

Questions taken on notice and further information agreed to be supplied at the hearings as per advice from PAEC

1. National Asbestos Register and EduSafe reports

Portfolio:	Education
Witness:	CEO VSBA Mr. Christopher Keating
Committee member:	The Hon. Mr. Danny O'Brien MP
Page/s of transcript:	7

Relevant text:

Mr D O'BRIEN: Right. Can you tell me—and I am happy to give this to Mr Keating—where asbestos has been detected or disturbed at schools, how many children have been placed on the national asbestos register and how many eduSafe reports have been made?

Mr MERLINO: I might ask Mr Keating to answer that question.

Mr D O'BRIEN: I am happy to take that on notice.

Mr KEATING: Every time, if there is an incident, we make sure all students and all staff are captured on eduSafe. I do not know the exact number.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay. Can I get that on notice, including students, how many teachers and how many parents? Thank you.

Answer:

The National Asbestos Register is for members of the community who think that they may have been exposed to asbestos to self-report. Teachers and students are encouraged to self-report on the Register. However, the Department does not hold this information. It is held by the Australian Government's Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency.

The Department can report from 1 July 2018 to 30 May 2019. For this period, there have been 74 reports on the Department's safety incident record system of risks of asbestos exposure to parents, students, or teachers. This data relates to reports collected from across the whole Victorian government school system of over 1700 schools.

For privacy reasons, the Department has not provided the information about the number of reports of asbestos exposure held on the Department's edusafe system. The number of reports for each category (Teachers, parents and students) are low and there is a risk that if the data is made publicly available, the identities of the teachers, parents and students may be ascertained, given other information that is publicly available.

2. Camps Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF)

Portfolio:	Education
Witness:	Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, the Hon. Mr. James Merlino MP
Committee member:	The Hon. Mr. Danny O'Brien MP
Page of transcript:	7, 8 – Camps Sports and Excursion Fund

Relevant text:

Mr D O'BRIEN: We have got 3 seconds. Will the [Camps Sports and Excursions Fund] CSEF continue?

Mr MERLINO: Well, what I would do is refer you to this page and funding for renewal of some existing—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Can I take that on notice given the time, please, Chair?

The CHAIR: Deputy Premier, we are going to have to take that question on notice.

Mr MERLINO: Yes. So funding for renewal will be finalised post the bilateral negotiations, so I will have more to say about this later.

Answer:

The Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund is funded to run until the end of the 2019 calendar year. Funding for renewal of some existing and new education initiatives, such as the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund, will be considered now that Victoria has signed a bilateral school funding agreement with the Commonwealth.

3. Number of Assaults in schools

Portfolio:	Education
Witness:	Secretary Ms. Jenny Atta
Committee member:	The Hon. Ms. Bridget Vallence MP
Page of transcript:	14

Relevant text:

Ms VALLENCE: Thank you, Minister and team, for attending today. Probably to pick up, I guess, off the back of discussing a lot about mental health—and that is a very important challenge for our society—I am going to take that forward into behavioural issues and assaults and bullying, so budget paper 3, page 24, is the reference. This question actually I will put to the secretary to start off with. You may need to take this on notice, but can data be provided, please, that shows the total number of student-on-student assaults, student-on-staff assaults, staff-on-student assaults and any other assaults for the last year?

Ms ATTA: Look, we do have some data. I am not sure we have it broken down in exactly that way, but I am happy to take it on notice.

Answer:

The table below provides data from 2018.

This data includes incidents that occur outside and during school hours, off or on school sites and involving students as victims or alleged offenders.

This data is based on reported and alleged incidents and therefore incidents are not substantiated and are largely unverified.

Allegations / Reports	2018
Alleged student on student assaults	171
Alleged student on staff assaults	27
Alleged staff on student assaults	0

4. Bullying in schools and police attendance

Portfolio:	Education
Witness:	Secretary Ms. Jenny Atta
Committee member:	The Hon. Ms. Bridget Vallence MP
Page of transcript:	14

Relevant text:

Ms VALLENCE: It is a serious issue. It is good to hear that there seems to be a reduction, and I guess if we have that data on notice, then we will be able to see that, so thank you. Also, for the exact same categories please, for bullying, on notice if you would not mind, Secretary. And can the data also be provided where police have had to attend or been called to attend a school, for all of those above incidents, on assaults and bullying where police have been called to the schools—the number of times and also the names of the schools. Can we have that on notice?

Ms ATTA: I am happy to look at what data we have and to provide what we have on notice.

Ms VALLENCE: Thank you, Secretary. How many students have been suspended in relation to physical aggression towards other students in the last year of reporting, and related to abuse or intimidation? I am happy to take it on notice if you do not have that available at hand.

Answer:

The table below provides data from 2018.

This data represents incidents that have been deemed of a serious enough nature to report to the Department.

Data is not available in relation to bullying incidents that are managed at a school level.

The Department does not capture data relating to police call outs or attendance at schools. The Department does not capture data detailing suspension resulting from physical aggression towards other students or abuse or intimidation.

Allegations / Reports	2018
Alleged bullying incidents – student on student	10
Alleged bullying incidents – student on staff	2
Alleged bullying incidents – staff on student	0

5. Cost of CCTV at ISOC

Portfolio:	Education
Witness:	Secretary Ms. Jenny Atta
Committee member:	The Hon. Ms. Bridget Vallence MP
Page of transcript:	15

Relevant text:

Ms VALLENCE: Thank you. Is there a cost for that program, particularly with the CCTV?

Ms ATTA: That is funded as part of the program. It is part of the budget for the service.

Ms VALLENCE: Okay. Are you able to provide us a figure related to that specific activity?

Ms ATTA: I will see what I can provide, yes.

Answer:

The establishment cost for the CCTV monitoring functionality was \$3,697.84 excluding GST. There is an annual license and maintenance fee of \$500 for the software that supports CCTV monitoring.

6. Audit of early childhood centres

Portfolio:	Education
Witness:	Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, the Hon. James Merlino MP
Committee member:	The Hon. Ms. Bridget Vallence MP
Page of transcript:	15

Relevant text:

Ms VALLENCE: Specifically we would like to understand, for the committee, has the government carried out an audit of early childhood education centres to assess their capacity to carry out the three-year-old kinder program? When was this audit conducted? At what time did the audit commence and conclude—so over what period? What was the criteria, which we would like to have on notice if you do not have it at hand today? And was asbestos assessment part of that criteria?

The CHAIR: Can I just say, given that there are 2 seconds left, Deputy Premier, if you could take that question on notice, please?

Mr MERLINO: I am happy to take that on notice.

Answer:

The Department of Education and Training is conducting an onsite capacity survey of every kindergarten and long day care facility in Victoria. The purpose of the survey is to help the Department gain a more detailed and accurate picture of local infrastructure and workforce capacity.

Since early May, key stakeholders in the sector have been consulted on the process, including local government. Onsite capacity surveys commenced in early June and are expected to run till the end of the year.

While the survey includes a question to services about building condition, assessing facilities for the presence or condition of asbestos is not specifically included in the scope of the survey.

7. Education cancelled at Parkville / Malmsbury

Portfolio:	Education
Witness:	Deputy Secretary Ms. Katy Haire
Committee member:	The Hon. Mr. Richard Riordan MP
Page of transcript:	18

Relevant text:

Mr RIORDAN: My question is to Deputy Secretary Haire with regards to recent riots at the Parkville and Malmsbury centres. As a result of these riots how many student education hours were cancelled or not held because of the various lockdowns? Do you have that information or can we take that on notice?

Answer:

While lockdowns may occur for safety and security reasons and may prevent students from accessing the designated learning environments, they do not prevent students from accessing teaching and learning provided by Parkville College staff. Parkville College staff engage every student in learning, which at times may mean providing education to students in their unit.

8. Student attendance at Parkville / Malmsbury

Portfolio:	Education
Witness:	Deputy Secretary Ms. Katy Haire
Committee member:	The Hon. Mr. Richard Riordan MP
Page of transcript:	19

Relevant text:

Mr RIORDAN: Okay, but you are not aware of those students who are missing out on an education because of the riots?

Ms HAIRE: I do not have specific information about the question you have asked of me, Mr Riordan, but I can say that what we do work very closely on with the principal of the school is that, whatever the circumstances might be, whether students may be unwell et cetera, the teachers work very flexibly—

Mr RIORDAN: But there is no record keeping on the attendance for those students?

Ms HAIRE: Yes, of course there is. There is—

Mr RIORDAN: So you would have access to the information?

Ms HAIRE: Yes—I apologise, I just do not have that with me right at the moment, but I am describing the model to you.

Mr RIORDAN: Okay, well we will take that on notice.

Answer:

Parkville College maintains records of student attendance in line with all Victorian government schools. All registered schools must ensure their system for recording student attendance meets legislative requirements, and schools use a centralised school administrative tool to record enrolment and attendance data.

Attendance data captures absences such as illness, court visits and medical appointments but does not specifically record attendance impacted by lockdowns.

9. Transport services

Portfolio:	Education
Witness:	Deputy Secretary Mr. Stephen Gniel
Committee member:	The Hon. Mr. Richard Riordan MP
Page of transcript:	19

Relevant text:

Mr RIORDAN: And the last quick question affects my electorate and many other rural electorates. On Anzac Day we snuck through boundary changes for schools where students are supposed to go to school. In my electorate there are numerous changes that affect communities that currently do not have bus services. So there is currently no indication that there will be transport services, and the only other option is for parents to get conveyance allowance. Is the department dealing with that issue?

Ms VALLENCE: Well what is the response, and can we take it on notice?

Mr RIORDAN: So what approach—

The CHAIR: Sadly, with that, you will have to take that on notice because it is now my turn to ask questions, and aren't we all looking forward to that!

Answer:

The Department provides travel assistance to students through the School Bus Program and the Conveyance Allowance Program. The eligibility criteria for these programs has not changed.

Where the confirmation/change of a school's enrolment zone would potentially alter a student's eligibility for transport assistance through the Department's transport programs, they will be granted an exemption to continue with their existing travel arrangements. Students (and their siblings) who currently catch a school bus will still be able to do so. New families can apply in accordance with the program policy.

In accordance with the School Bus Program policy, where a change in the enrolment zone identifies a need for increased services, the Department works with Public Transport Victoria to alter existing services or add additional services for eligible students.

10. Staff turnover in early childhood services

Portfolio:	Education
Witness:	Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, the Hon. James Merlino MP
Committee member:	The Hon. Mr. Philip Dalidakis MP
Page of transcript:	20

Relevant text:

The CHAIR: Obviously it is not just attracting new people into the workforce; it is about retaining as well. I am keen to understand what you are doing to retain the workforce, and I might ask a question also that I expect you to take on notice. Every profession has churn—people that come and go. We see that of course in our emergency services quite a bit. I am keen to find what the level of churn is within early childhood and whether it is above or below the mean or the average and also how it may compare with other jurisdictions, to be able to then be benchmarked. So I am happy for you to take those questions on notice, but I am keen to better understand what we are doing to maintain and keep people that are working in the workforce already.

Mr MERLINO: [...] I will take your question on notice in terms of churn in regard to early childhood and how it compares to other sectors. [...]

Answer:

The 2013 National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census shows that Victoria has comparable retention rates with other Australian jurisdictions.¹ It found that 81 per cent of paid early childhood staff in Victoria are expected to be employed by the same service in 12 months' time. The Australian Bureau of Statistics found that 8.1 per cent of the Australian workforce changed employers or the business they ran in the year to February 2018.²

The 2019-20 State Budget has a focus on attracting and retaining the early childhood workforce with investment of \$92.4 million over five years, including significant supports for beginning teachers. As part of this, we will be investing to improve workforce retention through support for early childhood teachers at key stages of their career. These supports will build a high-quality workforce, as well as establish partnerships between universities and early childhood services to enable leading practice in initial teacher education.

In 2018-19, the following actions have occurred:

- Over 600 beginning teachers are being supported with grants to help them become fully registered. These funds have been allocated to more than 180 service providers. These grants will follow the teacher, should they move services.
- Gowrie Victoria has been contracted by the Department of Education and Training to deliver additional mentors to support beginning teachers convert to full registration.
- Four beginning teacher conferences have been planned for later in the year. These conferences will provide key information and support for new teachers at the start of their careers.

¹ [National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census 2013 Report and State Tables](#)

²

https://cdn.aigroup.com.au/Economic_Indicators/Fact_Sheets/2018/Labour_Turnover_in_2018_Fact_Sheet.pdf

We are also investing in the Kindergarten Quality Improvement Program which is supporting services to improve their leadership and educational program and practice. This program is engaging educators, educational leaders and service management in professional learning and mentoring activities to support quality improvement.

These initiatives are underpinned by the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) which supports all professionals who work with children aged 0 to 8 with a range of discipline-specific guidelines and practice resources.

11. Early childhood infrastructure

Portfolio:	Education
Witness:	Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, the Hon. James Merlino MP
Committee member:	The Hon. Mr. Philip Dalidakis MP
Page of transcript:	20

Relevant text:

The CHAIR: Now, I am going to give you a question that I want you to take on notice, not because I do not think you can answer it now but because in the last minute and a half I want to focus on some schools in my electorate—and I think I would have a mutiny with my fellow committee members if I went over time. I just spoke to you and asked you questions about finding the teachers, but I would like you to take on notice about the infrastructure and what is required to be able to both fund and also support new infrastructure—because obviously those teachers are going to need to teach somewhere, the kids are going to need to be somewhere and we are going to need to have those facilities. So I will leave that with you to take on notice.

Mr MERLINO: Happy to take that on notice.

Answer:

The 2019-20 State Budget provides \$473.2 million over five years in funding to support the sector to invest in new and expanded kindergarten facilities for three and four-year-olds, when and where they are most needed.

This includes:

- A capital investment of \$283 million over four years to deliver additional infrastructure capacity for kindergarten programs for three-year-olds;
- \$156.6 million over five years in infrastructure grant funding to help create sector capacity for kindergarten programs for three-year-olds; and
- \$33.6 million over three years for the Children’s Facilities Capital Program and Inclusive Kindergartens Facilities Program to continue to support existing and growing demand for four-year-old kindergarten.

This investment is designed to complement and support investment from the sector. We are working closely with stakeholders across local government and service providers to support shared investment in kindergarten facilities and quality service provision.