

PART B — AGENCY PERFORMANCE

B.1 Key strategic achievements

Output Class 1

Government school education

Schooling is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 15. All government schools are coeducational and non selective. Schools deliver a balanced curriculum based on the eight key learning areas: the Arts, English, Health and Physical Education, Languages other than English, Mathematics, Science, Studies of Society and Environment, and Technology.

In February 2005, *Every Chance to Learn — Future Directions in ACT Curriculum Renewal* <http://activated.det.act.gov.au/learning/curri_renewal.htm> was published, setting the directions for the nature, structure and content of new curriculum requirements for all ACT schools from 2005, as required under the *Education Act 2004*. Education in government schools is guided by six principles: best practice, high standards, self assessment, innovation, professional learning communities and quality teaching. (ACT Budget 2005–2006, Paper No 4 Budget Estimates <http://www.treasury.act.gov.au/budget/budget_2004/htm/press.htm>).

Primary school education

(Statement of Performance Output Class 1.1)

Students in years 3 and 5 are assessed against national benchmarks in reading, writing and numeracy. The results show the excellent results from previous years have been maintained in ACT government schools. In reading, 94 percent of year 3 and 95 percent of year 5 students were assessed at or above the benchmark in 2004. For writing, 94 percent of year 3 and 91 percent of year 5 students achieved at or above the benchmark. In numeracy, 94 percent of year 3 students and 90 percent of year 5 students performed at or above the benchmark. (See Part C.2.2 Strategic

and organisation planning, Improving outcomes for the most vulnerable.)

In 2004–05, 24 primary schools were involved in the first year of the School Improvement cycle, a program that guides schools through a structured review of their own performance and planning process. The review showed that 91 percent of parents and carers and 87 percent of students expressed overall satisfaction with the education provided at their school.

The report *School Excellence: Improvement and Achievement in ACT Government Schools in 2004* is available at <http://www.det.act.gov.au/publicat/pdf/school_excellence04.pdf>.

This report replaces the previous *School Development Report*, and provides a wide-ranging system report on student learning and achievement in ACT government schools during 2004. It draws on data from many sources, including the findings from the 31 schools that participated in the formal review process. The report uses the School Excellence four domains of schooling as its reporting framework:

- teaching and learning
- leadership and management
- student environment
- community participation.

High school education

(Statement of Performance Output Class 1.2)

Students in year 7 are assessed against the national benchmarks in reading, writing and numeracy. The percentages of government school students in year 7 who achieved at or above the national benchmarks were: 92 percent in reading, 90 percent in writing and 83 percent in numeracy. These results were among the best in Australia.

At year 9 students are assessed in reading, writing and numeracy but not currently assessed against national benchmarks. In reading 46 percent of students achieved in the top two profile levels, the same as for 2003. In writing 44 percent achieved in the top two profile levels, an increase of 8 percent from 2003. In numeracy 46 percent of students achieved in the top two profile levels, an increase of 4 percent from 2003.

In 2004, 96 percent of year 10 students were awarded an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Competencies Certificate. Many year 9 students were assessed for some of the elements of the ICT competencies and these will contribute to their year 10 ICT assessment.

In 2004–05, seven high schools undertook the first year in the School Improvement cycle. Eighty-nine percent of parents and carers and 80 percent of students expressed overall satisfaction with the education provided at their school.

College education

(Statement of Performance Output Class 1.3)

Of 2 930 year 12 students enrolled in 2004, 2 541 obtained their Year 12 Certificate. Tertiary entrance statements were issued to 1 451 students (49.5 percent) and 1 703 students (58 percent) gained vocational education and training qualifications (certificates and statements of attainment). Of those students who started year 11 in 2003 in government colleges, 79 percent completed year 12 in 2004. Subjects taught are accredited with the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) to ensure courses leading to tertiary entrance qualifications meet the requirements of tertiary institutions throughout Australia. The BSSS Report (see Annexed Reports) provides further information.

Special education and early intervention programs

(Statement of Performance Output Class 1.4)

Special education is provided in all government schools. The focus is on the development of literacy,

numeracy and functional living skills appropriate to the assessed needs of students with disabilities. The Student Centred Appraisal of Need (SCAN) process is used to allocate resources to schools to support students with disabilities. It is a way of identifying the particular needs of each child and the support they require to access school programs and participate in the curriculum. In 2005 students in preschool, kindergarten and in years 3, 6, 7, 10 and 11 will have their needs appraised. All schools in the ACT, government and non-government, are using the same criteria to determine eligibility for support and the Student Centred Appraisal of Need to determine the educational needs of individual students with a disability. A total of 1 667 students with disabilities were identified in special and mainstream schools. This is an increase of 3.8 percent on the 2003–04 numbers. Of this number, 340 attended four government special schools with the majority of students enrolled in mainstream schools.

Special education assistance was provided to 887 primary school students, 318 high school students and 122 college students. Ninety-seven percent of students had an Individual Learning Plan in place at the time of reporting. The students without an Individual Learning Plan were those who were new to the special education programs and an Individual Learning Plan was in the process of development. Ninety-four percent of parents reported satisfaction with their child's education.

Early intervention programs cater for children with additional needs from 18 months up to five years of age. These include playgroups, early intervention groups for three to five year olds, language preschools and autism specific early intervention units. Early intervention programs are located at ten preschool sites across the ACT and the Therapy ACT building at Holder. A total of 476 children attended early intervention programs. This is an increase of 2.6 percent on the 2003–04 numbers. The annual survey of parents and carers showed a 98 percent satisfaction rating with their child's progress in early intervention placement.

Preschool education

(Statement of Performance Output Class 1.5)

Children four years of age before 30 April of that year attend a total of 10.5 hours of sessional preschool education per week during term times. Parents and carers of children were surveyed to determine their satisfaction with the services, with 91 percent of parents and carers expressing their satisfaction with their child's preschool education.

The Preschool/Primary Links trial, a major department initiative, commenced during this period. The trial involved moving the day-to-day leadership and management of preschools to collocated primary schools. Fourteen preschools are trialling this arrangement from term 2 2005.

Output Class 2

Non-government school education

(Statement of Performance Output Class 2.1)

There are 44 registered non-government schools in the ACT comprising:

- 27 Catholic systemic schools
- 3 Catholic congregational schools
- 14 independent schools.

During 2004–05 13 non-government schools were assessed by educational panels for registration renewal and registration at additional educational levels, in accordance with the relevant legislation (*Education Act 1937* or *Education Act 2004*). Six schools sought and were granted registration or provisional registration for the school to expand the educational levels offered at the school. Four organisations that had notified the department of an intention to commence operating a school in the ACT were scheduled for review. However, the schools did not pursue registration and have not commenced operating, therefore no review was required. Schools not reviewed in the 2004–05 financial year will be reviewed by the end of 2005.

One new non-government school, the Islamic School of Canberra, commenced operating in 2004–05.

Overall there has been an increase of 388 students in the non-government sector from 24 166 in 2004 to 24 554 in 2005. This year external consultants audited the enrolment census, in alignment with the process used for the government school sector.

The department administers Commonwealth and Territory grants. The department paid \$129m in Commonwealth and Territory funds to non-government schools during 2004–05, of which \$35m was provided by the ACT.

Output Class 3

Vocational education and training

(Statement of Performance Output Class 3.1)

The *ACT Vocational Education and Training Strategic Plan 2005–09* was launched in February 2005, and is the product of considerable research and consultation across the ACT vocational education and training sector. The Vocational Education and Training Authority's Annual Report (see Annexed Reports) provides further details on the plan.

In line with the stated goal of improving the quality and responsiveness of vocational education and training in the ACT, the Vocational Education and Training Authority, the Advisory Council on Adult and Community Education, and relevant departmental staff have undertaken governance training during 2005.

During 2004–05, the process for Registered Training Organisations to nominate for User Choice funding was reviewed and streamlined.

Action 33 of the *Economic White Paper* pledges the government to the introduction of a Training Pathway Guarantee of one year's post school training, in a relevant and available vocational and education and training course, within 12 months of leaving school for students not already in some form of post-school study or training.

The Training Pathways Guarantee program was piloted in 2004–05 and provided 30 young people, who were not in training or employment one year after leaving school, with one year of vocational training. The program will run again in 2005–06 in a revised format which addresses the challenges for young people who have become disengaged from the training sector in an economic climate with high levels of youth employment.

The first National Strategic Industry Audit was completed in July 2004 in the transport industry. The audit concentrated on the national key risk area of on the job training and apprenticeships and traineeships. Two ACT training organisations successfully participated in the audit.

The *ACT VET Half-Yearly Outlook* is a key publication of vocational education and training in the ACT. The document brings together a series of disparate, yet related indicators, data sets and policies that can be used to guide the purchase of vocational education and training in the ACT. Advice obtained through industry and community consultation is included.

In addition to the normal pattern of seasonal variations, the graph clearly shows the recent trend of increasing New Apprenticeships training activity in the ACT.

ACT VET Half-Yearly Outlook is available at <http://www.det.act.gov.au/services/TrainingVETplanningDocuments.htm>.

Seed funding for career development programs was paid to most government and non-government secondary schools. These funds were used in a variety of ways to enhance student learning and provide guidance about students' future options. Four clusters of high schools and colleges were granted funds to work collaboratively to further the career education and transition opportunities of their students. This funding will continue in 2005–06.

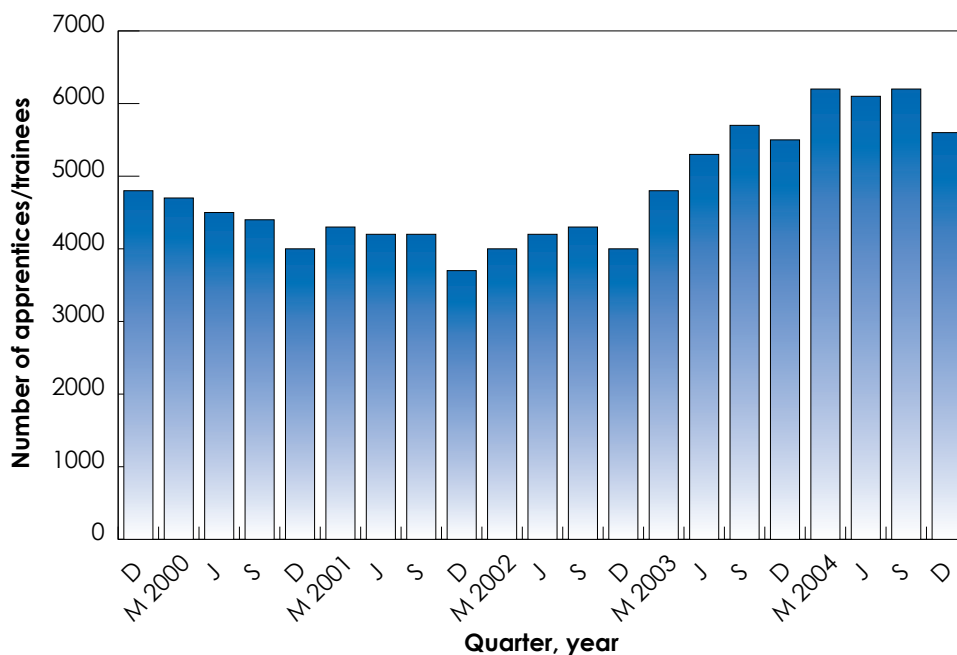
Eighteen ACT secondary teachers have completed the Graduate Certificate in Career Counselling through Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. A further five teachers have accepted scholarships to study a Graduate Certificate in Career Counselling through Edith Cowan University.

An independent research company, CWCC, undertook surveys of students' transition planning on behalf of the department. Data obtained by the surveys assisted in designing careers programs in 2005.

Further information may be obtained from:

Director
Training and Adult Education
Telephone (02) 6205 7088

Number of Apprentices/Trainees 2000–04



B.2 Human Rights Act

The department has liaised closely with the Department for Justice and Community Safety in relation to compliance with the *Human Rights Act 2004*. A briefing by officers from the Department for Justice and Community Safety was arranged to advise the department on meeting its obligations under the Act. The department has also actively participated in the interdepartmental committee established to implement the Act.

To support implementation, the department will enter into an arrangement with an independent centre with human rights expertise to audit the conformity of the department's legislation with human rights principles. This process will identify if the legislation has any inconsistencies with the *Human Rights Act 2004*, and provide the department with advice on ensuring compliance. This will commence in the second half of the 2005–06 financial year.

Further information may be obtained from:

Director
Strategic Policy and Planning
Telephone (02) 6205 7661

B.3 Access to government strategy

The department conducted an independent assessment of its accessibility during the first half of the reporting period. Following the assessment, the department developed an action plan to increase accessibility to its services for people with a disability.

Improving access to schools

During the reporting period capital works projects to improve access to schools for persons with disabilities were completed in 12 schools. The most significant project was at Melrose High School where a new passenger lift was installed. Connecting walkways between building areas were also constructed on each floor level and access ramps added to the infrastructure.

Works in other schools were completed under the Minor New Works Program and included provision of several internal and external access ramps in

four schools. Toilet facilities were refurbished and extensively modified in three schools to better provide for people in wheelchairs and with other disabilities. Special adjustable benches were installed in Erindale College to facilitate access for students in wheelchairs. A project at Stromlo High School improved the operation and access of the lift by providing additional entry doors with secure call switch systems.

Further information may be obtained from:

Director
Budget and Facilities
Telephone (02) 6205 9108

Alternative formats for ACT assessment program materials

The department is utilising alternative formats to ensure that all students who wish to participate in the ACT Assessment Program are able to do so. Information on alternative formats, and what special support can be provided to students with specific needs, is provided to parents and carers in a brochure at the beginning of each year (*ACT Assessment Program 2005, Information for parents and carers*).

Special materials requested in 2005 included tests on coloured paper, papers with larger font size, subtext videos for students with a hearing impairment, and listening scripts. Additional school support was offered to those students requiring it, including use of a computer, extra time and the support of a special teacher's assistant.

Possible special needs materials that are required are identified through cross departmental liaison. Schools verify materials that students require and are requested to provide support to students during testing, which is as close as possible to that which students normally receive during class.

Further information may be obtained from:

Director
Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Telephone (02) 6205 9205

Access to vocational education and training

A key mechanism by which the department ensures that its vocational education and training (VET) policies and programs enhance access for people with a disability is its consultation with the Advisory Group on People with a Disability in Vocational Education and Training. Membership of this group is largely comprised of representatives of advocacy groups, specialist employer agencies and providers of training and support services to people with a disability. A parent of a young person with a disability is also a member.

With input from the advisory group, the department developed the *ACT People With a Disability in VET 2005 Action Plan*. This plan identifies specific actions that will be undertaken by the department with the advisory group's support, to increase the participation and satisfaction of people with a disability in vocational education and training in the ACT.

All contracts let to Registered Training Organisations to deliver vocational education and training have, as a requirement, access for people with a disability. This requirement is monitored through compliance auditing. In addition, considerable funding is allocated to programs for people with disabilities and, where necessary, intensive individual support is funded. In 2004–05, 18.7 percent of Strategic Priorities Program funding supported people with a disability.

Further information may be obtained from:

Director
Training and Adult Education
Telephone (02) 6205 7088

B.4 Community engagement

The department undertook a variety of consultation activities with stakeholders and industry groups, including working groups, meetings and other regular contact. In addition, ACT schools are extremely responsive to their parents, students and local

communities. Active school boards and Parents and Citizens Associations are important elements in community engagement for schools and the department.

Preschool Working Party

A Preschool Working Party to implement the 12 hours preschool per week initiative was established in term 1 2005 with representatives of key stakeholders in early childhood education in the ACT.

The terms of reference include:

- delivery model/s
- implications for early childhood programs, including those for children with special needs
- implications of a changed delivery model
- implementation in the context of the *Preschool Strategic Plan 2005*
- implementation in relation to children, staff and families.

The Preschool Working Party will continue work in semester 2 2005. Preschool staff and families will be consulted prior to implementation.

Further information may be obtained from:

Director
Schools Central Canberra
Telephone (02) 6205 5479

Curriculum renewal

In February 2005 the Curriculum Renewal Taskforce published the new *Curriculum for ACT Schools P-10, Principles and Framework (Phase 1)*. (Available at <<http://activated.det.act.gov.au/learning/currenewal/EveryChanceToLearn-CurriculumForACTSchoolsP-10.pdf>>).

This taskforce is commissioned with developing a relevant and contemporary curriculum for all ACT students.

The taskforce comprises representatives from all key stakeholders including the Department of Education and Training, the Catholic Education Office, the Association of Independent Schools, the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, the Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools, the Australian Education Union, the Independent Education Union and the University of Canberra.

Development of the *Curriculum for ACT Schools P-10, Principles and Framework (Phase 1)* was based on extensive research and widespread consultation with the community. In addition to a consultative committee that advised the taskforce, numerous focus groups comprising parents, business leaders, students and teachers were used to identify those areas which are considered essential for students to learn.

Further information may be obtained from:

Director
Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Telephone (02) 6205 9205

Voluntary contributions

Following the commencement of the *Education Act 2004* on 1 January 2005, school communities requested information on how voluntary contributions may be sought from parents.

A working party was established to develop principles and a statement of practice on parental contributions. This working party comprised representatives from the department, the Australian Education Union and the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations. The working party released a statement in May 2005 on requesting financial contributions from parents.

Further information may be obtained from:

Director
Strategic Policy and Planning
Telephone (02) 6205 7661

Vocational education and training

A major focus in 2004 was the development of the *ACT VET Strategic Plan 2005–09*. Over 80 people participated in the development of the plan.

Community consultation was also conducted to investigate training issues related to sustaining and increasing mature age workforce participation. The work focused on the community services industry and was carried out through focus groups and individual stakeholder interviews. The consultation provided practical education and training solutions to labour force issues within the ACT and the application of strategies in place elsewhere. The results of the work will be available in August 2005.

During 2004–05, the ACT Accreditation and Registration Council hosted four Provider Forum Breakfast Seminars that offered ACT registered training organisations professional development and networking opportunities. On average, 70 people attended each session.

New Apprenticeships Program key stakeholder consultations were undertaken to refine and improve policy and administrative arrangements for 2005.

Further information may be obtained from:

Director
Training and Adult Education
Telephone (02) 6205 7088

B.5 Multicultural framework

The department is committed to achieving the goals outlined in the *Multicultural Action Plan 2003–05*. The Director, Information Management, chairs the ACT Public Service Multicultural Staff Network.

Embracing cultural and linguistic diversity

The department has four Introductory English Centres, three primary level and one secondary level. During 2004–05 the centres provided intensive English tuition to a total of 693 students (both

temporary and permanent residents). Extra programs and support were provided to 79 refugee students. Bilingual teacher assistants are employed at these centres and interpreters are used regularly.

The equivalent of 52 full time English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers across the system support students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in schools. Fifteen ESL teachers trained as facilitators and presented two courses on ESL in the mainstream to teaching staff this year.

The Language for Understanding Across the Curriculum professional development program continues in schools in 2005. The program supports ESL students through teachers' use of strategies appropriate to students' language development and cultural understanding.

The professional development program Time for Talk continues with a strong focus on oral language assessment and development for students of diverse cultures.

Valuing cultural and linguistic diversity

The department is committed to providing relevant, quality and professional support to all staff in the area of inclusive practices.

The department's *Equity and Diversity Plan 2003–05* commits to 'provide and facilitate Indigenous awareness training for executive officers and senior managers.'

The department also provides the following online learning courses:

- Cultural Awareness
- Cultural Diversity
- Workplace Discrimination and Harassment — Legal Compliance
- Workplace Discrimination.

These courses are made available to all managers, principals and staff equity contact officers.

Valuing cultural and linguistic diversity is also promoted in schools through special days such as Harmony Day, World Refugee Day and National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week.

Utilising cultural and linguistic diversity

Indigenous cultural awareness training was delivered to all senior managers and new executives in October 2004 and it is intended to extend this training to school based teachers.

In 2004–05, 230 probationary teachers and 140 contract teachers participated in orientation programs which included:

- Indigenous education in the classroom
- Cross cultural awareness.

This training is supported by cross cultural awareness training as outlined in the *Framework for a Multicultural ACT 2001–05*.

All teacher recruitment packages reflect the department's policy as an equal employment opportunity employer, and include information regarding the requirements for applicants for whom English is a second language.

The department supports staff participation in the ACT Public Service Multicultural Staff Network, which further promotes and enhances cultural and linguistic diversity.

Access Asia Program

During 2004–05 the Access Asia Program offered a series of professional learning workshops and activities targeting disciplines such as Studies of Societies and Environment (SOSE), Languages Other than English (LOTE) and the Arts.

The Access Asia and LOTE programs prepare students:

- to live and participate in an Australia that appreciates and respects diverse cultures and its religions

- to have the knowledge, language and skills needed to communicate and interact within different cultural settings
- to know about culture and its impact on how people behave and develop identity.

The Access Asia Program in conjunction with the Asia Education Foundation:

- offered 13 ACT teachers professional development scholarships to Vietnam, China, Japan and India to develop an appreciation of these countries first hand through real life experiences
- presented a professional development workshop to over 60 preservice teachers to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills to support the studies of Asia.

These professional development opportunities allow teachers the opportunity to gain first hand knowledge of the culture and educational systems of other countries, and the opportunity to share knowledge and experiences on a system wide basis.

Promoting the study and value of ethnic and cultural diversity within the school curriculum through the utilisation of the Access Asia, SOSE and LOTE networks

Over 100 education leaders from all states and territories participated in the Asia Educational Foundation's National Forum: Engaging Young Australians with Asia held at the National Museum in June 2005. The Chief Executive led a panel titled *Equipping young Australians to engage with Asia — what is the role of education?* Fifteen participants represented the ACT.

International and national exchange program

The department's exchange program supports and provides ACT government teachers with the opportunity to apply for a reciprocal exchange with teachers from schools in different states, territories and countries. These exchanges provide valuable professional and personal development for both incoming and outgoing participants. The exchange program operates with agreements between cooperating education authorities. In addition to states and territories, Australia currently has exchange agreements with Canada, Germany, United States of America, United Kingdom and New Zealand.

Three ACT government teachers participated in an overseas reciprocal exchange. Of these, two were to Canada and one to New Zealand.

A wide range of formal and informal functions are organised by the department and ACT Exchange Teachers League Inc. The Annual Autumn Conference brings overseas exchange teachers from interstate to Canberra to experience the ACT education system in operation, through school visits and interaction with department officers, teachers and ACT residents.

The department supports 450 international fee paying students or exchange students studying in ACT schools. This program provides local students with the opportunity to experience a diverse array of language and cultural experiences with students from 18 countries attending 31 schools across the ACT.

Awards and scholarships program

The department advertises awards and scholarships sponsored by foreign governments and other agencies. The awards and scholarships vary from intensive language and cultural programs in Australia, hosted by the relevant country, to home stay or study in schools and universities overseas. The program enables officers to gain considerable personal and professional development in their chosen language area.

During the reporting period two teachers from the department were awarded scholarships through the Japan Foundation.

Nara links — student visits to Canberra

The department has an Exchange Teacher Program Agreement with the city of Nara in Japan. In 2004–05 two ACT teachers travelled to Nara to participate in the program.

The Chief Executive travelled to Japan with the Chief Minister to visit schools during June 2005.

Further information may be obtained from:

Director
Human Resources
Telephone (02) 6205 9203

B.6 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reporting

The department's policies and programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people incorporate the recommendations of the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, Bringing Them Home* and *Journey of Healing and Reconciliation* reports.

In this report, the department is identifying its achievements in 2004–05 against the indicators listed in the Council of Australian Government's *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage, Key Indicators 2003 Report*.

Early school engagement and performance (preschool to year 3)

The Koori preschool program was extended to a fifth site. Koori preschools are located at Calwell, Wanniasa, Ngunnawal, Holt and Narrabundah. Each site is open two days per week from 9.00 am to 1.00 pm. Children up to five years of age are eligible to attend. Parents are encouraged to participate in the program and are required to attend with children under three years of age.

At the February 2005 census 95 Indigenous students were enrolled in preschools, with 59 students in mainstream preschools and 36 students in Koori

preschools. Thirteen students were enrolled in both mainstream and Koori preschools.

Ninety-four percent of year 3 Indigenous students achieved the national benchmark in reading and 96 percent of year 3 Indigenous students achieved the benchmark in writing. In numeracy, 91 percent of year 3 Indigenous students achieved the benchmark.

Positive childhood and transition to adulthood

Eighty-three percent of year 5 Indigenous students achieved the national benchmark in reading and 74 percent of year 5 Indigenous students achieved the benchmark in writing. Sixty-five percent of year 5 Indigenous students achieved the benchmark in numeracy.

Seventy-seven percent of year 7 Indigenous students achieved the benchmark in reading and 75 percent of year 7 Indigenous students achieved the benchmark in writing. Sixty percent of year 7 Indigenous students achieved the benchmark in numeracy.

The grade progression of Indigenous students from year 9 to year 10 was 110 percent. This result indicates movement into ACT government schools by Indigenous students from other states or from the non-government sector.

Indigenous cultural studies in school curriculum and involvement of Indigenous people in development and delivery of Indigenous studies

During 2004, recommendations from the 2003 consultations between the Indigenous community and the ACT Government on Birrigai were taken up with a number of specific developments. These included the Indigenous Students Leadership and Mentor Camp, Birrigai Boys Program and an Indigenous community meeting at Birrigai to consider further Indigenous initiatives.

National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) week saw Canberra schools involved in a variety of activities supporting the theme

Indigenous Softball Gala Day

In September 2004, a softball gala day for Indigenous students was held at Boomanulla Oval. The event was organised by the Indigenous Sport Program of ACT Bureau of Sport and Recreation in partnership with the department. About 25 Indigenous primary school students attended. Each student received a pack containing a hat, ball, drink bottle, stickers and reading materials. The day consisted of coaching clinics and small group games. The parents who attended were encouraged to assist in the clinics or games that were in progress around the oval. All had a great day, and everyone is looking forward to the gala day next year.

Personal story

Last year I addressed a year 8 class, telling them my story as an Aboriginal woman finding out about my family as an adult. The students were amazed that I was denied my culture as a child and the hurt and pain I had to go through as I discovered my true identity. The students listened to me talk, through tears, for 40 minutes without uttering a word. They listened so intently and they respected my story. The students then had to write a report on my story, which was later presented to me. They also said how much they appreciated my honesty and that I trusted them with my story. It was a wonderful experience for the students, the teacher and especially myself.

As recounted by an Indigenous staff member

of *Self-Determination: Our Community, Our Future, Our Responsibility*. Typically, NAIDOC activities in schools include:

- guest speakers and performances from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- Indigenous students leading assemblies and flag raising ceremonies
- community celebrations and cultural programs that include 'bush tucker', traditional and contemporary artwork and traditional games
- reconciliation activities with an emphasis on respecting the past and sharing the future.

Further information may be obtained from:

Director
Student Services and Equity
Telephone (02) 6205 7029

Transition from school to work

Consultation with the Indigenous People in Vocational Education and Training Committee is a key mechanism by which the department ensures that its policies and programs improve the vocational education and training opportunities of Indigenous people. Membership of this group is largely comprised of Indigenous people. The Vocational Education and Training Authority also has one Indigenous member.

In the calendar year 2004, participation in vocational education and training programs in the ACT by people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island backgrounds was as follows:

Aboriginal	498
Torres Strait Island	26
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island	13
Total	537

Of the 141 Indigenous New Apprentices in training on 28 February 2005, 31 were undertaking Certificate II qualifications, 86 Certificate III, 21 Certificate IV and 3 Diploma. This is an indication of the breadth

and level of qualification that Indigenous New Apprentices are pursuing.

While it is too early to have accurate completion figures for 2004, the ACT has averaged a completion rate for Indigenous participation in vocational education and training of 80 percent over the last three years, well above the national average.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community of the ACT receives strong support to enable all post school individuals to achieve further opportunities in vocational education and training through the Strategic Priorities Program. In 2004–05, 12.6 percent of funding was allocated to these programs.

The department assisted in organising the Journey of Careers held in Canberra in August 2004. This showcased future career and transition options for Indigenous students. The Training and Adult Education Branch also worked closely with the Student to Industry's Indigenous Project Officer to develop and plan 'myfuture' workshops before they were delivered to Indigenous youth.

Further information may be obtained from:

Director
Training and Adult Education
Telephone (02) 6205 7088

B.7 ACT Women's Plan

The department has supported progress against the objectives of the *ACT Women's Plan* through the following actions.

Objective 1: Representation and recognition

International Women's Day was celebrated at a luncheon on Tuesday 8 March 2005, with the theme *Women Telling Stories*. This theme was designed to recognise the achievements of women in the ACT. A panel of speakers shared interesting life stories to illustrate some of the many ways in which participation in vocational education and training puts women on the path to secure and productive futures.

Future actions

- host an International Women's Day event dedicated to women.

Objective 2: Good health and wellbeing

The department convened a working group to develop the policy on *Sexuality, Relationships and Sexual Health Education in Schools and Preschools*. The working group comprised stakeholders including schools, students, parents and other government agencies. Extensive community consultation has been conducted on the draft policy. When completed, the policy will specify the responsibility of the department in providing relevant and consistent educational programs in sexuality, relationships and sexual health education.

Objective 3: Housing

The department does not have specific responsibility for actions relating to this objective.

Objective 4: Safe, inclusive communities

Outcome 1: Protection and justice — a justice system that provides protection, support and advocacy for women.

Online training in workplace harassment and discrimination, cultural awareness and cultural diversity continues to be provided to Staff Equity Contact Officers. Network meetings of Staff Equity Contact Officers have been held. In the reporting period, 22 officers completed anti racism training and 27 officers completed anti sexual harassment training.

Future actions

- provide support and information to all staff about workplace harassment through the Staff Equity Contact Officers Network
- provide staff with regular Professional Assault Response Training and
- continue to expand Restorative Practices professional learning for staff in schools and colleges.

Outcome 2: Options for women — assistance provided for women is appropriate, accessible and responsive.

The department continues to heighten awareness of workplace bullying. Equity and diversity articles and issues are published each month in the staff newsletter, *bluemango*.

Future actions

- continue to provide equity and diversity contact officers
- develop and distribute an information card on services available to women and marginalised groups
- provide training for school staff on handling threatening and abusive phone calls
- improve security measures around schools and front offices
- training for managers on workplace harassment prevention and
- course offerings to school based administrative and school support staff will include anti bullying, violence and safety information.

Outcome 3: Prevention of violence — understanding and acknowledgement of the right of women to live their lives free from violence.

The department continues to support restorative justice programs and the *Bullying. No Way!* program. The National Safe Schools framework is implemented within ACT government schools to assist school communities in creating safe and supportive environments.

During the reporting period, 80 teachers have been involved in professional learning for Health Promoting Schools. The implementation of the Health Promoting Schools model within school settings ensures the issues of violence are addressed within the curriculum and engages community partners. Further professional learning has been delivered to teachers

on Resilience Education, focusing on empowering students to deal with many wellbeing issues including prevention of violence.

Future actions

- finalise new Injury Prevention and Management Agreement with the unions, which demonstrates commitment to a safety culture
- implement the National Safe Schools Framework
- Constable Kenny Koala will visit ACT schools to present materials about personal safety
- deliver professional learning to teachers around domestic violence, its impact upon members of the community, support strategies and referral agencies.

Objective 5: Economic security and opportunities

The department does not have specific responsibility for actions relating to this objective.

Objective 6: Flexible education and training

Future actions

- further research programs aimed at supporting young mothers to continue with, or re-engage in, schooling and continue the implementation of the Canberra College Cares program, which provides an alternative educational service for young carers, pregnant and parenting students
- develop an Introduction to Vocational Education and Training brochure as a guide to women in the ACT, explaining vocational education and training specific concepts in plain English
- provide leadership development opportunities for female Indigenous students through the Indigenous Leadership/Mentoring Program

- develop a *Pathways to Qualifications* program to recognise the existing skills of women
 - either in paid or unpaid employment, or who are not in the workforce, and who have no formal qualifications and
- explore ways in which young carers can complete their schooling in a flexible, supportive environment.

With input from the Women in VET Committee, the department developed the *ACT Women in VET 2005 Action Plan*, which identifies specific actions

that will be undertaken by the department with the committee's support, to increase the participation and satisfaction of women in VET in the ACT. One initiative for 2005 is the production of a poster promoting women's participation in vocational education and training.

Further information may be obtained from:

Director
Strategic Policy and Planning
Telephone (02) 6205 7661

Grandparents' morning tea at Village Creek Primary

In April 2005, Village Creek Primary School held a morning tea for grandparents to coincide with Seniors Week. The school invited grandparents to help students with regular classroom activities and to share stories about their school experiences.

Grandparents Daphne and Keith Harding said they were delighted that their granddaughter Daniele Pearson (Year 6) had invited them to the occasion. 'We always come to support her at school activities,' Mrs Harding said. 'It is important for her to have another support system here other than her immediate family. It helps to keep the whole family informed so we can all share and support each other.'

Year 6 teacher Joanne Herstik said the morning tea offered an opportunity for grandparents and grandchildren to bond and to share experiences. It gives them an opportunity to discuss how school has changed, and how it hasn't changed,' Ms Herstik said. 'It also gives grandparents a chance to interact with their grandchildren and to find out what's happening in the classroom.'