

**Public Accounts and Estimates Committee  
Inquiry into 2021–22 and 2022–23 Financial and Performance Outcomes**

**Responses to Questions on Notice**

**Question 1**

Portfolio:	Schools Infrastructure
Witness:	Tom Kirkland
Committee member:	Danny O’Brien
Page/s of transcript:	25

**Transcript:**

**Danny O’BIEN:** Righto. On a broader question, can I ask how the VSBA prioritises school upgrades? Separate to new schools specifically and growth areas and the like, is there a list, either by state or by region, of the next ones that need either rebuilding, replacement or significant upgrades? I am not just talking about maintenance.

**Tom KIRKLAND:** Yes, there is a systematic approach to upgrades that we provide advice to government on based on the work that we do. Back in 2012 we did a complete portfolio condition audit of all government schools in the state. In 2018 we rolled out a program of some significance called the rolling facilities evaluation program, and we look at, over a five-year period, 20 per cent of the schools every year – so roughly 300, 325 schools per year. We send in external auditors to look at the school condition. The first, between 2018 and 2023, was really on the condition of visibility – so structure, roofing, glazing, that sort of thing.

**Danny O’BIEN:** Is that done on a statewide basis or by region?

**Tom KIRKLAND:** No, it is done statewide.

**Danny O’BIEN:** **Righto. Can I ask where Sale is on the statewide list?**

**Tom KIRKLAND:** I do not have that information to hand.

**Danny O’BIEN:** Is it something that you are able to share with us or not?

**Tom KIRKLAND:** Yes, we can find out where Sale is on a routine.

**Danny O’BIEN:** If I could ask you to take that a notice, that would be wonderful.

**Answer:**

The Department of Education’s Rolling Facilities Evaluation (RFE) program is delivering condition assessments to every Victorian government school across a 5-year cycle. Sale College’s RFE condition assessment was undertaken in June 2020. The school can expect their next RFE (RFE2.0) in 2025.

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**Question 2**

Portfolio:	Schools Infrastructure
Witness:	Tom Kirkland
Committee member:	Ellen Sandell
Page/s of transcript:	30

**Transcript:**

**Ellen SANDELL:** Okay. I just want to clarify what you have committed to provide to Mr O’Brien for Sale College. Is that just advice on where Sale College is up to in terms of its rolling facility?

**Tom KIRKLAND:** That is right. So I will go back to the team and we can provide where in the next five-year tranche Sale College is in that program, whether it is in the 2023 school year for example or the 24 school year. I honestly do not know, but I can certainly provide that information, through the minister’s office, to Mr O’Brien.

**Ellen SANDELL:** And would you also be able to please provide that for Kensington Primary School?

**Answer:**

The Department of Education’s Rolling Facilities Evaluation (RFE) program is delivering condition assessments to every Victorian government school across a 5-year cycle. Kensington Primary School’s RFE condition assessment was undertaken in May 2022. Also, the school currently has capital works in progress. The school can expect their next RFE (RFE2.0) in 2027.

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**Question 3**

Portfolio:	Infrastructure
Witness:	Jenny Atta
Committee member:	Ellen Sandell
Page/s of transcript:	32-33

**Transcript:**

**Ellen SANDELL:** Thank you. I would like to ask about traffic safety around schools. This relates to three schools, but I am sure it relates to many others. There is a new campus of Clifton Hill Primary School that opened just a few months ago, but there are a lot of issues with getting the kids safely to and from school in terms of traffic. They do not have a permanent pedestrian crossing at South Terrace and Gold Street. I think there is a temporary crossing that has not been converted into a permanent one. We also have similar issues at Docklands Primary where there are a lot of traffic management issues around the school and also the new North Melbourne Primary campus where there is the issue of getting kids between the two different campuses and a lot of traffic safety issues. My question is on these traffic planning issues – they do not seem to be considered as part of new school builds, because we are consistently seeing these types of issues. **So how are those traffic management and safety issues considered when new schools are built?**

**Answer:**

The safety of students and school communities is of paramount concern to the Department of Education. As part of considering traffic management and safety issues when identifying sites for new government schools, the Victorian School Site Selection Criteria provides a range of principles and requirements that the department considers, including several relating to traffic management and safety. The department also works with planning authorities, such as the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) and local government, to have the roads abutting new school sites specifically designed to achieve slow vehicle speeds and provide designated pedestrian crossing points in the vicinity of the school.

Where possible, the department seeks to locate new government schools on connector roads, that is, roads that connect neighbourhoods and local streets to major roads. This is to ensure that the surrounding street network can accommodate on-street indented parking, a student drop-off zone and two-way traffic movement in addition to other street functions to facilitate safety and efficiency of traffic and pedestrian movement, especially at school pick-up and drop-off times. Locating new government schools on arterial roads is avoided to minimise the impact of busy roads on school sites and to improve the amenity and safety of schools.

During the design and construction phase, representatives from the department will continue to consult with external stakeholders to ensure that critical infrastructure is in place to ensure the safety of students, school staff, parents and the community.

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**Question 4**

Portfolio:	Infrastructure
Witness:	Jenny Atta
Committee member:	Ellen Sandell
Page/s of transcript:	31

**Transcript:**

**Ellen SANDELL:** Thank you. Just one further question for you: a few years ago, the parents at Kensington Primary fundraised for a kitchen on the school grounds, which was built. It is used primarily for the cooking and gardening program but also for local community events – fundraising for the school, for example. As part of their first stage of building works, the VSBA advised them that the kitchen needed to be demolished because it was in the area of the building works but that a new kitchen could not be built by the VSBA or funded as part of this program because it is not part of – and I might not get the technical term correct – their ‘facilities assessment’ or such. Parents obviously are rightly quite upset about this because they put their own money, just a few years ago, into a kitchen which is now being demolished by the government, but the government will not rebuild the kitchen and so the parents are being asked to go and fundraise again for a kitchen that they just built a few years ago. So is that VSBA and government policy – that they can demolish parent-fundraised facilities and then not rebuild them?

**Tom KIRKLAND:** I will make two comments: one, yes, it is the facilities area schedule. I might take the question on notice, and we can do a bit more work specifically around that issue and revert back to you.

**Answer:**

As a part of the 2021–22 State Budget, Kensington Primary School was allocated \$7.365 million to upgrade and modernise the school.

The kitchen in question is attached to the existing student toilets for the school’s kitchen and garden program. As part of the Stage 1 works at the school, the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) is demolishing the existing student toilets, including the kitchen attached, and replacing them with a larger student toilet block. I am advised that this was agreed and endorsed by the school principal and school council president, initially in October 2021 and reiterated at each milestone until immediately before a builder was appointed in March 2023. This ensures that the school will have sufficient toilet facilities to meet the anticipated enrolment increase at the school in the next several years.

The VSBA will continue to investigate options regarding the potential delivery of kitchen facilities to support the school’s kitchen and garden program.

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**Question 5**

Portfolio:	Schools
Witness:	Jenny Atta
Committee member:	Nicholas McGowan
Page/s of transcript:	13

**Transcript:**

**Nick McGOWAN:** I am meaning Nicole Werner; she is the local member there. The Victorian High Ability program – I have got two students in one of my schools in the district of Ringwood, from Heathmont East Primary School, and they have written to the minister about the high ability program. They have used and had the benefit of that program. They love it so much that they would like it to be extended to not just one year but two. Their question is currently before the minister, so full disclosure, but of course many other kids would love the opportunity too. We back our sports kids so much, which is great, but here we have got a couple of young achievers who would like to do more than just a one-off in grade 5, because in grade 6 you cannot do it anymore. **Is there some prospect for those aspiring young students that maybe – just maybe – that school might be able to access something for next year for them?**

**Jenny ATTA:** It is fantastic to hear that, and we do hear really great feedback from lots of schools and students, and we think it is a fantastic program.

**Nick McGOWAN:** Can I take that as a yes, Secretary?

**Jenny ATTA:** I do not want to pre-empt any decisions of government, but we also have that feedback.

**Nick McGOWAN:** Thank you. I do not know the capacity. I am in conversation with many principals about this sort of thing. If there is that capacity where students are keen to do more, I am assuming it is not going to inundate the system, but if we can facilitate them in some way, that would be amazing.

**Jenny ATTA:** Yes, it is a funded program at the moment. Mr Fraser, I do not know if you can –

**Stephen FRASER:** **I am happy to look at the details of that case.** It is a focus of ours, and the purpose of this program was to recognise that while we have had very considerable success in lifting the students who struggled with their learning out of those bottom bands, we do want to focus as well on those students who are at the top and who are excited about their learning and engaged in their learning. That is why we have got the program, and we are happy to look at any individual cases.

**Answer:**

The Victorian High Ability Program (VHAP) is part of the Victorian Government’s \$37 million investment through the 2022–23 State Budget to continue the Student Excellence Program, with its total funding now exceeding \$115 million since its commencement in 2020.

Eligible students can participate in the VHAP up to four times across Years 5 to 8 – in the primary English, primary mathematics, secondary English and secondary mathematics programs. As these students have completed the primary programs, their next opportunity for participation in the VHAP will be in secondary school.

When students have completed the VHAP, the Victorian Challenge and Enrichment Series (VCES) is an additional program available for them to pursue through the Student Excellence Program. The VCES includes a range of engaging extension activities for students across all areas of the curriculum. The Department of Education is working with the relevant school (Heathmont East Primary School) to support the participation of students in the VCES.

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**Question 6**

Portfolio:	Schools
Witness:	Jenny Atta
Committee member:	Ellen Sandell
Page/s of transcript:	31-32

**Transcript:**

**Ellen SANDELL:** The parents fundraised for it, it is being demolished and they are being told, ‘Go fundraise for it again.’ Perhaps this one might be for the Secretary: **how many Victorian public school students took part in the nuclear-powered submarine design competition – the Nuclear-powered Submarine Propulsion Challenge?**

**Jenny ATTA:** I do not have that information to hand.

**Ellen SANDELL:** Okay. Is it able to be provided?

**Jenny ATTA:** I am not sure, but I can find out.

**Ellen SANDELL:** Okay. Thank you. You can probably see where I am going with this, but how does a military design program meet with the department’s policy? The department policy says that schools must not engage in a partnership with companies ‘involved in the sale or promotion of firearms’. **So how does this program, which is essentially asking students to design weapons, accord with this department policy?**

**Jenny ATTA:** Dr Howes, do you have the background?

**David HOWES:** I might have to get some more detail, but if it was in relation to the army –

**Ellen SANDELL:** It is. I believe it is a partnership with the –

**David HOWES:** Sorry, the navy.

**Ellen SANDELL:** I believe it is a partnership with the navy or the ADF, Department of Defence – a federal Department of Defence program that is being run through Victorian schools.

**David HOWES:** I would need to get some more detail.

**Ellen SANDELL:** Okay. Thank you. **Does the Department of Education formally support the AUKUS program? Is that why this is being run through Victorian schools?**

**Jenny ATTA:** I do not think the department has a policy position on the AUKUS program.

**Ellen SANDELL:** Thank you. **Are there any other programs in Victorian schools that involve the Department of Defence?**

**Jenny ATTA:** I am not sure. I would have to pull up the detail, but there is work at the senior secondary level in terms of development of vocational skills, vocational education and training. There may well be through our school-based apprenticeship programs and other things some arrangements that have some involvement in projects that sit with the Department of Defence. I do not know that that is the case, but I can find out.

**Answer:**

The Nuclear-Powered Submarine Propulsion Challenge (the Challenge) is an initiative developed by the Commonwealth Department of Defence (Department of Defence). The Victorian Department of Education (DE) was not involved in the development or administration of the Challenge and so does not hold data on student participation.

Information about the Challenge was provided to Victorian government schools at the request of the Department of Defence to foster student engagement with Science, Technologies, Engineering and

Mathematics (STEM) studies and to build student understanding of careers in the Australian Defence Force and related industries.

The department considers that the provision of such information about the Challenge, does not constitute a partnership agreement.

DE does not have any agreement with the Department of Defence concerning work-related learning. There are currently no school-based apprentices or trainees from Victorian government schools employed by the Department of Defence.

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**Question 7**

Portfolio:	Early Childhood
Witness:	Bronwen Fitzgerald
Committee member:	Danny O'Brien
Page/s of transcript:	5

**Transcript:**

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Can I switch to early childhood but on the workforce issue still, and again on your slides there is a lot of data there of good what you might call inputs but not necessarily outcomes. So 878 and 899 scholarships awarded, 180 trainees, and then grants to staff for being provisionally registered. **Can I ask, though, out of those, how many actually completed the traineeships, completed the scholarships, and are now working in the early childhood sector?**

**Jenny ATTA:** Yes, and of course it is early days to see the full outcomes as people take up those options. Ms FitzGerald might be able to add to that, though.

**Bronwen FITZGERALD:** **We will need to take on notice the specifics of completion rates.** Some of those numbers – those students – are still studying. They have commenced their scholarship and are receiving support to study, but they have not completed, and the payments for the scholarship will go into the period of employment as well.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Is there an incentive, as in you do not get the last payments until –

**Bronwen FITZGERALD:** That is right – you get a series of staged payments to continue study and then continue employment once you are done. **We can take on notice the completion for both the scholarships and the trainees.**

**Danny O'BRIEN:** **Traineeships and the grants for the provisionally registered – how many of those have actually gone into the system?**

**Bronwen FITZGERALD:** The grants for provisionally registered teachers are for teachers already teaching in the sector. **It is to translate their qualification from provisionally registered to fully registered, but we can also provide some further information about that.**

**Answer:**

Over 2021-22 and 2022-23 reporting period, 1,777 people were awarded scholarships under the Early Childhood Scholarships Program. Early childhood teaching qualifications take up to four-years (full-time) to complete and 10% of these scholars completed their studies during the reporting period. Of the scholars who completed their studies, 86% had secured, or were actively seeking, employment at the end of the reporting period.

More than 180 trainees were actively engaged in the Early Childhood Traineeship Program during the reporting period. Employment in the sector is a program eligibility requirement and all trainees were employed as early childhood educators while taking part in the program. None of these trainees were scheduled to complete their traineeship during the reporting period.

Through the Provisionally Registered Early Childhood Teacher (PRT) Grants Program, approved providers can apply for funding to support PRTs in their employment to move to full registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT). In the reporting period, 1,220 grants were issued through this program and grant recipients have 24-months to move to full registration.



VIT data shows that only 98% of the PRTs supported through the PRT Grants Program during the reporting period are registered. Of the PRTs supported through the Grants Program in 2021-22, 61% have moved to full registration, with the acquittal period still to be completed for this cohort. With 18-months of the acquittal period remaining for 2022-23 recipients, 34% have already progressed to full registration.

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**Question 8**

Portfolio:	Schools
Witness:	Jenny Atta
Committee member:	Nicholas McGowan
Page/s of transcript:	12

**Transcript:**

**Nick McGOWAN:** Thank you. Good afternoon to everyone. Page 147 of the Department of Education and Training annual report 2021–22 refers to employee expenses, including payroll tax. **Secretary, can the department provide a list of how much each school in Victoria pays in payroll tax?**

**Jenny ATTA:** Mr McGowan, are you talking about the reporting period?

**Nick McGOWAN:** For any period. The two reporting periods would be great, but if you can do this year as well, that would be awesome.

**Jenny ATTA:** Anything you would add, Mr Bates?

**Anthony BATES:** Yes, we can, Mr McGowan. **Payroll tax for most school staff, so teachers and support staff, is all paid centrally, so we do all of those payroll tax calculations and remissions on behalf of schools. I do not have it at hand, but my team can produce a list by school.**

**Answer:**

Refer to **Attachment 1: Payroll tax by Victorian government school (2021-22 and 2022-23).**

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**Question 9**

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

**Transcript:**

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Thank you, Chair, and good afternoon, Secretary and witnesses. Secretary, can I ask: during the reporting period, was any work done to determine the areas across the state suffering the severe shortage of teachers?

**Jenny ATTA:** Yes, Mr O'Brien, we have been very, very focused on that, and carefully trying to map what supply and demand looks like across the system because it is uneven. The majority of our schools are fully staffed, or close to fully staffed, but we have other schools that are under significant pressure.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** **Where are they? Is there a geographic area that is –**

**Jenny ATTA:** The geographic areas are most particularly the growth corridors of Melbourne and different parts of regional Victoria.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** **Is there data on that that could be provided to the committee?**

**Jenny ATTA:** **Yes, it is possible that we could –** Mr Robinson might be able to talk to our key areas that we are focused on, but we could certainly provide –

**Danny O'BRIEN:** **I do not want to go through a whole lot of detail but if there are actually lists of areas that are under-served at the moment that would be good.**

**Jenny ATTA:** Yes, we will follow that up, Mr O'Brien.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Okay. Take that on notice. Thank you.

**Answer:**

Recruitment metrics by departmental Area for Victorian government **primary** schools which had the most significant workforce challenges in attracting and recruiting teachers for the 2022 calendar year are as follows:

Area	Application rate*
Brimbank Melton	2.8
Goulburn	2.1
Hume Merri-bek	4.0
Inner Gippsland	3.2
Loddon	3.4
Mallee	2.4
Outer Gippsland	1.9
Ovens Murray	2.2
Wimmera South West	2.2
Western Melbourne	3.5

\*Application rate is the average number of applications received per teaching staff vacancy in the indicated area. The average application rate across Victorian government primary schools in 2022 was 5.3 applications per vacancy.

Recruitment metrics by departmental Area for Victorian government **secondary** schools which had the most significant workforce challenges in attracting and recruiting teachers for the 2022 calendar year are as follows:

Area	Application rate
Brimbank Melton	1.7
Goulburn	0.9
Hume Merri-bek	2.0
Inner Gippsland	1.8
Loddon	1.8
Mallee	1.0
Outer Gippsland	0.7
Ovens Murray	1.8
Wimmera South West	1.3

\*Application rate is the average number of applications received per teaching staff vacancy in the indicated area. The average application rate across Victorian government secondary schools in 2022 was 2.8 applications per vacancy.

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**Question 10**

Portfolio:	Schools
Witness:	Jenny Atta
Committee member:	Danny O’Brien
Page/s of transcript:	4

**Transcript:**

**David ROBINSON:** Thanks, Secretary. There is a range of things that we do to both support the system as a whole and rural and regional Victoria, as well as individual targeted schools where they need it. The first thing to say is we have the targeted teacher financial incentive program, which is providing incentives of up to \$50,000 for teachers to move into rural and regional areas, with retention payments of \$9000 per year for every year that they stay in those schools.

**Danny O’BRIEN:** Was that just geographically based or on particular specialties?

**David ROBINSON:** It is geographically based, but the incentives increase based on how rural and remote a particular community is. It is \$25,000 for those regional schools, and then it rises to \$50,000 for those schools that are in more rural areas.

**Danny O’BRIEN:** **And has it actually worked?**

**David ROBINSON:** We have filled all of the incentives that were available over the reporting period. For the reporting period there were 400 of those funded, and all of them have been filled. The retention of those teachers in schools has been relatively good, with upwards of 90 per cent staying within the school that they were recruited to or staying within the government school system, so –

**Danny O’BRIEN:** **For a period of how long?**

**David ROBINSON:** Over the period of the funding of the program since 2019 – the most recent data on that retention is not available, but for that period that is what we have seen.

**Danny O’BRIEN:** **Would you be able to share that data with the committee?**

**David ROBINSON:** Yes, we can take that on notice.

**Answer:**

The Teacher Financial Incentives (TFI) initiative seeks to attract and retain suitably qualified teachers in hard-to-staff positions in Victorian government schools.

During the reporting period 401 incentives of up to \$50,000 have been filled under the program. Teachers taking up positions through the program at outer regional and remote schools received a \$50,000 incentive, teachers taking up positions in inner regional schools received a \$21,000 incentive and teachers taking up positions in metropolitan schools received a \$9,000 incentive.

Number of Incentives	Financial Year
250	2021-22
151	2022-23

In addition, retention payments of up to \$9,000 are paid to the teacher on the completion of their second, third and fourth year of employment at the school.

For the 2021-22 cohort 79% of the 250 TFI teachers who received upfront financial incentives remain in their same (original) TFI school. An additional 13% remain teaching in another Victorian

government school. This means that a total of 92% remain with the Victorian government school system.

For the 2022-23 cohort 93% of the 151 teachers who received upfront financial incentives remain in their same (original) TFI school. An additional 4% remain teaching in another Victorian government school. This means that a total of 97% remain with the Victorian government school system.

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**Question 11**

Portfolio:	Schools
Witness:	Jenny Atta
Committee member:	Danny O’Brien
Page/s of transcript:	5

**Transcript:**

**Danny O’BRIEN:** Yes. That would be good. Sorry, just back on schools – **can the department provide a breakdown on schools across Victoria who have an acting or temporary principal and have not had a permanent principal for more than 12 months?**

**Jenny ATTA:** Yes. We will have a look and see what we can provide on that, Mr O’Brien.

**Question on Notice:**

How many schools have had an Acting Principal/vacancy for more than 12 months?

**Answer:**

As at June 2023, 3% of Victorian government schools (51 schools) had an acting principal between July 2022 to June 2023.

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**Question 12**

Portfolio:	Schools
Witness:	Jenny Atta
Committee member:	Nicholas McGowan
Page/s of transcript:	13

**Transcript:**

**Nick McGOWAN:** Okay. Just picking up on some of the conversation earlier about the schools for children with some disabilities. Heatherwood School I know obviously had the fire just recently, and I know the kids and the community there are very keen to make sure that they have as little interruption as possible, notwithstanding there is construction occurring there, so it was very, very bad timing on many fronts. **I am wondering if you could give some assurance at least to the community locally that starting the new year next year there will be some sort of certainty going forward for them in terms of what their future looks like there.**

**Jenny ATTA:** Look, I do not have the details with me, Mr McGowan, but we would be absolutely wanting to make sure that at every step of the way the school community had as much clarity as we could give them. It is really unfortunate and tough on that school community.

**Nick McGOWAN:** Totally. If the local member there could have a briefing perhaps with you or with the department or anyone you deem fit, that would be very useful.

**Jenny ATTA:** **Yes, we can follow that up through the minister’s office.**

**Nick McGOWAN:** I am meaning Nicole Werner; she is the local member there.

**Answer:**

On Saturday 26 August 2023, a fire broke out at Heatherwood School impacting roughly 60–70% of the building. The site was released to the Department of Education the next day and isolated from the school community. The required asbestos removal and demolition of the Block A was completed on 29 August.

The school has been able to stay on-site and classes resumed on 30 August 2023. The department provided a food technology relocatable onsite to support the school which was completed on 2 October 2023.

The department is currently exploring options to rebuild Block A. The tendering for a consultant design team for the replacement of Building A is in progress and is envisaged the team will be commence the design of the facility by the start of Term 1 2024.

As part of the 2020–21 State Budget, Heatherwood School was allocated \$10 million to deliver the next stage of its masterplan which includes Block B. The builder who was awarded the contract entered into administration in May 2023. A letter of contract award was issued to the new contractor on Friday 17 November with the works expected to commence in December.



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**Question 13**

Portfolio:	Schools
Witness:	Jenny Atta
Committee member:	Nicholas McGowan
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**Transcript:**

**Nick McGOWAN:** In terms of quantity, do you know how many teachers might be affected, or staff under the department’s remit?

**Jenny ATTA:** No, I do not have any numbers on that sort of scenario modelling about what that would look like.

**Nick McGOWAN:** **Would you know the quantity of teachers who might be on WorkCover for greater than 130 weeks?**

**Jenny ATTA:** Yes, we would have that data.

**Nick McGOWAN:** **Would you mind providing that to us?**

**Jenny ATTA:** **We will have a look at what we can provide.**

**Answer:**

The department has 413 claims with over 130 weeks paid/payable (these are historic claims that have previously been granted secondary entitlement). As the modernisation changes are not slated to change historic entitlement, these claims would not be impacted by the modernisation bill.

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**Question 14**

Portfolio:	Schools
Witness:	Jenny Atta
Committee member:	Danny O'Brien
Page/s of transcript:	6

**Transcript:**

**Danny O'BRIEN:** If you would not mind, a bit of detail on that would be useful. **During the reporting period did the VCAA undertake a review of any of the VCE exams for mistakes or errors, and was there an internal or an external review undertaken?**

**Jenny ATTA:** Mr O'Brien, the VCAA, as I am advised, had undertaken a review of some mathematics examinations after a range of issues had been raised with them. I do not have the detail of that with me, but there was a review that they undertook 12, 18 months ago.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Sorry, you said you would come back to me with some detail?

**Jenny ATTA:** **I said I do not have the detail on that, but we can come back to you on the scope and timing and nature of that.**

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Is it publicly available?

**Jenny ATTA:** Is it publicly available? I do not believe so.

**David HOWES:** My understanding is it was a review of the mathematics exam. **They engaged a company to look at that, and one of the questions was 'Were there errors of mathematics in the exam?' My understanding – and I am happy to take this one on notice – is that they did not find there were errors of mathematics. There were some recommendations about how some language could be tightened.**

**Danny O'BRIEN:** **Any further information you can provide would be welcome. If you can provide a copy of the review, then we would welcome it as well.**

**Question on Notice:**

What was the scope, timing and nature of the VCAA review that was done 12-18 months ago? If possible, can the committee be provided with the report?

**Answer:**

In January 2023, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Ltd (Deloitte) was engaged to conduct an independent review of the 2022 Mathematics examination development process to provide feedback and recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the examination development process and the roles of the personnel involved in the examination development. The review is not publicly available.

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**Question 15**

Portfolio:	Schools
Witness:	David Howes
Committee member:	Danny O'Brien
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**Transcript:**

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Given, though, as you said, there are many eyes involved in the development of the exam, particularly when you get towards the end, what about digital security? Because presumably it is not everyone literally looking at a hard copy. I assume they are whizzing around to experts via email and the like at times.

**David HOWES:** No, that would not be the case. I would need to come back to you with the detail of what the most recent practice is.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** They would be physically in a room working on the exam.

**David HOWES:** That has been the past practice. I would need to get back to you with –

**Danny O'BRIEN:** If you would not mind, a bit of detail on that would be useful.

**Answer:**

The VCAA examination development manual outlines required key security measures at each process stage.

During the examination development phase, strict security directions to maintain the confidentiality and security of the examination materials must be followed. These protocols are outlined in writing and discussed at both the Introductory Meeting and subsequent Panel Briefing Meetings.

Examination material cannot be stored on network or local computer drives and are transferred via a secure file sharing network. No email, mail, text, fax, or similar transmission of these materials is allowed. Hard copies are hand-delivered or sent via a VCAA-approved security courier, sealed and marked confidentially. After an exam is sent for mark-up, panel members must not retain electronic or paper copies.

All panel members must sign a confidentiality agreement, ensuring they do not disclose any information about the exam outside of the panel, except to the Examination Development Manager. Panel members are also obligated to report any breaches or potential breaches of security immediately.

Post-submission, the VCAA finalises examination branding and stores the examination securely. Proofs are provided in hardcopy for panel review in a secure VCAA office space, ensuring all copies are accounted for after reviews. The examination sitting also occurs in this secure environment.