



ACT Department of Education and Training

Annual Report | 2005 - 2006



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ISBN 0 642 60399 5
978 0 642 60399 9

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Produced for the ACT Department of Education and Training.

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Inquiries about this publication should be directed to:

ACT Department of Education and Training
PO Box 1584
Tuggeranong ACT 2900
Telephone (02) 6205 9400

Contact details

Street address

ACT Department of Education and Training
186 Reed Street
Tuggeranong ACT 2901
Australia

Postal address

ACT Department of Education and Training
PO Box 1584
Tuggeranong ACT 2901
Australia

General inquiries

Telephone 13 22 81

Website address

www.det.act.gov.au

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ACT Department of
Education & Training
ACT 01 626 601 000

Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Minister for Education and Training
ACT Legislative Assembly
London Circuit
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Minister

This report has been prepared under section 5(1) of the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004* and in accordance with the requirements referred to in the *Chief Minister's Annual Report Directions 2005-2006*. It has been prepared in conformity with other legislation applicable to the preparation of the Annual Report by the Department of Education and Training.

I hereby certify that the attached Annual Report is an honest and accurate account and that all material information on the operations of the ACT Department of Education and Training during the period 1 July 2005 and 30 June 2006 has been included and that it complies with the *Chief Minister's Annual Report Directions 2005-2006*.

I also hereby certify that fraud prevention has been managed in accordance with Public Sector Management Standard 1, Part 4.

The annual reports of the:

Accreditation and Registration Council
Board of Senior Secondary Studies
Government Schools Education Council
Non-government Schools Education Council
Vocational Education and Training Authority

are included in this report.

Section 13 of the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004* requires that you cause a copy of the Report to be laid before the Legislative Assembly within three months of the end of the financial year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michele Bruniges".

Michele Bruniges
Chief Executive
13/9/06



PART A Chief Executive Review

A.1 The organisation

The ACT Department of Education and Training (the Department) works in partnership with the community to deliver a sustainable, world class education and training system that will significantly add to the economic, social and cultural well-being of the people of the ACT.

Departmental services include the provision of early intervention education programs; government school education at preschool, primary school, high school and senior secondary college levels; registration of non-government schools and home education; and the planning and coordination of vocational education and training.

The Department is guided by the values of:

- inclusivity
- transparency
- equity and diversity
- respect and tolerance
- excellence
- collaboration
- responsiveness
- innovation.

The Department of Education and Training is one of the largest agencies within the ACT Public Service. The Department is responsible for:

- 82 preschools
- 66 primary schools
- 13 high schools¹
- 8 senior secondary colleges
- 4 combined primary/high schools
- 4 special schools.

The departmental structure is made up of two networks – an education network and a resource management network. These networks are made up of 11 branches.

The education network includes the Schools Directorate (Schools Central Canberra, Schools Northern Canberra and Schools Southern Canberra); Student Services and Equity; and Curriculum and Assessment.

The resource management network includes Budget and Facilities; Human Resources; Information Management; Planning and Reporting; Training and Adult Education; and the Office of the Board of Senior Secondary Studies.

As education and training impacts on nearly all members of the community, our clients and stakeholders are many and varied. They include school students, trainees and apprentices, parents and carers, ACT government schools, ACT non-government schools, school communities, training organisations, industry training advisory bodies, group training companies, and community organisations.

Strategic planning

During the year a new *Strategic Plan 2006–09* was developed following extensive consultation with the community and with staff of the organisation. Our purpose is to provide world class education and training that is innovative, responsive and inspires all students to succeed.

Key priorities are identified under four strategic goals:

- provision of high quality education and training that meets the needs of the 21st Century
- shaping and leading education and training

¹ In January 2006, the ACT Government announced the closure of Ginninderra District High School pending the building of a new preschool to year 10 school on that site.

- building communication, collaboration and partnerships
- strengthening organisational capacity.

Progress against this strategic plan will be reported in the next annual report.

A.2 Overview

The Canberra Plan and *The Canberra Social Plan* set the strategic direction for the Department to 'Lead Australia in education, lifelong learning and training'.

In 2005-06, the Department has responded to this challenge by developing the first draft of a responsive and rigorous curriculum framework for ACT government, Catholic and independent schools from preschool to year 10; implementing performance management and learning plans to ensure the continued development of quality teachers and administrative staff; and strengthening our governance arrangements.

Departmental performance in these areas is commented on in more detail in Part B of this report.

Changes to the ACT Budget in 2005-06 provided a new performance measurement framework for the Department, consisting of both strategic and accountability indicators.

- The strategic indicators report against the key progress indicators for the longer-term goals of the Government. Strategic indicators include student performance against national and international benchmarks and year 12 equivalent completion rates.
- The accountability indicators are a yearly record of the Department's achievement against literacy and numeracy benchmarks, Indigenous results, retention rates, Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) for students who access general education, and satisfaction surveys.

The Department's performance against each of these indicators is also detailed in Part B of this report.

A key strategic priority of the Department is maintaining a high level of academic performance against national and international benchmarks through high quality teaching and school-based curriculum. ACT student achievement in international assessment programs remains strong, as demonstrated in the latest available results in the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS) and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). At a national level, ACT students continue to achieve high levels in reading, writing and numeracy assessments against national benchmarks.

School excellence

The performance of ACT government schools is also assessed by the Department's *School Excellence Initiative*. Introduced in 2003, it provides the overarching framework for improvement of ACT government schools. The process recognises that each school has a different demographic profile and that each school is responsible to its community for the learning outcomes of its students.

The *School Excellence Initiative* is grounded in the principles of implementing best practice, attaining high standards, conducting self assessment, developing innovation, promoting professional learning communities, and delivering quality teaching.

The objective of the *School Excellence Initiative* is to create excellence across the four domains of:

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

The performance of schools against these measures is further expanded in Part B.

In 2005, schools in the first year of their review cycle collected data on perceptions of parents, staff and students. Levels of satisfaction were generally high across the ACT government school system, particularly in primary schools and colleges.

Individual school boards produce annual reports each calendar year which contain further information on the progress of the school. These can be obtained by contacting individual school boards.

Early intervention

In line with the Government's continued focus on early intervention, the Department works across government to provide early intervention programs for young children with development delays or disabilities. With specialist teachers and experienced special teachers' assistants, the programs deliver specialist support to children in an environment of low child-to-staff ratio to ensure better intervention outcomes. An annual survey of parents and carers showed a 97 per cent positive satisfaction rating with their child's progress.

Vocational education and training

The ACT vocational education and training (VET) system is demand driven through the requirements of industry and the community. In the ACT, activity remained steady in 2005–06 from the previous year.

Eighty-seven per cent of trainees and apprentices, and 85 per cent of employers registered a positive response when surveyed on their satisfaction with the services of VET in the ACT.

Non-government education

The Department has responsibility for non-government school registration and the distribution of grants. Reviews of non-government schools were completed (with one exception) within the period required under the *Education Act 2004* and grants were paid within the required period of receiving funds from the Australian Government. In the area of home education, reviews were completed within three months of receipt of application.

Organisational changes

In July 2005, the Department undertook an organisational review to clarify and refine the key deliverables and priorities of the Government. Consultation occurred with the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) and the Australian Education Union (AEU) in accordance with the *ACT Department of Education and Training Staff Certified Agreement 2004–2006* and the *ACT Department of Education and Training Teaching Staff Certified Agreement 2004–06*, and a reduction in staff numbers was achieved to meet required budget savings. The reduction in staff was accommodated through natural attrition and limited voluntary redundancies.

The current teaching staff certified agreement expired in March 2006 and the Department is currently negotiating with the AEU to develop a new agreement that will continue to attract and retain quality teachers.

In April 2006, Mr Andrew Barr MLA was appointed as Minister for Education and Training taking over the portfolio from Ms Katy Gallagher MLA. Minister Barr also has carriage of the portfolios of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, and Industrial Relations.

The Minister represents the ACT educational and training interests on the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) and the Ministerial Council on Vocational Training and Education (MCVTE). The Department is represented on officials' committees and working parties that support the ministerial councils.

Throughout the reporting period the Department was unaffected by changes to the Administrative Arrangements, continuing to have responsibility for overseeing and administering the following 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*
- *Tertiary Accreditation and Registration Act 2003*
- *University of Canberra Act 1989*
- *Vocational Education and Training Act 2003*.

A.3 Highlights

Education is of strategic importance to Canberra and is a key investment in the future of the ACT. A well-educated community is the basis of what makes Canberra socially and economically healthy. ACT government schools have an excellent record of education provision that is participative, inclusive and supports lifelong learning.

Student learning outcomes

Latest available data from PISA and TIMSS show that the ACT is performing well against international benchmarks. In the TIMSS science assessments, ACT year 4 students were ranked in the top band of countries and were significantly above the international level. In mathematics, year 4 achievement was equal to the fifth highest ranked country.

In the 2003 PISA assessments, the mathematical literacy of ACT 15 year olds was equal with Western Australia as the highest in the country and well above the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development average.

ACT students continue to perform well against national reading, writing and numeracy benchmarks. The 2004 benchmark results show that ACT students' performance in years 3, 5 and 7 reading and numeracy were amongst the highest in the country.¹

ACT students remain consistently among the highest performers in Australia in literacy and numeracy, with at least 95 per cent of year 3 students achieving at or above the benchmark standard. A study of scientific literacy showed the ACT was the only state or territory with a performance significantly above the national average.

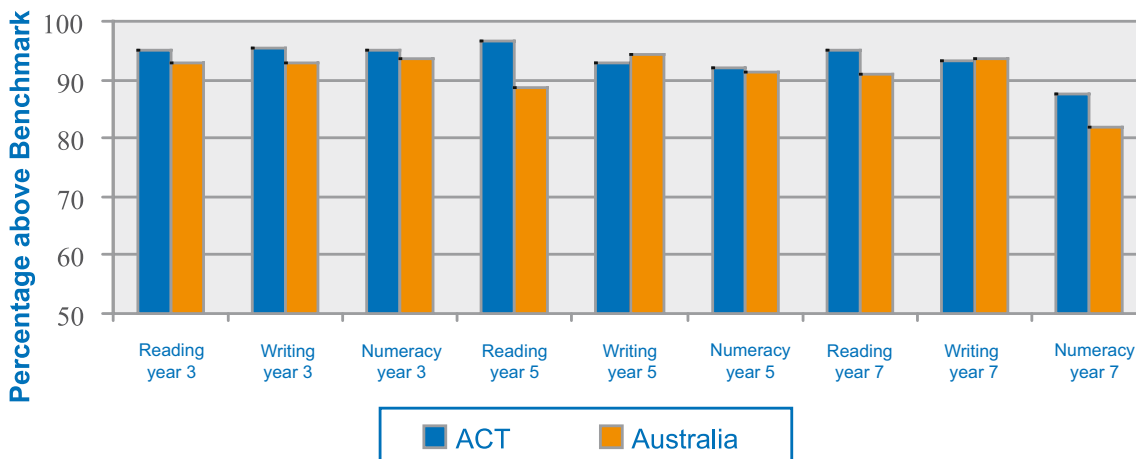
Student completion rates

In 2005, 2 847 students were enrolled in year 12 in ACT government senior secondary colleges. Of these, 2 461 students received their Year 12 Certificate (86.4 per cent), and of these 1 379 (48.4 per cent) received a Tertiary Entrance Score (TES). The highest Universities Admission Index (UAI) achieved by a student attending an ACT government college was 100.00. All eight government colleges had students achieving outstanding results, with UAIs over 97.00.

A total of 1 736 students in years 11 and 12 (61 per cent) obtained vocational qualifications. Of the students who completed their Year 12 Certificate, 1 092 were awarded one or more nationally recognised VET Certificates (a total of 724 Certificate Is, and 483 Certificate IIs). In addition, 1 609 partially completed certificates were recognised.

In 2005, 241 students at government schools commenced a School-based New Apprenticeship providing opportunities for students to gain VET qualifications and undertake employment while completing their Year 12 Certificate.

Figure 1: Percentage of students achieving the national benchmarks in 2004¹



¹ The most recently reported figures are from 2004, as published in the *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2005*.

Student health and well-being

During the 2005 school year there was a movement toward providing a more holistic approach to a range of student health and well-being issues in ACT government schools. This included focused support for the issues of drug education, sexuality education, mental health, nutrition, physical activity and safety.

School plans gave a major focus to student well-being, through initiatives that aimed to provide a safe and supportive school environment and to improve student learning outcomes.

Departmental initiatives in this reporting period included:

- professional learning workshops for teachers focused on strategies to embed the issues of drug education and safety into the school curriculum
- the development and trialling in schools of a Secondary Nutrition program, which provides opportunities for students to work with a nutritionist to develop their skills and understandings about food choices and healthy eating.

All ACT government schools are committed to working within the *National Safe Schools Framework*, which provides an agreed national approach to help schools and their communities address issues of bullying, harassment, violence, and child abuse and neglect. Details of the framework are available at <www.mceetya.edu.au/verve/_resources/natsafeschools_file.pdf>.

During 2005–06, the Department also continued to assist in the implementation of restorative practices. The aim is to support schools in shifting the culture from a blame or punishment approach to a restorative or relational approach. Support to schools has been in the form of workshops and ‘Circle Time’ training by an external consultant, as well as consultation and training in individual schools by departmental officers.

School surveys in 2005 showed that parents and students were generally satisfied that schools provided a safe and supportive environment, that high standards were set for student conduct, and that teachers and students got along well.

Student Pathways

Student Pathways Planning promotes and strengthens pastoral care for students in the senior years as they move through school to work and/or further study. Students are supported to explore and identify their individual strengths, interests and goals, assisting them to plan possible subject choices, personal and vocational pathways.

In this reporting period, high schools and colleges used a range of strategies to engage students in the pathways process. Examples included embedding pathways in a ‘Learning for Life’ curriculum or in an innovative Student Development program, and engaging the community to increase student understanding of careers and work pathways.

In 2005:

- all students in year 9 commenced the Student Pathways Planning process
- 97 per cent of year 10 students had a Student Pathways Plan that was used to support their transition from high school
- the process commenced in the college sector with the year 11 cohort.

School leadership

Effective leadership is at the core of high quality schooling. Through the *School Excellence Initiative*, leaders are encouraged to be strategic and purposeful and to remain focused on student achievement.

Leadership has been an important focus in ACT government schools through the school review and development process, the principal’s professional appraisal and teacher professional pathways processes, induction programs for new staff, and professional learning for staff.

Results of school surveys undertaken in 2005 reflected continuing parental confidence in the leadership and management of government schools (see Table 1).

Table 1: Parental confidence in government school leadership and management

Parents	Primary	High school	College
Confidence in school management	90%	83%	90%
School values promoted	94%	83%	88%
Parental concerns taken seriously	87%	81%	88%

Staff surveyed also believed that they had opportunities to practise leadership (84 per cent positive response), and that innovative teaching was encouraged (91 per cent positive response).

Information and communication technologies

In the area of information and communication technologies (ICT), the Department commissioned *education.au limited* to provide consultancy advice on emerging educational technologies. The resulting report, *Emerging Technologies: A framework for thinking*, has been highly regarded and used nationally and internationally <www.det.act.gov.au/publicat/pdf/emergingtechnologies.pdf>.

At the end of 2005, 97.6 per cent of year 10 students enrolled in ACT government high schools achieved an ICT Competencies Certificate. To receive an ICT certificate a student must demonstrate competency in all of the required 15 competencies that cover the following five areas:

- accessing information processes and tools
- communication and collaborative processes and tools
- organisation processes and tools
- authoring processes and tools
- presentation and visual display processes and tools.



A teacher at Hawker College, Ms Alana McGee, was the recipient of the National Excellence in Teaching Award. Ms McGee, who teaches in the areas of PE, Sport and Health, was recognised for the vocational education programs in Sport Administration that she has developed.

Curriculum renewal

The Department, along with the Curriculum Renewal Taskforce, completed the phase 2 development of the project and, as a result, the ACT will trial and consult on a robust and well-researched and developed curriculum framework over the next 12 months.

The ACT is leading the country in incorporating required National Statements of Learning into our curriculum framework. ACT schools will only need to refer to the ACT curriculum framework to meet Australian Government requirements by 2008.

The ACT Government has made student learning in high schools a priority over recent years. The High School Development Program 2002–06 is a key strategy to improve teaching and learning in high schools. High schools, in this reporting period, undertook significant work in the areas of teaching and assessment, curriculum structures, student management, and whole school effectiveness under this program, linked to curriculum renewal.

New initiatives

In January 2006, following six months of community consultation, the Government announced the closure of Ginninderra District High School and the construction of a new, state-of-the-art school for West Belconnen, due to open in 2009.

The new school is a significant investment in the future of the West Belconnen community offering purpose-built facilities for a range of areas such as electronics, visual arts, music, drama and home science. A multi-purpose gymnasium and library will provide facilities that will serve the needs of the school community.

Students that were attending the former Ginninderra District High School were supported by individual transition plans to ensure any disruption to their education was minimised.

In February 2006, the Department received the report of an external review of government secondary colleges. The purpose of the review was to evaluate the effectiveness of the ACT government college system after 30 years of operation to ensure that the system remains effective and relevant; the highest quality education is being provided; and it is meeting the needs of all senior secondary students enrolled.

In May 2006, the Australian National University (ANU) Secondary College enrolled its first students in mathematics, chemistry and physics. The ANU Secondary College is a joint initiative of the ANU and the ACT Government, providing selected students in years 11 and 12 at government colleges a taste of the university learning experience, and an opportunity to study advanced courses using facilities and staff located on the ANU campus.

Students who successfully complete the program will gain credit towards their studies at ANU in each of the subject areas completed. Completed units will also be listed on the Year 12 Certificate and a completed program can be counted towards the UAI. Negotiations are taking place between the Department and the ANU on arrangements for the 2007 program and the course offerings that will be available.

Recognising the social and educational benefits to children of early learning experiences, the hours of free preschool education for eligible four year olds was increased from 10.5 hours per week to 12 hours per week.

Increased access and participation in school programs for students with a disability was achieved through the Student Centred Appraisal of Need (SCAN) process, which was successfully introduced in 2003. The SCAN process is an objective means of identifying and measuring the needs of students in a systematic way.

At the national and inter-jurisdictional level, a number of key issues dominated the agenda. These included consideration of a common Year 12 Australian Certificate of Education, the implementation of A–E reporting and the consideration of a common minimum school starting age.

Challenges

Strategic

As reflected in the Department's *Strategic Plan 2006–09*, the Department aims to provide a sustainable world class education and training system that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of the Canberra community.

The needs of the students in the knowledge economy are very different from those of previous generations. With the rapid expansion of information and communication technologies, education and training must develop students' skills in technology and to make them flexible, independent learners who can adapt to the challenges of the future.

Learning is no longer aimed at one career path, but at giving students knowledge, competencies and capabilities, which will enable them to embrace the challenge of future change.

ACT government school education is delivered across over 170 separate buildings; and the average age of our schools is over 30 years. Our schools are ageing and are in need of maintenance and capital injections to meet the teaching and learning needs of 21st century students.

Demographic projections show that the population in the ACT is predicted to age considerably over the next 30 years. With the falling fertility rate, it is predicted that there will be a 10 000 person decrease in school age groups by 2032.

The age profile of school leaders and teachers shows that the majority are in the 44 to 65 age range, with colleges having a small number of teachers in the 20 to 40 year age group. In the next few years there will be a number of school principals retiring and exiting the public education system. It will be important to find ways to capture and share the accumulation of leadership knowledge and skills of our current educational leaders with aspiring leaders.

Capturing corporate knowledge is also a challenge within the Department's central office, which has a similar age profile. A number of central office staff have left the Department to pursue other career opportunities presented by other agencies including the federal education department.

The strategic plan, curriculum renewal, *Towards 2020: Renewing Our Schools*, the ANU Secondary College, and increased preschool hours are just some of the directions and initiatives that will assist in meeting these strategic challenges.

Operational

The *School Excellence Initiative* has identified student management and student involvement in school decision-making during the high school years as areas that need further improvement. Although both primary students and college students felt they were well represented in decision making (80 per cent), in high schools students felt there were less opportunities to be involved (58 per cent). There are many examples of strategies that are successful in engaging students in the decision-making processes of the school. These successful practices need to be shared, and support provided for schools to strengthen and extend their student participation in ways that prepare them for active citizenship.

In the teaching and learning domain, surveys identified the need to use data more effectively and to increase personalised learning. In 2006, the Department will issue a discussion paper on evidence-based practice to support greater understanding of the use of evidence (research and data) to improve teaching and learning and whole school effectiveness.

Financial

The 2006–07 Budget, like the 2005–06 Budget, has required the Department to make savings, which will result in a further reduction in central office staff and changes to the way we work.

A.4 Outlook

We will continue to focus on meeting literacy and numeracy benchmarks and maintaining a high level of academic performance against international benchmarks. Our priority is for students to achieve a Year 12 Certificate or equivalent vocational training qualifications, leading to employment or further study.

The strategic and operational issues to be pursued include:

- community consultation on the *Towards 2020: Renewing Our Schools* proposal, and implementing any decisions by the Government following the consultation period
- undertaking upgrades of school facilities to improve the environment for learning
- planning for the construction of new schools in West Belconnen and Harrison, and conducting the feasibility study for a college in Gungahlin
- implementing the *Smart Schools–Smart Students* IT program
- implementing the next stage of curriculum renewal to trial and validate the framework for ACT schools
- providing training opportunities in areas of skill shortage
- continuing with the ANU Secondary College joint initiative
- strengthening ACT senior secondary colleges following the external review
- resolving and implementing the teacher Enterprise Bargaining Agreement
- achieving required efficiencies within the Department.

The *Towards 2020* proposal, announced as part of the 2006–07 Budget, aims to ensure that public schools remain viable and provide a breadth and diversity of programs for students by addressing ageing infrastructure and changing demographics.

The proposal offers students and their families a more diverse range of education options in public schools – including early childhood schools, middle schools, and comprehensive high schools that offer specialist programs in technology, vocational training and the arts.

The 2006–07 Budget has committed \$90 million to improve government school infrastructure.

The Government is providing funding for the construction of a new Preschool to Year 10 (P–10) school to open for the commencement of the school year in 2008 in Harrison. The school will be a fully inclusive school able to accommodate a range of students with special needs, including a small number of students with high support needs. The school will also provide permanent facilities for 100 preschool students and 430 primary school students.

Design work on the school has been under way since September 2005. It is anticipated that tenders for a construction contractor will be called in September 2006 with the contractor to commence work onsite in December 2006.

Funding is also provided for the new P–10 school for West Belconnen, due to open in 2009.

The provision of ICT services across the school system is a continuing priority for the education system. A further \$20 million has been provided over four years for the *Smart Schools–Smart Students* program, which will ensure that ACT government schools remain at the forefront in using new, established and emerging technologies in the student learning environment.

The Australian Government's *Schools Assistance Act 2004* and associated Regulations 2005 require schools to report relative and comparative measures of student achievement using A–E grades against learning areas or subjects studied. The Department has developed a policy that will allow schools to comply with these Australian Government requirements for students in years 1 to 12.

In preparation for transfer to the National Assessment Program in 2008, when students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 will complete literacy and numeracy assessments, the Department will revise the ACT Assessment Program in 2007 to better align with the national requirements.

The Australian Government, states and territories are involved in discussions around a common school starting age and on ways of achieving greater consistency in curriculum, assessment and reporting in the senior secondary years. The ACT will continue to actively participate in and inform these discussions.

The implementation of a new curriculum remains a key objective for the Department. The aim of the curriculum renewal project is to set directions for the development of a new curriculum framework for all ACT schools for preschool to year 10. During 2006 and 2007 the draft curriculum framework will be externally validated, trialled in schools, and open to continuing community consultation. The completed framework will be ready for implementation in all ACT schools by 2008.

The coming year is one of likely major change for the Department. The Department must be prepared to implement decisions arising from the *Towards 2020* proposal. The Department has also been required to make savings across all areas, and the reform of the organisation is essential in order to further direct resources toward face-to-face educational services. The successful implementation of a 'shared services' department will also provide both challenges and opportunities.

Our success and our ability to shape and lead education in the ACT depend on our committed staff and a community that has a long history of support for our education system. The Department has much to be proud of and this is due in no small measure to the commitment and support of staff. I thank them for their ongoing professionalism and support throughout the year.

Michele Bruniges
Chief Executive



Miles Franklin Primary School was presented with a National Literacy and Numeracy Award for the excellence of a numeracy program that is operating across the school.