they have been patient, as one of the principals I spoke to before coming in described it.

There has been obviously some disruption in some schools that has been greater than others. In our secondary schools the data that we have so far today is reasonably inconclusive; I think we have only had about three dozen report in their attendance data up to this point. I am expecting we will have more accurate data by the end of the day. To this point, it is between 50 and 60 per cent, but I do not know whether that includes the year 12s being taken out or not; of course, they are no longer here. Their last exam was the Japanese exam, which thankfully took place just before the lockdown on Wednesday.

To all of our year 12s, they have lost their schoolies rite of passage, they have lost many rites of passage this year, but as I have said to a number of them in end-of-year graduations so far this year—and I will say to more of them—in 20 or 30 years' time many people will have forgotten what happened at schoolies, but none of the year 12s this year will not have a story to tell about their year 12 year and the resilience they learnt and the outstanding things they learnt.

There are a couple of arrangements that do remain restricted in our school sites or at least are presenting differently. A number of events had to be cancelled, there were some due to take place during the lockdown, and schools are looking at what can be rescheduled. Some are being restricted, particularly those where an event is going to take place off site. I ask all South Australians to be patient with their schools as they work on that adjustment.

Excursions are, by and large, able to continue so long as, obviously, the venue where the excursion is to have appropriate arrangements in place. For camps, there is not one answer for all of the camp arrangements. I know there are some examples of camps that are allowed to continue, and some that have had to be cancelled. There are some examples of that where we are working with SA Health to provide answers to schools that are relevant to their circumstances as quickly as possible.

The education department has distributed masks to every site in our public system. They are available for staff to use. There is no one hard rule on the use of masks within schools. They are certainly encouraged in environments where adults cannot socially distance from each other. I have spoken to a few principals this morning who have told me that there are fewer people visiting the staffroom than usual and that a number of staff are wearing masks in their own office areas, but it is not a requirement and, indeed, most staff are not using masks in the classroom. That is not an expectation of SA Health but there is a higher number using masks, particularly if they catch public transport to and from school.

We are asking for patience, particularly from parents, who we have asked in most cases to not come onto the school grounds, certainly this week, and we will provide updated advice over the course of this week if that is to change. But to reduce the number of adults congregating within the school grounds it has certainly been our advice to schools that they are absolutely empowered to say to parents that they are not to come onto school grounds. I ask all parents to be patient as we are dealing with this situation.

This is still a very nasty disease and there is a cluster that SA Health is working to get on top of. As we have all year, we will continue to comply with the health advice in our schools. Once more, I thank all of our staff and all of the people who work in education for the great job they have done this year.

The CHAIR: Lead speaker for the opposition, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr BOYER: Thank you, Chair, only to endorse the comments of the minister insofar as thanking all the teachers and support staff across all sites in South Australia for the work they have done across the last nine or 10 months now, on behalf of the opposition and also as the member for Wright. They made a great many sacrifices including, of course, being asked to go to work and look after our kids, including my own children, when many other people have been able to work from home. We offer our very sincere thanks to them and to the staff from the department who provide all the supports so that they have been able to do that. We thank you as well.

The CHAIR: With opening statements now concluded, this is Estimates Committee B. We will now be examining the proposed payments for portfolios relating to school education. The minister appearing today is the Minister for Education. I now declare that the proposed payments are open for examination and refer members to Agency Statements, Volume 1, for the education portfolio. Can we now have questions from members. The member for Wright.

Mr BOYER: Minister, if I could start with Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, pages 190 to 192, which essentially list capital works that are underway. I note in the budget papers that we do not get a complete, exhaustive breakdown of school capital works that are occurring here, some are lumped into other school projects at the end. At the beginning, can I ask about the capital works that are earmarked to be completed by the end of 2021, which I think is the vast majority, in time for the transition of year 7s into high school. Can you give us an update on where we are at in terms of meeting that deadline?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I thank the member for the question, it is an important question and perhaps if I provide some broad information and then you can get into specifics if necessary. I think the member's framing of the question is reasonable. The majority of the works that are in the papers are anticipated, are expected, are desired to be completed by the end of 2021 in anticipation of the 2022 school year.

It is not that every single one of those works is directly related to increasing capacity for year 7s. Some of them have to have increased capacity anyway, some of them are in primary schools, some of them are about replacing infrastructure that needs to be urgently replaced, but the time frame of works enables it to be completed next year, but certainly there is a big build in the months to come.

There is an expectation that we will be completed on time ahead of the year 7 transition, certainly for those schools. I am looking at whether there is any specific information about timing. Maybe the easiest thing to say is that we are on target, but there are a couple of schools where the anticipated completion date we would not want to go back any further. There are some schools with an anticipated completion date that approaches December of 2021, and we are working with those schools and those projects wherever we can to bring forward their times where possible, and obviously that is something that will be of great interest to us, to the community and to yourselves in the coming 12 months.

Mr BOYER: Can you tell us which schools you are working with to make sure they are going to be on track?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I will see whether I can get some specific examples in the coming minutes, but can I provide further advice. Even with these that are on track for a December completion, that is for a completion of all the works. We are not in any anxiety about whether the general and specialist learning areas, the classrooms, if you like, will all be well and truly in place—we are very confident of that. We are checking in relation to those where there is a check that we are putting on as to whether all the works will be complete.

The schools that are currently listed, as I understand it, to have all of that work completed in December of next year are Adelaide High School, Glenunga International High School, Roma Mitchell Secondly College, Norwood Morialta High School, Unley High School and Port Lincoln High School. There is obviously information coming back to the department on a monthly basis, and I get those updates on a monthly basis, so it is possible that some of those may come back into November—hopefully we can get some of them into October—but at the moment those six schools are scheduled to be completed in December.

I also have two schools, if I am reading this chart correctly, that are identified to be completed in November and they are the new high school in Goolwa, yet to be named—I do not want anyone to read into the fact that I started that with 'Goolwa', there is no identified name yet—and Henley High School.

Mr BOYER: Am I right in assuming from your answer, minister, that there are no works currently anticipated to be finished beyond December? December is the latest time line you have for any of the schools that are having works for the transition of year 7 into high school?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: None that would affect the transition of kids. I am advised that there may be some other minor things, like landscaping and those sort of things, where it is not relevant necessarily to the conduct of school education at the school. There are other works that are not in our schedule to be completed by the end of next year at the moment that we anticipate already actively will be progressing through 2022.

Mr BOYER: Do you, by chance, have a list of the schools that fall into the category of needing the more minor works—landscaping and things like that—the non-classroom based work, that needs to be completed?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: No, I will have to take that on notice.

Mr BOYER: Minister, the budget papers state that, I think it was, \$175 million in expenditure was anticipated for the last financial year, but my reading of the papers is that 65 per cent of that was spent. Can you explain the reason for the discrepancy between predicted and actual?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I will get the chief executive, Mr Persse, to provide some clarification on that.

Mr PERSSE: Assuming this is the number, the \$65 million, that is the delta between the 2019-20 actual and the 2019-20 budget, basically what we have there is a difference that can largely be explained by two factors. One is that there was some start-stop associated with the pandemic, with construction and so on, with new rules and new operating procedures that had to come in with COVID-safe training for construction workers. The other, a factor that I would be happy, with the minister's blessing, to come back with some details on, is work that has been completed but has not yet been invoiced. I am happy to work with DIT to bring back that information.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: We will take that aspect on notice.

The CHAIR: In line with the introductory statement, I believe the member for Chaffey is seeking the call.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, thank you for your update. I have a question referring to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 190. Can you provide an update on how measures in the budget support schools and preschools in my electorate of Chaffey and how other local works are progressing?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I thank the member for Chaffey for the question. There has been, obviously, a very significant injection of cash into a lot of our schools and preschools through this budget's allocation of grants of \$30,000 for urgent maintenance works in our preschools and grants of between \$20,000 and \$100,000 to all our public schools in South Australia.

Schools in Chaffey will benefit, and preschools in Chaffey will benefit. It comes on top of the \$20,000 grants that all our preschools had earlier in the year. Our preschools have undertaken a range of activities to spend that \$20,000. Most of them have spent it, and the works have been done, whether that is painting, tiling, roofing or outdoor play areas being upgraded.

One thing that many of them have had in common is they have been able to identify a use for a further \$30,000, so I know that many of them will have no trouble. Whether it is Barmera or Berri, Glossop, Loxton, Monash, Morgan, Renmark, Renmark North, Renmark West, Swan Reach or Waikerie, all the children's centres and preschools in the Chaffey electorate are no doubt now able to apply themselves to the task of how to spend that \$30,000 grant, and then grants of between \$20,000 and \$100,000 for all the schools in the electorate.

This is over and above the usual minor works maintenance that is provided by the department, which is in the order of \$12 million to \$16 million a year from central office to support schools, over and above the maintenance money that is available in their RES to spend supporting maintenance projects in their school. All those schools can now undertake projects, and they can be of different scales, depending on the size of their grant.

Earlier in the year, we were also able to knock off a significant number—more than 100—of projects on the Department for Education's maintenance list of projects that had been approved for minor works but were awaiting funding. That included \$80,000 for the Cobdogla Primary School and \$150,000 for Waikerie High School, which were able to benefit.

Meanwhile, the capital works project in the seat of Chaffey at Glossop High School, where there is a \$17.2 million project to bring the two campuses onto one site at Berri, is progressing well, as are Loxton High School's and Renmark High School's projects. We were able to talk about Renmark High School when we visited earlier in the year. They are all absolutely on track to be completed next year.

Mr WHETSTONE: Just on that, your most recent visit was widely applauded, particularly with that funding stream, so please, you are always welcome to come back.

The CHAIR: Member for Chaffey, I remind the member that we are after questions, not statements; we are in an estimates committee. Member for Wright.

Mr BOYER: Minister, are any of the schools' capital works programs, that are ongoing as part of the transition of year 7 into high school, budgeted to come under the amounts that were initially provided to them?

The CHAIR: In the same vein, member for Wright, if you could have a reference to a budget line as well, please.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I do not have a detail for you other than that where there are favourable outcomes in relation to tenders, the department's approach is to honour the scope of the project. Once the scope is confirmed, we look to honour that. I think that where there are favourable outcomes, then I think the department seeks to make sure that the entire scope is honoured. I think that is relevant where, if there was any value management that had been taken earlier on in the process, then, potentially, it means that more can be provided to those schools.

Mr BOYER: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 192. Perhaps if I provide an example of part of my question: if there is a school that was provided a \$10 million grant under Building Better Schools, some of which was then repurposed for providing or creating more student accommodation in preparation for the transition of year 7 into high school, and those works came in under the \$10 million figure that was initially awarded to the school, will the department be seeking to claw any of that money back from the school or schools?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I am happy to take the question on notice. It is a bit hypothetical, but I will take the question on notice and provide a response. If the member has a specific one in mind, then maybe we can go into that.

Mr BOYER: Again, I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 192. I do have a specific example. The Heights School, which is the biggest government school, if not the biggest school, in the seat of Wright, was provided \$10 million by the member for Port Adelaide in the previous government for a double gymnasium. Some of that \$10 million was repurposed at the behest of the department to accommodate the transition of some year 7 students onto the Heights School campus. The remainder was there for the school to build a single gymnasium.

My understanding is that the school has now been told that those works in totality, single gym plus extra accommodation for year 7 students, comes to \$7.8 million and the remaining \$2.2 million of the \$10 million that was given to them by the previous government must now be handed back.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Just further to the previous answer, if there is any clarity sought about what I meant by 'scope', the scope we mean is the scope that we go to tender on. I will have to take the question about the Heights on notice.

Mr BOYER: I refer to the same budget reference. So you cannot rule out, in situations like that, where the scope is the revised scope from the department, that some money will be taken back?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I just do not have information here that will assist in that answer.

Mr BOYER: Minister, are you aware of any staff from the education department engaging with schools directly to advise them that their project is significantly under budget and the remainder will be clawed back, including principals of schools?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: There is an agreed scope that goes to tender and then, potentially, some projects, I anticipate, might come in somewhat under budget and some might come in slightly over budget, but the education department obviously makes absolutely best endeavours to ensure that the scope that goes to tender is an accurate estimation of what the cost is going to be.

Mr BOYER: I might take you now, minister, to Budget Paper 5, page 34, departmental efficiency measures. Can you tell the committee please, minister, what the current status of efficiency measures that must be met by the agency are?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Are you after a number?

Mr BOYER: Ideally, minister, I would like to know what the targets are, how much of those targets has been met and what is still to be met.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The member is aware, obviously, that the education budget continues to increase across the state. We have efficiencies, as departments do, and, by and large, education efficiencies are reinvested in education. As part of the 2020-21 state budget and additional general efficiencies target, a total of \$7.5 million has been allocated to education. These efficiency savings come from operational efficiencies and non-teaching and non school-based areas of the department.

The department will continue its harvesting process, which has been an accepted strategy for some time. I am sure that the members remember it well from their time as ministers or chiefs of staff to ministers. It involves harvesting any once-off financial benefits, including vacancies. That strategy has been utilised to deliver against past savings allocations. Obviously, in education, if you have a role where somebody retires at the end of the year they do not need to be replaced for several months, until the beginning of the following year. If somebody stays in the role then they are paid over the holiday period. That is a benefit that Education has generally in meeting its savings.

The department's estimate of cumulative savings will increase over the forward estimates period, bearing in mind that this goes back to savings from previous budgets, including those before the transition in government—well and truly including those. The department's estimate of those, in cumulative savings, increases over the forward estimates period from an estimated \$16 million in 2020-21 to around \$30 million in 2023-24.

A key part of the department's strategy to deliver savings is, as I say, involved in harvesting underspending and non-salary costs. The department does not hold positions vacant to achieve savings targets but redirects savings from staffing vacancies that occur to offset the department's savings targets.

There are other activities that are undertaken as well in relation to reducing red tape in our schools. There is a unit—I think it is called the business improvement program, from memory—that is a really outstanding program in the education department. Its primary purpose is not to deliver savings, although it has been able to do that. Its primary purpose is to deliver an improved experience for families, for staff in schools relating to head office and for families relating to schools.

It was established in April 2019, in line with the department's strategic plan priority area, to reduce administrative burden and red tape. Its role in doing so has been effective at reducing inefficient or ineffective processes that cause unnecessary frustration, delay or administrative load, particularly for school staff. As I say, its primary objective has not been savings, but it has achieved savings.

The directorate was established on a 12-month basis, initially to trial the concept. Its success has meant that it has been funded to run for a further three years. Some of the focus is really about engagement with end users and codesign at every stage of the process to ensure that the needs of those end users are met. There are workshops with school staff and site visits undertaken to understand their issues and their impact. Schools are involved in testing when solutions are being developed.

Some of the examples of the sorts of things they have achieved are: improvements to HR and recruitment systems; processes to improve speed, user experience and functionality; the development of more than 30 digital forms that incorporate significant process improvement, using automation, validation and shorter processing times; and enhancements to existing systems. An example of that is One Plan, which I am sure members have had feedback on, as I have, about the complexity of the arrangements used over those One Plan documents. This unit is working with us to dramatically improve the One Plan documents to improve their speed and the user experience, reducing time in processing transactions.

Another achievement is improvements to our systems processes surrounding the management of employable teachers and ancillary staff to provide efficiencies for schools and reducing wasted time pursuing unavailable or ineligible applicants. There is a new and improved digital School Card application process, which improves the parent or guardian experience and vastly reduces administrative time in schools.

There is a new and improved process for the annual transition of year 7 students to secondary school, or year 6 students to secondary school as it will be in the future, including the introduction of a digital capability, reducing the administrative burden for schools, and improved data quality, which should result in more accurate matching of students to places, reduced rework and reduced complaints.

There is also the delivery of a new process online to reduce the admin burden of schools associated with polling parents in relation to materials and services charges. Work has begun for a new system to facilitate complaints management across sites and in corporate areas and the management of critical incidents. Work is planned for a second round of improvements to School Card and transition processes, and a tool to improve the process for the production of annual site reports.

There is a process to redesign the system used to support the learning of students with a disability—that is the One Plan I talked about—children in care and Aboriginal students as well. They are the some things taken by the department. We will look at other measures if necessary.

Mr BOYER: I refer to the same budget reference, Budget Paper 5, page 34. In your answer to my previous question you mentioned that the global education department budget is growing. How much of that growth is due to enrolment growth from students?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: A very significant part of that is obviously due to the growth in enrolment. That growth in enrolment reflects a confidence that the community has—and I would say a growing confidence the community has—in our public schools. The expectation is that we are going to be employing well over a thousand extra teachers in the very near future. That is a commitment the government has made to enhance that, but it is also due to a range of other things.

When we signed the national school funding reform agreement in late 2018, that required the investment, the commitment, of our state government. It not only unlocked extra federal funding but it required the investment of, from memory, around \$700 million of extra state funding into our schools over and above that which was in the budget settings previously identified.

Moving year 7 into high school has required an additional recurrent expenditure in the education budget, which I believe hits the books from 1 January 2022 when our year 7s become classified as high school students. That unlocks extra federal funding. It requires significant extra state funding.

There are other examples of increases over and above enrolment growth. For example, with the nationally consistent collection of data for disability funding, we have put significant emphasis on that in our education system to ensure that students with a disability have the funding stream that

will enable our department to work better with them and their families to get the outcomes they deserve. Even that work has produced a requirement for extra federal funding and extra state funding as well.

Indeed, there are other measures such as that in this year's budget of the maintenance grants that I have provided information on to the member for Chaffey earlier. Those \$20,000 to \$100,000 grants—those \$30,000 preschool grants, for example—are all new money coming into the system over and above the standard settings. There may be some others, but I think I have probably captured the main ones.

Dr CLOSE: Following as a supplementary question from the answer the minister has given about enrolment growth, does the minister have with him or could he take on notice the percentage of students enrolled in public versus private schools in South Australia this year and what the projections are for future years?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Let me check. I may have something. Maybe if I read the table. I do not have the different non-government school sectors, but I have the percentage of FTE enrolments in the government system from the last 10 years:

- 2009, 64.5 per cent;
- 2010, 64.3 per cent;
- 2011, 64.1 per cent;
- 2012, 63.9 per cent;
- 2013, 63.9 per cent;
- 2014, 63.7 per cent;
- 2015, 64 per cent;
- 2016, 64.5 per cent;
- 2017, 65 per cent;
- 2018, 64.9 per cent;
- 2019, an increase to 65.7 per cent.

That is ABS data, so I would imagine that at some point the 2020 figures will be added to the ABS data. What that table does not potentially identify are the specific numbers. I have some further information that I can provide that has some; it is not for all of those years. Perhaps if I provide it, then you can have a look later and let us know if there is further information you would like us to track down.

So for 2018, there were 45,447 Catholic enrolments, 48,827 independent enrolments and 174,157 government enrolments, for a grand total of 268,432. If they do not add up exactly, it is because they are done by FTEs so there might be some rounding. Primary in the government system was 113,217; secondary was 60,939.

In 2019, the Catholic enrolments had increased by 0.6 per cent to 45,720 enrolments. The independent enrolments had increased by 1.3 per cent to 49,476 enrolments. The government enrolments had increased by 1.3 per cent to 176,376, for a grand total of 271,572. The government enrolments breakdown was 114,415 in primary and 61,960 in secondary. That is probably the same as this information, so I will leave it there and if there is more information sought we will see what we can find.

Mr ELLIS: Minister, I have a question that originates from Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 198, targets. Can the minister update this committee on the progress of strategies to address chronic non-attendance?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I thank the member for Narungga for that important question. When we came into government, one of our key focus areas was that we wanted to look at the rates of attendance in our schools and what we could do to address that. We know that there is a snapshot

of data that shows, as it often does, that on semester 1, 2019, there was 97 per cent of students who attended school regularly or who had an authorised reason for their absence. That is usually significantly higher on any given day because you have a combination of students who are maybe ill or have a reason for their absence.

But a significant proportion of absences recorded as unexplained is a concern at any time. Students not attending school are at higher risk of a range of outcome deficits compared to the rest of the community. Every day of schooling lost is a day of opportunity that is lost for those students. Schools are required to follow up with the family regarding any absence from a school program. They are also required to maintain records of authorised and unauthorised absences in the department's central reporting system.

It is worth saying that preliminary data seems to indicate that COVID-19 has resulted in a decreased average school attendance rate for 2020. As we have seen on many occasions, 2020 has not been a normal year by any measure and we have worked very hard to get our students back to school, particularly those vulnerable students for whom it is utterly important.

In a pre-COVID environment in what will continue to be useful through COVID and post-COVID, the department has reinforced requirements for schools to follow up on student absences. The evaluation of this is informing a review of department procedures. We have implemented a central social work duty line which takes consultations and referrals for students where there are attendance or more general wellbeing concerns across the state.

We have ensured that there is a strong collaboration between the education department, SAPOL, DHS and the Department for Child Protection with regard to confirming student safety where there are long-term absences. We have a document in the department called 'Attendance matters in South Australian preschools and schools'. That emphasises that attendance is everybody's business. It outlines a whole of school community approach to attendance and it emphasises the importance of strategies which promote the importance of education in the earliest years, actively engage children and young people and their families, and address barriers to attendance.

Among examples of the sorts of initiatives that it includes is a new attendance policy we released last year, which underlines the responsibility of all members of the school community to ensure that our kids are attending school. There is a review of procedures on the development of supporting resources for schools, which is underway. We have a pilot program of parent-targeted social media messages about the importance of attendance at preschool and school.

We have used the internal communication channels of preschools and schools in the Inner West and Port Augusta-Quorn partnerships. The independent evaluation of that reported positive shifts in parental awareness and attitudes relating to attendance and provided recommendations we are looking at rolling out across the state. The statewide implementation of that has been delayed due to COVID-19, but I am very much looking forward to the opportunity to see some of that work more broadly put out next year.

There is an online portal for schools now which supports those schools to create local best practice bullying prevention and attendance policies and plans. As at 17 November, 268 of our schools—about half of our schools—have started that policy or plan using this portal. They are all supposed to have plans already, but now this portal that ensures they have best practice in the way they are delivering that is well and truly being embraced by our schools. We are anticipating that being even more highly used in the months and years ahead. Also, a partnership with the Youth Affairs Council of South Australia has provided a youth voice on barriers to attendance and bullying prevention.

I want to briefly address an outcome of the Education and Children's Services Act amendments, which I know all members should be rightly proud of. I thank the member for Port Adelaide for the work that was instigated when she was the minister and that we grasped with both hands, committed to during the election and have indeed now been able to enact with the support of the whole parliament.

We have amended the Education and Children's Services Act to allow for education family conferencing. I think some people might be familiar with the concept of family group conferencing. To ensure that conferencing does not get confused with family group conferencing that takes place

in other circumstances, those that are taking place in relation to school attendance we are calling 'education family conferencing'. It is an escalation pathway to address chronic non-attendance by supporting families to make decisions about the best way to support them to address the non-attendance of their child.

A small pilot was conducted from December 2019 to May 2020 in partnership with the Department for Child Protection and the Courts Administration Authority. A formal evaluation of that pilot has shown really positive shifts in attendance and/or attendance-related behaviours in many of the children. Families indicated that the process created an environment where they felt more supported by education to address issues underpinning non-attendance. The conference provided a level of motivation and accountability for families to implement their plans and take action to improve attendance.

Education family conferencing for chronic non-attendance will be made available statewide as another option in the suite of respondents to address chronic non-attendance from term 1 next year. The model is considered unique in Australia. There has been interest in its rollout from other states and New Zealand.

I also want to reflect briefly and again give some credit to the former minister for another aspect of the program that we were very encouraging of when the former governor announced, I think in 2017, or it might have been 2016, that prosecution of children who had not engaged with the process, where children were not attending and considered truant, would be undertaken. There were two examples where that took place. It sent a strong message around South Australia, as we knew it would, and we encouraged the government from opposition to do this. The minister defended the undertaking of this at the time despite some criticism from some on her side of politics, I would suggest.

The outcomes of those prosecutions were improved attendance from the kids involved and a message that the department and the government was willing to use that method. Indeed, it fits in very neatly with the education family conferencing process that we are now rolling out across the state because we do not want to prosecute families.

We want to do everything we can to get kids back to school without such a prosecution, but having that education family conferencing as a gateway, I think, is a very healthy encouragement. Having the prosecutions there, the capacity to prosecute there, is a very healthy message to send to those families to get them to engage in education family conferencing and I am very optimistic about the benefits that it is going to provide to the system in the years ahead.

Mr BOYER: As a supplementary to that, minister, can you just elaborate? How many prosecutions for chronic truancy have taken place in the last financial year or in the last, I guess, three financial years since you became minister?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: None, to my knowledge. The expectation is of course that that would come through the minister. My preference, as absolutely I have said on every single occasion, has been to ensure that every effort is made to engage the child. We now have, as I just outlined, the education family conferencing model as an opportunity to engage. I am really pleased that the pilot has identified that those families who have been approached were indeed successful in engaging in that model, and I think it has had a positive impact on their kids' attendance.

That will be rolled out across the state. My very clear message to parents whose children are identified as potentially benefiting from that model is that they really need to engage in that model because I will have no hesitation in endorsing a request from the department to approve any of those measures of taking them to court if necessary if they refuse to engage in doing everything they can to get kids back to school.

Mr BOYER: On the same budget line, have any recommendations been made to you by the department for prosecutions in your time as minister?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Out of an abundance of caution, I will just double-check. I have not had any such recommendations. The strong message that was sent in 2017 commended the then minister, and I commend her now, for making that decision. That has been a very useful mechanism to encourage engagement from parents with schools that are trying to do everything they

can to get those kids back to school. The education family conferencing model is now available in the first instance. I would suggest that if a family does not engage with that education family conferencing model, then that will be very informative to the department in any recommendations they might consider making in the future.

Mr BOYER: Minister, if I could take you back to Budget Paper 5, page 34, departmental efficiency measures, and the question I asked before—I am happy if you want to take this on notice—about what percentage of the increase in the overall education department's budget can be attributed to enrolment growth. Do you have a percentage or a total figure for what that might be?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I imagine that there is a vast array of technical detail in any framing of an answer, so I will take it on notice and we will endeavour to provide whatever useful information we can.

Mr BOYER: On Budget Paper 5, page 34, departmental efficiency measures, my reading of the budget papers is that the efficiency measures with which the department has been tasked over your time as minister are \$11 million followed by \$48 million and now \$30 million; is that correct?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: To be clear, are you asking about those that have been added to those that were already in place for these financial years under the previous budget settings, or is your question in relation to how much efficiency is expected in each of the financial years?

Mr BOYER: I am asking whether or not the departmental efficiency measures put in place for the education department in 2018-19 were \$11 million; the following year, \$48 million on top of that; and in these budget papers, \$30 million on top of that?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I will double-check. From my reading of it, I can only assume you are including those efficiencies that were announced prior to the election, which were in the 2017-18 budget in the Mid-Year Budget Review in 2017. In the 2017-18 budget, previous budgets and previous Mid-Year Budget Reviews, there were efficiency measures put in place for future years, which I think were captured in the years that you are talking about in your question.

In addition to that, there have been some further efficiencies requested of the education department in the last couple of budgets. They come up to a total, which may well be the figures you have cited. I will double-check that and I will also seek to investigate which budgets are responsible for which parts of that allocation.

Mr BOYER: Maybe I could provide a bit of clarity. What I am seeking is whether or not in the 2018-19 budget \$11 million of efficiency measures were handed down for the education department; whether or not in 2019-20 \$48 million of efficiency measures were handed down for education; and I can see in this one it is across four years, \$7½ million per year at a total of \$30 million; and whether or not those three figures come to a cumulative total of \$89 million which the department must meet.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I am not trying to be difficult, I promise you. You are identifying the savings over the forward estimates announced in each of those budgets. All right, well I will double check that and also—

Mr BOYER: As a total figure, if that is possible.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Yes, as a global figure, and as I say I will also do the same for the previous years.

Mr BOYER: On the same budget line, and I accept that you will be taking this on notice because it flows on from your last answer, but it would be good to know where the department is at in terms of having achieved those targets as well.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Yes, I would do that. I think that obviously the range of approaches we have taken are no doubt by now clearly a matter of public record. But as I alluded to and as the member would be familiar with, I think harvesting has been very helpful to us in that.

Mr BOYER: The same budget reference, Budget Paper 5, page 34, departmental efficiency measures. Are there some areas of your agency that will be quarantined from needing to find or contribute towards the global efficiency measure that must be achieved?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Yes, look, thank you. Obviously, I identified harvesting as the main part, so that is useful, but the efficiency savings will be from operational efficiencies in non-teaching and non-school-based areas of the department.

Mr BOYER: On the same budget reference, minister, can you rule out that it will be at least in part achieved through FTE reductions?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The number of FTEs in the education department includes those in our schools, and that figure continues to go up. I think that that is pretty clear in the budget papers.

Mr BOYER: My question, though, is can you rule out that FTE reductions, regardless of where they may be, but I accept that you have said that school sites and classrooms will be exempt from these, that the efficiency measures could be met at least in part through the FTE reductions in the agency?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I work with the chief executive on a range of recommendations that they may put forward. I know that there are some areas where efficiencies have been what you might call low-hanging fruit. I think in the last couple of years we have talked about the ministerial office being an example of that where we have a very lean office compared to some previous iterations. I do not think that that has presented a problem to me as a minister.

So where there is efficiency, that can be a very positive thing. Some efficiencies have been able to be done in a quite straightforward fashion, and the chief executive will provide me with any other advice that is necessary.

As I outlined before, some of those efficiencies are streamlining and automation of processes. Obviously, I think I identified over 30 processes within the department and schools have been streamlined through automation and through improved processes. That has a benefit to the end user, whether that is the school or whether that is the family, who is seeking a quick process where they can provide information to a computer; they do it very quickly, and that does not require them to spend an inordinate amount of time on the phone to various people. That process, streamlining, may well have an efficiency as well.

I can update that I am advised by the chief executive that there is nothing currently planned for any further FTE reductions, but as I say there have been some streamlined processes that have created efficiency. Whether that has meant an FTE reduction or just a sped-up process, that would be up to any of those individual 30-odd measures.

Mr BOYER: Are there any areas of—I will call it head office maybe to make it a bit clearer—head office that will be quarantined from the efficiency measures as opposed to school sites and the classrooms?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: With your indulgence, I will invite the chief executive to provide a response to that.

Mr PERSSE: Thank you, Mr Boyer, for the question. Obviously, we have a range of staff associated with, colloquially, head office in, say, Student Support Services, who actually work with kids in terms of providing direct allied health and other services. These are areas that are in high demand and we would be loathe to reduce in that area and, in fact, we have been investing in that area, as you can see through the disability funding.

If we were to look at any FTE reduction in the corporate areas it would only be associated with any business processes, reforms or priorities that were associated with that, but, as the minister said, there are none on the books at the moment, so it is a bit hypothetical at this stage.

Mr BOYER: Thank you, Mr Persse, for your answer. On the same budget line, will the Literacy Guarantee Unit be quarantined from any savings measures?

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

Mr BOYER: Will the incident management division be quarantined? I refer to your answer last year where you said there were no further plans, I think, to make any changes after an initial FTE reduction there.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Perhaps I can save some time in the questions that may be about to come. We are not in the business of compromising those critical support services that are absolutely vital to ensuring the wellbeing of our schools, our students and our staff. I think if there are any efficiencies that might be garnered then that will be something, due to automated processes, for example, of benefit.

We automate processes not to reduce staff but to provide a better service, as the chief executive reminds me. I am not aware of any likelihood of any reductions in that area but, as I say, I think the answer I provided two or three questions ago, that there are no current plans for any specific FTE reductions, would probably be a global answer to any of these questions.

Mr BOYER: If I could take you to Budget Paper 3, Volume 1, page 197, highlights. Can you tell us whether or not the government has met its commitment around permitting sniffer dogs to go into schools to search for drugs, and whether or not that has been enacted or used in this financial year, or any others, in your term as minister?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I thank the member, and I am aware that the member for Elizabeth, I think, has a question on notice that I am just awaiting some final confirmation about and hopefully I will have that submitted very soon. I apologise if that has been out of time. There was certainly an occasion late last year where the protocols were enacted. I think it is fair to say that this year the situation with the pandemic has seen that as being a lower priority than some other uses of resources, and I have been very happy to support those resources being applied to other bodies of work.

Mr BOYER: On the same budget reference, can you maybe explain to the committee what the process is for triggering sniffer dogs to go into schools? Does a request come to you and, if so, who does it come from and have there been any of those requests to you in your time as minister?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I do not get involved in that process. The government had an important task to fulfill its election commitment to do a number of things. One was to provide support to a range of non-government organisations to enhance the drug education offerings that were available in schools. I know the former government signed off on an allocation to the Sammy D Foundation. Since coming to government we have provided funding to Encounter Youth and to Life Education. Those organisations all engage with a range of schools around South Australia and have a very high level service provision, and I am very pleased with the rollout of those services.

In conjunction with that we committed to developing protocols that would make it simpler and easier for those schools that wanted to engage in this process, or indeed where police wanted to engage in these processes. There are occasions when that might be the case and those protocols were delivered and are on the public record. I think during the last year they were made available to principals if they wanted to proactively seek an engagement. There has clearly been at least the one that I am aware of where it has been used, but this year it has not been a priority.

I do not get involved with that process. I do not think it would be appropriate for the minister to be involved with either asking a school or the person at the school who makes a request through the school or the police. Whichever it is that instigates it would abide by the protocols, and they are set out in the publicly available document.

Mr BOYER: Who is notified in your office—or if not your office, in the agency—when either a school or police, I am not sure who it is, request that there might be a need to bring sniffer dogs on to a school site?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The responsibility for signing off on it from the school's point of view rests with the chief executive. I am trying to remember whether I was notified of the last one before or after it happened. Apparently, I get advised as an FYI after the chief executive has made that decision.

Mr BOYER: Just to clarify, minister, you are told after the request is made or after, in that one case, potentially the dogs have already gone in to the school to look?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: After the chief executive has determined to sign off on the use of the dogs on that school site.

Mr BOYER: On the same budget reference, minister, has your chief executive in that case received any more applications for sniffer dogs to go into schools, other than the one occasion on which I understand it was approved?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: My understanding is that that has happened, but that any of the potential occasions were deferred as a direct result of matters related to COVID. It was not as high a priority as some other activities by the police officers who might have been undertaking that work, given the extraordinary situation our state and our world has confronted this year.

Mr BOYER: I am wondering whether you, or the chief executive through you, is able to tell us how many times, in addition to the one occasion on which it was approved, it has been requested that sniffer dogs go on to school sites.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: It is hard to answer that directly because while there may well have been a number of expressions of interest, and I understand that is the case, it was clear from quite early on in that process that the resources to conduct the checks would not be available on a number of those occasions. I would anticipate that, once police have resumed a more orderly business-as-usual model in the future, this will be something we will be able to take up more often.

Mr MURRAY: Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, pages 190 and 191. My rather parochial question is directed to expenditure specifically in the seat of Davenport. I note that there is \$786 million in total being invested, and in particular page 191, Aberfoyle Park High School, a total expenditure of \$13.269 million. Minister, can you provide us with further detail of expenditure on other schools and other projects in the electorate?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I thank the member for Davenport for his question. I know that he has been very eager to have me visit his electorate with him on a number of occasions. I think the last time we were there we were actually visiting the Aberfoyle High School, and it was fantastic to see their project being built and to be given a tour of that worksite. I am very confident that, when that is complete, that school will be in a tremendous position to make full use of their brand-new infrastructure and their refurbished infrastructure. I know that Marion Coady and her team are really excited about that.

Equally, at the Australian Science and Mathematics School there is also a program underway, and I think when that is complete in the coming years it will really be an enhancement to what that school is able to offer. Schools in Davenport that were able to benefit from the accelerated maintenance project were schools that had a project that had been identified by the school and the facilities manager and on the education department's approved list for being able to be eligible for funding under minor works, but for whom that minor works funding had not been available.

When the state government announced an extra \$25 million in funding in the earlier stimulus rounds, we were able to see Aberfoyle Park High School benefit from \$750,000 worth of minor works. The Australian Science and Mathematics School got an \$800,000 project and Craighburn Primary School got an \$87,000 boost in their maintenance projects.

These, of course, have been added to by the \$20,000 grants for all the preschools in Davenport: the Aberfoyle Hub Preschool on Taylors Road, the Aberfoyle Park Campus Preschool, the Flagstaff Hill Kindergarten and the Flagstaff Oval Kindergarten. Those maintenance projects have been welcomed. They have provided great jobs for small businesses and tradies in the local area. They have enabled kitchen works, carpeting or tiling. They have enabled nature play areas, they have enabled lifts to the sites in all manners of ways.

As I said to the member for Chaffey earlier, whatever mechanism they used to identify what that \$20,000 would be spent on, every single one of those preschool directors I spoke to was able to find a list. They knew that they had more things that they would do if they had a further grant, and so the application in this budget of a \$30,000 grant to every single one of those preschools I know will be welcomed. This is the sort of opportunity for extra stimulus money where these preschools have so often been overlooked. I am so pleased that they will benefit from that.

In relation to school maintenance grants, those schools in the member for Davenport's electorate have also benefited from those \$20,000 to \$100,000 grants. Those schools that have capital programs underway—and I identified the Aberfoyle Park High School and the Australian

Science and Mathematics School, which currently have multimillion dollar capital projects underway—get the lower end of the new maintenance grants, so \$20,000 for those schools.

Larger schools that have not been the beneficiary of capital works or, for example, primary schools that did not get a STEM works and have not had a capital works, benefit from the larger end of the grants. There is an allocation according to size, but I can tell the member for Davenport that in his electorate the Aberfoyle Hub R-7 School is getting a \$70,000 grant; the Bellevue Heights Primary School, the Braeview School R-7, the Craighburn Primary School and the Thiele Primary School will all benefit from a \$70,000 grant; and the Flagstaff Hill R-7 School will get a \$100,000 grant to apply to those projects that the school identifies throughout the course of the next year are really high priority.

It is a great opportunity to get some works done to lift the school but also to provide important jobs for local businesses. That is what the stimulus measure has been designed to do, and I am really pleased that our schools and preschools will be the prime beneficiaries. Indeed, the prime beneficiaries will be the students attending those schools and preschools.

Mr ODENWALDER: I bring you back to the previous discussion about sniffer dogs, which I think is on Budget Paper 3, Volume 1, page 197. Did I understand from your comments to the member for Wright that some approaches have been made under these protocols by schools, or school principals, and they have been subsequently rejected or delayed by SAPOL, which has cited COVID-19 as a resourcing problem in there? Did I understand that correctly?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: It was identified that the schools had been advised, I think by my department, that potentially on some occasions there would need to be some delay or some future consideration of that. As I understand it, there are discussions when these expressions of interest are made, which are between the school and local police and/or between the school and their local education team and/or between the school and people higher up in the department, and so it could be at any of those levels where the feedback can be provided that now may not be the right time.

Mr ODENWALDER: Does that advice ultimately come from SAPOL, that they do not have the resources at the time?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: It is less about resourcing and more about prioritisation. The member would be as familiar as I am that this year so much that has been going on in SAPOL has been different to what it was last year, for example. The efforts in the South-East, the efforts generally on COVID, have required an enormous priority on that. The advice I have is that that information about the priorities could be provided by SAPOL, or indeed by people in Education.

I will just check if there is further information that is necessary. Yes, so there is obviously discussion in that between Education and SAPOL, and between the school and SAPOL, about risk management that helps inform that identification of what is the priority. I am advised that quite recently, I think in the last month, there is an example where SAPOL did not defer it; we deferred it as an identification of the priorities that we saw.

Mr ODENWALDER: One last one on that line: given the relative scarcity of these notifications or expressions of interest—however you want to describe them or however the protocol describes them—I wonder how it could be determined that they are of a particularly low priority given that there are police around doing normal police work all the time; they are not so under-resourced that they cannot perform their normal functions. Given the relative scarcity, surely it is a matter of quite some importance to those schools to bring the police dogs in at that point. Why would the education department or SAPOL not consider it a priority?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I would say three things: firstly, I refer you to all of the previous answers that provided a range of information, and, ultimately, it comes back to the fact that this year has seen some extraordinary challenges to SAPOL and some extraordinary challenges to schools. We are not talking about a business-as-usual state of affairs.

The second point I would make is that the significant focus of our education department's drugs policy at the last election may not have necessarily captured the newspaper headlines in the same way, but we have a significant commitment for investment in drug education programs, which,

over the course of the time in government, is in the millions of dollars. That commitment was a priority in 2018, it was a priority before the protocols were completed and it has been rolled out in schools. We have been encouraging all of our schools to take up those opportunities to engage with one of those third-party providers, that are much better resourced now than they ever were before, to be able to undertake drug education.

In addition to that, there has been the opportunity for schools to identify an expression of interest. I am not surprised that the determination has been made, whether it is at a local level or at a higher up level, that this year, once the risk management approach has been looked at, I would expect that we will have more of these once we do not have the challenges to schools, to police and police resourcing posed by the pandemic.

Mr BOYER: I refer to Budget Paper 3, Volume 1, page 197. Was the government's election commitment around sniffer dogs not for random checks of schools?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: There are two aspects: the commitment was around developing protocols and that there would be the expectation that any school student who wanted to bring drugs to school to sell to their mates, or any parent who wanted to give drugs to their child to sell to their mates, would be absolutely at risk of that school being the target of a police dog operation, and that student would have no way of knowing that was not going to happen.

The protocols that have been developed enable an opportunity—and the development of the protocols was the key election commitment—for those situations where a school wants to request a check. Then, in addition to that, the police are able to identify any school that they want to go and conduct a visit to and do that.

Mr BOYER: Have there been any random checks at schools for drugs, in your time as education minister?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The one from last year I believe was in line with the school request protocol.

Mr BOYER: Minister, I might take you now to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 202, specifically the issue of kids with disabilities in the public school system. My first question is: I see from these papers that we have seen a big increase of students with a disability, from 16,534 in 2018 to 19,111 in 2019. Do you think we have enough disability-specific places in the system to cope with this increase?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: There is a bit to this, so I will provide some high-level information, and as we go into it there may be occasions where I might need some further advice from departmental officers. Is it useful to the member if I potentially provide some information that may be broader than the narrowness of the question, and then we can come back to the detail further, if you would like? Is that okay?

Mr BOYER: It is fine, thank you.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Preschools and school children and students in government schools can access teaching and learning support via the department's Inclusive Education Support Program (IESP). The IESP was introduced at the beginning of the 2019 preschool and school year and replaced the former Preschool Support and Disability Support programs. According to this model, students are now funded according to their functional need rather than their disability diagnosis or label. This is an important development because diagnosis is not the only determinant of funding; rather, the functional need of a child and the adjustments a teacher needs to make to support that child's learning are now the driver of teaching and learning support.

The new funding model has seen greater investment than ever before in supporting students with a disability. In 2019, preschool children with a disability were allocated a total of \$11.38 million compared with \$7.22 million in 2018. In 2019, school students with a disability, including those in special education options and specialist education options, were allocated \$255.2 million compared with \$230.6 million; that was a 10.66 per cent increase in 12 months.

At the term 3 census in 2020, 21,115.7 FTE students were being supported under the IESP; this includes students receiving targeted categories of funding allocations and support via the

IESP grant. This is a 10.5 per cent increase in FTE from the previous year, when it was 19,111.2 FTE. The largest increases have occurred in the areas of autism and complex social and emotional behaviour. In preschools, as at March 2020, 230 FTE have been funded at the extensive level. There were 404 FTE in 2019 and 66 FTE in 2018.

In relation to special options, which I think is probably directly in the wheelhouse of where the member's question was, 84.3 per cent of students with a disability attend mainstream schools, 15.7 per cent attend a specialised educational option, 6.7 per cent are in a special class, 4.3 per cent are in a disability unit and 4.7 per cent are in a special school. In 2020, student enrolments in specialised education options were: 984 in special schools, 906 in disability units and 1,425 in special classes.

The department has a number of specialised education options, geographically placed across South Australia to meet local demand. There are 151 special classes, 39 disability units, 15 special schools, one school for vision impairment and four Centres for Deaf Education. These used to be called the Centre for Hearing Impaired (CHI) schools, as the member might recall. We now call them Centre for Deaf Education, which I think has been a change that has been welcomed by advocates whom I have spoken to.

The department also has six speech and language classes, 16 inclusive preschool programs and one dedicated preschool at The Briars. The number of specialised education options has been expanding. Using projection data, the department anticipates further expected need, though it is complex because parent choice, family movements and student needs fluctuate.

This year, we have made a number of recent announcements of increased specialised educational options. We have special classes at Salisbury High School and Mount Gambier High School, providing an additional 24 places from the beginning of this year. Nuriootpa High School and Springbank Secondary College have each converted one of their disability unit classes of eight to a special class of 12 students, due to a changing mix of student need away from the more intensive disability unit towards the less intensive special class. The conversion has provided an additional 24 special class places from the beginning of this year.

A two-class disability unit at Modbury Special School now provides an additional 16 places. That has been in place since the beginning of term 3. A further three secondary schools at Golden Grove, Salisbury and Para Hills will each convert one of their disability unit classes of eight to a special class of 12 places, again due to a changing mix of student need away from the more intensive disability unit towards the less intensive special class. These conversions will provide an additional 36 special class places from term 1 next year.

There are 180 extra places at 11 secondary schools as part of the year 7 to high school project, which commence in 2022. I think all 11 of those have been announced publicly. There are an additional 104 special options placements at each of the two new schools in Angle Vale and Aldinga, which are opening progressively in 2022. There is an additional special class included in the design of the new Whyalla secondary school, bringing the total to 48 special class places there. We have a feasibility study examining the future need for the Ceduna Area School.

The process—and this is really important because I think this gets to the nub of where there is some anxiety in the community about whether or not a parent's child is going to be able to access a place—of placing students in specialised educational options is based on need. There are three stages. In term 2 they are looking at the secondary; in early term 3, primary; and in late term 3, preschool and junior primary.

In response to the number of children who were not able to be offered a place through that process, the department this year has established additional classes at Ingle Farm East Primary School, which will offer an additional disability unit class and a primary special class. South Downs Primary School will offer two additional disability unit classes, and Balaklava Primary School will offer a new disability unit class. The classes provide an additional 32 disability unit places and 12 special class places. A further six schools are still under investigation, where we are looking at further expansions for next year.

The department is also investigating opportunities to place more children who were not able to be offered a special option place in those first rounds. Because students are continuing to be

placed, more settled placement data will be available in the next two weeks. We are wanting to make sure that every child in our system is given the support that they need. There is no cost saving to the department if the child is identified as being in a mainstream class with additional support.

The important thing in the placement is that that class should be relevant to the needs of that child, not just their wellbeing needs and their developmental needs but their educational needs as well. We do not want a situation where a child with extra support is being put in a place that will give them no educational benefit whatsoever. We would rather provide extra support to them in a mainstream class. That said, we are working extremely hard over time to enhance the offerings and ensure that they can have educational growth in a setting that is appropriate. That is why all of these additional special classes, disability units, that I have just gone through have been added to the system over and above what was there last year to meet some of that gap in where the provision was.

As I say, there are six further schools where extra provision is currently under investigation. I believe in the next two weeks those final decisions will be further made. If there are any mainstream classes next year with a student who meets that need who is unplaced, they will receive IESP resourcing to ensure that student's learning success. This is not a cost saving for the department, but I am pleased that, even though the growth in the need for the number of places has been significant year on year, the gap between the number of students who need that extra support and the number of students receiving an appropriate placement has diminished dramatically this year. We will want it to continue diminishing.

I am sure when the former minister, the member for Port Adelaide, first, I think in 2016, sought the central collection of this data, she would recall the challenge that that was to the system then, with well over 100 students at that stage who were unable to be found an appropriate placement and were given support in the mainstream setting instead. We have that number well down. We are still looking to support all those children who are left. Prior to 2016, we do not have data on this because it just was not collected centrally.

Mr BOYER: How long is the waitlist for a special options placement, whether it be a special class, a disability unit or a special school, in the southern and northern suburbs, if you have that data?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I will see what I have to hand. To be clear, there is no waitlist as such. If a child has been identified, then they will get support. The question is—and I think this is what the member is getting at. I am not meaning to be difficult in any way and I am sure the member would agree with this characterisation. A child is identified as needing the support; they are going to get the support.

Ideally, the support is going to be in the class or unit or setting that has been identified as most appropriate and, if the places have not been identified that enable them to fit that, they will get a body of support through the IESP funding model to enable them to have that wraparound support in a mainstream setting. I do not have disaggregated data by region. As I said, this is changing every day as more placements are being found and those classes are coming on line. I would anticipate that well before the estimates responses are due, according to the usual process, we will have some pretty clear data.

I am going to take the question on notice on the basis that the information is changing every week and I will endeavour to not just wait until estimates responses are due but to get back directly to the member for Wright and to those parents and families who have sought specific information in relation to their children as soon as possible. Each one of their cases is very important and they are going to want to know by the end of the year if a placement in a unit or a class, whichever is relevant, is able to be done by the beginning of next year, or if there is going to have to be some extra level of support to support them in a mainstream setting.

We take these responsibilities very seriously. I have great confidence in the department because I have seen the numbers coming down compared to previous years quite dramatically. We are very much on track to have more children than ever before placed in a setting that is appropriate to their educational wellbeing needs.

Mr WHETSTONE: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 198. Minister, could you please advise the committee of the progress of the government's reforms in vocational education and, in particular, how the government is going to get more school students into apprenticeships, traineeships and other vocational pathways that will lead into jobs?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I thank the member for Chaffey for this question. I think that there is a dramatic need for reform in this area that has been needed for some time. The opportunity to have more of our young people on a pathway to a positive employment outcome has never been more important than at this time when the economy has taken such a hit and people have been concerned about their future wellbeing.

We took to the election a really important policy of providing \$200 million to enhance educational outcomes for apprentices and trainees, employment outcomes for apprentices and trainees, and that has been a significant effort of both the education department and also the Department for Innovation and Skills. Indeed, it has been heartening in the last year to see South Australia bucking the national trend in relation to commencements of apprenticeships and traineeships, dramatically improving in South Australia, at a time when they have continued to go backwards around the country. That has continued as recently as the figures I saw earlier this year and schools are an important part of that.

One of the things that we want to make sure our schools are doing is looking at this from a point of view of pathways for a student that enables them to get their SACE—it is an important part of their education—but be on a pathway to employment if they are undertaking vocational education. The VET for School Students policy announced in October last year really brings industry and schools together to clearly articulate those pathways.

I am really proud that the department, in partnership with industry over the months since, has developed 27 what we call flexible industry pathways. They map out a student's journey through secondary school and they articulate the qualifications, the training and skills that are required by employers in a number of those key growth industries in our state. As part of a flexible industry pathway, schools are supported to use the flexibilities in the SACE to tailor a learning experience to students' chosen pathways.

The first pathway commenced in July with 18 students commencing at the ASC Shipbuilding Readiness Training Program at Osborne. The program supports students to complete their SACE while undertaking a Certificate II in Engineering and beginning a paid traineeship in the defence industry. The ASC plan to take on 1,000 students as trainees throughout the lifetime of the \$90 billion shipbuilding project and a further 22 students will commence that program in December. These are students from around schools, not just one school. They are students who have an interest in going to work in this area. They are working in this area now while they complete their SACE, and they are also getting further qualifications to boot.

Schools are also partnering with industry to give students exposure to workplaces and employers through the Industry and Employer Immersion Program. The program immerses students in workplace activities such as industry challenges or competitions, workplace visits, career expos and events, virtual work experience and work-related projects. For example, the department's capital works program has provided the opportunity for schools to work with builders and subcontractors on site to immerse students in their building projects, exposing them to the workplace and building awareness of the building and construction industry.

For students interested in pursuing a career in the building and construction industry, opportunities for apprenticeships and traineeships exist through a flexible industry pathway, but can I say how exciting it is for those students who are seeing schools—their school potentially—transformed and at the same time those students can have the opportunity to be part of that transformation, getting qualifications but actually contributing to the work.

I really want to express my particular appreciation to those employers, those businesses, who have engaged with the Department for Education, those builders who have wanted to get some apprenticeships and traineeships and industry engagement students on site being part of their builds because they know that these students are going to be the workforce that they are going to have in

the future. They want them to be energised and motivated and to develop the right skills from an early age so that they can have prosperous careers in that really growing industry.

The department is also working on enhancing career education schools. This is a really important part of the mix. We have developed guidelines for best practice career education to ensure that every student has industry engagement opportunities, understands their pathway options and can manage their career across their lifetime.

The World of Work Challenge, or the WOW Challenge, as I am being encouraged by some to call it, will launch in 2021. It will encourage students in years 7 to 10 to participate in 100 hours of work exposure, including work experience, industry events, volunteering and careers expos. The WOW Challenge, or potentially the World of Work Challenge, will enable students to learn firsthand from employers about employment opportunities, the skills that are valued in the workplace, supporting students to make informed decisions about their learning and pathway options as they approach senior secondary school.

In preparation for full implementation in 2022, a series of early adopter projects will be piloted in schools through 2021, including the flexible industry pathways, the Pathways Readiness and Employability Program for those students who need further foundational skills to prepare them for the workforce or VET, and a broader area partnership hub and spoke model to support schools to collaborate and share resources. I am really excited about the work that is being done here.

I think in the years ahead we are going to see the fruits of it identified as more and more of our young people are well on the way with qualifications underway, getting their SACE and also a contract of employment and training already underway in the industry. We are going to need it to meet the workforce needs of the future because there are significant areas, whether it is shipbuilding, whether it is care, whether it is the building industry, where we know we are going to need people working in these industries. Getting young people excited about them and on their way to those careers is a really important part of the puzzle.

Mr BOYER: Minister, if I could take you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 198, and specifically targets. My recollection is that there was a threshold of enrolments at schools, but I think more precisely primary schools, at which there would automatically be a review into the viability of the school triggered. Is that the case and, if so, do you know what the threshold figure is?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I thank the member for the question. I have to say, I was not aware that there was a magic number, and I am informed that there is not a particular number that is used for that purpose. There are some sites that were identified in the last couple of years. I am trying to think of the examples. The East Murray school was one. I think there were about two or three schools, I recall Tantanoola being one, where we reached a stage where there were four, then three, then one, then zero students.

Even when there was a very small number, the response I had was that there was a voluntary amalgamation process that the school could investigate if they wanted to. Indeed, when there was one student left who was interested in the school, I am sure there was some encouragement for further consideration to be given at that point. It was not going to be in that student's interests, in my view, to have no peers to engage with at school.

The voluntary amalgamation process was started under the former government from 2002 to 2018, and I said in opposition that it was a good model. It continues to be a good model. Schools get the benefit of the capital sale, and I think they get a three-year benefit from the savings of running two separate sites that can be applied directly to that school. There are a number of schools, particularly the really small ones where some families leaving can have a big impact on them, that have a look at that process, but we are not forcing anyone to close.

Mr BOYER: I accept that maybe my recollection is wrong. I thought I recalled a figure somewhere in the vicinity of 30 pupils at which point there was some kind of automatic trigger for a review of a school's viability. I accept I might have that wrong.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Whether that has at some point been the case, I cannot speak to. It is not the case now and I am not aware of it having been the case in my time as the minister.

Mr BOYER: On the same budget line, what is it that potentially, under the current processes, triggers a review into viability or a potential voluntary amalgamation?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: There is one example where I did authorise an educational review at Springbank. I think it is a matter of public record that the government felt that, rather than the proposed outcome there, there was a better outcome that could be achieved, which we are now on track to achieving. I think that is a great outcome for everyone involved.

I think Tantanoola may have been an educational review as well, and that was in the circumstance that, by the time I was authorising an educational review, there were zero students. I think that speaks for itself. By the time we got to the review, there were zero students at that stage. The family had obviously had a number of discussions with people in the education department about how best to support their child's needs and ultimately settled on a different school, so an educational review was the only sensible course of action there.

I am trying to remember whether Mintabie was an educational review as well, but it might not have been. That might have been a different arrangement. In relation to the voluntary amalgamation process, a school that is interested in that is able to access information. They would obviously want to identify whether it is a nearby school or a preschool, potentially. In some cases, it has been a preschool located immediately adjacent that has been the voluntary amalgamation partner, if you like.

There can be any number of methods to gather that information, whether talking to their local education team or the department's infrastructure team or looking at publicly available material and then seeking information about how to access the process. Those voluntary amalgamations rely on a discussion within the school community and an intent from the school community to want to do it.

Mr BOYER: Before I ask this question, I accept that perhaps there is not a threshold figure at which a review into a primary school's viability is triggered; nonetheless, I will ask these next couple of questions just in case. As a result of moving year 7 students into high school, how many primary schools in metropolitan Adelaide will have less than 30 students at the start of 2022? How many will drop below the figure of 30?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Metropolitan? I think I would be surprised if it was many. The definition of metropolitan, obviously, extends to 75 kilometres from the CBD, as my recollection serves. There may well be some small schools' numbers—

Mr BOYER: I reckon there are some people who can help you out with that distance in this chamber.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Sorry?

Mr BOYER: It is all right. Just making—

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Look, I can speak from my own electorate experience. I know the Basket Range Primary School used to have fewer than 30 and now has well over that number. So I do not think they are going to be in any jeopardy. There is also some information that we know that where there are schools that have higher proportions of kids who are going into area schools or Catholic schools or independent schools or R-12 schools that already have year 7 in high school, some of the local primary schools already have diminished numbers of year 7s compared to others.

A significant body of work was done I think last year, most of it, in relation to consulting with schools about transitional arrangements. Those transitional arrangements are more relevant for regional communities than metro. If there are some schools classified as metropolitan who we anticipate to drop under 30 as a result of the change, then I will bring back that information. Let us take it on notice just for the sake of clarity.

Mr BOYER: Thank you, minister. My next question was going to be the same question but regional areas, which I accept you could take on notice, if you wish.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Yes, so it may be easiest if I just take that on notice.

Mr BOYER: The minister no doubt understands where I am coming at with these questions in terms of primary schools that lose significant numbers of their school population because year 7s

will no longer be on those school sites. Is the minister making a blanket promise not to close any primary schools that might have diminished—or significantly diminished—enrolment numbers due to this transition?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I have always said that we are not going to be forcing anybody. There is actually some information that I can probably share with the member that may even resolve some of the earlier questions that I took on notice; we might make a judgement at the end of this. But perhaps this will help directly with the question just asked.

We recognise a number of families, particularly in the country, that had concerns about year 7 moving into high school, so we undertook a range of consultation from July to September 2019 to understand the concerns of those communities to ensure transitional arrangements reflected those concerns. So we developed these transitional arrangements, particularly for regional communities.

The transitional arrangements apply to 46 eligible primary schools. Parents at eligible primary schools—and these primary schools are schools that are a certain distance from the local area school, 20 kilometres from the local school offering a secondary enrolment—by exception can seek exemption from their principal to keep their year 7 child in primary school.

Where the departure of the year 7 cohort causes an eligible primary school to drop below four classes, top-up grant funding will be made available to maintain the number of classes. School eligibility is determined on the basis that the school is more than 20 kilometres by road from its nearest area or high school. It also includes the School of the Air in recognition of the unique circumstances of those students; they don't have to go to boarding school, certainly in that first year, until year 8, if that is what their family wants to do.

Since the original list of eligible primary schools was issued in November 2019—and I think that the then shadow minister would have got a briefing from the department at that time—Goolwa Primary School is no longer eligible due to the Goolwa high school opening in 2022. Again, I reiterate: do not read anything into my reference to Goolwa high school; it might be called that, or it might be called something else. These arrangements will apply for a transitional period from 2022 to 2024.

In relation to small schools more generally, the department currently provides small schools with extra funding in the form of small schools base and small schools primary step model. Schools with fewer than 40 students receive the maximum amount of support. In 2020, 133 schools received the small schools base funding and a further 40 schools are funded under the small primary step model.

Small schools funding does not distinguish between country and metropolitan schools. Small metropolitan primary schools also receive extra funding. A preliminary analysis that involves removing the current year 5 cohort from total enrolments suggests that as a direct result of the move of year 7 to high school, the number of schools under 40 enrolments will grow from 44, which it is currently, to 52—so by eight schools.

The impact in very small schools will be uneven; for example, for four schools with enrolments below 40, there is no year 5 cohort at all, so there may be no impact in 2022. We recognise these changes occur in a broader context for regional and small school communities. It may be an example, and I am familiar with one where there is just a large family where, if one family moves out, that can be half of the school enrolments and that in itself can make a much bigger difference than zero school students at year 7 in 2022 would have been—that can happen, too.

There is no minimum viability that we require for the support of a school, and that is a commitment that I am certainly happy to maintain in relation to this project. That probably covers both of the questions that I took on notice earlier. It does not differentiate between the schools in metro and regional because, as I say, we do not keep that differentiated.

Mr BOYER: Thank you, minister, that does help. As a supplementary, I guess, the figure that you gave of schools that will fall into the small schools category of having—I have to say 'fewer', the member for Port Adelaide's staffer has just written to me to make sure I say 'fewer' and not 'less'. If he is listening—

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Michael Atkinson would be so proud!

Mr BOYER: I feel it is only right that I embarrass him in *Hansard* for daring to message me during this. If my mum was listening she would be doing the same thing. Am I right in saying that the increase from 44 to 52 is across all schools in South Australia projected—

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Yes, that is—

Mr BOYER: Is that metro or regional?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: To be clear, as I understand the information the number of schools that have fewer than 40 enrolments, a school population of less than 40—

Mr BOYER: Well done.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: —is 44 at the moment. If you remove all of their current year 5s, then that would increase the number of schools with fewer than 40 students to 52, on the basis that those year 5s will be entering high school in two years' time rather than staying in their current primary school. That is a blunt measure and does not take into account that some of them might have moved to a local Catholic school or a local area school a year earlier than that anyway, but that is the basis for the eight extra schools, if losing the five school drop under the 40 level.

Mr BOYER: If I could take you to Budget Paper 3, Volume 1, page 193, targets, and specifically the no job no play policy. Did you seek an exemption from the commencement of the no job no play policy for government preschool sites?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Just to be clear, do you want to do this now rather than in the early childhood?

Mr BOYER: I do not mind. I can do it in either, but there is a budget reference there that I used, but I am happy to move it to child development if you would prefer.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Yes. It is really in the early learning childhood area. The school education has a different arrangement because the no job no play legislation applies to early childhood settings, not to schools: schools are compulsory.

The CHAIR: Without needing to shift and move advisers, perhaps if we leave that until that point in time and somebody else comes forward.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I am happy to come back to it.

Mr BOYER: Chair, I understand that we have only about seven minutes left until a break. Is that right?

The CHAIR: Correct.

Mr BOYER: I may take this opportunity to read the omnibus questions.

The CHAIR: Absolutely, go for it.

Mr BOYER: Okay. The omnibus questions are:

1. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
 - What is the actual FTE count at 30 June 2020 and the projected actual FTE count for each year of the forward estimates?
 - What is the total employment cost for each year of the forward estimates?
 - What is the notional FTE job reduction target that has been agreed with Treasury for each year of the forward estimates?
 - Does the agency or department expect to meet the target in each year of the forward estimates?
 - How many TVSPs are estimated to be required to meet FTE reductions over the forward estimates?
2. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:

- How much is budgeted to be spent on goods and services for 2020-21, and for each of the years of the forward estimates period?
- The top ten providers of goods and services by value to each agency reporting to the minister for 2019-20; and
- A description of the goods and/or services provided by each of these top ten providers, and the cost to the agency for these goods and/or services?
- The value of the goods and services that was supplied to the agency by South Australian suppliers.

3. Between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020, will the minister list the job title and total employment cost of each position with a total estimated cost of \$100,000 or more which has either: (1) been abolished and (2) which has been created?

4. Will the minister provide a detailed breakdown of expenditure on consultants and contractors above \$10,000 between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020 for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, listing

- the name of the consultant, contractor or service supplier;
- cost;
- work undertaken;
- reason for engaging the contractor; and
- method of appointment?

5. For each department and agency for which the minister has responsibility:

- How many FTEs were employed to provide communication and promotion activities in 2019-20 and what was their employment expense?
- How many FTEs are budgeted to provide communication and promotion activities in 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 and what is their estimated employment expense?
- The total cost of government-paid advertising, including campaigns, across all mediums in 2019-20 and budgeted cost for 2020-21.

6. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, please provide a full itemised breakdown of attraction and retention allowances as well as non-salary benefits paid to public servants and contracts between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020.

7. What is the title and total employment cost of each individual staff member in the minister's office as at 30 June 2020, including all departmental employees seconded to ministerial offices?

8. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, could you please detail:

- (a) How much was spent on targeted voluntary separation packages in 2019-20?
- (b) What department funded these TVSPs? (except for DTF estimates)
- (c) What number of TVSPs were funded?
- (d) What is the budget for targeted voluntary separation packages for financial years included in the forward estimates (by year), and how are these packages funded?
- (e) What is the breakdown per agency/branch of targeted voluntary separation packages for financial years included in the forward estimates by FTEs?

9. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive terminations have occurred since 1 July 2019 and what is the value of executive termination payments made?

10. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what new executive appointments have been made since 1 July 2019, and what is the annual salary, and total employment cost for each position?

11. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many employees have been declared excess, how long has each employee been declared excess, and what is the salary of each excess employee?

12. In the 2019-20 financial year, for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what underspending on operating programs (1) was and (2) was not approved by cabinet for carryover expenditure in 2020-21?

13. In the 2019-20 financial year, for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what underspending on investing or capital projects or programs (1) was and (2) was not approved by cabinet for carryover expenditure in 2020-21? How was much sought and how much was approved?

14. For each grant program or fund the minister is responsible for please provide the following information for 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial years:

- (a) Name of the program or fund;
- (b) The purpose of the program or fund;
- (c) Balance of the grant program or fund;
- (d) Budgeted (or actual) expenditure from the program or fund;
- (e) Budgeted (or actual) payments into the program or fund;
- (f) Carryovers into or from the program or fund; and
- (g) Details, including the value and beneficiary, of any commitments already made to be funded from the program or fund.

15. For the period of 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, provide a breakdown of all grants paid by the department/agency that report to the minister, including when the payment was made to the recipient, and when the grant agreement was signed by both parties.

16. For each year of the forward estimates, please provide the name and budgeted expenditure across the 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial years for each individual investing expenditure project administered by or on behalf of all departments and agencies reporting to the minister.

17. For each year of the forward estimates, please provide the name and budget for each individual program administered by or on behalf of all departments and agencies reporting to the minister.

18. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what is the total cost of machinery of government changes since 1 July 2019 and please provide a breakdown of those costs?

19. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what new sections of your department or agency have been established since 1 July 2019 and what is their purpose?

20. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:

- What savings targets have been set for each year of the forward estimates?
- What measures are you implementing to meet your savings targets?
- What is the estimated FTE impact of these measures?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I thank the member for the questions. I note that my recollection, from when we were in opposition and I used to ask omnibus questions regularly, is that I think my record was to smash them out in about 90 seconds, so when the member asked whether he should start them with seven minutes to go I was uncertain that all seven minutes would be

necessary. Twenty questions, with a large number of sub-questions, I am not entirely sure is the historical norm.

I imagine that all ministers will be asked to respond, and I take them on notice and will provide whatever response is feasible and appropriate in the circumstances. But I am intrigued as to the expansion of the convention around omnibus questions. I am sure the Hon. Michael Atkinson will be watching right now, and he will be able to provide us with some detailed summary of the history of how it comes about.

Mr BOYER: Thank you, minister.

Sitting suspended from 15:02 to 15:15.

The CHAIR: We have been examining before the break proposed payments to the portfolios of school education. The Minister for Education is the minister appearing today. Estimate payments were outlined during the last session to both the Department for Education and administered items for the Department for Education. I advise that the proposed payments remain open for examination and refer members to Agency Statements, Volume 1 or Volume 4.

Mr BOYER: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 202, Performance indicators, in particular, retention. Can the minister explain where he is at in terms of meeting the commitment to develop a tool that will track students who did not complete school? It is my understanding that it will find out where they are lost to in the system.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: There are a couple of aspects to this question. One of them is in relation to what measures the government talks about. I recall in previous times people talking about the SACE completion rate as headlining government press releases, without perhaps the identification that that is the completion rate of those who are studying their SACE in October who complete it at the end of the year. I have never found that an enormously useful tool.

What is more useful is in relation to retention rates, for example, for those who start in year 8 and complete year 12. That is a really useful figure and we have some information about that. It is in the 70s per cents for most years, rather than the 96 per cent to even 105 per cent, I think, that was reported in 2016, which is the SACE completion rate. That is because some students may complete who were not on the list in October. That is probably beside the point.

The member refers to a tool. There are a couple of pieces of work going on. The first is a body of work that was commissioned 1½ years ago, I reckon, which related to earning and learning, what is happening with those students who are not completing school in our public schools. We identified that a number of them may well go to the non-government sector and a number of them may well move states, but we are really interested in what the group is who might be dropping out of the system. That report is not far away. It is a significant report. It was undertaken by ACER, which won the opportunity to do that work.

The tool to track them is what is known as a unique student identifier. This is a national body of work, because one of the key reasons a lot of kids leave our schools is that they move state, and so it has to be a national body of work. It has come out of the Gonski reforms. It is one of the commitments we signed up to when we signed up to the national school funding reform agreement. It is one of the priorities that is being undertaken by the Education Council.

It is not a small body of work. It is progressing. I am looking forward to its implementation, but we are not there yet, we will not be there for a little while. We will not be there for, I suggest, a year or two. The Education Council will report on that after the Education Council meets. I am certain that had it not been for the pandemic, the Education Council would have been talking a lot more about this during this year. We have been talking about other things instead, largely.

I think it is the Schools Policy Group within the Education Council, under AESOC, which is the officials group in the Education Council, that is progressing that work. All states are committed to it. It was not something that was necessarily to be assumed would happen. There were some policy discussions about whether or not a unique student identifier had privacy implications that needed to be taken into consideration.

We thought being able to keep track of these students and help ensure they do not fall through the cracks was a massive benefit and we are really keen to see that work continue to progress at the national level. I do not think we will be here in 12 months with the USI, but I hope that we will have a really clear road map by then to when it can be implemented. The USI, to be clear, stands for unique student identifier.

Mr BOYER: Thank you, minister, for your answer. For the sake of clarity, I refer to a commitment that you made in *The Advertiser* on 5 July 2018 to collect better data to:

...determine the employment and training outcomes of students who leave early, to make sure they are not 'slipping through the net'.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Yes, there are two aspects to that. I think that might have been the media release, the preface, the ACER research work—I stand to be corrected on that—but certainly that large body of work is underway. In terms of a tool, the unique student identifier is the relevant piece of work. At that stage, that date, I believe, would have been prior to the signing of the National School Reform Agreement, so it was obviously a tool that was in discussion as a result of the Gonski report.

I will take that question on notice as well because I think there is some useful further information that I can probably provide. I am really keen to provide as much information as I can. I think it is good work, but I just want to make sure that I do not give information from the Education Council that has not yet been cleared for release.

Mr BOYER: My last question on that topic: just to be clear, though, the piece of work to which you refer in that media release that, I think you are right, then became the article from Tim Williams in *The Advertiser*, that is not complete yet?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The work has been completed. I think it is not far away from release.

Mr BOYER: I take you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 190, VET within secondary education. Minister, could you inform the committee if it is true that TAFE auspicings in secondary schools will no longer be taking place?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: In relation to this, there is consideration by the TAFE board of what they are doing to support schools. Their decisions, obviously, are also influenced by seeking to have their relevant standards being aligned with the directions from the national regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority. I am sure the member would understand the importance of that to the TAFE board.

When the member talks about auspicings, this is where TAFE has effectively a delivery of training services being undertaken under what is called the VET in Schools Agreement, often referred to as a VISA program, where the school can deliver the program under TAFE's name. ASQA, the national regulator, has had a bit to say about these VISA arrangements at the national level in recent times and so TAFE has indicated that they are going to reduce the number of schools where they are offering the VISA programs in 2021.

TAFE's position is that this ensures compliance with the Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015, which is administered by ASQA in an area of high risk, as identified by ASQA. There are 16 VISA arrangements that are qualified to be considered under an exceptional circumstance, based on a set of principles for a limited scope delivery in 2021.

This is where schools are in a position where TAFE has agreed to look at continuing delivery of the auspicings arrangement in those circumstances in those 16 schools. TAFE SA is currently working with schools who wish to take up the offer of a VISA arrangement in 2021 to ensure that the governance and compliance documentation is in place. A 2021 MoAA between TAFE and the Department for Education for VISA is in its final stages of development. TAFE SA are working with the department on that.

There is a range of work that that is going to produce, not just in relation to VISAs but also looking at what I think has been called stackable VET pre-vocational qualifications, participation in VETRO—there are a lot of abbreviations in this portfolio, as you guys are very well aware—which, if

you are not familiar with it, is VET Readiness Orientation. It is often something that you would offer to a student to give them a familiarity with some of the vocational opportunities.

It is really important to recognise that there is also the capacity—and this is in many ways a really desirable outcome for schools to be engaged with TAFE or other providers, but it is usually TAFE—for TAFE to deliver the certificate training directly, rather than having it done by school staff, bearing in mind that, while there are a number of our school staff who have outstanding industry experience, one of the requirements that VET providers are expected to ensure is that provision of certificate training is in line with the national training package and, as much as we can, is delivered by people with the relevant experience.

So the delivery of courses by TAFE directly is not necessarily about outcome. It can certainly provide a complication to a school that has an existing VISA and wishes to continue it.

Mr BOYER: I refer to the answer where you said it looks like there could be 16 schools offering the VISA program in 2021. If that is indeed to go ahead, that would be down from how many schools currently offering auspiced TAFE courses?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: It is a question that we can check with TAFE later today, if you like, rather than taking it on notice now.

Mr ELLIS: I have a question from Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 190, Investing expenditure summary. Minister, with a particular focus on my electorate of Narungga, can you update this committee on how local works are progressing and on the budget support for schools and preschools in my electorate?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I thank the member for Narungga for the question. It was indeed with the member for Narungga that I was able to travel around Yorke Peninsula, and to some of the sites on the Adelaide Plains as well, at the beginning of this year, prior to the first set of restrictions in relation to COVID. I am really pleased we were able to undertake those visits. We visited a lot of schools and preschools. I remember, in particular, that one of the preschools in the member's electorate—I want to say that it was the Kadina Preschool Centre—

Mr Ellis: Wallaroo.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Yes, the Wallaroo Preschool Centre, where we had a fantastic conversation with the director about what they would do if they had some extra support. I was so pleased that they got a \$20,000 grant, as did all the other preschools in the member's area. They are going to be able to do even more to lift the physical and built infrastructure of their preschools and deal with maintenance challenges with the new \$30,000 maintenance grant.

Whether it is Ardrossan, Bute, Central Yorke, Kadina, Mallala, Minlaton, Moonta, Point Pearce, Port Broughton, Port Wakefield, Snowtown, Wallaroo, Warooka or indeed Yorketown, all those preschools and early childhood centres in the member's electorate will benefit from that \$50,000 investment. The schools in the member's electorate will benefit as well. In the accelerated maintenance program that we announced as part of the first stimulus package, the Central Yorke, Minlaton, Port Broughton, Snowtown, Wallaroo Mines, Warooka and Yorketown schools all benefited from that.

There was a significant amount of work, particularly in the member's electorate. Some of it existed for years—projects had been identified as needing support from central office and were given the tick. They were identified by the facilities manager of the school and approved by Infrastructure, but for this work there was not yet a funding source that was enabled. Having those funding sources identified, with the \$25 million extra allocation of maintenance funding this year, enabled all those projects, some in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, to be able to be completed and to let those urgent maintenance works be done.

Now every single one of the public schools in the member's electorate is able to get these grants from between \$20,000, so schools like Moonta and Kadina will get the \$20,000 grants, because they are benefiting from capital works: \$3½ million at Kadina and \$4 million at Moonta. They will get the benefits of those \$20,000 grants, but other schools will be between \$30,000 and

\$100,000, depending on their size, whether they are secondary or primary and what other programs they have.

Those are going to be fantastic opportunities for the governing councils and the school principals to work together to identify what can be done, what needs to be done, and to engage local tradies and small businesses in providing work for them at a time when they have never needed it more.

Mr BOYER: Just to go back to TAFE auspicing, I have been able to find the figure in my notes. There are currently 66 schools which offer courses auspiced by TAFE but at their secondary school, taught by their own staff. I see that 29 are in the metropolitan area and 37 in the regions. Do you have a list, assuming that 16 schools will go on to teach the visa program, of what the 50 schools that will no longer offer those courses will be?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I have a couple of reflections. Again, TAFE may have possibly in their session this afternoon the detail the member is referring to. Schools do not just use TAFE to support their vocational training requirements, some use other non-government providers. I recall one example—I think it was 2018 it was brought to my attention, after the change in government—where there was a school that was seeking to offer some vocational training without a visa, and so those students ended up getting some SACE credits but not necessarily getting a certificate qualification, which was very unfortunate.

That arrangement can be complex. Indeed, schools sometimes make the decision to try out a different non-government provider, but that is actually up to the school level to determine what provider they would like to approach.

TAFE may well have made a specific decision in relation to a certain number of campuses, but I do not have that information here. As I say, there is a TAFE session this afternoon. I am happy to come back to it.

Mr BOYER: In relation to the same budget line, given that one of the appealing features of the auspicing process is that it is cheaper for schools because their own existing staff can teach the course, what will the cost implications potentially be for schools, I guess, and/or students wishing to take those courses, where they will not be able to do so in one of the 16 of the 66 schools left offering it on an auspiced basis?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I do not necessarily accept the basic premise of the question. Obviously, we have a key responsibility to all of our students, whether they are in schools or whether they are in VET training only, whether they are apprentices/trainees or whether they are people doing short courses or anything else, that the quality of the training be at a high level. We have a responsibility to those students, for their benefit so that they can get a job in the area that they have identified they want to undertake vocational education, and we have a responsibility to the businesses and industries who rely on those training provisions to be at a high quality in line with the national training package.

ASQA had some serious concerns about some of the work that TAFE was doing in 2017, not aligning necessarily with what was expected in the national training package. TAFE has done an enormous body of work in the last 2½ years to ensure that there are no questions over the quality of their delivery and the identification that their delivery is in line with the national training package.

That further provides confidence to businesses to engage TAFE. It provides surety to students that when they graduate or when they receive a parchment, a certificate, from TAFE, that it is recognised as being at the highest quality. ASQA, the same body, as we identified in the earlier answer, has some reservations about the use of the visa program, and so the TAFE board has made a decision, independent of me, independent of the Department for Education, to have a serious look at that. That has had some consequences in the way that their delivery model will be done in the future, and they are reducing the number of visa engagements.

I have been advised in relation to one of the earlier questions, which I do not think I took on notice, but nevertheless I will still provide it to the member. There are 49 visa arrangements—I assume that means with TAFE this year. So, yes, it is fewer. It is a number that is less, but it is also

critically important that all of those schools have the opportunity to engage in training arrangements. They do not get auspicing arrangements with TAFE that they had before.

What we want to ensure is that their students have access to a quality VET program that will give those students a certificate or a pathway that will help them get a job in the industry that they are desiring to be working in and that they do not have any question mark over whether their parchment is adequate or whether there is a quality question over the organisation delivering it. I think when it comes to TAFE SA and quality, it is understandable that the TAFE SA Board will have a focus on delivering those quality outcomes.

Mr BOYER: Minister, I accept your comments about the importance of quality courses. I am wondering whether or not, though, you can rule out that there will be an increase in costs to students under the new proposed model where I understand 16 schools will offer the visa program, down from the current number of 66.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Sorry, a cost to students?

Mr BOYER: Schools or students. I think the school at the moment largely absorbs it; that is the attractive thing for students. But if that is not how it is run anymore, then the cost of private training providers providing it must be absorbed somewhere.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Yes, this is not just a matter where the advisers I have here would be relevant. TAFE would be relevant. Indeed, the Department for Innovation and Skills is also relevant in this discussion. Of course, we have subsidised training lists that provide subsidised training for those industry areas that have been identified by the Department for Innovation and Skills, through the Training and Skills Commission's advice, as being in need.

So there are certainly significant incentives for young people, either at school or not, to undertake training, particularly in areas of skills need. This government's investment in this area is massive compared to other states, compared to previous years. It is in the hundreds of millions of dollars. What you are seeing is an uptake in skilled traineeships and apprenticeships in this state like no other jurisdiction. I think it might be Tasmania that is the only other state that saw an uptick at all in the last data, but South Australia's was much more significant because it is set against the backdrop of a national decline.

Mr MURRAY: On the subject of skills acquisitions, minister, can you provide us with further detail of the professional development being undertaken with the Orbis program? I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 198.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Yes. I thank the member for Davenport for the question. It is a real pleasure to be able to provide some information to the committee about the work being done by a group of people in the education department under the project's title, Orbis. It is also known as the Expert Teaching and Leadership Academy.

Orbis was established in the Department for Education in April 2019. Its goal is to provide exemplary learning for leaders and teachers, focusing its professional learning on systemwide priorities and support of world-class education. I want to identify that our educators, teachers and leaders have identified and passionately engaged with Orbis in the last year and a half.

On the first day of our unexpected lockdown last week, for example, teachers who were expecting to present their final applied learning projects at Orbis in Hindmarsh flexibly adjusted to Microsoft Teams and lasted the whole day online with their colleagues. One of them had their 18-month-old baby by their side. I can report, from having some experience, that this is a circumstance outside of the usual engagement that anyone in a workplace environment has to have, but increasingly more people in our community now have, and I want to commend that person for successfully completing that day online.

I think that is an example of the demonstration of the professionalism and the commitment our teachers have to developing their knowledge and their teaching practice so that they can have an even greater impact on their students' learning, regardless of what is happening around them. I think they would have been understood if they had not presented on that day for that professional

learning opportunity but they were really enthusiastic and appreciated what Orbis is able to do for their professional practice.

The way Orbis is operating is a deliberate shift in a new direction. Leaders and teachers are at their best when they apply contemporary research and their best evidence practices about teaching and learning in their daily work. They combine their experience with their understanding of evidence-based best practice and contemporary research.

The programs that Orbis offers provide leaders and teachers with purposeful, collaborative and empowering learning. Our expert providers make sure the research and best practice examples are contextualised and are built on the knowledge and expertise that our people already bring. Orbis's launch programs were designed to deliver on the department's system-wide focus on literacy and numeracy and instructional leadership in the first instance in line with school improvement reform.

The partnership was with the University of Melbourne and the Harvard Graduate School of Education and so Orbis focused on literacy R to 3 and 7 to 9, and numeracy R to 3 and instructional leadership. As a measure of Orbis's success, the number of spaces available for leaders and teachers tripled in the 2020 school year to 406 enrolments. COVID-19 did cause disruptions to program delivery with postponement during term 2 of 2020; however, leaders and teachers were provided the option to either continue their learning or postpone their participation in the program until 2021, supporting personal preferences and school community needs.

Earlier this year, Orbis also designed a thought leadership series. Educational experts provided actionable insights and reflections to support our leaders, given the rapidly changing times of 2020. Given the successful implementation of the launch programs, Orbis is now expanding to include preschool literacy, preschool numeracy, literacy 3 to 6, mathematics 3 to 5, and mathematics 7 to 9. In addition, Orbis will be expanding to support the transition of primary school teachers into high schools as part of the year 7 to high school project.

The suite of professional learning includes 7 to 9 curriculum programs; understanding adolescent learners, which is very important in that junior and secondary environment; literacy across the curriculum; and, fourthly, special option programs to support teachers new to teaching students with disabilities. This means that from 2021 Orbis will also have new expert providers, including Griffith University and Flinders University.

Supporting the growing demand for world-class professional learning, Orbis is currently looking to expand its footprint within the Education Development Centre because we have an expanding of programs and participants. I really want to congratulate all the staff at Orbis and all of the educators—teachers and leaders—who have engaged so successfully with the program this year and last since its installation in April last year.

Mr BOYER: Minister, Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 191, in relation to the upgrade, if I can call it that, of South Road. What impact will that upgrade of South Road have on Black Forest Primary School, Richmond Primary School, Warriappendi School or St Anthony's Primary School?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I thank the member for the question. Obviously, the member is familiar that when complete, expected in 2030, around 60 per cent of the Torrens to Darlington project will be underground tunnels and that will obviously significantly reduce the impact on the community, potentially schools as well, compared with what would have been the case had we not included tunnels in the design, as I think was the proposal a couple of years ago when we came to government.

There are those three government schools and the other site the member mentioned in the question. The Department for Education is obviously working at the moment with the Department for Infrastructure and Transport to mitigate as much as practicable any possible impacts on those schools. I do not have the details of those potential impacts, if any, at this stage.

It is fair to say that the hybrid-plus option being identified as the preferred way to deliver that Torrens to Darlington project will see any risk of that reduced. Indeed, I know that the Department for Infrastructure and Transport is doing a significant body of work in the coming months, engaging with the community and working on clearly answering some of those questions.

I can advise that that engagement with the community from DIT has begun with Warriappendi School, Richmond Primary School, Black Forest Primary School and also St Bernadette's, St Anthony's and St George's, but that should not necessarily be taken to assume that there will be impacts. I think there will be a significant body of work to be done in the coming months and more information will be provided as it becomes available.

Mr BOYER: On the same budget line, in light of that upgrade, will the capital works that are planned for Black Forest Primary School, which I think was allocated \$5 million under the Building Better Schools fund, continue or be paused or will any change be made in terms of the time line for the delivery of that project?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: At Black Forest Primary School, my understanding is that the scoping work for that is still underway. Obviously, there is a significant importance in undertaking that scoping work with the Torrens to Darlington project in mind to ensure that any new buildings, for example, would be constructed as part of the works located on a section of the site away from South Road to reduce any potential impacts of the project.

The time line is not necessarily problematic just yet. We would imagine that there will be work between the school, the Department for Education and the Department for Infrastructure and Transport, and that will take place. Again, if there is further information that comes out in the course of those discussions, I am sure we will be keen to share it with the public and the local school community there as much as possible. We are very excited about the possible improvements to Black Forest Primary School, and I think the school will be, too.

The CHAIR: Members, the time agreed and allocated for the examination of school education has expired. Therefore, there being no further questions, I declare the examination of the proposed payments for the agency portfolio of school education completed. If there are any changes to advisers that need to occur, if you could please do that now, that would be appreciated.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The change to—

The CHAIR: I have some words first, sorry, minister. The current time period, 3.45 to 4.15, is related to the portfolio of early years and child development. The minister appearing, again, is the Minister for Education. The estimates of payments are as outlined earlier for the Department for Education and administered items. I advise that the proposed payments remain open for the examination and refer members to the relevant Agency Statements. I call on the minister to make a brief statement if he so wishes in regard to this portfolio.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The only comment I will make is to thank our early childhood educators, especially for the outstanding work they do in relation to this section. I thanked them earlier in conjunction with the school educators for the extraordinary work they have done all year, and certainly this area is no less. The only change in personnel we have here is that Caroline Croser-Barlow, who is the executive director, early years and child development, now sits at the table and Rick Persse, the chief executive, has taken a step back.

The CHAIR: I invite the lead speaker for the opposition to make a brief statement if he so wishes in regard to this portfolio.

Mr BOYER: There is no opening statement from me.

The CHAIR: There is no opening statement; therefore, we call on questions from members. The member for Wright.

Mr BOYER: Minister, are you in the process of privatising the family day care and respite care programs?

Mr ELLIS: What budget line, Chair?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: That is alright, we can just take it as a general one, I am sure. I am not too fussed.

Mr BOYER: I can give you one: Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 193.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: To be very clear, our family day care educators are not public servants.

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: Members! The minister has the call.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: It is important to be really clear. Our family day care educators in South Australia are not public servants, they are small business operators. There is a Public Service unit that provides coordination and administrative support to them, but they are not public servants. Their service is provided by non-public servants now. It was provided by non-public servants when the Labor Party was in power.

The unit in the Public Service that provides that administrative support is unique in South Australia. Other states do not have that administrative support function provided by a government unit. It is provided in other jurisdictions by the non-government sector or by local government.

Last year, I think in June or July, the first half of last year as I understand, we announced that we would investigate whether that was an appropriate administrative oversight group that should stay in government or whether it would be better provided by the non-government sector. We are exploring that. That process has been underway for more than a year, and I am looking forward to receiving further advice at the end of that process.

Mr BOYER: On the same budget line, what is proposed to happen to the unit in the department if this market engagement process, which you have commenced, continues?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: To be clear, in relation to the public servants they have every protection of their employment that would ever exist. Whether or not that unit will have a function or purpose really depends significantly on decisions that are still to be made based on advice that is still to be received.

Mr BOYER: So are you saying, minister, that even if it were to be private providers providing family day care and respite care, which I understand is not currently the case in South Australia—

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: No, that is incorrect. Family day care itself—the people who are family day carers, who are looking after the children, are private providers and have been for years.

Mr BOYER: Are they all managed under that unit in the department?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: There is an administrative oversight unit in the department, which is what we are talking about.

Mr BOYER: On the same budget line, could you perhaps then elaborate on what exactly the change will be if the market engagement process runs its course and, I guess, is approved?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I think, and I will take advice if my summary is incorrect, the market engagement process will identify whether or not a non-government provider or a group of non-government providers—and as I say, interstate I think this is councils, this is NGOs, charities in a number of cases which provide administrative oversight to groups of family day carers. If that arrangement is recommended as a result of there being appropriate people in South Australia, then it will be considered by government. We are not at that stage yet.

Mr BOYER: On the same budget line again, how many staff are in that unit which manages the current providers in the department?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I do not have the exact number, so out of an abundance of caution I will take that on notice.

Mr BOYER: On the same budget line again, am I right in assuming, then, that if this market engagement process goes all the way through, family day care and respite care services will be offered exclusively by non-government providers?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Again, the services are currently only offered by non-government providers. Every single one of those family day carers is a non-government provider

that has a government unit that provides them with some administrative oversight. They are not public servants.

Mr BOYER: Just to be clear, minister, are you saying that currently they are non-government providers?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: There is a government oversight unit, so the provider of the overarching service, if you like, is a unit within the Department for Education. The staff are not public servants. They are, indeed, non-government private operators, if you like—small businesses, if you like—each of whom looks after children in their family day care arrangement. I might ask the executive director if she wants to describe it in any way that she thinks would be appropriate.

Dr CROSER-BARLOW: Yes, just to add to that that the department is the approved provider of the 12 services but that the care is provided by educators and respite care providers, who are independent contractors in a relationship with the department.

Mr BOYER: Thank you to you both for your answers. Referring back to your previous answer, minister, I understand, though, that the letter that was sent to parents who currently access the service and to providers says:

Yesterday I announced the findings from the family day care market engagement process which found there was sufficient market interest in a transfer of family day care and respite care services to a non-government provider. I do not understand how that is consistent with the answer you gave. Can you explain how it might be?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The point I am making is that if there is a confusion it is in the use of the word 'provider'. When I talk about the provider of the family day care, I think of a person who is providing family day care to a child. Those people are, as the executive director, Caroline, described, private contractors. They are non-government operators and they are all collectively administered under one umbrella which is a unit in the Department for Education for the purposes of reporting to, I assume, the ESB. They are the approved provider at that level, so it is the administrative oversight of all of those private contractors.

The letter to parents that went out—I do not have a copy of it here but I am happy to have a look at it—I imagine would have been referring to the provision of care to the child of that parent, and there will be no change to that. The approved provider in terms of who administers and supports those private providers would transfer in that circumstance from the Department for Education to a non-government provider or providers.

Mr BOYER: So they are currently non-government and they are being transferred to non-government. Something is inconsistent in the answer—

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: There is a unit within the Department for Education that manages and supports a range of private contractors across South Australia. That is as it is now and as it has been for a number of years. Certainly, it is how it was for many years before the change in government. Family day carers are non-government private contractors, private providers of service to those children. They are not public servants. There is a unit in the Department for Education that provides them with administrative support, a level of oversight, and that unit is the provider from the point of view of the Education Standards Board.

Mr BOYER: When the letter that I referred to talks about a transfer of respite care services to a non-government provider, are you saying that it is actually referring to the unit being transferred or the actual people who offer family day care and respite care?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The service that is currently provided by the unit, that being oversight and support for those family day carers, those family day carers already being not public servants and effectively private contractors.

Mr BOYER: What will happen to the existing providers who offer the family day care and respite care programs in their home?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Instead of having administrative oversight and support from a group of people who are public servants working in the education department, their administrative oversight and support would come from a non-government provider, as it does in every other state.

Mr BOYER: So nothing else will change if this is to go ahead, other than that, for the providers, I mean, the people who are offering the actual respite care and family day care in their homes?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I will take it on notice because it will really probably be informed by whether there is information in the process that is currently underway that might inform that. By the time responses are ready for estimates we might actually have substantially more information and I can give you a fuller response to that. But substantially the main change is the logo on the business card of whoever is providing them with that administrative oversight.

Mr BOYER: Has an approach to market commenced or will it commence? At what stage is this transfer of services currently?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I am going to ask the chief operating officer of the education department, Julieann Riedstra, to potentially provide a response to that one.

Ms RIEDSTRA: We did a market sounding exercise to see that there was interest from the market in October last year. Things were then paused following March 2020, and we are now looking to go ahead with our approach to market, based on that original market sounding, but we are going back to confirm that that interest still exists.

Mr BOYER: Thank you, Ms Riedstra, for your answer. Minister, I guess my question now is, in light of the answers provided by you, Dr Croser-Barlow and Ms Riedstra, why is the department doing this? What is the benefit or upside in these changes?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: We want to make sure that every service we provide using taxpayer resources to children and young people in South Australia is of high quality—good value certainly—and giving the best outcomes for our children and young people. No other jurisdiction in Australia has felt that this aspect of the service is most appropriately delivered by public servants in a Public Service unit. That is not to say they are not doing a fantastic job—they may well be. We were interested in exploring what opportunities there are in the non-government sector, and I am looking forward to further information coming forward.

Mr BOYER: On the same budget line, what deficiencies are there in the current respite care and family day care program?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I refer the member to my previous answer. What benefits are there to be identified, what deficiencies are there? They are the two sides of the same coin. I have outlined what we saw as the potential benefits, and if we do not identify benefits that leads to a different outcome than if we do.

Mr BOYER: I will come back to that. I do not think you did explain what the benefits are. I think you said that you will explore what they might be. It sounds to me like you are saying that, if there are no deficiencies at least that you are aware of, you are simply going out there just in case somebody comes back and shows you a better system. You do not know whether or not it exists and you do not know why.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Sorry, is there a question there?

Mr BOYER: Can you give me a practical example of a benefit that there might be to the agency by making these changes?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I have answered that question.

Mr BOYER: No, you have not. Minister, same budget line, same topic. What will the benefit be to private providers? Why would they want to take over the role that is currently performed by the agency in terms of managing the providers on the ground?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: That is a matter for private providers. We went to check with the market if there was an interest and, subsequent to delays related to COVID, I think we are checking again.

Mr BOYER: Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 193. Can the minister rule out any increasing costs for family day care or respite care services as paid for by families who use those services?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: There are cost increases from time to time, whether it is in government or non-government administrative oversight. If there is anything specifically relevant to this matter, I will take it on notice and provide a response.

Mr BOYER: On the same reference, Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 193, can the minister or perhaps Dr Croser-Barlow tell us when the last increase to the cost of family day care and/or respite care was?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Dr Croser-Barlow informs me that we do not have that right here, so we will take it on notice.

Mr BOYER: On the same budget reference, does the minister know how much an hour respite care and/or family day care currently costs a family?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I was looking at that a moment ago. It is between \$7 and \$12 per hour per child.

Mr BOYER: On the same budget line, does the minister have an opinion on whether or not that is a fair and reasonable price or whether it should be less or whether it should be more?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: It is less than I am paying. I think it is absolutely understandable that families have price in mind when they are looking at these things. In circumstances surrounding families' choice in relation to the service provision they choose, cost will always be one of those things, and long day care providers have a varying range of prices. There is a commonwealth's support process that also ensures that families in higher levels of need have higher levels of support from the commonwealth.

Mr BOYER: I refer to the same budget line again. My understanding of the way that the current system is funded—and I am happy to be corrected if I am wrong—is that the NDIS provides a base rate to the agency and then the agency passes some of that on by way of hourly rate to the providers. I accept that you may not know that detail yourself, but is that correct?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The member is, I assume, specifically talking about respite care rather than broader family care?

Mr BOYER: Yes, respite care, not family care.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I will take the question on notice so I can provide a longer and more detailed response to the member than I would otherwise provide.

Mr BOYER: I repeat the budget line again: Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 193. Was there anything in the in-market engagement process that made it clear to the potential private providers who have expressed an interest in taking over the management of the scheme that the current hourly rate must stay as it is, or could not be increased, or could not be increased above a certain level?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I will take that on notice.

Mr BOYER: I refer to the same budget line. I suspect this will be taken on notice as well, and that is fine: what is there to prevent a private provider keeping the full base rate—and I understand that is something like \$52—from the NDIS for respite care and then, I guess, passing on the cost to families at the end to make up for that?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Again, to ensure that I can provide a full and accurate response, I will take it on notice.

Mr BOYER: I refer to the same budget line again. Is a concern about the risk of managing kids on private premises, and also vulnerable kids with a disability in respite care programs, part of the consideration in terms of the department making a call to market to see if a private provider might take on the management of the system?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I think I answered this question several times before. We want to look after the interests of our children and young people. We want to ensure that we explore

every opportunity to provide the highest level of government support to those children and young people. If that government support is best delivered by funding the non-government oversight of people who are already non-government contractors, providers of service, then that is the path we will go down. It is about the kids.

Mr BOYER: I take you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 195, the rural care program. Is there any money in this budget to address the shortfall of places at the early learning centre (ELC) at Kingston South East?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I might take that one on notice. I remember visiting the Kingston Community School with the member for MacKillop, and this was certainly a matter for discussion with the local group of parents. I believe people from council and the school were there. I am just not sure off the top of my head where that is up to, and I do not have that level of detail in my pack, so I will take that on notice.

Mr BOYER: I refer to the same budget line, which is Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 195, the rural care program. Is the minister aware of what the waitlist is for a space at the early learning centre at Kingston South East at the moment?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I will take that on notice in the context of the last one.

Mr BOYER: I refer to the same budget line again. Does the Kingston South East ELC already utilise a two-worker delivery model, which I understand from elsewhere in these budget papers has helped to cater for previously unmet need in other locations?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: We will see if we can find out an answer to that before the end of the session. If we do not get back with clarity on that, I will take that on notice, but if we can get an answer before the end of the session, then I will provide it.

Mr BOYER: I refer to the same budget line again. My understanding is that there was some suggestion at a time that if there was money left over from the STEM and Building Better Schools builds at Kingston Community School some of that money might potentially be repurposed to create a bigger footprint for the ELC and to co-locate it to the community school. Do you know if any consideration has been given to that, and whether or not there were actually any funds left over from those two fantastic Labor projects?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I am pretty sure the taxpayers were the ones who were paying. I do not believe that there was room in the scope of works for the ELC to be included in terms of the priorities identified by the school.

Mr BOYER: Minister, I understand that part of the concern at the moment and part of the reason that there is such a waitlist at the Kingston Early Learning Centre is due to the footprint of the building there and they can only accommodate a certain number of children. Are you aware of any plans to increase the size of the current footprint of the Kingston South-East ELC to accommodate more children?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I will ask Dr Croser-Barlow to respond, and in doing so I will pre-emptively suggest that we will check your answer against the earlier questions in case some of the information we have just discovered does answer any of those earlier questions too.

Dr CROSER-BARLOW: As I am sure you are aware, the rural care model is in place where there is limited demand for child care. What we have seen in Kingston has happened in a number of communities where there is an increase in demand for child care that suggests that you could have a viable, more normal childcare operating arrangement, like a community childcare arrangement.

The department is in conversations with the community around supporting them to investigate that particular option. That would be the appropriate pathway. Rural care is really when you talk about the one worker or two-worker model. Rural care is really about providing for it where it is not financially viable under the current commonwealth arrangements.

In response to your previous question, I am advised that there were 48 children on the waiting list for a place in the rural care placement as of a month ago, and I am still seeking advice in relation to the number of workers.

Mr BOYER: Minister, can I take you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 193, targets, regarding no jab no play. Did the minister seek an exemption from the commencement of the no jab no play policy for government preschool sites?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Yes, and, indeed, I think this has had some fairly significant public ventilation. The advice from my department was that there is a range of issues that needed to be worked through in implementing the legislation across the department's 383 preschool services. Notably, the department was looking to develop a systematic ICT solution, incorporating data sharing from the commonwealth Australian Immunisation Register. This would have removed the need for manual checking of records at site level and would ensure that the provision of records was not a barrier to access to preschool for vulnerable children.

While the broadscale exemption sought was not supported, the Chief Public Health Officer and her staff have worked very closely with the department to resolve issues around vulnerable children who may be immunised but whose families are struggling for a variety of reasons to provide their records. I think these are a group of children who nobody—I do not want to speak on behalf of the member, but I suspect that it was not the purpose of anybody in the parliament who voted for the legislation to ensure that the paperwork was the only thing; the purpose was to ensure the children were vaccinated.

Where we believe that the children were vaccinated but the paperwork might be deficient, we did not want those children to be excluded. The department's advice was therefore to seek exemption, I think for the remainder of the year, to ensure that those children would not have their preschool interrupted.

The department has also implemented the first phase of an ICT solution that allows preschool services to record and report children's immunisation status through the early years system. I imagine in future the acronym EYS in this context will presumably pass into common discussion in these discussions. EYS, the early years system, is one of our ICT solutions.

A fully automated solution requires further work with the commonwealth regarding data sharing, and I understand that conversations with the commonwealth, Education and Health are underway. Given that there was not a broadscale exemption, as I think has had some public ventilation, we invested some funds in supporting preschools to enable them to do some of that work manually. So there was effectively release time for directors, although some of them might have used that funding for purposes that served their site better to enable them to support families to try to find their documentation.

Indeed, there are some small cohorts of students who we believe have been immunised but who are still unable to identify records. I think this might include students on the lands, students who are coming into or coming out of guardianship, where exemptions are still the order of the day, to ensure that their wellbeing needs are not diminished in any way.

The CHAIR: With that answer, we have reached the conclusion of the agreed time for the portfolio of early years and child development. There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the portfolio agency of early years and child development completed.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: While people are moving from the former session, can I provide some further information?

The CHAIR: You can.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I can advise that Kingston is a three-worker model. That might save one of the questions taken on notice earlier.

Mr BOYER: Thank you.

Departmental Advisers:

Prof. M. Westwell, Chief Executive, SACE Board of South Australia

Mr R. Persse, Chief Executive, Department for Education

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

Dr P. Smith, Executive Director, Strategic Policy and External Relations, Department for Education.

The CHAIR: With everybody now in place, we move to the proposed payments in relation to the portfolio of administered items under the Department for Education, and the minister appearing is of course the Minister for Education. The estimate payments were outlined earlier today for the Department for Education and administered items for the Department for Education. I advise that the proposed payments remain open for examination and refer members to the relevant Agency Statements. I call on the minister, should he wish to make a brief statement in regard to the particular portfolio of administered items. I note for the committee an agreed time frame of 4.15pm to 4.45pm.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I would like to express my thanks to not just people at the SACE Board but people in all the other units, agencies and groups that are administered by the education department—relationships with whom I am very grateful to have. Their work across a broad range of areas, whether it be in youth arts or oversight bodies, or indeed SACE, is exceptionally important.

I want to leave as much time as possible for questions, so instead of a long opening statement going into detail about all the wonderful things they do, I will instead advise that I have, sitting to my right, Martin Westwell, Chief Executive of the SACE Board of South Australia. Behind me, I have Chris Bernardi, Chief Financial Officer and Rick Persse, Chief Executive, both of the Department for Education. Behind them is Dr Peta Smith, who is the Executive Director of Strategic Policy and External Relations in the Department for Education.

The CHAIR: Lead speaker for the opposition, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr BOYER: I do not; thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: With that, are there any questions from the committee? The member for Wright.

Mr BOYER: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, minister and Professor Westwell. Can I begin with Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 188. Perhaps I should have said this in an opening statement, but firstly I acknowledge the incredible amount of work the SACE Board does to run a very big program of exams. However, I think it is incumbent on me to ask about the status of the investigation into the psychology exam and what the investigation might have shown about how the problem occurred.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I will invite the chief executive, Professor Westwell, to respond.

Prof. WESTWELL: Our priority has been on making sure that the year 12s for this year will get their results on time this year. A preliminary investigation has identified that a video within the psychology exam, the bit rate—the streaming rate of the video—interacted with the system in such a way that it slowed the exam down. What that meant was that every student, regardless of whether they were looking at the video or not, was affected in the exam, and that is why we called it to a halt. That is the position that we are in at the moment. We were able to do enough investigation to determine that the subsequent electronic exams would run without problem, and that turned out to be the case.

Mr BOYER: Thank you for that answer. I refer to the same budget line. I guess this may be a question for Professor Westwell or you, the minister, if you prefer. What reassurances can you give us about making sure that something like this does not happen at future exams?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I thank the member for the question. On the day, I encouraged Professor Westwell to provide me with advice. I think there were two examinations still to come, and I believe late in the day the SACE Board made a determination that they were confident things could go ahead. Again, I think that Professor Westwell and the SACE Board have been up-front with the people of South Australia right from the start on this. I rely on their advice. I am going to ask Professor Westwell to again provide any further response to that question so that the advice that he

will provide me is exactly the same, I promise you, as that which he will provide to the broader community right now.

Prof. WESTWELL: There will be lessons learned from what happened with the psychology exam. What we are finding is that, being innovators within this space in Australia—the SACE Board really have been leading with electronic exams—there are some risks. We do all we can to ameliorate those risks, but we will certainly take the lessons from this and apply those. We were able to do that in quite a short period of time for the remaining two electronic exams.

Mr BOYER: Fantastic. Thank you, Professor Westwell, for your answer. Minister, are you contemplating or is the SACE Board contemplating putting in place any kind of old-fashioned, so to speak, backups in the future? Do we think that is necessary just in case we get a situation like this arising again?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I think this is something that we certainly discussed last year when, I think, it was three exams. Professor Westwell and I had a couple of discussions. It was ultimately agreed that there would be paper and pen backups for those examinations. They were not needed in the end. There was some cost to that, of course, because we are talking about over 100 sites where secondary examinations take place. There are couriers, secrecy provisions; there is a complication to all of this. The psychology exam is one where there was a video file, and it is impossible to provide that examination in the same way using just a pen and paper backup.

One of the advantages of electronic exams is that you are able to engage with the student in the assessment of their learning in a much more real way. You are able to test them on something that is presented to them right then and there in an interaction which is relevant in the real world, so that is one of the benefits of electronic exams. It obviously elevates the risk because you cannot just replace that with a paper and pen backup right away. I will invite Professor Westwell, if there is further information to add to that. Particularly part of your question was whether the SACE Board was giving consideration for future years to any of that. I will leave it to Professor Westwell.

Prof. WESTWELL: The reason why we are doing electronic exams is to have better assessment—for students to have assessment that looks like the work they have done at school and to look like what will be expected of them in the workplace and in university. Being able to push forward with electronic exams means that we can do things differently, we can do assessment differently. It is very difficult to provide a paper backup for that, so we are not planning on providing paper backup for the future because we would essentially then end up with two exams: the paper exam and the electronic exam.

Dr CLOSE: I have just one SACE question. What is the ambition for other subjects also having electronic exams, and will we get to a place where that is the only form of examination in the future?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I will ask Professor Westwell.

Prof. WESTWELL: We have always taken the position that we will work with the community to introduce exams, so we are not rushing to do exams for the sake of it. What we are looking to do over this year is to work with the community on another three or four exams. They might be languages exams, for example, with the success of the Indonesian continuers that we had this year. For other examinations such as mathematics and some of the science exams that have symbolic language, we are not going to rush into using computers just for the sake of it. Those exams might take a little bit longer, so we want to take it one step at a time to get better assessment.

Mr BOYER: I have questions on the Education Standards Board.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I will get Peta to come forward. I do not have any particular advisers on the Education Standards Board, but we will see how we go. Dr Peta Smith now joins me at the table.

Mr BOYER: Budget Paper 3, Volume 1, page 193, highlights. My understanding is the Education Standards Board is the new name for what was easily the world's worst acronym.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Yes, it is definitely the one you are thinking of.

Mr BOYER: Yes.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Three registrars brought into one and a very long name that we refer to as the Education Standards Board.

Mr BOYER: A very wise move. How many departmental preschools have been assessed and rated by the Education Standards Board to date?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I will have to take that one on notice.

Mr BOYER: What was the target for assessments in the last financial year and was that target reached?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Let me double-check quickly if I have information on that, but I suspect I do not have it readily here. Let me provide a little bit of information about the board's work this year and perhaps, if it does not cover everything, we will provide further information having sought it from the board.

The board regulates 1,343 early childhood education care services in South Australia across metropolitan, rural and remote locations. As at 30 September this year, there were 436 approved providers, with 374 operating a single service. There were 1,222 services approved to provide education and care under the national law. There were 121 residual services comprised of in-home care, rural and mobile care, and occasional care services. These services are regulated under a modified version of the national law.

As at 30 September, 95 per cent of eligible services in South Australia have been assessed and rated. The board is responsible for the registration and review of registration of all government and non-government schools as well. You were asking about early childhood settings, though, were you not, sir?

Mr BOYER: Yes.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Just early childhood, so I will skip the schools. I would identify further that the independence of the board as a regulatory authority is greatly valued by the community—and I am sure members would agree—for its consistent approach to approving and rating early childhood services and registering and reviewing the schools across the government and non-government education care sectors.

Chris Chatburn is very well regarded. She was appointed, I think, when the member for Port Adelaide was the minister. It might even have been her predecessor. The current chair of the board, Ann Doolette, was appointed to the board around 2018, either just before or just after the election. I am grateful for her leadership of the board and the work they are doing.

Mr BOYER: Minister, if I could take you now to Budget Paper 5, page 36, Non-government School Loans Scheme. How many applications were received under this grant line in the past financial year?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I will take that on notice because I am not 100 per cent sure whether all of the applications go directly to me or to a unit in Treasury. I have a feeling that it is the latter. I certainly have a role when the proposals are at approval stage, as the former minister would have had. But whether I have direct line of sight over all of those applications or if they get filtered through Treasury first, out of an abundance of caution, I will take that on notice and bring back an answer.

Mr BOYER: Same budget line, Budget Paper 5, page 36, Non-government School Loans Scheme. Were any applications knocked back or denied? If so, for what reasons?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Again, I will include that in the answer I am seeking to the previous question. I will take that on notice alongside it.

Mr BOYER: Budget Paper 5, page 37 as to non-government school capital grants. How many applications were received in the last financial year? If you have some answers, I will pause here.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The first thing I would say in relation to the Catholic education sector is that half of the quantum of money goes to Catholic Education SA and half to independent schools. You would be very familiar with a historical fact we have in South Australia: there are about the same number of independent schools as Catholic schools. It certainly makes for a certain level of administrative convenience in government.

Catholic Education makes all the decisions in relation to their loans in compliance with the process set out, and indeed they make recommendations and determine the funding allocations. Last year, for example, Catholic Education approved grants, including St Francis Xavier's Regional Catholic School at Wynn Vale—a school I imagine the member is familiar with—which received \$2 million for new classrooms and ancillary facilities.

St Joseph's Memorial School at Norwood received \$470,000 for a performing arts centre, indoor multipurpose space and library. St John the Baptist Catholic School at Plympton received \$2.4 million for a refurbishment of classroom block and flexible learning spaces. St Joseph's School at Kingswood received \$303,937 for flexible learning areas, outdoor learning and school entry and administration areas.

St Catherine's School at Stirling received \$300,000 for a multipurpose hall, staffroom and learning areas. It was a real pleasure to see that school recently with the member for Heysen and the archbishop. Can I say the archbishop's homily during the service dedicating that was just stunning and showed a really significant understanding of the importance of education within the Catholic Church's mission and the importance of looking after the needs of every child in the system. I had no reason to doubt that he would have such an approach, but his homily I think was really touching and I am sure everyone there appreciated it.

The Tenison Woods Catholic Primary School at Richmond received \$131,500. Those were the Catholic schools grants. Together with some administration costs, the total funding is up to \$5,778,437. Of course, \$5.5 million was the original one and it has been indexed.

In relation to independent schools, almost all of our independent schools apply for and receive a grant according to a model that we develop in partnership with the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA). I can provide a list to the member if the member would like me to, but it would take up more than the rest of the time we have available now to read them out.

Mr BOYER: On the same budget line, Budget Paper 5, page 37, were any applications under that capital grants program knocked back or rejected for any reason and, if so, were reasons provided that you can share with the committee?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I will take that on notice to double-check.

Mr BOYER: A final question on this little part here, minister: have any changes been made to the assessment criteria for that grants line since March 2018?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I am pretty sure there was a change. I think there might have been an issue with whether it was applicable to non-government early childhood services. I have a feeling the member for Port Adelaide and I might even have had a discussion about one, and I do not remember being certain at the time as to whether there was a non-government childcare provider in I do not know if it was in the member's electorate or the electorate of a member who had approached her as the shadow minister at the time.

I remember that triggered a conversation with AISSA at the time on whether or not it was a program designed for schools only or for the broader non-government sector. My recollection is that we had to specify that it was just for schools. I will bring back further information to the committee if I am incorrect there, but I am pretty sure that was a change made to clarify that it was what I suspect the original intention of the program always was. I do not think that was a change in outcome.

I have a feeling there might have been some increased flexibility as to what program grants could be for. I think that in the first iteration there was a discussion about whether it was just for STEM projects or environmental projects. I think we created extra flexibility for schools. It is possible there were other changes.

Mr BOYER: Could I take you to Budget Paper 5, page 37, non-government/state government funding arrangements. If you want to change your personnel, I am happy to pause for a second, if you wish.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I have a feeling that it is still Peta.

Mr BOYER: What effect is the transition to the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) methodology for funding of non-government schools going to have in terms of state government funding?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: It is a fairly complex question. It has been a body of work to try to have an outcome that best serves the needs of our students and our schooling systems and is fair. There are a couple of impacts that we looked at together at once. One was the move that the commonwealth had made to a Direct Measure of Income in assessing parental capacity to pay.

For those who are unfamiliar with the context, when we have our national school funding agreements that fund non-government schools—and, indeed, fund government schools—the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) identifies how much you would like to fund them, then the commonwealth is on the hook for a certain amount and the state is on the hook for a certain amount. We have agreed to about 22 per cent of that, but it is less whatever the parental capacity to pay is determined to be.

Since the beginning of the commonwealth education act, that parental capacity to pay has been determined by a measure that is not going to be used anymore. Effectively, it was based on socio-economic status data from the suburbs people were living in. The commonwealth determined and changed their legislation to what the member referred to as the Direct Measure of Income. I am going through this because it is really complicated and I think most people are not familiar with the details. It is really difficult to describe why you make a decision without a little of the detail that the shadow minister and I, school principals and system leaders might know but that others might not necessarily.

That Direct Measure of Income effectively says that a parent's capacity to contribute should be measured by how much income they have, and that is best measured by their tax return. That transition has been made, but schools have been budgeting based on what they expected to get. For some schools it is a bigger change, and for some schools it is a lesser change. For some schools it is a positive change, and for some schools it is a negative change. At the same time, we also have some historical arrangements in relation to the funding of non-government schools as to where they are at that 22 per cent of the SRS.

For a range of really hard to grapple with historical accidents, we have some schools that were riding along at maybe 16 or 17 per cent of SRS that were slowly, slowly getting to 22 per cent and some schools that were at 25 per cent or 26 per cent. Some schools that were dramatically higher than that for no obvious historical reason were slowly, slowly coming down, but it would have taken a very long time under a model that had them getting growth every year in funding.

I think there was an understanding that they would have growth of about 3 per cent per year, then whatever was left in the bucket of 22 per cent for independent schools would be applied to bring everyone closer to 22 per cent. As I understand it, that is the agreement that the department was in with AISSA up until this year for many years. Catholic Education is much easier, they get 22 per cent and then they apply the adjustments within their schooling system.

When we determined that we needed to make a decision on whether we were going to join the commonwealth and move to DMI, the Direct Measure of Income, for calculating parents' capacity to contribute, because that would have significant benefits for some schools and detriments to other schools and their funding, it seemed that this was a time where we absolutely had to take steps to ensure that we could reach that 22 per cent for all the non-government schools.

That 22 per cent is a complex measure, too, because in regard to parents' capacity to contribute, their income tax changes from year to year. It is also complex because schools have a budget for the coming year. If there is a dramatic change, that is problematic. So we have put in place a three-year transition. We are moving to a DMI outcome. Within those three years, we are moving to having that 22 per cent for almost all the schools.

There are a couple of our schools that have a particular purpose supporting students with disability where we have some extra supports, because they were amongst the schools that were doing better than 22 per cent before. They do not have the benefits of the broad system that either the public school system or even Catholic Education have that provides those economies of scale to support services for those schools, so we are being more generous in the transition for those schools.

Indeed, it is fair to say that that three-year transition provides a little bit of long-term opportunity for schools to plan for that, but in three years' time we will have the fairest, in my view, model of how to distribute that, and certainly the intention I think, of those that designed the process.

Mr BOYER: Will the government be looking at drawing on that DMI data to inform its assessment of where funding under the no-interest loans and additional capital grants schemes might direct its money in the future?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I do not think so.

Mr BOYER: Budget Paper 5, page 38, review of regional school bus services. Can the minister give the committee an explanation of how the money the government has set aside—I think it is \$2 million—will be spent and whether or not he believes it will meet all the let us say unmet need out there?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I thank the member for the question. This is a process that has taken some time. It certainly took longer than I ideally would have liked. I am certain that there are a number of families at Catholic schools and independent schools in regional South Australia who would have liked an earlier outcome, and to them I can only say that I am really pleased to be part of a government that has now acted to provide some further support for families in that situation.

It is fair to say that the review of the government bus services provided a range of pieces of information that were useful in determining a positive outcome. The cost, I think, of some of the proposals would have, certainly in my view—and it is the government's view—not provided the benefit that, given a particular cost, you might have hoped for. So it was determined by the government that the best way to provide support for those families was through an alternative approach, which is these grants, so \$1 million per year to Catholic Education where they are able, for those regions that have this significant challenge, to apply it in a way that will help.

It may or may not fix all of the problems, but I have had such incredibly strong feedback from Catholic Education that it will provide a massive improvement to a range of those systems. And there is an alternative arrangement being put in place, again because independent schools provide many of the supports for services in the regions. They do not, again, have the system approach that Catholic Education does, but by a grants process that they are working on they are able to provide some support to their schools to be able to deliver an improved service for their families.

Dr CLOSE: So this money that is going to assist with transport to non-government schools and is in addition to the 22 per cent of SRS that they receive, is there any requirement to report on its use for transporting students around? What is the acquittal of this money?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Obviously, there is going to be some detail in that question, so I will take it on notice and I will bring back the strong detail to ensure that the committee can have access to that information. There are about 60 non-government schools located in the region. I do not have the breakdown of which ones are Catholic schools and which ones are independent schools. Our relationship in terms of the funding starts with Catholic Education SA and the Association of Independent Schools of SA.

Dr CLOSE: Minister, are there any shortfalls in government school transport arrangements for students in regional areas, and has there been any additional money put to remedy those?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I am not sure that the relevant advisers for public school transport are on the floor of the chamber. With the Chair's indulgence, I might ask the chief operating officer to make a return visit to the chamber. Policy settings for government school students that were in place when the member was the minister remain the policy settings and remain fully funded to those settings.

The CHAIR: With that answer, the time allocated and agreed for the portfolio of administered items has now expired and, therefore, there are no further questions and I declare the examination of the portfolio administered items complete.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr D. Coltman, Chief Executive, TAFE SA.

Mr R. Persse, Chief Executive, Department for Education.

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

Ms C. Feszczak, Director, Further Education and Pathways, Department for Education.

The CHAIR: The estimates committee will now move to examination of TAFE SA. With everyone in place we move to the examination of proposed payments in regard to the portfolios of TAFE SA and higher education. The minister appearing is the Minister for Education. The estimate of payments, as described earlier today, relates to the Department for Education and administered items for the Department for Education. I am advised that the proposed payments remain open for examination and I refer members to the appropriate Agency Statements. I call on the minister now to make a brief statement if he so wishes, and to introduce his advisers.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I thank the Chair for the invitation. I have been joined at the table by David Coltman, Chief Executive, TAFE SA; directly behind me is Clare Feszczak, Director of Further Education and Pathways, Department for Education; to her right is Rick Persse, Chief Executive; and behind her is Chris Bernardi, Chief Financial Officer.

Again, as educators across South Australia who have worked very hard throughout the year, in what have been very trying and unusual circumstances, so too have the people who work for our—I was going to say young people, but it is young people and older South Australians seeking skills training through the TAFE SA organisation, and I thank them for their efforts in an extraordinarily challenging year.

The CHAIR: Lead speaker for the opposition, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr BOYER: Just to echo the minister's words and thank all the people working in the TAFE sector as well, for the difficult circumstances under which they have been asked to carry on this year, and thank them for that.

The CHAIR: I now call members for questions. The member for Wright.

Mr BOYER: Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 92, targets. Can the minister rule out any further closures to TAFE campuses?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I can advise the committee that there is no expectation of closures at TAFE campuses.

Mr BOYER: On the same budget line, can the minister rule out any further cuts to TAFE courses?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I can provide some general information about course delivery. In relation to government-funded courses, the government is committed to building the VET market in South Australia to ensure access and choice. TAFE SA is an important part, the biggest part and a very critical part of that market as the public provider. Training profile decisions are made by the TAFE SA board based on a range of factors such as student demand, employer and industry need and the purchasing minister's directions and priorities.

It is vital that we have a vibrant training market in South Australia that provides a skilled pipeline of workers for existing and emerging industries. It has never been more important as we navigate a skills-led economic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19.

I am advised that TAFE SA regularly analyses the courses on its scope of registration to ensure that the training it delivers is of high quality and—and this is really important—meeting the

needs of current and emerging industries. There is no point in training people for jobs that no longer exist. This is the hallmark of a quality-relevant training provider, and in 2020-21 TAFE SA is pivoting its training profile to respond to need.

TAFE SA will be transitioning selected metropolitan courses in business and community services, expanding its regional delivery, increasing its education and training in regional areas, apprenticeships and traineeships, foundation skills and supporting the growth of VET in schools. Both TAFE SA and the registered training organisations that are not TAFE SA continue to play an important role of skilling South Australians into the future. TAFE SA is providing public VET learning opportunities aligned to South Australia's workforce and economic needs to equip the students of today with the skills for tomorrow.

The government's priority in delivering high-quality training for students and businesses while delivering value for public money and more choice for South Australian career seekers and those undertaking vocational education training is important. We are committed to supporting TAFE SA and all providers in the state to offer the skills and training opportunities for our current and emerging industries, and for students who seek employment and future careers in those industries.

So TAFE SA is moving out of a couple of market segments that have significant provider depth, characterised by a number of RTOs with capability and capacity to deliver more training in the publicly subsidised contestable market, significantly often non-government providers, not-for-profits in particular. I am advised that the changes that have been identified have no impact on continuing students at TAFE SA. All current students enrolled in studying are not affected and will be supported to complete their studies at TAFE SA.

TAFE SA will continue to work through any changes with their staff, as TAFE SA will continue to have an important role in delivering vocational education training across SA. As I said before, there is no intention to close any campuses, according to the advice I have, and TAFE SA will continue to identify opportunities and initiatives to ensure that those campuses are used to support the skilling of students in South Australia. TAFE SA will continue to provide quality and industry-linked training for South Australian students, employers and industry, and I thank the board for all the work it is doing in supporting David and his executive team.

Mr BOYER: Again, Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 92. I refer to your answer where you said that there is no point training people for jobs that no longer exist. I note that three of the 20 TAFE courses that were recently announced to be no longer being offered by TAFE include Certificate III in Early Child Education and Care, Certificate III in Individual Support (Disability) and Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing). Can you advise the committee on whether or not enrolment demand for those certificate III courses was going up or down?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: In relation to the courses, and I stand to be corrected if I am wrong, that probably would be relevant to the part of my answer where I talked about TAFE SA moving out of market segments with significant provider depth, characterised by a number of RTOs with capability and capacity to deliver more training in the publicly subsidised contestable market.

Mr MURRAY: Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 90. Can the minister advise the committee how TAFE SA is leading skills training for our defence and cyber industry?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I thank the member for the question. Areas where we need TAFE SA to be really strong are areas of growing need for the South Australian community, and our strategic investments and the strategic opportunities we see for South Australia in the future in our defence area, in our cyber area in particular, are really strong. In the last year, there are a couple of things that TAFE SA can be really proud of, and the government is very proud of the work that David and the team have done in defence and cyber.

Defence, shipbuilding, digital technology, cybersecurity industries and partnerships that have been built will continue to grow. For example, TAFE SA is working with BAE Systems Australia to deliver ASC Shipbuilding's new shipbuilding readiness training program. The ASC Shipbuilding has recruited school-based trainees for a Certificate II in Engineering. TAFE SA has commenced delivery

to trainees in mid-July 2020 at the TAFE SA Regency campus. ASC Shipbuilding will transition suitable candidates into a school-based apprenticeship program in 2021.

In partnership with Flinders University, TAFE SA has begun online delivery of two topics—Design for Manufacture and Microcontrollers Embedded Systems and Industry 4.0—for 51 students in Flinders University's Diploma of Digital Technologies. The students are current employees in the naval shipbuilding industry. The two topics have vocational education and training units of competency embedded within them, making the Flinders diploma a unique hybrid educational product for South Australia, with higher education and vocational education elements combined.

In relation to the Naval Shipbuilding College, TAFE SA provides consulting and staffing services to NSI (Aust) Pty Ltd, which runs the Naval Shipbuilding College, under a fee-for-service arrangement. Three TAFE SA staff are currently working full time in the NSC's training services division and provide advice to the divisional manager on vocational education courses and training solutions for naval shipbuilding workforce requirements.

I would like to talk about the Australian Research and Experimental Submarine project, also known as an ARES, which is an aptly named title for followers of Greek mythology. TAFE SA is engaged with the Australian Research and Experimental Submarine (ARES) project, led by the University of Adelaide and supported by the Defence Innovation Partnership. The ARES project aims to perform research into submarine hydrodynamics and hydroacoustics while providing Australia with a free running model of a submarine. TAFE SA defence industries and engineering staff are providing advice during the design phase of the submarine on fabrication techniques and the capability to manufacture using standard workshop equipment.

In relation to the South Australian Defence Industry Leadership Program (SADILP), it is a collaboration between the Defence Teaming Centre, executive mentoring company Heavypoint and TAFE SA to train emerging leaders in the defence industry. Participants undertake both accredited and non-accredited training activities, workshops and industry-mentored activities. The accredited training component awards successful participants with either a Diploma or an Advanced Diploma of Leadership and Management. SADILP is widely considered the pre-eminent leadership program for emerging leaders in small to medium enterprises in the defence industry in South Australia and now boasts an alumni of over 250 graduates.

TAFE SA has recently partnered with Odyssey Australia, a South Australian specialist engineering company, to develop a virtual reality ship engine room for training in 3D computer-aided design engineering and fabrication. In relation to cyber, which I know is an industry of particular interest to the member for Davenport, given his experience in small business in the IT sector—the number of times he and I have discussed this area in the last 1½ or two years is significant—TAFE SA, in conjunction with the Department for Innovation and Skills and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, is working with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment on strategies for government agencies to recruit cyber trainees.

The first intake of 22 cyber trainees under these arrangements commenced in semester 1 this year, and regular intakes of trainees are occurring throughout semester 2. There has been continued development of the Advanced Diploma of Cyber Security in collaboration with a national network of TAFE institutions, including TAFE Queensland, the Canberra Institute of Technology, TAFE NSW, the Box Hill Institute and a number of others. As a member of the national TAFE cyber network, TAFE SA can codevelop training resources and learning materials to benefit South Australian students and benchmark training against national best practice.

Finally, the Microsoft traineeship program for Certificate IV in Information Technology was launched in July 2019. This program is a bespoke qualification with Microsoft certifications embedded into course delivery. Intakes occurred in October 2019 and April 2020. These areas are really important. These areas are areas where employment growth in South Australia is going to be demonstrably significant in the years ahead, and not just in the distant future but next year and the year after and the year after.

Students with these qualifications will be getting jobs. These are great careers. These are exciting careers. These are careers that will last, and I am really pleased with the work that TAFE is doing, working with our schools through the pathways in education to encourage more of our young

people, and indeed older workers who want to retrain, to be thinking about future careers in these areas.

Mr BOYER: I move to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 95, Activity indicators. Has an investigation been carried out into the bungled email that was sent to more than 2,100 prospective TAFE students earlier this month, incorrectly advising them that they had been successful in gaining a place in their desired course at TAFE?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: You will understand that some of the briefings that would usually take place in the lead-up to estimates last week were not able to take place, so rather than seek a new briefing from Mr Coltman, I will invite him to provide information directly to the committee on this.

Mr COLTMAN: A root cause analysis has been undertaken into what caused the issuing of the 2,000 emails on Friday week past.

Mr BOYER: On the same budget line, who conducted that root cause analysis and what were its findings?

Mr COLTMAN: It was conducted by staff within TAFE SA and what was identified was that, in haste, an incorrect email template was uploaded and sent through to the 2,000 students.

Mr BOYER: Will the findings of that root cause analysis be communicated to the 2,100 or so students who received the correct email?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Can I suggest it is something that TAFE is prepared to do, potentially either directly or by making it public. I think if there are any students who would like an explanation, then when we have that further information, either publicly or directly to them, one way or the other, they will get the information.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, I refer you to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 90. Can the minister advise the committee how TAFE SA is particularly supporting our regions, and, minister, do you have any acronyms for any of those programs in the regions?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I thank the member for the question. I am going to take the second part of the question as a very amusing comment given the significant level of acronyms that we have been dealing with today in this sector. Particularly important, though, is the first part of the question about supporting regional South Australia. TAFE SA has a really important role there in providing vocational education and training opportunities to regional communities.

In 2019-20, 36 per cent of TAFE SA students lived in regional areas. Of course, there are a number of students in metropolitan Adelaide who are from the regions. Some of them would have commenced their training in the regions and then continued in metropolitan Adelaide. Regional South Australia is very well represented in TAFE's students.

In regional locations, there were 259 courses delivered to 16,809 students. In order to grow regional enrolments, TAFE SA undertook significant marketing activity in regional areas in 2019-20, including via regional media outlets and via statewide digital and traditional channels. For students with a regional home postcode, the three most heavily accessed qualifications were Certificate II in Automotive Servicing Technology, Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician and Certificate III in Early Childhood of Education and Care.

TAFE SA's educational staff travel across regions and between campuses and learning sites, including workplaces and community venues, to support its regionally based students and regional communities. As at 15 October, 20 per cent of all TAFE SA staff were based in regional South Australia.

In 2019-20, TAFE SA invested in major infrastructure upgrades, providing access to high-quality training facilities and services. Major infrastructure replacement and improvement projects included the Mount Barker campus student hub and the community library learning resource centre. In January 2020, TAFE SA completed an upgrade to the Mount Barker TAFE SA student hub, and, in collaboration with the council, reconfigured the community library learning resource centre.

At the Murray Bridge learning innovation hub, a project was undertaken in collaboration with the Murray River Study Hub, the Murray River Council and partly funded through the commonwealth's Building Better Regions Fund. The learning innovation hub provided regionally located students access to higher education options and that was completed in April 2020.

The third one is the digital efficiency program in Mount Gambier. TAFE SA undertakes annual reviews and improvements to its digital infrastructure to ensure efficient and effective systems. The digital efficiency program aligns with TAFE SA's strategic goals by providing a combination of fit-for-purpose cost-efficient physical and virtual assets, improving access to equipment, infrastructure and venues appropriate to the teaching outcomes, delivery mode and the expectations of students, industry and educators, improving global, regional and local campus communications on campus and supporting WHS alerts and systems (that is not a TAFE-specific acronym) and enhancing customer experience and meeting their expectations of a modern education environment.

Regional managers across all regions were involved in many school-based activities that included career nights for subject selection, school tours on regional campuses, and metro campus tours for regional students. In October, Whyalla hosted about 40 new migrants attached to the Migrant Resource Centre in Adelaide who were looking at relocation options to Whyalla for employment. Port Lincoln campus hosted Come and Try VET at Port Lincoln's campus for 130 year 10 students from Eyre Peninsula schools, including Streaky Bay, Cowell, Tumby Bay, Cummins and Port Lincoln.

The Berri, Murray Bridge and Whyalla campuses have hosted Try a Trade days for local schools, with the Barossa campus hosting a World of Work day, showcasing many career pathways. Mount Gambier hosted similar events over multiple days. TAFE SA was represented at the Riverland Field Days, while Victor Harbor hosted the Local Business Association to promote the variety of courses on offer. Mount Barker hosted community open days—opportunities for locals to drop in and explore courses on offer.

The chief executive regularly visits TAFE SA's regional campuses. Indeed, I think he has encouraged the board in the last couple of years, since he has been there, to do the same. Since COVID-19 he has met via Zoom with regional local government officials and counsellors—and members of parliament, too—to update them on TAFE SA activity and to respond to queries of campuses. There is a range of work we continue to do in the regions, and I think that regional South Australia has an affinity with a great deal of that work.

Mr BOYER: Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 92, targets. How many courses will be provided in a modified way next year, for example, when a course was previously offered at numerous locations but will now be offered at fewer locations or perhaps only one location?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: We will need to take that on notice. I think that it could encompass a reasonably broad range of potential adjustments, and a lot of those happen in the normal course of events. Of course, TAFE has been moving to a blended delivery model in many of its courses, because often that is what a student wants, that is what their employer wants, so that they can do some of their training on site. That is potentially going to get caught up there, too.

Of course, COVID has had a dramatic impact on how courses are delivered. Some of it has presented challenges and some of it has presented some fantastic opportunities, enabling some courses to take place in a really positive way—courses that might have otherwise struggled without that force to check in to new delivery options. Out of an abundance of caution, I will take that on notice so that we can provide a firm and accurate response to the member in the house.

Mr BOYER: Thank you for your answer, minister. On the same budget line, of the 20 TAFE courses that were announced as having been cancelled at metropolitan Adelaide TAFE campuses, how many prospective students were there who had expressed an interest in enrolling in those 20 courses and who are now being advised that they must seek to apply to a private provider to do that course instead?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Again, we do not have an exact number relevant here, so I will take that on notice.

Mr BOYER: I refer to the same budget line again. Has TAFE changed its requirements in relation to the minimum number of students for a course to run?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: There is an application of a minimum number of students going forward, which will guide a number of courses at locations. Obviously, the opportunity is also there to ensure that cohorts, particularly in regional areas, may have opportunities for courses that might never have proceeded to now take place, given the opportunity for some blended models.

Mr ELLIS: I have a question on Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 90. Can the minister please update the committee on the progress of the agreement between TAFE SA and the Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia? What response does the minister have to those in the community who have expressed criticism about this agreement?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I thank the member for the question. This is important because I think it goes directly to some of the comments that were very unfortunately put in a misguided manner in the house in recent weeks and to certain other bits of information, elsewhere in the community, that tell nothing like the whole story.

TAFE SA signed a memorandum of understanding with the Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia on 5 July 2019. Initiatives from the collaborative agreement include the provision of professional development opportunities by TAFE SA and access for independent providers to publicly owned resources, buildings and teaching and learning resources. The initial three-year MOU acknowledges the intention of TAFE SA and ITECA (Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia) to foster potential areas of collaboration, including:

1. The scope of delivery offered by public and independent providers;
2. Access to publicly owned resources by independent providers; and
3. Joint professional development initiatives.

Senior executives from TAFE SA and ITECA meet on a quarterly basis to further develop a benefits framework to maximise the partnerships approach. By collaborating in this way, there are fantastic outcomes for TAFE SA, for the non-government providers and, actually, for the most important group of people of all here, the students seeking skills to get jobs, and the business and industry for whose workforce needs we are providing this training.

That is a fantastic approach. It is a collaborative approach. Ongoing engagement in 2019-20 included a joint TAFE SA, ITECA and Department for Innovation and Skills professional development event in 2020 for educators, and providing support for private registered training organisations, including ITECA members, to build capability to deliver cybersecurity training within the industry. This is, of course, an area where in the future we expect that we are going to need many, many, many workers filling jobs and career opportunities in that sector.

There is a fantastic program now being delivered by TAFE SA. If others are going to start providing work in this area, then that is to the state's benefit. This has included offering of access to curriculum teaching and learning, including digital materials, and facilities where possible. That is what the MOU is about. It was categorised by the Leader of the Opposition the other day as 'government's assault on TAFE'. It was described as 'TAFE facilities provided to private RTOs to conduct their own training'. I do not think that that is a fair characterisation. Others have also similarly, I think, provided unfair characterisations.

I draw the committee's attention to some of the collaboration that already takes place, that has taken place for many years and is an outstanding part of the success story for TAFE SA and non-government providers. If you go to the Regency campus, you can see ICHM and Le Cordon Bleu, which are non-government education providers, working on the TAFE campus, next door to TAFE staff. Some of the staff have had engagement across both. That collaboration has existed for an extended period of time.

There are opportunities for our state, for TAFE SA to significantly benefit from these partnerships, and I am really pleased to be part of the government that is embracing these opportunities. Again, it comes back to two things. Our key responsibility is to the young people of South Australia who are seeking training for a job, the older worker seeking retraining for a job, or

the worker seeking enhancement of their skills to get a job, to have a great career and opportunities. We are also seeking to ensure that the workplace and business and industry needs of our state's employers are supported as well. TAFE SA is a really important part of that mix, and it is great to see them working well with other providers in the market, where there is complementary benefit.

Mr BOYER: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 92. Just back to the minimum course numbers for a TAFE course to run, could the minister elaborate on his previous answer and tell us what those new numbers might be and how they differ from previous course numbers?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: It depends on the course and the location and the nature of the provision. I do not want to provide half an answer; I will provide the member with a full answer on notice.

Mr BOYER: I refer to the same budget line. Can the minister rule out that regional TAFE courses could be cancelled because a minimum number of students will not be met under whatever the new minimum course numbers are?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: TAFE SA is committed to delivering the courses that they have advertised for regional. To provide some further colour on the same question, I will invite Mr Coltman to provide a little bit more information.

Mr COLTMAN: As part of TAFE SA's regional strategy, we will be committing to deliver a range of courses across regional campuses, both face-to-face courses and also complemented by a range of digitally enabled courses. This will see the range of courses available increase and provide more opportunity for regional South Australians to engage in vocational education and training with TAFE SA.

Mr BOYER: Still on Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 92, targets. How much does TAFE estimate will be saved over the forward estimates from moving to online delivery? What is the impact on the quality of vocational education and training provided by that move?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I will invite Mr Coltman to respond to both of those questions.

Mr COLTMAN: In relation to the question regarding the impacts on quality of moving to digital delivery, I am happy to confirm that there are no negative impacts that we anticipate in moving to a blended or digitally enabled and supported delivery model—that contemporary form of education that allows people to access learning from wherever they are and apply it to their own learning contexts.

In terms of, 'Will it provide a saving?', it will provide us with the ability to offer more courses where we will be able to polysynchronously deliver courses across the state, which means that, as I am talking to you, I could be talking to people in different locations at the same time. We believe it will increase access, and it is the fundamental driver to a move to enable digital delivery for TAFE SA.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: I will just add one thing to that. A student in a town like Wudinna, for example, which has historically had pretty low numbers of courses delivered in that campus, could utilise that campus to access a course delivered elsewhere, as an example of some of that.

The CHAIR: The time is now 5.15, which concludes the time allocated and agreed for examination of payments in relation to portfolios of TAFE SA and Higher Education. Therefore, there are no further questions. I declare the examination of the portfolio agencies TAFE SA and Higher Education completed and the estimate of payments for the Department for Education and administered items for the Department for Education closed.

At 17:15 the committee adjourned to Tuesday 24 November 2020 at 9:00.