



Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee

Inquiry: Inquiry into the state education system in Victoria

Hearing Date: 27 March 2024

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: Lisa Vagg

Received Date: 26 April 2024

1. **Joe McCracken, page 42**

Question Asked:

Joe McCracken: Yes, absolutely. What would you recommend to government then, in terms of a change that you would like to see, particularly in your context? Because we are obviously wanting to take evidence and get ideas that we can recommend to government. What would you like to see happen?

Lisa Vagg: Just two parts: that our operation, as I told you, that central support, is sustained, so that government has a fund that could sustain our operation, but that schools then could also be supported – because we are struggling to keep going, we have had to institute a membership model in Victoria only, because every week we get two new schools inquiring. In the other states we are trying to grow – but we are trying to bat them back in Victoria because capacity is full. We had to institute, for Anthony, a membership model where he has to pay, on top of employing the two staff, a membership model. I cannot remember off the top of my head – I can provide those details to the committee – it is scaled for the size of the school. It is a very small nominal amount to support our operation to be able to keep going, because basically philanthropy is propping us up.

Response:

As per our attached submission below are the recommendations we have suggested that the government could make to improve engagement in school and education for at-risk students.

The second recommendation could take the form of a pilot of a fund similar to the current Mental Health Fund & Menu which would focus on a limited number of proven ‘engagement’ interventions of which Hands on Learning would be one. This would provide a targeted mechanism to

enable schools to access evidenced early interventions that directly address the drivers of disengagement from learning and promote engagement in the mainstream school setting.

It would be distinct from, and complementary to, existing government initiatives and investments that focus on student mental health and wellbeing but do not directly address student engagement. We would be very happy to discuss this further.

Recommendations and further information

We recommend that the Victorian Government:

1. Develop a comprehensive strategy to keep students engaged with learning. The strategy should enable schools to intervene early through evidence-based interventions focused directly on supporting student engagement and addressing the factors driving disengagement. This strategy should complement existing initiatives that focus on mental health and wellbeing.
2. As part of this strategy, ensure that students in all Victorian government schools can access evidence-based programs such as Hands on Learning that operate in schools and have proven impact in re-engaging students or keeping at-risk students engaged.

2. Melina Bath, page 38

Question Asked:

Melina BATH: Hello. I am jumping in with about 13,000 questions; this is very exciting. First of all, a very basic one: 103 Victorian schools, could you provide to the committee a list of those schools? Is that possible?

Lisa VAGG: Yes, and the very quickest, fastest way is on our website. There is a live link straightaway to the partner locations. I will just say that it keeps changing every moment, and I do not think that I will shock your committee, or definitely not Anthony – staffing is the biggest problem and so programs go on and off hold. But I think it is pretty absolutely mind-blowing that schools are still running Hands on Learning in the current staffing, because you think they straightaway only put it into maths. Anthony, I am just meaning, you know, straight, normal curriculum. I cannot believe how many schools are still running HoL when it is a real struggle – and this is across the four states we work – to staff the program. So, a really good question.

Response:

The most accurate up to date list of HoL partner schools is available online <https://handsonlearning.org.au/schools/>

3. **Melina Bath, page 42**

Melina BATH: Could I? Thank you very much. We will note your recommendations in your submission, so thank you very much. And also the Dandolo Partners independent analysis – we can click on it and open it, but can you send it to us? Because then is far more official.

Lisa VAGG: Absolutely. Patrick, I will do an attachment and all of that, because that is extensive.

Melina BATH: Thank you. Or if there is an executive summary or a collation of what is in there, maybe that is the request I have, because what we want to understand is the longitudinal benefit. We all talk about kids refusing to come school and the cost of them going down the wrong path. This program is the right path, from your point of view.

Lisa VAGG: And they have got financial numbers on exactly investing that way.

Melina BATH: Could you give us a trimmed version of it? Thank you, Chair.

Lisa VAGG: Okay, got it.

Response:

Attached please find a copy of the An Independent Analysis of Hands on Learning – 2021 completed by Dandolo Partners, with an Executive Summary as requested on pages 5-10.