

Education
Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Inquiry into the 2024-25 budget estimates hearings

Response to Question on Notice

Portfolio	Education
Witness	Jenny Atta/David Howes
Deputy Secretary	David Howes
Committee member	Avi Puglielli
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Excerpt from transcript

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you so much. Just moving ahead, something that has been raised quite a bit with my office is concern or quite extreme concern from parents and teachers hearing that weapons manufacturers may have snuck their way into our schools through STEM programs, so talking about things like Cyber Taipan, Code Quest and many more. I understand that there are teachers currently calling for a ban on programs supported by the likes of BAE Systems, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin and RTX, formerly Raytheon. Could you just reassure, Minister, this committee that none of these companies and their supported programs currently run in our public schools?....

....Aiv PUGLIELLI: For example, if you have STEM Camp, which I understand has run in the past in our schools, and if that is sponsored by a weapons manufacturer or there are weapons manufacturers involved in the delivery of that program, how has that not violated the policy?

David HOWES: I am not aware of that particular program. I am happy to take that one and have a look at that.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: I will just pull that one up. STEM Camp has implications with Northrop Grumman, which is the company that supplies the Israeli Air Force with Longbow missile delivery systems for its Apache attack helicopters. Is that not a clear violation of that policy?

David HOWES: I would have to have a look at the details of that.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Okay. I am happy to provide those to you on notice.

Answer:

Regarding the STEM Camps, I am informed that:

In 2019, \$1.4 million was provided for Rural and Regional STEM Camps (STEM Camps) under the Rural and Regional Program initiative.

Through this funding, the Department of Education's Tech Schools have run 13 STEM Camps for students who did not have access to a Tech School. Neither Northrop Grumman nor any other weapons manufacturing company were involved in the delivery of these Tech School camps.

In July 2021, Northrop Grumman provided virtual STEM Summer Camps targeted to students in the United States. The department is not aware of any Victorian government schools or students engaging in the Northrop Grumman camps.

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Regarding the list of weapons manufacturing companies provided by you, I am informed that the department does not have a formal relationship (e.g., partnership arrangement) with any of these companies.

The department's policy is that schools are not permitted to expose students to materials created by inappropriate organisations for classroom use.

This includes those created by companies involved in the sale or promotion of weapons, including firearms.