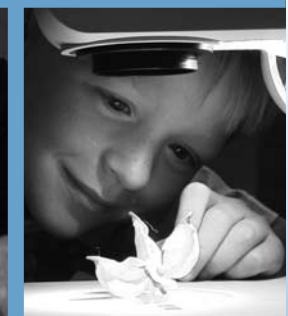
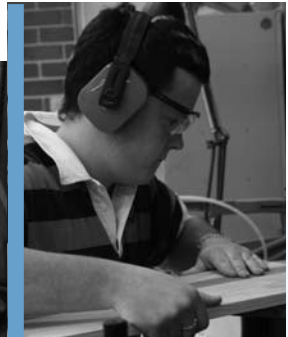


SECTION

B

CONSULTATION AND SCRUTINY REPORTING



CONSULTATION AND SCRUTINY REPORTING

B1 Community engagement

The Department values the links that it forms with the community and works to develop, strengthen and broaden this engagement through a wide range of activities as described below.

Community consultation

Government and non-government schools education councils

The Government Schools Education Council (GSEC) and the Non-government Schools Education Council (NGSEC) are the peak ministerial advisory groups in the education sector. The Department provides secretariat support for these councils. During this reporting year, the Councils provided the Minister with formal advice on the 2007-08 Budget and met with the Minister to discuss issues of mutual interest. Annual reports for both Councils are annexed to this report.

ACT Indigenous Education Consultative Body

The Department consults with the ACT Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB) whenever plans, initiatives or programs are being developed or proposed that will impact on Indigenous students. During the second semester of 2006, the IECB held three community meetings to provide parents, caregivers and members of Indigenous communities in the ACT with opportunities to discuss issues that they consider impact on educational outcomes for Indigenous students. These meetings also provided opportunities for parents and caregivers to be informed about the *Schools Renewal* proposals.

IECB members and representatives of education and training providers attended a conference held on 8 November 2006. Some of the outcomes from the discussions at the conference included:

- the need to positively reinforce teachers for their effort in meeting the needs of Indigenous students
- the importance of providing a culturally inclusive classroom environment
- greater representation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on school boards
- promoting local role models of all ages from the ACT Indigenous communities.

Renewing our schools

Between 6 June and 6 December 2006, the ACT Government undertook a comprehensive six-month consultation on its *Schools Renewal* proposal to reinvigorate the ACT public school system.

The consultation process, implemented in accordance with the ACT Government *Community Engagement Service Charter* and *Community Engagement Manual*, incorporated a variety of strategies for providing information and obtaining feedback, including meetings, publications, correspondence, submissions and a dedicated website www.det.act.gov.au/2020/index.htm.

Ten community forums and over 700 meetings were held. These meetings were attended by the Minister for Education and Training, ministerial staff and/or departmental officers during the six-month period. These included group and individual meetings with parents and carers, school communities, members of school boards, parents and citizens associations, preschool parents associations, community members, business groups and other stakeholders. The Minister visited or met with representatives of every school proposed for closure and, in a number of cases, followed up with further meetings with school communities.

The ACT Chief Minister, the Minister for Education and Training and the Department provided over 1650 responses to correspondence received regarding the proposals during the consultation period.

Over 350 submissions were received and considered. Submissions were called for by 3 November 2006, but were accepted until the end of the consultation period on 6 December 2006. Submissions for which approval was given for publication are available on the Department's website.

Following the end of the six-month consultation period, the Government announced its decisions on 13 December 2006. The full Consultation Report is available on the Department's website.

Curriculum renewal

In this reporting period, the Curriculum Renewal Taskforce and Consultative Committee continued to meet to guide the development of the ACT curriculum framework. With the release of the phase 2 draft framework in June 2006, all schools identified a curriculum renewal contact teacher. Contact teachers met once each term to provide feedback on the draft framework. Twenty-two schools also participated in an intensive school-based trial of the draft framework. School communities and members of the broader ACT community were encouraged to provide feedback via an online survey and a range of consultative forums.

P-2 Early childhood schools

In December 2006, the Minister announced that four early childhood (P-2) schools would be established on existing school sites at Isabella Plains (Tuggeranong), Lyons (Woden/Weston Creek), Narrabundah (south Canberra) and Southern Cross (Belconnen). The early childhood schools will open in 2009.

During the first half of 2007, a P-2 reference group provided advice to the Department on the development of a policy framework for the early childhood schools. The reference group included representation from peak education and community stakeholder organisations and other government departments. Reference group members and representatives from the four proposed early childhood schools participated in an experts panel day on 31 May 2007. Community consultation will continue during 2007 and 2008.

West Belconnen regional school

The Government announced the construction of a new school for west Belconnen on 25 January 2006. Community consultation on development planning and design of the school during 2006-07 included community forums and information sessions for members of the local community.

Key stakeholder groups also participated as members of the working group during the design phase of the school. The design working group included representatives from the ACT Principals Association, AEU, CPSU, Canberra Preschools Society, ACT Council of P&C Associations, Belconnen Community Council, ACT Schools Canteens Association, Koori Preschool, and Holt and Higgins Preschool and Primary Schools.

The design working group has made a significant contribution with a number of alterations incorporated into the design of the new school.

Plans for the new school were on public display at the Kippax Library and the Westfield Belconnen Shopping Centre in June 2007.

Vocational education and training

Legislation governing the provision of VET services ensures that the Minister for Education and Training is provided with the best advice on VET. Until 29 May 2007, the Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA) provided this advice. On 29 May 2007, the Vocational Education and Training Advisory Group (VETAG) replaced the Authority as a source of advice to the Chief Executive of the Department. The Advisory Group members will provide expert, independent, strategic advice based on broad and differing areas of experience and expertise across the VET sector.

Until 30 September 2006, local Industry Training Advisory Boards (ITABs) were contracted through an umbrella organisation of ITABs, the ACT Industry Training Advisory Association (ACTITAA), to provide advice, consult with stakeholders, conduct industry forums and prepare written reports. In October 2006, contracts

were let with six individual ITABs (on a fee-for-service basis) to consult with small and medium business in the ACT on training needs and preferred delivery modes for training. From May 2007, the Department began a process of testing the market for industry training advice and related services by calling for tenders from suppliers with expertise and experience in the provision of specialised training advisory services.

The Department also consults with other community advisory groups on planning to improve VET opportunities and outcomes. Advice from these groups helps to better link training and employment, particularly for people with a disability, Indigenous people, women and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

2006 ACT Training Excellence Awards

The ACT Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA) hosted the 2006 ACT training excellence awards on Thursday 24 August 2006 at the National Convention Centre. The Department organised the event on behalf of the Authority.

The Awards brought together a range of community VET stakeholders, including RTOs, Australian Apprenticeship Centres, schools, small and large businesses and community organisations to celebrate the achievements of individuals and organisations in VET. Winners of major awards went forward to the national training awards.

School boards

Each ACT government school has a school board as a way of sharing authority and responsibility with the local school community. Part 3.4 of the *Education Act 2004* describes the establishment, proceedings and responsibilities of school boards. The Department provides training for new members of school boards, most recently in June 2007. During 2007, feedback from board members suggested a review of the processes and procedures within the *School Board Manual*. The Department is working towards completing the review process and providing advice to schools and interest groups before the end of 2007.

Partnership programs

The Department has a number of specific partnership programs with ACT community groups and leaders who support public education. These include the Capital Chemists Group, Country Women's Association and Refugee Day Committee, who each provide scholarships for students so they can complete their education. In addition, Paperchain Book Store, Microsoft and School Volunteer Program ACT, all assist and support public schools.

Public education seminars

A series of six Public Education Seminars were presented in 2006 that showcased the quality and diversity of educational opportunities available in ACT government schools. A similar series of seminars occurred in 2007, with three of the six seminars being completed in this reporting period.

Public Education Week – 14-20 May 2007

Public Education Week provided an opportunity for the Department to celebrate and showcase the work of students, teachers and parents of ACT government schools. Events included Back to School Day, where previous students returned to the school they attended and spoke with students, the Breakthrough 500 conference and a number of public music performances by school students. The Department collaborated with the Australian Education Union (AEU) to organise these events.

2006 Adult Learners Week in the ACT

The ACT celebrated Adult Learners Week from 1-8 September 2006. The Minister for Education and Training, Mr Andrew Barr MLA launched the week and Senator Ursula Stephens acknowledged the ACT's outstanding adult education teachers, learners and educational organisations. The record number of nominations for awards demonstrated the growing relevance and importance of lifelong learning in our community.

For more information contact:

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B2 Internal and external scrutiny

Internal scrutiny

The Department has an appropriate internal control environment in place to support its legislative functions and provide assurance that its objectives and aims are being achieved. A number of processes and procedures are in place to ensure an appropriate level of internal scrutiny is maintained.

The Department has a robust planning process in place that, through the *Strategic Plan 2006-09*, links business plans with the organisation's strategic objectives. Outcomes and outputs from these plans are reviewed and monitored. The performance of directors and principals is monitored against performance targets in the plans. The risk management and audit framework provides a further level of internal scrutiny, particularly of the major risks faced by the organisation.

Departmental policies are regularly reviewed and updated and new policies developed in response to changes in the internal and external environment. The ongoing review of policies provides a level of internal scrutiny on the Department's policy environment. Work progressed during the year on the development of a centralised policy register.

During the course of the year, scrutiny of the Department's legislative obligations continued and, following the Departmental restructure, a review of the Department's legislative obligations was carried out. A key deliverable of the review was the identification and acceptance of obligations under legislation administered by the Department. A review of other legislative obligations will be carried out during the next financial year and progress will be monitored by the Executive and the Audit Committee.

External scrutiny

The *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004* and the *Auditor-General Act 1996* provide mechanisms for the external scrutiny of the Department. The *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004* requires the Department's annual report to be provided to the ACT Legislative Assembly within three months after the end of the financial year. The Auditor-General Act provides for an annual audit of the Department's financial statements and financial performance.

The Auditor-General's Office has observer status on the Department's Audit Committee. During the year it provided regular reports to the Committee, including advice on matters affecting the Department and also advised of the findings of a performance audit carried out in relation to credit card usage, hospitality and sponsorship. The audit reviewed various categories of discretionary expenditure across several agencies. It considered the adequacy of, and compliance with, policies and guidelines and the appropriateness of expenditure. While not included in the audit, the Department has addressed a number of recommendations and findings arising from the audit.

The Auditor-General's final audit management report found the Department's financial report and statement of performance for the year ended 30 June 2006 to be well prepared. One matter arising from the audit related to the approval of school returns by school boards. Processes have been put in place to ensure that school returns are approved by school boards prior to their inclusion in the Department's certified financial report.

No significant matters were identified from the review of the statement of performance.

The Department's Governance, Regulation and Risk Directorate coordinates responses to complaints made under the *Ombudsman Act 1989* (ACT) about the administrative actions of the Department. No complaints against the Department were referred to the Ombudsman during the reporting period.

The Acting Commonwealth and ACT Ombudsman and the Senior Assistant Ombudsman addressed the Department's senior management group on 21 March 2007 about the role of the Ombudsman's Office and the Department's responsibilities.

For more information contact:

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B3 Legislative Assembly Committee inquiries and reports

The Sixth Assembly's Standing Committee on Education, Training and Young People is currently holding inquiries into:

- voting age eligibility
- vocational education and training (VET) and skills shortages
- practice of restorative justice principles in youth settings.

On 17 October 2006, the Committee reported on its inquiry into *Annual and Financial Reports (Education) 2005-06*. The Committee made no recommendations that applied to the Department.

The Sixth Assembly's Standing Committee on Public Accounts is currently holding an inquiry into the *Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2006: Vocational Education and Training*.

For more information contact:

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B4 Legislative report

Under the Administrative Arrangements, the Department oversees six pieces of legislation:

- *Board of Senior Secondary Studies Act 1997*
- *Building and Construction Industry Training Levy Act 1999*
- *Canberra Institute of Technology Act 1987*
- *Education Act 2004*
- *Training and Tertiary Education Act 2003*
- *University of Canberra Act 1989*

Amendments to the above legislation between 1 July 2006 and 30 June 2007 were as follows:

- *Board of Senior Secondary Studies Act 1997* – amended by *Training and Tertiary Education Legislation Amendment Act 2007* – notified 13 June 2007
- *Building and Construction Industry Training Levy Act 1999* – amended by *Training and Tertiary Education Legislation Amendment Act 2007* – notified 13 June 2007
- *Canberra Institute of Technology Act 1987* – amended by *Training and Tertiary Education Legislation Amendment Act 2007* – notified 13 June 2007
- *Education Act 2004* – amended by *Education Amendment Act 2006 (No 2)*, notified 19 December 2006
- *Training and Tertiary Education Act 2003* amended by the *Training and Tertiary Education Legislation Amendment Act 2007*– notified 13 June 2007. This act replaces both the *Tertiary Accreditation and Registration Act 2003* and the *Vocational Education and Training Act 2003*.
- *University of Canberra Act 1989* – amended by *University of Canberra Amendment Act 2006*, notified 18 December 2006.

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