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PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Audit review on

Improving our Schools: Monitoring and Support

Melbourne — 29 April 2009

<u>Members</u>

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<u>Witnesses</u>

Professor P. Dawkins, Secretary,

Mr D. Fraser, Deputy Secretary, Office for Government School Education,

Ms J. Petch, General Manager, School Workforce Reform and School Improvement, and

Dr S. Glover, General Manager, Data, Outcomes and Evaluation, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

The CHAIR — I declare open the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings on the review of the Auditor-General's audit findings and recommendations August 2007 to February 2008 addressing the following audit, *Improving Our Schools: Monitoring and Support*. On behalf of the Committee I welcome Professor Peter Dawkins, Secretary of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development; Darrell Fraser, Deputy Secretary, Office for Government School Education; Judy Petch, General Manager, School Workforce Reform and School Improvement; and Dr Sara Glover, General Manager, Data, Outcomes and Evaluation. Members of the public and the media are also welcome.

In accordance with the guidelines for public hearings I remind members of the public they cannot participate in committee proceedings. Only officers of the PAEC secretariat are to approach PAEC members. Departmental officers as requested by the Secretary can approach the table during the meeting. Members of the media are also requested to observe the guidelines for filming or recording proceedings in the Legislative Council committee room. All evidence taken by the Committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act to protect it from judicial review. However, any comments made outside the precinct of the hearing — that is, the door — are not protected by parliamentary privilege. There is no need for evidence to be sworn. All evidence being given today will be recorded and witnesses will be provided with proof transcripts to be verified and returned within two working days of this hearing. In accordance with past practice, transcripts and PowerPoint presentations — and you have one today I see — will then be placed on the Committee's website. Following a presentation by the department, Committee members will ask questions relating to the audit findings and recommendations. Generally the procedure followed is that relating to questions in the Legislative Assembly. We ask that all mobile telephones be turned off. I now call on the Secretary to give a presentation on the *Improving our Schools: Monitoring and Support* audit.

Prof. DAWKINS — Thank you very much, Chair. Thanks for the opportunity to talk to you about our school improvement agenda, the way we are implementing it and the way we are responding to the issues that were raised in the Auditor-General's report. I have some slides to take you through some of the main points, obviously not all of the detail that we covered in our response to your questions, but some of the main points that I think we really need to emphasise about our school improvement processes.

Overheads shown.

Prof. DAWKINS — As it said in the report, I have tried to summarise three of main points that have come out of the report. Firstly, there were early signs that targeted support is making a positive difference. The focus was very much on how we were targeting school improvement in underperforming schools — schools that were performing below the expected levels. They concluded that there were:

> … early signs that targeted support is making a positive difference. The department has established a useful evidence base to inform future target support.

But there were areas where efforts could be enhanced. We have indeed been doing a lot of things since that time which have been enhancing our school improvement agenda, many of which were things that were recommended in the report.

Before I go into the details about the accountability and intervention process, which is really at the heart of what the report was about — how we hold various people accountable for school improvement, particularly amongst the lower performing schools — I think it needs to be put in the broader context of our general approach to system improvement, because it is hard to understand our accountability and intervention process without looking at the broader strategy.

There are three other planks to this broad strategy: one is around building leadership in our schools; one is around building teacher knowledge across the whole school system; and the third is about regenerating education, particularly in areas where it is in severe need of regeneration — whole areas as opposed to individual schools. I will say a little bit about leadership, teacher knowledge and regeneration before I get specifically on to accountability and intervention.

On leadership, we have an extensive range of leadership programs, and I can leave a document with you that describes all of our leadership programs, *Learning to Lead Effective Schools*, which includes in it an impressive suite of leadership programs that we run in our department both for existing school principals, for assistant principals and for aspiring leaders. One of the things that we have done since the Auditor-General's report is

developed a thing called the developmental learning framework for school leaders, which is a very richly evidence-based learning framework which enables all of our school leaders to map themselves from novice to expert leaders and across five domains of leadership. We include in our package for principals — and I will table that — an online service so that they can track their progress in the various domains from novice to expert.

Our leadership development programs are built around progressing leadership along this framework. That was the thing that particularly impressed the OECD, so the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development did a report on world best practice in system leadership, in school leadership — I will table the report as well — in which it looked at what best practice was around the world. It searched around the world and it found that Victoria was one that it thought was best practice. As it says on the slide there, 'an outstanding example of effective large-scale reform' from which other systems can learn. So leadership is very much at the heart of the agenda, and with out very strong leadership across all of our school system, this school improvement agenda is not going to work.

The next thing we have recently announced is the establishment of the Victorian Institute of Educational Leadership which will be the home of these leadership programs and an expanded suite of endeavours that we think will keep us at world best practice. Then in the area of teacher knowledge, there are some initiatives that have been launched in recent times — teaching and learning coaches, literacy specialists, a wide range of other professional development opportunities. The most recent development, not unlike the leadership development framework, is a framework for teachers to understand best practice, classroom practice, which is called E^5, and again I table this. It is again based on extensive empirical evidence about what makes for outstanding classroom practice.

In E^5 — the five Es are engage, explore, explain, elaborate and evaluate; those are the five things that good teachers do. With each of those five areas there are capabilities that teachers need to do each of those five things and there is a whole set of performance indicators. Again, teachers can track themselves in these five areas according to the capabilities, using the performance indicators, and our professional development will improve our teaching across the whole system on the basis of this model.

On regeneration, there are a number of areas of Victoria where infrastructure and teaching relative to performance have been identified as needing regeneration; there is a list of some of those areas where it is not just individual schools but where there are areas that we need to regenerate our school education. We have a multi-pronged strategy in these areas to regenerate education. It involves improving the infrastructure; it involves improving the leadership; it involves improving the teaching practice and developing links between the schools and their communities.

One of the best known examples is in Broadmeadows. There you see the kind of new building designs that we use to promote the teaching practice, and what we have done is consolidate schools that were struggling. We previously had 17 schools on 17 sites; we are moving to 11 schools on nine sites. We have appointed an executive principal there. One of our strategies to improve performance in schools is to find high performing principals who have got a strong track record of achievement to help go into those schools that need significant improvement. There is a whole suite of other strategies combined with the infrastructure and the leadership and teacher quality to improve education in those areas.

That takes us on to accountability and intervention. The Auditor-General's report was very much around accountability and intervention. Since the Auditor-General's report we have produced for the government the Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development. In that blueprint there was a commitment to the next level of government school reform. Amongst other things, to strengthen the accountability and improvement framework, a new role for school networks — I will explain school networks in a minute — and stronger interventions in schools where performance needs to improve. In the process, I table the Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development.

Just to tell you a little bit about the accountability and intervention framework, we have a thing called the effective schools model, which again is very strongly evidence based around what makes for effective schools. I will not go through each of the dimensions, but all schools have to develop plans for school improvement based on the effective schools model.

One of the other features of our school improvement agenda is performance and development culture, which is an accreditation process whereby schools have to go through a process of demonstrating that they adopt many of the practices of an effective school. Now we have reached 94 per cent of schools being accredited under the performance development culture, and we have got evidence to show that as these schools move along the process of becoming accredited, they improve in many ways. There is accumulating evidence about those schools that are succeeding being shared across the system. A major aspect of this is the use of data at the system network school and student level as part of the diagnostics involved in determining what is needed for each particular school.

In terms of the use of data, I would just like to mention a couple of very significant developments, again since the Auditor-General's report, about improvements in the use of data. One is that we now have the national literacy and numeracy tests in years 3, 5, 7 and 9. All of our students in Victoria are tested with the national literacy and numeracy tests. So we can now not only compared the performance of our students with other students in Victoria, we are now able to make comparisons on a national level. The results of the first test were very pleasing for Victoria. We were, along with New South Wales and the ACT, part of the three highest performing jurisdictions in Australia in those literacy and numeracy tests. We are also in the process of developing new value-added measures of school performance which we think is a very significant development which will further improve our ability to diagnose the needs of those students and the schools that they are in.

Also, since the Auditor-General's review, we have updated and extended our accountability and improvement framework for Victorian government schools. I can table something that explains the performance and development culture that I mentioned. We have now got a new accountability and improvement framework for government schools which adopts a number of things that the Auditor-General's report was recommending. Along with that, new school review guidelines were released in 2009 about what they have to do within this framework. Another very significant development is a network accountability and improvement framework — I will explain what that means in a minute. The networks are a key part of our reform process.

A major aspect of the reform that we have undertaken which particularly relates to those lower performing schools is the extended diagnostic review. Previous to the Auditor-General's report when that review was undertaken we just had three types of review. We have now added to this a thing called the extended diagnostic review, which is aimed at those schools where the data and the assessment of regional directors and regional network leaders gives us severe concern that the schools need intervention to help them improve. So, as it says there, it is for schools with particular challenges that do not have the capacity to design or implement their own improvement strategy. It involves 28 hours of field work. It can include surveys, focus groups, interviews and classroom observation. The report includes recommendations for a school improvement strategy, including additional resources.

   Mr WELLS — Is there a brochure on that?

   Prof. DAWKINS — Yes, the extended review is explained in the school review guidelines.

   Mr WELLS — Yes, that is all right; I thought we might have missed it.

   Prof. DAWKINS — I mentioned regional network leaders; this is the other major reform that has happened over the last year. We have established 70 regional networks, each with an average of about 22 schools and each with a regional network leader. Their responsibility is to monitor school performance, assist schools to identify and implement improvement strategies, quality assurance of school strategic plans and annual implementation plans, assist schools to understand and use the data collected and develop network strategic plans. That means we have added a level of accountability between the region and the school.

One of the issues that I think we decided partly as a result of the Auditor-General's report but also our own analysis of our school improvement agenda was that we needed a layer between the region and the school where you could have an expert in school improvement dealing with about 22 schools and being responsible to the regional director to ensure that we get school improvement across that whole network. It would typically coincide roughly with a local government area; that gives you an idea of the size of the network. So we now have accountability at the system level, the region level, the network level and at the level of the school. We have planning and review processes at each level and appropriate accountabilities at each level, and of course

within the school, the principal and each teacher within the school taking accountability for the students they are responsible for.

Going back to the targeted improvement strategy that the Auditor-General's report was partly looking at, it said there were signs that the targeted improvement strategy was making a positive difference. This evidence has increased since the report. We have had two more years of data on the performance of our students in those schools, and there is a significant upward trend in most areas. That one happens to show year 5 reading, but we could show you the evidence for other areas, as well literacy and numeracy, where we have been achieving significantly.

   The CHAIR — It would be useful if you could send us similar graphs for those, if you could.

   Prof. DAWKINS — We can. We have them with us; we can certainly do that. We will leave that with you. That shows you the progress we have made in our school improvement agenda, in our accountability and improvement framework, in the way in which we are intervening in schools that need intervention through doing these extended diagnostic reviews, through the role of the regional network leader to ensure that the findings of those reviews are implemented.

The very positive note on which to end is that we are now in this very strong space in which we have the capability of improving our schools very significantly, and now there is a significant investment coming in; firstly, through the 2008 blueprint and the Victorian government's investment in the blueprint reform agenda, and now through the COAG process we have negotiated with the commonwealth a very substantial investment in improving literacy and numeracy in our schools, in investing in low socioeconomic status schools, in negotiating a national partnership with the Commonwealth Government with matched funding from the Victorian government to work on low socioeconomic status schools. Not all, but many of the lower performing schools are in areas of low socioeconomic status, so that is a very important set of investments that will be taking place over the next few years. Also there is the national partnership on teacher quality, which will enable us to invest in a whole range of initiatives to improve the quality of teaching in general. As I have explained, we have got a lot of things already in place, but this will enable us to go even further.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to introduce the topic and our general approach and some of the highlights of our improvement strategy, which we also wrote about in our response to you. We will be very pleased to take any questions

   The CHAIR — Thank you very much. If every department responded to the Auditor-General's report with so much material, we would be far better off in terms of the management of the Victorian government sector. I want to ask particularly about the one you mentioned in terms of the blueprint, which of course covers education and early childhood development. Now you have obviously a much wider scenario in the department — it is not just education, it is early childhood development, and of course that articulates into school. What does this change mean in terms of your school improvement agenda and the issues that the Auditor-General has raised?

   Prof. DAWKINS — As you mentioned, in August 2008 a large part of the former Office for Children, which was previously under the Department of Human Services, and the former Department of Education merged to form the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. It has a remit to promote the learning, development, health and wellbeing of all young Victorians from birth to 18. In addition to school education, as you pointed out, in the new department we are responsible for working with other levels of government, federal and local, to support and regulate, for example, maternal and child health, child care, early childhood intervention services for children with disabilities and preschool — kindergarten. And of course there is accumulating neurological and social science empirical research to show that high-quality early childhood services have beneficial effects on the learning and development of children as they get older — for example, improving their literacy and numeracy. There is a very strong focus, of course, around literacy and numeracy in our school improvement agenda. This is particularly significant in disadvantaged communities, which is where many of our schools struggle.

   The CHAIR — This is the 128 schools which the Auditor-General identified.

   Prof. DAWKINS — Indeed. Many of those are in disadvantaged communities, and that is where schools are struggling to get students above minimal acceptable standards. In Victoria, in bringing schools and early

childhood services together in one department, it gives us a great opportunity to promote the learning and development of children from an earlier age and prepare them better to learn at school. Victoria, partly in collaboration with the Commonwealth Government, is pursuing policies to promote the quality of early childhood services and to strengthen linkages between these services and schools. For example, we are working on the development of transition plans for children to achieve successful and smooth transitions into primary school. We are developing an early learning framework so that childhood services workers in maternal and child health, child care and kindergartens have a learning framework from which to base the work they do with children to promote their learning and development.

We are encouraging the co-location of primary schools and early childhood services, which will further reinforce these efforts. The Victorian government is also entering a national partnership agreement to increase the hours of the early childhood education that our children receive. Yes, I am confident that this will have an effect on preparing children better for school and improving the chances that our primary schools will achieve significant improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes and other outcomes that schools are striving to achieve.

The CHAIR — It is particularly important in the disadvantaged areas.

Mr WELLS — Just a comment first: I noticed that you mentioned the OECD book about leadership and are very proud that the OECD has recognised that. But I also note that it is interesting that when the OECD brings out a report about assessment of students the Minister for Education rejects that outright because it shows Victoria's standards against all other states except Tasmania is the lowest in the nation. Moving right along.

The CHAIR — Yes, move right along.

Mr WELLS — I refer to the executive summary and 1.2, the overall conclusion. What is the breakdown in numbers of regions of schools being provided with priority attention since 2007, what recurrent funding do regional officers receive, and what percentage of that is used for supporting those priority schools in that period?

Prof. DAWKINS — I would just like to comment on your preamble before we go on to the breakdown of regions of schools. The first thing to say is that in that OECD PISA data on 15-year-olds in Australia comes out at being in the top handful of countries in the whole of the OECD. Australia is identified by the OECD as being one of the highest-performing countries in the world, and Victoria is found to be not significantly different from the average for Australia. You mentioned differences between Victoria and other jurisdictions, with the exception of, I think, one jurisdiction, which was the ACT, I think this is true to say. I would have to go back and check precisely. It depends which year you look at — —

Mr WELLS — Two thousand and six.

Prof. DAWKINS — But as a general rule I think you will find that Victoria was not significantly below any other state, apart from the ACT, which of course has a very high SES among its students. The other thing to say is that since that 2006 PISA data we have now got that on the national literacy and numeracy tests across Australia, which is not just based on a small sample. There are issues about the size of the sample of the PISA, but it is based upon all year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students — it is not only 9, 7, 5 and 3 — and Victoria comes out equal with New South Wales and the ACT.

On the issue of the breakdown of regions and schools, I think to give the precise answer to that question we will have to take that on notice and give you the full data on those schools that do receive intervention. I do not know whether the head of the Office for Government School Education or the head of school improvement would like to comment on any specific data at this stage on that.

Mr FRASER — We can give you some information about the targeted schools. In late 2003, when the blueprint for government schools was released, 90 schools were identified for targeted school improvement. In 2003–06, $6.52 million was allocated directly into those improvement initiatives. In 2006 funding was provided as regional grants; we moved it from schools to regions; an additional $1.35 million was allocated in 2007; and $2.474 million was distributed through regions in 2008 as grants. This year we are putting out approximately $1.78 million. When we first put forward those 90 targeted schools it was in response to a blueprint initiative where the Minister required us to identify those schools that we identified as not having the internal capacity to

improve. Those schools were identified by looking at a range of indicators. You are probably aware that this department collects a lot of data on how schools are performing. This is student performance data. In 2004 it was AIM testing, for instance. We collect data on students' perceptions of school, their safety, their engagement, teacher morale; there is a huge number of data sets across both primary and secondary schools. What we did was to look at those data sets and ask the regional directors in conjunction with the central office to identify those schools we believed needed the support to actually meet the performance expectations of the government.

In addition to those first 90 schools we extended the brief to regional directors to identify an additional 15 schools in each region because, as you would imagine, those 90 schools were actually concentrated in just a couple of regions. Those were the most in need, but we knew there was a large number of other schools that actually needed additional support as well. The agenda of this department since late 2003 has been to identify those schools that needed additional support, and, using the models that Peter referred to and the international evidence base on how you actually assist schools to respond to those performance expectations, we have crafted a range of programs, a range of strategies, that enable schools to address those significant issues. When you look at Broadmeadows — there were significant issues in Broadmeadows — the public was rejecting the public education offer. The figures showed 1000 students were leaving that precinct on a daily basis to go to other government schools. There were poor retention rates; there were poor outcomes achieved by children in secondary school. So the principals in that precinct determined in 2004 that the education offer was inadequate, and they themselves came to the regional director and asked for the regional director to work with them to look at a better model of provision to actually improve the quality of the offer. That has been one of the major projects — we can name others — where government has actually understood that you could invest in a regeneration of the education offer. In just this one example, in excess of $90 million is being invested just in infrastructure. For the past five years we have put additional resources into professional learning opportunities for those teachers. We have invested heavily in interventions for those children and in that precinct.

Just one piece of data: the intake into Hume Central Secondary College this year into year 7 — that is the new college formed out of the merger of some of the schools — over 50 per cent of the children going into year 7 had a reading age of about year 3. These are significant issues. We can point to a whole lot of factors which have contributed to that situation, but they are the very factors that we are actually trying to deal with at the moment in terms of those children coming from homes where the social, the educational, the cultural artefacts are not in those homes to allow children to actually engage with their education beyond that school gate. You might have seen the press reports in relation to the netbook launch in Broadmeadows. We have provided every student — I think it is in years 7 and 8 — with a netbook, which is one of those small form factor computers. They actually contain 38 different applications and software programs like literacy programs, numeracy programs. They have Encarta, mind-mapping programs, dictionaries — all those resources which we have determined are not necessarily available for those children once they finish school. It would be difficult for me to quantify every dollar that has gone in, but let me tell you there is a large number of dollars from a whole range of sources that has been directed into this effort since 2004.

Mr WELLS — Can I clarify two points?

The CHAIR — Quickly.

Mr WELLS — Firstly, in your preamble to your answer, Professor Dawkins, you are saying that the latest OECD figures that were released in 2006 — the PISA results — showed that Victoria had the highest rate behind the ACT. Is that what you are claiming?

Prof. DAWKINS — No. What I am saying is the sample sizes are very small so when you look at significant differences, my memory is the only jurisdiction where you can say they were significantly different to Victoria was the ACT. Victoria was not significantly different from the average for Australia, and Australia was one of the highest in the world. But my supplementary point was we now have much stronger data on which to compare Victoria with other states, and that is the national literacy and numeracy test which every student, as opposed to a small sample, is — —

Mr WELLS — It was just interesting because my recollection of the same data is Victoria had the second lowest of any state, from the graphs that I have seen. The second point: are we able to get the figures on notice then in regard to the break down in numbers in each region of the schools since 2007?

Prof. DAWKINS — Yes.

Ms MUNT — I am interested in graph 2.3.2 on page 12 of the Auditor-General's report, primary school learning outcomes. As I mentioned to the Auditor before lunch, every indicator has risen across a range. You mentioned in your presentation improvements in year 5 writing in targeted schools. I have three parts to the question: how do you target the schools? What resources were put in to achieve that improvement in year 5 writing outcomes? And were any other improvements in any other areas of curriculum observed?

Prof. DAWKINS — I think the best way to answer your question is to explain to you what our school improvement model is. We have referred in the report to the school improvement model, which is how we now set about targeting those underperforming schools that we need to intervene in. This is not exactly the same process that was used when we first had the targeted improvement strategy. Part of what the Auditor-General's report was suggesting was that we needed to refine and improve our approach, so rather than going back over the way we used to do it, it is probably best to tell you how we do it now.

Ms MUNT — Yes.

Prof. DAWKINS — What I would like to do is not only table a document but talk you through it. In relation to identifying the schools that we need to target our improvement strategies into on the underperformance side, within our accountability and improvement architecture I guess the best place to focus is at the bottom of the school accountability and improvement framework. You will see that on the left-hand side it talks about a 'four-year cycle including a year of self-evaluation, independent school review and planning' and an 'annual cycle with annual planning and reporting'. For each school we have a review process which enables us to determine how they are going. There is a four-year major review but on an annual basis each school has to be reporting on its performance against its plan, and we are monitoring its outcomes with respect to things like literacy and numeracy and other things to identify how well it is going.

What we have done recently, which I mentioned, is we have now got this network accountability and improvement framework. We have a regional network leader who is overseeing about 20 or 25 schools and who is analysing their data. They are doing it for all of their schools and then they are reporting on their progress up to the region and the region is doing that up to the system. The Office of Government School Education, which oversees the government school system, headed up by Darrell Fraser, chairs the school improvement committee. Judy Petch is the general manager for school improvement.

All of this evidence eventually cascades up to them and they can forensically go through all of the schools, all of the networks, all of the regions, but with reports coming up from school principals, regional network leaders and regions about the way they are going against plan, supplemented of course by these diagnostic and extended diagnostic reviews. If you then go to the subsequent pages, you will have a look at the sort of data that is being analysed to identify which schools we should be intervening in. We have just given you two examples of schools here, one of which is the sort of school that the deputy secretary eventually decides we have to intervene in.

This is a school with low student outcomes which is performing below like schools. Just to give you an understanding of what that means, you will see that we have a range of data about student learning, including their literacy and numeracy tests — that is the AIM test. Then there are teacher judgements and the VCE. For each of these schools and on all those student learning outcomes we analyse their performance in each of the last four years. We look at the four-year trend, and then we look at the four-year average. When you see the red boxes there, they start to ring some bells to say, 'This is a relatively low performing school in our system'. That is particularly worrying in the student learning area, and it is not surprising therefore that the four-year average in student engagement and wellbeing is also low, and student pathways and transitions — our year 12 completions over the four years — is low. You will see that as far as the four-year trend is concerned, there is no sign of improvement. That means that immediately, both at the network level and in the region, this type of school will come to the attention of Darrell Fraser and he will start thinking that we need to intervene in this school. One of the things that is very important is that you have to consider the circumstances of schools. We know that student achievement is very much influenced by the socioeconomic background of the students and the composition of the students. You have to take that into account in thinking about the performance of the school.

Turning to the second slide, it compares the school with like schools. What ' like' schools means is that you have a look at schools with a similar composition of students. This is a school with relatively low socioeconomic students. What you will see in that set of numbers is lines as opposed to block data. The lines represent the performance of like schools — that is, schools with a similar socioeconomic composition to the schools in question. What you see is that in most of these areas they are actually performing below the like schools as well as being below performing in an absolute sense, even when you compare them with schools with similar socioeconomic backgrounds. The students are also low performers.

When you see schools performing low in absolute terms and low relative to like schools then these are the kinds of schools that are going to be the focus of attention for targeted intervention. Darrell will then say to his regional director, 'What else do you know about the school?'. The regional director will talk to the regional network leaders and say, 'How is this school going with respect to student satisfaction, staff opinion and parent opinion?'. The next set of data that will be at our fingertips, and the regional network leaders and the regional director will help us interpret it, tells us about student morale and student relationships.

As you can see down at the bottom of the slide, the orange bars show student relationships. That is not a good set of data. In a minute you will see in a comparison with a good school that this suggests that attitudes to school are not particularly good. The staff opinion suggests that there is a staff morale problem. The parent opinion is a bit more favourable. This is the kind of data that is compared across networks, across regions and across the system. This is one that Darrell would definitely say we need to intervene in. That gives you an idea of how it is done through this accountability system and through all of the data and the reviews and the cycles of reviews — and this one would get an extended diagnostic review. We would do all of the fieldwork, then we would identify all the interventions, and then we would get on with an intervention strategy.

Just to make it clear how that one would end up in that group, have a look at the next school which has good student outcomes. There is more green showing improvement in all of its student learning areas. Its actual level of achievement is in the mid range; it is not one of the highest performing in terms of outcomes, but it is improving. It is high on student engagement and wellbeing. What is particularly telling is when you go to the next page where the table is headed 'Comparison with like schools', you will see it is outperforming like schools massively. If you compare it with students with similar socioeconomic backgrounds it is really performing extremely well. It suggests that it is adding considerable value over and above what a normal school with those kinds of students would be doing. The leading indicators also show high staff morale, student connectedness and so on. That is the process whereby the schools are identified. That was one part of your question. The other part of the question was about interventions; is that right?

   Ms MUNT — No. The first part of the question was about how you target the school, and the second part of the question was about what resources you put into those schools to improve the outcomes. You mentioned that outcomes have improved in those targeted schools in year 5 writing. Was there a corresponding improvement in other areas of the curriculum?

   Prof. DAWKINS — In a minute I might ask Darrell Fraser to talk about the resources we put in and the interventions we make in those schools. It depends on the schools. You have to tailor it to the needs of each school, and these reviews help us to determine what kind of interventions we need to make. We showed you the writing results. This is for the cohort of schools in the original targeted intervention strategy which started some years ago. The improvements exist also in reading and number and spelling and mathematics and so on. I will table that as well. The other thing to say is that we have been intervening in more schools than just those that were in that initial cohort, and as we learn more and more about what interventions work, we are more and more confident about achieving the upward trends in outcomes. In terms of the kinds of resources, Darrell talked about what we have been doing in Broadmeadows. Can you talk more generally about the sorts of interventions that you oversee?

   Mr FRASER — What we have learnt through this work over the last five or six years is that every school is facing a particular set of circumstances. The response has to be quite nuanced and sophisticated. You cannot go in there and say, 'It is the staff's fault, it is the leadership's fault'. There is usually a constellation of factors that actually brought the school to a point where they are struggling to deal with the performance issues and the achievements of the children within those schools.

What Peter was taking you towards was our definition of evidence-based decision making. All this data looks a bit overwhelming, but what it does is actually identify groups of schools which require further attention. Then we actually use that local knowledge, that contextual knowledge that regional network leaders and regional directors have, and overlay. They help us identify a group of schools which they believe needs support. Then it is really what we would say is a forensic analysis of needs within those schools — for instance, it might be there is a new principal recently appointed who is actually struggling to deal with some pretty significant issues around staffing. So it might be that that principal is provided with a mentor or a coach over a period of time to deal with some of the technical issues they might have been struggling with. In other circumstances it might be a workforce capacity issue. There are children whose literacy outcomes are significantly below — for example, in Broadmeadows, three and four years below — age-appropriate milestones.

What you might identify there is that the teachers in the school do not have that disciplinary knowledge base to effectively intervene and plan programs to assist those children to improve. An example of an initiative put in place is the literacy improvement teams, funded a couple of years ago, and teaching and learning coaches, which was a $48.7 million funding from government over a period of two years. Those learning and teaching coaches, those literacy improvement teams, work alongside teachers in classrooms, helping them develop the teaching strategies, the repertoire of skills they need, to intervene when children are not making progress.

We also have leadership programs. As Peter pointed to, there are something like 19 different leadership initiatives that we have in place. We fund Masters of Educational Leadership. I think we are up to cohort six — four cohorts of about 315 young leaders have actually finished that Masters of Educational Leadership. They are a resource which becomes available to the system. There is professional learning for teachers. We have run literacy and numeracy professional learning activities across the system to actually provide teachers in classrooms with the skills they need to intervene when progress is not occurring. There is a whole raft of interventions and it is just determined by the needs identified within a particular school.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Professor Dawkins, can I ask you about the Auditor-General's conclusions on page 3 of the executive summary, where he states:

> Resourcing issues forced two regions to place a cut-off on the number of schools that could be provided with targeted support. In both regions, 60 schools were identified with issues of concern in 2007, while 28 and 34 schools, respectively, received targeted support.

Are you able to tell the Committee if the other 58 schools in that cohort have now received targeted support?

Prof. DAWKINS — The precise dates on all of those schools we might have to give you on notice, but certainly since that time we are progressively increasing the number of schools that we are intervening in. For that particular group of schools, do you have any details?

Mr FRASER — I think I do. We audited the schools identified. We made sure that they were receiving some form of support. That was determined by the resource base we had to draw on. Certainly we went into each of those schools.

I might add the point that the Auditor-General identified an issue for us. It was really about capacity to respond. A lot of the schools he identified were in the northern suburbs. The capacity of that region to effectively manage the improvement effort of that large number of schools in the first instance would have overwhelmed them. It would have been a superficial engagement with the school. What we wanted them to do was to learn from it a deep, sophisticated engagement with a smaller number of schools, and then transfer that knowledge into the broader group of schools that need support. We could not solve all those problems in the first instance. It was just the reality; not even if we doubled the staff and tripled the resource.

The biggest challenge we have is as more resources become available through government through further investment in this effort, we have to make sure that our workforce has got the capacity to use these in a productive way which leads to the improvements we want, because you can flood a system with resources and they could be wasted. We are intent on making sure that we use the available resources to deliver a return on that investment.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — What has been the impact of inserting the regional officer level in the process with respect to resourcing? Have you had additional resources to support that?

Prof. DAWKINS — In the last budget, which itself provided funding to increase the regional presence, which funded the investment in these regional network leaders, it also gave additional funding for investment in school improvement. So yes, we have got additional funding out of the Victorian state government budget. As I mentioned towards the end of my presentation, the other thing that has happened of course is that now through the COAG process we are getting significantly more investment. It turns out to be excellent timing to have these regional network leaders in place to be able to manage what is going to have to be a very extensive investment in school improvement out of this COAG funding.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — If you could take the specifics of the other 58 schools on notice.

Prof. DAWKINS — Yes.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Thank you.

The CHAIR — So you want details in terms of interventions?

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — If they have occurred.

The CHAIR — Not just in terms of money but also in terms of the leadership upgrading and that sort of thing.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — And whether those 58 have been addressed or are outstanding.

Mr NOONAN — I think at about the time that the Auditor-General finalised his report, or concluded his report, you were the Department of Training and Education. Of course now you are the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. In that time you have also moved from the 2003 *Blueprint for Government* Schools to the *2008 Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*. My question goes to how these changes have assisted the school improvement agenda.

Prof. DAWKINS — Yes, I described earlier the advantage of becoming the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. I think what you are asking really is about not only that change in department but also this new blueprint that we have got, which is the blueprint for education and early childhood development.

The CHAIR — Sure, and how it responds to the Auditor-General's stuff.

Prof. DAWKINS — Yes, indeed. There was the 2003 blueprint for government schools. That had a focus very much around school improvement in government schools. The 2008 *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* really represented a step forward in two major ways: one was the broadening of the focus of the department with a birth–18 agenda, a focus on early childhood services, a focus on universal learning and development opportunities for all young people in Victoria. So that relates to this broadening practice of the department.

On the actual school improvement agenda, as I mentioned in my slides, one of the things it did was to broaden the focus beyond government schools, so it also talked about the importance of the government having a broader focus around non-government schools as well as government schools. But within the government school improvement agenda, it talks about taking this improvement agenda to the next level. I might quote one or two things it said about that:

> In school education we will pursue a stronger systemic approach to school improvement in government schools based upon driving improvement through the role of regional networks, and stronger interventions in schools where performance needs to improve —

so very much what we have been talking about today —

> Working in partnership will be a key characteristic of our new approach.

Again, this is another dimension. We have been talking very much about the school improvement agenda today, system reform and improvement in the workforce. But there was another dimension as well which was emphasised in the blueprint for education and early childhood development that is working in partnership with:

parents and communities as the first and most enduring influences on children's development. We will also work in partnership with the thousands of dedicated leaders and staff in Victoria's schools and children's services.

So it is partly the broadening of scope around all children in Victoria from birth to 18, whereas the 2003 blueprint was specifically about students in government schools. Then the second thing that is particularly relevant today is this ramping up of the school improvement agenda, increasing the accountability of schools, inserting this new network level of accountability and the regional network leaders, and stronger interventions in underperforming schools.

Mr NOONAN — Just to follow up, page 22 of the Auditor-General's report talks about — it is the last two paragraphs, I suppose — partnership agenda:

> Audit found that the school principal has a key role in driving improvement.

That is in the second last paragraph. The first line of the last paragraph says:

> School councils also can play a prominent role in school performance improvement.

I think you just had a slide up there which talked about sort of the various partners in all of this. I just wonder whether you might give us a short answer in terms of those, both the school principal and the school councils, in terms of where your focus is going forward because there is a lot of discussion about regional network leaders.

Prof. DAWKINS — School principals are still the key players in this school improvement agenda. That is why we have been emphasising leadership so much, particularly in a fairly devolved system. Victoria has adopted for quite some time now by world standards a devolved government school system. So if you compare Victoria with most systems around the world, the amount of autonomy and freedom that the principal has got with respect to hiring staff, with respect to tailoring their programs to their student needs and so on, it is greater in Victoria than nearly any other system around. So that hinges critically on very strong leadership. That is why that really was the major focus of the foundation of our school improvement agenda and also with the first government school blueprint. That is why we have placed so much emphasis today on the importance of school leadership and why we are very pleased that the quality of our school leadership development is being recognised around the world as being sort of best practice.

The regional network leaders are there in a sense to make sure we have strong leadership everywhere — 1600 government schools approximately. Having every one of those school leaders performing extremely well is a big ask. The regional network leaders are there to work with each of the 20 to 25 school principals — to assist them, support them and identify challenges they are facing. If necessary, at times we do succession planning and we move onto new school principals and so on. But school principals are certainly at the heart of it. Their relationship with the school community is the third dimension of the blueprint agenda. So there are three really main aspects to the *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*. One is system reform which we have been talking about mostly today; one is workforce improvement which is around the leadership or teacher workforce; and the third is engaging with the community. A major part of that community of course is the parent community.

The evidence is clear that working closely with parents is another of the major drivers of student achievement. Parental expectations, for example, are widely found in literature to be a significant influence on student outcomes. One of the roles that principals do take on is engaging with the parent community to help build their capability and commitment to their children's education. Of course one other mechanism that helps that is the school council, because there is typically significant parental representation on the school council. Through this blueprint we are encouraging school principals to work very closely with parents and other members of the school council to build these strong school community linkages. That is very much the third part of the strategy.

Ms PENNICUIK — Professor Dawkins, you mentioned professional development and leaders in literacy and numeracy programs in schools around that. I have a couple of questions: one, is that being targeted or opted in; two, is it ongoing; and three, is it going to extend to all teachers?

Prof. DAWKINS — I will make a couple of general remarks and then ask either Darrell or Judy who are experts in this field to give you more detail. As a general remark, we have a system-wide strategy for improving literacy and numeracy. We put a lot of effort into getting the best knowledge in all of our teacher workforce about what is a good numeracy and literacy strategy. We may not have it with us, but we have a discussion

paper on literacy and numeracy teaching, which identifies what good quality literacy and numeracy teaching is and which we would be more than happy to send you. That is something that is made available to our whole workforce.

For our regional network leaders, we ensure that they are up to date with world best practice. One of the experts we are using in our literacy and numeracy strategy is a lady called Diane Snowball, who comes from Victoria but who then went and worked in New York on their school improvement agenda and developed a worldwide reputation for her capability in driving literacy and numeracy. She has come back to Victoria now. She is working with our western region but she has also been working with all our regional network leaders to promote their knowledge of literacy and numeracy and they in turn have been working with all their school principals. So there is that system-wide approach, and then we have a targeted overlay on that, with our literacy and numeracy coaches, where we use specialists to advise and assist teachers of literacy and numeracy where the need is greatest. So that is a kind of an overview. I might ask Darrell or Judy to add to those observations.

Mr FRASER — Just a particular example: $22.1 million over three years was provided to us to employ 45 literacy coaches and also 16 Koori literacy coaches. They work in schools where there are significant performance issues around what those children are achieving in P–10, so it is targeted. We identify the schools with the worst literacy outcomes and then work very closely with teachers responsible for those children. The Koori literacy coaches work in schools where there are more than 20 Koori children. As of November 2008, those coaches were working in about 200 schools, coaching 532 individual teachers and working across about 11 000 students, out of a total population of 540 000 students in government schools. So it has been very targeted, very specific. In fact I think we are going to finetune it more as we move forward, so that the effort is even more concentrated for those students and teachers who need support.

Ms HUPPERT — In your response to your Auditor-General's report and also in your presentation you talked about the E^5, is it, instructional model? I was wondering when you said that what difference is that going to make and is that going to require retraining of teachers to follow that particular model?

Prof. DAWKINS — Just taking you back to the slide on the E^5 — engage, explore, explain, elaborate, evaluate — this is based on some work in the biological sciences but it is generalisable across all areas of teaching, discipline areas but also all levels of schooling and further education. As I mentioned earlier, the E^5 materials that we have developed go through each of those aspects of good classroom practice and identify the capabilities that the teachers need to do each of those things and also some indicators of their performance in being able to do that. We are designing professional development to support all this. Judy Petch is leading that work, under Darrell's supervision, so I might get you to just elaborate on this.

Mr FRASER — I will have a go and then hand over to Judy. The need for the instructional model was identified at the Melbourne Big Day Out, where we bring all Victorian principals into the convention centre and work with them over the course of a day. Our Ministers and the Secretary talk to them about the system, the imperatives of the system and the work of the system. We forecast that we were going to explore the development of an instructional model. I think 94 per cent of principals who participated in that then said that they needed guidance on how to host conversations around what high-quality practice looks like.

It is a piece of work which was initiated over two years ago, as Peter said, based on work initially undertaken by Biological Sciences Curriculum Study, which was an American piece of work. All we took was the construct, the five Es. It is a simple mathematical model which people can actually remember. The challenge was then to actually elaborate what that model meant and how it translated into what highly effective practitioners do. We launched it about two weeks ago. Minister Pike launched it in front of 200 educators. It is something which the workforce has been waiting for eagerly. Judy actually led the research into how this model could be constructed and led the expert groups who contributed to the final formulation of the model.

Ms PETCH — I think one of the things that we learnt through the development of the leadership framework was that you actually have to show people how they can get better at what they do. Then if you define the capabilities that people need to develop, you can target all your resources very effectively and you can align all your professional learning and you can hold providers who deliver those programs to account, so you are developing the capabilities that you believe are going to have the greatest impact, on both performance and student learning. That was the premise that we used in terms of this instruction model.

I think the other driving force was that the evidence base tells us that the greatest variability within schools is between teachers across classrooms, rather than between schools. So, in constructing the model, we had to find a way of being able to define those capabilities that teachers needed to develop what would have the greatest impact on increasing the intellectual demand of the learning in the classroom with students. What we have been able to do is develop profiles that explain from novice to expert what it actually looks like to increase your proficiency as a teacher and what it means for the type of interactions that you engage in with students in the classroom. One of the probably most significant things that will come out of this is that we will now be able to align all the teacher performance and development plans, asking them to self-assess their capacity against this framework, so that they can target their professional learning as well as achieving in terms of their own individual goals but also the school's priorities. We can also influence the professional learning strategy that is enacted in any one school, because schools can determine across all their staff where they are not doing well, so that they are able to target that professional learning.

The other thing we are able to do is to enhance the performance and development culture framework by demonstrating to school leaders what it actually looks like if you have a common view of practice. If people are actually talking about the same things, you can have a pretty rich conversation in a school about those areas you need to improve on.

Mr FRASER — There is just one other thing: I think the international evidence has pointed us in one direction for some time. We have reached agreement that basically in the system there are only three ways we can actually improve what students learn. The first way is to increase the knowledge base of our practitioners, our workforce. This is a deliberate strategy to enhance what they know about their practice.

The second way is to increase the quality and intellectual rigour of the content they engage with. You might be aware there is a major project for government, ultranet, which is to create the virtual classroom and create a mechanism through which teachers across the entire state can share high-quality content and learn from what good practitioners do.

The third way is to change the role of students so that it is not only the teachers doing the work, but the students accepting some responsibility and agency for their learning and progress. That would mean we would have a workforce that actually understands that and is prepared to actually engage with us in lifting understanding.

Ms HUPPERT — Will you be doing professional development programs to go with that model, or will it be basically a self-assessment type of thing at the school level?

Ms PETCH — One of the things we will do moving forward is that any of the professional learning programs that are tendered out will have to be built around the capabilities we have defined in that model. From next year the teacher professional learning leave initiative will operate, which enables teachers to apply for up to 20 days release. One of the conditions of that teacher professional leave will be that it has to link the five-tier instructional model with the leave. That can be at an individual or team level within a school, across schools or across the network.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — In respect of the executive summary of the report, in the second paragraph on page 3 it talks about the blueprint. I gather that is the first blueprint — the alleged reforms in 2003 — the focus of which was to elevate:

the role and responsibilities of senior education officers (SEOs) …describing them as key change agents.

And that:

the capabilities of professional development needs of SEOs have only recently been assessed.

I understand these positions have been scrapped; is that right?

Prof. DAWKINS — The positions were spilled and replaced by regional network leaders. Some of the previous SEOs have been successfully getting jobs as regional network leaders.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Yes, so there has been a re-badging. Given that there are now regional network leaders (RNLs), who have now replaced the SEOs, what guarantees do we have that there will be an improvement in terms of the concerns that were raised in the Auditor-General's report? I know you touched on

it before, Mr Fraser, in relation to some of the roles, but is there a document, a presentation or something you could provide — perhaps you could take this on notice — as to exactly what the roles are, what the KPIs are and what you are expecting them to achieve?

I know you have the frameworks, and I have seen reference to them in the document here, but it is sparse. A comment made today by Alison Smith, director of performance audit from the Victorian Auditor-General's office, was just concerned and — I am not trying to quote it — thought some of the response was generalised and not detailed as to how you expected to achieve those outcomes.

I am just worried, and I guess the context of my question is that you have re-badged them, but are we going to have the same problems as those the Auditor-General identified regarding the SEOs? Perhaps you can take it on notice, and maybe just provide a bit of an overview as to how you expect those roles to be undertaken.

Prof. DAWKINS — We will certainly provide you with more detail about the RNLs. I will make a few preparatory remarks and then ask Darrell to elaborate, because he actually oversaw the process of recruiting all these regional network leaders. I must say I think the quality of the regional network leaders is outstanding in terms of their professional knowledge. But Darrell could elaborate on that. I think it was more than a re-badging; it changed in a number of ways. One was that we now have more regional network leaders than we had SEOs. That means there are fewer schools that they each have to deal with, so that each school can get more attention.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — There were 40 schools per SEO. What is it now?

Prof. DAWKINS — It is about 22 on average. The second point is that what we were progressively doing with the SEOs was getting them more and more focused on school improvement. With regional network leaders this is very much their primary focus. We are doing an extensive amount of professional development to keep them at best-practice knowledge about school improvement development agenda. Darrell, who recruited them, can talk about that process. Some of the SEOs who were amongst our better performers in terms of school improvement knowledge got positions, but we have also attracted a number of other very good people into these roles.

Mr FRASER — We had about 46 SEOs, and they had on average 36 schools. Clearly that was too many schools to manage an improvement effort for. There were also some legacy issues. These people have actually been appointed at a different time, with a different agenda. A lot of their work was managing issues the schools confronted rather than managing the improvement effort.

We hosted a statewide selection process. There were over 127 applicants for these 70 positions. We set up three panels. Each panel had three regional directors on it and a central office person like Judy Petch, who was on one of the three panels. The panels were moderated every day, so that we actually had a shared understanding of the type of person we were trying to identify to lead the improvement effort in the 22 schools they would each be responsible for. We were very confident at the end of that process that we had identified, I think, 61 people who had the skill base and the necessary knowledge base or the potential to actually undertake this work in a sophisticated way. We subsequently filled the remaining nine positions on a temporary basis, so we had a cohort to work with. Our first task was to make very explicit what their work was. So it was not only putting these regional network leaders into place, but was actually working with the regional directors to actually remove — and our minister, Minister Pike, was very explicit about this — work that SEOs used to do that she did not want the regional network leaders to do. So there was a restructure within the regional office to deal with some of the issues which sort of confounded SEOs in the past — the parenting process, getting smarter business processes to allow these people to concentrate on school improvement.

We also put in a structure where we had three assistant regional directors — one to take care of early childhood, one to manage the operations and one for school improvements — so a dedicated senior person within each office to manage the work of RNLs. Since their appointment, we have conducted four professional learning activities of three to two days — one was three days. The first was a forum hosted by Michael Fulham, who is an international expert on change management. We ran a series of seminars and workshops around that. We spent a day with Diane Snowball, who was teaching them how to identify high-quality literacy practices in schools, so they knew what to look for when they went into schools. We did a session with Patrick Griffin on assessment and the use of data for assessment. There are 129 people currently enrolled in a Harvard online

course called Data Wise. This is on how you use data to intervene in instructional practice — that is, every RNL, every assistant regional director, every regional director and about 10 from central office. This course is run over three months. There have been six modules we have completed, and we will have all finished the last module at the end of this week.

So to your point, we could have got more of the same. And Professor Richard Elmore from Harvard University, who is the expert we have been working with over four years, identified the challenges and risks associated with this move. He said we had to transfer agency away from the centre of the region to a smaller unit. We had to have RNLs, but he said there were risks associated with it. They could go feral. They could actually get out into the sector and try to create 70 regions and run little enterprises which were not related to the core agenda. His challenge to us is to make sure that we manage their work and make sure that we provide them with professional development opportunities so they have the skills to be able to undertake the tasks that the Minister had asked them to undertake.

You identify it as a real challenge, and we are at the very early stages of this. But we cannot help but be impressed by the quality of the work that they have undertaken at this point in time. Every regional network has actually interrogated the performance in a very sophisticated way across all the data sets and come up with a series of improvement strategies so that we can take advantage of the new state government money as well as the federal money, and sophisticated interventions over periods of three, four and five years, to actually deal with the performance issues.

> **Mr DALLA-RIVA** — You are intending to have an assessment process at some point?

> **The CHAIR** — And evaluate; I hope so.

> **Mr DALLA-RIVA** — I do not want the spin from Labor, I just want the documents. Are you intending to have an assessment process as part of the RNL so that, for example, you do not get this problem down the track because there is an assessment done?

> **Mr FRASER** — Their performance has been monitored sort of on a quarterly basis. So every regional network has an annual implementation plan, a three-year strategic plan. Within those plans it represents the performance improvements that they are seeking from the schools they are responsible for. So you have to be reassured by that. For any school with issues related to literacy or numeracy, I can guarantee that in that school's annual implementation plan and strategic plan, those literacy issues have been identified and strategies have been put in place to address them. That is cumulated and aggregated up to the regional network level, and that regional network leader has a responsibility to deploy the resources to assist the school to respond to those performance challenges and report on progress — and if progress is not evident, challenge the strategy they have put in place and come up with an alternate strategy. We understand we are in receipt of significant resources, resources we have not really had access to, of this scale, in the past, and we want to make sure that they deliver real improvement for every child in a Victorian government school.

> **The CHAIR** — In areas where you have got challenged schools, you have got proportionately more regional network directors, have you, with a smaller cohort of schools? It is all right in my area; we have got very good schools.

> **Mr FRASER** — There are a whole lot of factors taken into account.

> **The CHAIR** — Do some of them have 15 schools rather than 20?

> **Mr FRASER** — Geographic dispersal is a major issue up in country Victoria, and the distance they have to travel to get to schools.

> **The CHAIR** — Okay.

> **Mr FRASER** — The distance they had to travel to get to schools was a factor we took into account. So you might have, up in the Grampians, a network with 17 schools, yes. The degree of challenge in the west — so we allocate an additional regional network leader, because to actually put 23 schools on average into each of those meant that we were going to limit their capacity to improve. In growth corridors, we knew there would be a dozen new schools out in the Cardinia growth corridor, so we took that into account. We had 70 to allocate, and

each regional director put the case for more than 70, and probably a legitimate case. But we said that was adequate to the task at this point in time.

The CHAIR — All right. I am sure it comes out in the evaluation.

Mr SCOTT — I noted on page 7 of the report that the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development has selected Victoria as a case study in leadership. I noted the deputy chair's comments about it. But on a more serious level, I would be interested to know why the OECD selected Victoria.

Prof. DAWKINS — Yes. This report, which I have tabled, was the outcome of a process whereby the OECD had a team of people to analyse what the best practice leadership programs were. By the time they came to doing it, the reputation for our leadership programs was very strong internationally. So they sort of it drew up a short list of possible systems to look at, of which ours was one. Darrell Fraser and his team put together some information about our leadership programs, and that led to them choosing Victoria, and then of course they explained in their report why, after they had done a lot of interrogation, they thought we were a good example of best practice. Darrell, would you like to add to that?

Mr FRASER — It was a reputational issue. The executive director of the Centre for Strategic Education indicated to the OECD that if they were looking for jurisdictions to come into, they should consider Victoria. They chose Austria, Finland, Belgium, United Kingdom and came directly to Victoria after we actually packaged up and described what we had been doing over the last three and a half to four years. They made direct contact with us, said they were coming for a case study and it was quite rigorous. You might look at the 50 page report. We have copies for you; we knew you would all be interested in reading this overnight, and we brought a few hundred copies just in case.

Mr WELLS — It is a coincidence! When they ask a question, you have documentation. When we ask a question, you do not have any documentation. I find that ironic.

The CHAIR — Ignore the comment.

Mr FRASER — Perhaps the question you asked had not been in receipt of such a detailed study from the OECD.

Mr WELLS — Maybe, yes. We will not hold our breath.

Mr SCOTT — Just as a follow-up, what in your view is the link between leadership and school performance?

Prof. DAWKINS — Darrell is a former school principal himself and can talk from direct experience but as I was saying earlier, particularly in a devolved system, the quality of performance of a school hinges critically on its leadership. There is a lot of empirical evidence that even in less developed systems it is one of the major drivers of school performance. Judy or Darrell, would you like to add to that?

Mr FRASER — Professor Ken Leithwood was commissioned by the Wallace Foundation in America to do a major study on those factors that actually impact on school performance. He was given the commission to look at leadership right across the world, and one of the conclusions he drew was that there was no evidence of a school improving in the presence of weak leadership.

It does not matter where you look, the capacity for a school to improve without that leadership element is almost non-existent from the research that he undertook in the jurisdictions he evaluated. So there is a pretty strong evidence base around it, and our direct experience, working very closely with a large number of schools in our system where there are performance issues, would indicate that to be the case. The figures if I remember correctly, Judy, in the performance of development schools that have not been accredited — there are about 100?

Ms PETCH — One hundred and eight.

Mr FRASER — One hundred and eight. I think 68 of those schools that did not get over the accreditation bar in the time line had major changes in leadership over that time. Some of them had three, four or five

principals, so it is such a fundamental issue in terms of performance of schools. Schools are not alone, of course. Some of the private sector organisations suffer from lack of good leadership, as we know.

The CHAIR — Thank you for that. You have mentioned several times the things with the commonwealth and COAG process. Of course now we have the BER — Building the Education Revolution. How is that going to link in with this system improvement that you are looking at?

Prof. DAWKINS — On the Building the Education Revolution, as you know the Commonwealth Government has committed about $14.7 billion over three years to Australian schools through the Building the Education Revolution program. There are three parts to this program: one is called the National School Pride program, which is for maintenance and smaller projects; then there is the primary schools program, Primary Schools for the 21st Century, which is the major investment in Building the Education Revolution; and then there is the science and language laboratories in secondary schools. There are those three parts to the program, the biggest part being the primary schools program. What that means is that all our primary schools in Victoria will get a significant investment in their infrastructure, and as I mentioned earlier in our regeneration agenda, infrastructure is one of the ingredients if you are trying to boost the quality of education in a school. Improving the infrastructure is one thing that can be a significant stimulus.

It cannot do it on its own; it needs to be complemented with strong leadership, strong teacher quality — the things that we have been talking about today. But where it can be complemented with significant infrastructure improvement with things like library facilities, more flexible learning areas that accommodate more progressive teaching practices — that can play a very significant role. So that investment, through the Building the Education Revolution, along with the major investment through COAG in teacher quality and in low SES school communities and the other COAG program in literacy and numeracy will between them, invested wisely — and we are confident we can do that — make a significant difference to outcomes in our schools.

The CHAIR — Thank you. A final question?

Mr WELLS — I would like to refer to recommendation 4.2 on page 5 where it says the Auditor-General recommended that:

> The department investigate additional strategies to sustain support for schools with student outcomes below expected levels, including the feasibility of extending the provision of targeted funding and intensive regional office support for a period of at least two to three years.

Has the period for targeted funding and intensive regional office support been extended by another three years and, if so, when does the funding finish?

Prof. DAWKINS — We certainly are of the view that to make a significant difference to educational outcomes, you need a sustained investment over a period of at least this length. In planning the investment of a current injection that I have been just talking about coming through, both the Blueprint and the COAG money, we are talking about investments of 2, 3 and often 4 years and it is over that period of time that we expect to see significant improvements in outcomes. Have you anything to add to that, Darrell?

Mr WELLS — So the funding is up until which year?

Prof. DAWKINS — The COAG money is for a four-year period, yes.

Mr WELLS — Which finishes when?

Prof. DAWKINS — It will be starting in the second half of this year and proceeding — —

Mr WELLS — For another four years?

Prof. DAWKINS — Yes, for four financial years.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Does that allow ongoing funding for particular schools, though, beyond the 12-month window?

Prof. DAWKINS — There are these three programs — this is from the COAG manual: one is on teacher quality, one on low SES school communities and one on literacy and numeracy. The teacher-quality money can

be system-wide investments, but the low SES and literacy and numeracy are targeted at schools with low socioeconomic backgrounds or schools with disproportionate numbers of low SES students. We are in the process at the moment of designing our strategy for investing this funding and from memory will be investing in about 250 schools, which we could give you. This program is still under design but it will be of the order of 250-plus schools that we will now be able to make significant additional investments in over this period.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — That will be for more than 12 months for individual schools?

Prof. DAWKINS — Yes.

The CHAIR — Okay, and over the four-year period as well.

Prof. DAWKINS — Yes.

The CHAIR — Good. Thank you very much for that. That concludes the consideration of *Improving Our Schools: Monitoring and Support*. I thank Professor Dawkins, Mr Fraser, Ms Petch and Dr Glover for their attendance today. It has been an interesting session. Where questions were taken on notice — and I think we had a couple of them — the Committee will follow up with you, in writing, at a later date. The Committee requests the written response to matters be provided within 30 days. I thank you very much for the large number of materials and tables which you have tabled.

Witnesses withdrew.