

# PART B Agency Performance

## B.1 Analysis of agency performance

The ACT Department of Education and Training (the Department) works in partnership with the community to provide school education and training services to meet the needs of the people of Canberra and the ACT.

Departmental services include the provision of government school education; registration of non-government schools; registration for home education; planning and coordination of vocational education and training; and the provision of preschool and early intervention education programs.

Through these services the Department aims to improve learning outcomes for all students and trainees.

As published in the *ACT Budget 2005–2006, Paper No 4*, strategic and operational issues pursued in 2005-06 included:

- increasing hours for preschools
- implementing the next stage of curriculum renewal in all ACT schools, focusing on the development of essential learning achievements
- supporting high school student participation, engagement and achievement through the development of relevant and inclusive curricula and support structures
- continuing to support the improvement of information communication technology resources in schools
- providing access and participation in school programs for students with a disability through the Student Centred Appraisal of Need process
- maintaining and improving the fabric and physical safety of government schools
- continuing support for Indigenous students with a particular focus on participation, retention and outcomes

- strengthening Canberra's economy and its community by targeting vocational education and training funding to areas of skill shortage.

The performance measure framework detailed in *ACT Budget 2005–2006, Paper No 4*, provides the context for assessing agency performance in achieving the Department's strategic and operational objectives.

The performance of ACT government schools is also assessed by the Department's *School Excellence Initiative*. 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.

Figure 2: Conceptual framework for school excellence



The report – *School Excellence: Improvement and achievement in ACT Government schools in 2005* is available at <[www.det.act.gov.au/publicat/pdf/SchoolExcellenceReport2005.pdf](http://www.det.act.gov.au/publicat/pdf/SchoolExcellenceReport2005.pdf)>.

## Output Class 1: Government school education

ACT government schools have a record of education provision that is participative, inclusive and supports lifelong learning. The achievements of ACT government school students in literacy, numeracy, scientific understanding, the arts, technology, sport and community service rank with the best in Australia. Student participation in senior secondary education is high in the ACT.

### Literacy and numeracy

Years 3, 5 and 7 students in ACT government schools continue to achieve excellent results in assessments against the national reading, writing and numeracy benchmarks. Student performance against the reading and writing benchmarks was combined in 2005–06 to provide a measure of performance for literacy in Output Class 1, the first time this combined measure has been reported. In this combined measure in 2005, 90 per cent of year 3, 91 per cent of year 5 and 83 per cent of year 7 students achieved at or above the benchmarks. In numeracy, 93 per cent of year 3 students, 91 per cent of year 5 students and 83 per cent of year 7 students achieved at or above the benchmarks.

### Indigenous students

This is the first year that Indigenous results in the ACT Assessment Program (ACTAP) are reported separately in Output Class 1. In 2004, the last year national reported benchmark data were reported, the percentage of ACT Indigenous students at or above the benchmark was equal to or greater than the national percentage for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy for years 3, 5 and 7.

The improvement in the year 3 Indigenous reading and numeracy results observed in 2004 was maintained in 2005.

In the combined reading and writing measure reported in Output Class 1, 84 per cent of year 3, 76 per cent of year 5 and 55 per cent of year 7 Indigenous students were assessed at or above the benchmarks in 2005. In numeracy, results for Indigenous students were similar to those achieved in 2004 with 91 per cent of year 3 students, 79 per cent of year 5 students and 54 per cent of year 7 students achieving at or above the benchmark.

Government funding of \$1.6 million over four years in the 2004–05 Budget will continue to support Indigenous students. An increased number of Indigenous literacy and numeracy consultants is facilitating the provision of intensive literacy and numeracy support for under achieving Indigenous students. The program focuses on year 4 students who did not meet the national benchmarks in year 3, or fell in the lower 20 per cent of ACTAP.

This funding also supported the introduction of leadership and mentoring programs for Indigenous students in years 10 to 12 to improve student retention.

### Special education

Special education is provided in all government schools where identified children are enrolled. The focus is on the development of literacy, numeracy and living skills appropriate to the assessed needs of students with an identified disability. The Student Centred Appraisal of Need (SCAN) process is used to allocate resources to schools to support students with a disability. A total of 1 698 students with a disability were identified in special and mainstream schools at the February 2006 census. This is an increase of 1.9 per cent on the 2004–05 numbers. Of this number, 322 attended four government special schools with the majority of students enrolled in mainstream schools.

Special education assistance was provided to 922 primary school students, 339 high school students and 115 college students. Ninety-nine per cent of students had an Individual Learning Plan in place at the time of reporting. Ninety-four per cent of parents reported satisfaction with their child's education.

Increased funding of \$1 million per annum, provided in the 2005–06 Budget, allowed the Department to continue to meet the needs of increasing numbers of students with a disability, including the growing numbers of students with very complex needs in government schools.

## Curriculum

The aim of the curriculum renewal project is to develop and support the implementation of a quality curriculum framework for preschool to year 10 that meets the requirements of the *Education Act 2004*. The framework will ensure consistency in curriculum requirements across all government and non-government schools in the ACT, from preschool to year 10, by identifying what is essential for ACT students to know, understand, value and be able to do.

During the second half of 2005, 34 reference groups comprising over 300 teachers, professional association nominees and academics met regularly to provide advice on the development of the Essential Learning Achievements to include in the framework. The Curriculum Renewal Taskforce approved a set of Essential Learning Achievements for further development in February 2006. These were developed and then subject to external review by the Curriculum Renewal Consultative Committee, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority and the Curriculum Directorate of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training.

By June 2006, the Taskforce had approved the phase 2 trial draft of *Every chance to learn – Curriculum framework for ACT schools, preschool to year 10* with the inclusion of 26 Essential Learning Achievements. This framework will be subject to external validation, trial and community consultation over the next 12 months prior to being finalised for implementation by all schools in 2008.

Building teacher capacity to improve student learning outcomes has been a departmental priority throughout 2005–06. Support to teachers in their understanding of how to effectively meet the needs of all learners through curriculum design and implementation, has been delivered through professional learning workshops and seminars, consultancy support at the school level and through professional networks.

This year saw the conclusion of the High School Development Program Budget initiative. This \$2 million, four-year initiative has focused on enhancing student learning outcomes through intensive teacher professional learning delivered to over 380 teachers in 2005–06. This included professional learning in curriculum design and delivery, improving vocational learning options for high school students, researching and developing middle schooling practices in ACT schools, and extending and enriching the Year 9 Exhibitions program in high schools. Overall, the High School Development Program has strongly supported professional learning for high school teachers around curriculum renewal.

## Improvement of information communication technology (ICT) resources in schools

In 2005–06, the Government made a significant investment in Information and Communication Technologies in ACT government schools. This included:

- Schools IT Infrastructure Fund – funded for four years from 2004–05
- Student Digital Passkey – funded over three years from 2004–05 to develop an authentication and directory system for students
- Interactive whiteboards – \$1.2 million for 2005–06, to provide schools with the capacity to purchase interactive whiteboards and introduce new ICT-based teaching and learning methods. Through this initiative, the Government will match school purchases of interactive whiteboards of up to a maximum of two per school.

The Department also increased the numbers of ICT technical support staff in schools, commencing in 2005 using Budget initiative funding. This has provided in-school ICT support to 80 schools, allowing teachers to be released back to teaching. This initiative has been particularly effective in primary schools.

The above infrastructure and technical support initiatives were complemented by the promulgation of standards for student networks and by the introduction of *myclasses*. *Myclasses* is a highly flexible learning management system and collaboration tool that is available to students and teachers from home as well as at school.

The Department supported teachers with professional learning programs in these two areas:

- *myclasses* virtual learning environment, with over 500 teachers trained in its use in 2005–06
- using interactive whiteboards as an effective tool for teaching and learning, with over 1 500 recorded attendances at professional development sessions.

Several programs offer major learning and development programs focused on integrating ICT in the curriculum. These programs included:

- the Itinerant Technology Officer program supporting 50 per cent of schools in the reporting year
- the Embedding Learning Technologies program, in which about 1 500 teachers participated during the reporting year.

### **Satisfaction with government schooling**

To measure community satisfaction with the delivery of education services, the Department surveys parents and students as part of the school review cycle.

In 2005, parent and student levels of satisfaction with the education provided and with the student's school were generally high across the ACT government school system, particularly in primary schools and colleges (see Table 2).



### **Special Education**

A Post School Options Expo – 'Pathways for Students with Disability' was held in May 2006. Over 200 people attended the event, which was organised by the ACT Department of Education and Training in collaboration with the Disability Coordination Office. The aim of the Expo was to assist young people with a disability to plan their transition from school to training, employment and community options. Based on feedback from the parents and students attending, the event was highly successful, with 98 per cent of evaluation respondents indicating that the Expo was a valuable use of their time. As well, 100 per cent indicated that they would recommend future expos to someone in the same position.

Table 2: Parent and student satisfaction with government schooling

Parent satisfaction	Primary	High school	College
POSITIVE LEVELS OF SATISFACTION			
With their children's education	92%	84%	88%
With the school	90%	84%	91%
With the high expectations the school has in all aspects of its work	88%	80%	88%
Student satisfaction <sup>1</sup>	Primary	High school	College
POSITIVE LEVELS OF SATISFACTION			
That I am getting a good education	93%	81%	92%
With the school	89%	69%	91%
That the school has high expectations in all aspects of its work	90%	72%	89%

1. Students in years 5 to 12.

Parents and students have very positive perceptions of the overall quality of learning and teaching in ACT government schools. Examples of perceived strengths in the ACT government school system are given in Table 3. Responses of 'strongly agree' and 'agree' to survey questions were considered positive.

Table 3: Perceptions of learning and teaching in ACT government schools

Parent perceptions	Primary	High school	College
POSITIVE LEVELS OF PERCEPTION			
Learning is relevant to student needs	95%	90%	93%
Students are encouraged to achieve their best	96%	87%	92%
Reports of student progress are useful	92%	87%	93%
Student perceptions	Primary	High school	College
POSITIVE LEVELS OF PERCEPTION			
Learning is relevant to student needs	96%	90%	95%
Students are encouraged to achieve	98%	91%	85%
Reports of student progress are useful	92%	87%	93%

The level of parent and student satisfaction in high schools has been a focus for the Department over recent years. The High School Development program 2002-2006 was a key strategy to support improved teaching and learning in high schools. High schools are undertaking significant work in the areas of teaching and assessment, curriculum structures, student management and whole school effectiveness.

## Senior secondary education

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

Funding in the 2004–05 Budget supported the introduction of leadership and mentoring programs for Indigenous students in years 10 to 12 to improve student retention.

The School-based New Apprenticeships Scheme provides opportunities for students to gain vocational education and training qualifications and undertake employment while completing their Year 12 Certificate. In 2005, 241 students at government schools commenced a school-based new apprenticeship.

There was a decline of 3.1 per cent to 2 461 in the number of year 12 students receiving a Year 12 Certificate. This reduction is in line with the decline in enrolments in colleges. There was also a decline of 5 per cent to 1 379 in the number of students receiving a Tertiary Entrance Statement. This reflects, in addition to the decline in the number of students, a move away from university to vocational studies where there was an increase in the number of students receiving vocational certificates. In 2005, there was an increase of 14 per cent to 679 in students receiving a Certificate I and a 29 per cent increase to 413 in the number of students receiving a Certificate II.

## Review of the government college system

In 2005 the ACT Government made two major announcements regarding the college sector.

The first of these was an external review that would provide advice to government about:

- the effectiveness of the current secondary college model
- the suitability and relevance of courses offered
- the effectiveness of teaching strategies and student support.

The review was concluded at the end of 2005 and was presented to the ACT Government in January 2006. The Chief Minister commissioned a reference group to provide advice to the Government on the implementation of the review's recommendations. The advice of the reference group went to the ACT Government in May 2006.

The second announcement concerned the establishment of the Australian National University (ANU) Secondary College pilot program. This will provide opportunities for outstanding students of mathematics, physics and chemistry to access challenging courses on the ANU website as part of their college program. This initiative was implemented during the reporting year.

## Maintaining and improving the fabric and physical safety of government schools

In the 2005–06 Budget, the Government introduced the School Building Renewal Fund, providing \$2 million additional annual funding for the next four years, to improve the quality of government school infrastructure. The additional funding provided was on top of \$11.05 million in capital upgrades funding, and normal school repairs and maintenance funding. Projects were undertaken in 10 schools, including improvements to infrastructure and learning environments; improvements in lighting, security fencing and window screening; and upgrading of electronic security.

## Enrolments

From 2000 to 2005, enrolments in ACT government schools decreased by an average of 622 students or 1.6 per cent per year. Conversely, enrolments in non-government schools increased on average by 490 students or 2.2 per cent per year.

In 2006, while the trend of students moving from government schools to non-government schools continued, the movement was smaller than in previous years. Enrolments in government schools fell by 258 students or 0.7 per cent, while enrolments in non-government schools increased by 125 students or 0.5 per cent.

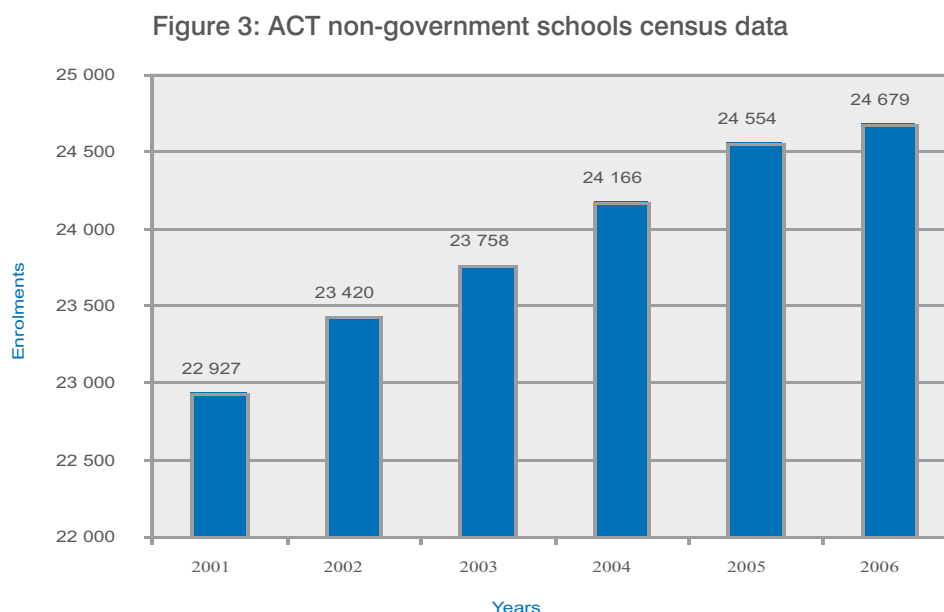
## Output Class 2: Non-government school education

The ACT contributes to the provision of educational choice through the registration of 44 non-government schools. In 2005, 12 registration reviews were undertaken in 10 schools. Two schools, Burgmann Anglican School and Blue Gum Community School, underwent registration reviews that included registration of additional educational levels. One registration was not completed by 31 December 2005 as the school could not demonstrate compliance with the criteria for registration under the *Education Act 2004*. Once compliance was demonstrated, the school was granted registration.

The publication of a comprehensive manual, available online, supports schools and registration panels preparing for and undertaking registration reviews.

One application was received for in-principle approval to establish a new school. One application was received from an existing school for in-principle approval for additional educational levels. Both applications are being assessed against the legislated criteria.

All schools provided enrolment data as part of the 2006 *Non-Government Schools Census*. A random sample of schools were subject to independent audit. Enrolments in non-government schools from 2001 until 2006 are shown in Figure 3.

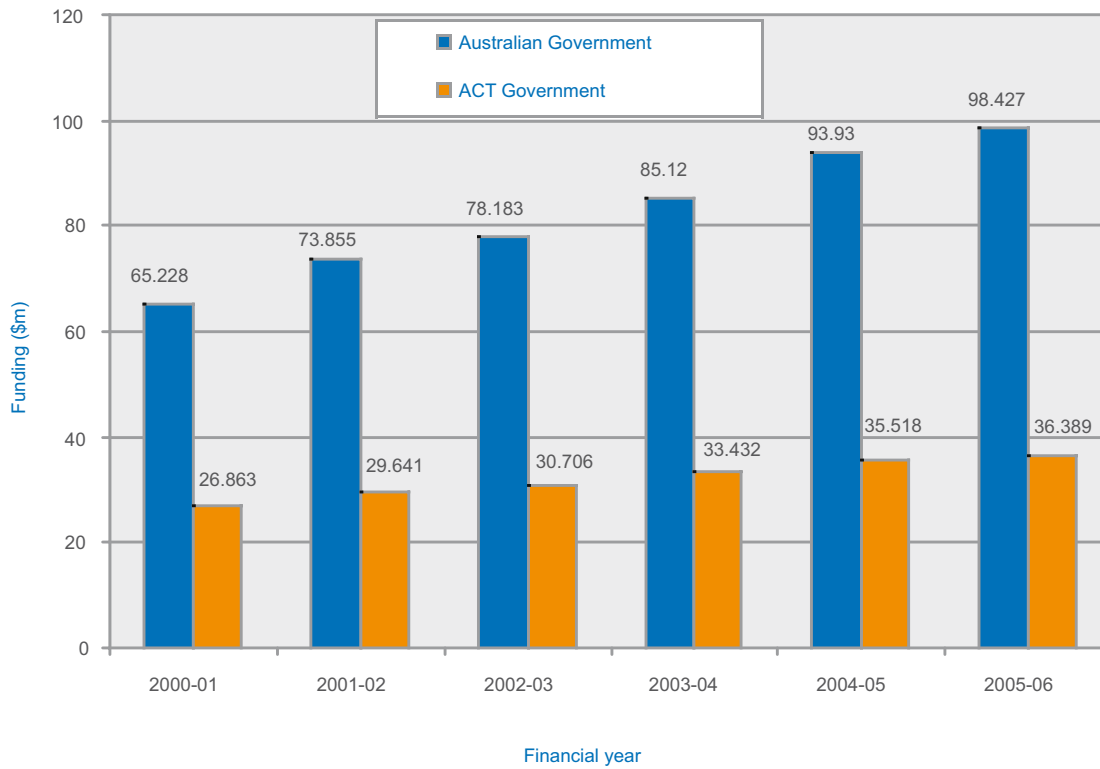


Source: ACT Department of Education and Training census figures.

## Funding

Figure 4 shows total ACT Government and Australian Government funding to ACT non-government schools since financial year 2000–01.

Figure 4: Total government funding for ACT non-government schools



Source: ACT Department of Education and Training.

In 2005-06 the Australian Government reduced the timeframe for grant payments to non-government schools from ten working days to seven working days. The Department made administrative efficiencies to ensure this timeframe was met.

### Home education

In recognising increased participation and engagement in home education, provisional registration and registration for home education were introduced into the *Education Act 2004*. Under previous legislation, home education had limited recognition and few parents applied for the required exclusion from school. This requirement is now replaced by an automatic approval process through provisional registration. In the first year of implementation, the Department has administered home education provisional registrations for 163 children from 100 families, an increase of 379 per cent over the 2004 annual figures. The parents of 95 children decided to continue home education, and all registration reviews were completed within the timeframe.

Implementation processes to manage the administration of home education include the development of an information pack for all enquiries, online access to publications and application forms, and close relationships with community organisations.

## Output Class 3: Vocational Education and Training

### Output Class 3.1: Planning and coordination of Vocational Education and Training Services

In Output 3.1 the performance measures report on the Department's contribution to the planning and coordination of vocational education and training (VET) by managing apprentice and traineeship schemes; the registration and accreditation of providers under the *Australian Quality Training Framework*; and the disbursement of funding for training to the Canberra Institute of Technology and through competitive processes.

The ACT VET system is demand driven through the requirements of industry and the community. In the ACT, activity remained steady in 2005-06 compared to the previous year. The ACT continues to deliver more high level qualifications such as Certificate IV and Diploma, as a percentage of total VET qualifications delivered.

Indications are that the ACT training system is meeting demand, identified through robust consultative processes, quality information, and program funding addressing areas of identified skills shortage and disadvantage within the community. Most of the commencements are in areas of skills shortages and government priorities.

The ACT Government accepted the Australian Government's funding offer outlined in the *Skilling Australia's Workforce Agreement* on 20 December 2005. The agreement requires an increase in the number of training places in skills shortage areas from 2005-08 and has a strong emphasis on Indigenous people, people with disabilities, youth and mature aged people (aged over 40). The ACT has offered many training opportunities to people within these target groups, mainly through the Strategic Priorities program, but also through additional support to individuals, including existing workers, undertaking a traineeship or apprenticeship.

In this reporting period, the Department sourced industry advice primarily through the ACT Industry Training Advisory Association. The Association consults with small and medium business in the ACT on training needs and preferred delivery modes for training. During April 2006, the Department also facilitated focus groups to gather information and feedback on the provision of skills training through the ACT VET system. The objective of each focus group was to test, verify and supplement a variety of sources of information on skills, labour and recruitment shortages.

Satisfaction with the services of VET in the ACT is determined through annual surveys. In May 2006 surveys of employers, apprentices and trainees were conducted. Results were as follows:

- *Trainee and Apprentice Survey 2006* – positive satisfaction rate of 87 per cent
- *Employer Survey 2006* – positive satisfaction rate of 85 per cent.

As a result of the surveys, registered training organisations (RTOs) were advised on methods of increasing satisfaction through a newsletter and the Provider Forum held in May 2006.

At the same time, the *Accreditation and Registration Services Survey* showed that 93 per cent of RTOs are satisfied with the services provided by the ACT Accreditation and Registration Council, which is staffed by the ACT Department of Education and Training.

In addition to the now well-established VET programs in colleges, 2005 saw the extension of vocational education and training in the high school sector. The High School Development program fully funded 14 high school teachers to gain Certificate IV in Workplace Assessment and Training through the Canberra Institute of Technology. This will enable each high school to maintain its quota of 10 per cent of staff holding this credential, allowing high schools to further increase their offering of VET courses in 2006.

High school and college teachers, with representatives of relevant industry bodies, developed VET course guidelines for the Certificate I in Information Technology and a Statement of Attainment course in Hospitality, for use by high school VET teachers.

### **Output 3.2: Provision of Vocational Education and Training Services through the Canberra Institute of Technology**

In Output 3.2, the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) reports on the provision of places in publicly funded courses at the CIT, consistent with training needs as identified in the *ACT Vocational Education and Training Plan*.

The main measures that relate to providing quality VET services to meet the needs of the community of the ACT and surrounding region indicate better than target results for student activity. The nominal hours delivered exceeded budget by 1 per cent, program enrolments exceeded budget by 19 per cent and program completions exceeded budget by 12 per cent. Nominal hours delivered were slightly over target, while program enrolments increased significantly due to increased demand for shorter duration programs. The completion rate was significantly higher than target due to the higher number of enrolments and an increase in programs offered with multiple exit points. These programs enable continuing students to gain recognition for completing different levels of competency within a program of study.

### **Output Class 4: Early intervention**

In the early intervention cross agency output, the Department reports on programs that cater for children from around two to six years of age with additional needs. 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 10 preschool sites across the ACT and the Therapy ACT building at Holder. A total of 433 children attended early intervention programs in 2005–06. Eighty-nine per cent of students in early intervention programs had an ILP in place at the time of reporting. The students without ILPs were those who were new to early intervention programs and an ILP was in the process of development. The annual survey of parents and carers showed a 97 per cent positive satisfaction rating with their child's progress in early intervention placement.

## Preschools

The 2005–06 ACT Budget increased the provision of preschool education for eligible four year olds in the ACT from 10.5 hours per week to 12 hours per week. A Preschool Working Party, with representatives of key stakeholders, directed the consultation process with all staff, parents, unions, primary principals, and feeder child care centres during the planning. The extended hours were trialled in selected preschools from July 2005 and made available in all preschools in 2006.

Children aged four years before 30 April of that year attend a total of 12 hours sessional preschool education per week during term times. In 2006, of the 153 ACT government preschool programs available, 79 offer long day sessions (6 hours x 2 days), and 74 offer short day sessions (4 hours x 3 days). Parents and carers of children were surveyed on their response to the services, and 95 per cent of parents and carers expressed positive satisfaction with their child's preschool education.

Despite a decrease in resident four year olds students of 110, this did not result in a decrease in preschool enrolments. The *Census of ACT Government Preschools – February 2006* revealed that ACT resident preschool enrolments decreased by only six students. It would appear that the increase in the preschool hours initiative has resulted in an increase in preschool enrolments.

The Preschool/Primary Links trial was initiated in July 2005 when 14 preschools linked with their co-located primary school. The day-to-day management and leadership of the preschool was carried out by the primary school. In 2006 another 25 preschools formed links with their local primary school, trialling the same day-to-day management and leadership model.

## Koori preschools

At the February 2006 schools census, 87 Indigenous students were enrolled in ACT Government preschools. Thirteen children were enrolled in both Koori and mainstream preschools.

In 2005-06, Koori preschool sessions operated at Calwell, Holt, Ngunnawal, Narrabundah and Wanniasa Hills preschools. Children aged 0 to 5 years are eligible to attend. Parents are encouraged to participate in the program and are required to attend with children under three years of age. Each preschool has an Indigenous Home/School Liaison Officer. Liaison with the Indigenous community assists in achieving continued growth in Indigenous student participation.

### **For more information contact:**

Director  
Measurement, Monitoring and Reporting  
Telephone: (02) 6205 5511

## B.2 Human Rights Act

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The Castan Centre for Human Rights Law is currently conducting an audit of legislation which is administered or overseen by the Department of Education and Training for consistency with the *Human Rights Act 2004*. The Castan Centre is auditing seven pieces of legislation for consistency and applying proportionality testing with reference to national and international case law.

Departmental staff with policy responsibilities have attended human rights training provided by the Department of Justice and Community Safety, a workshop addressing the right to education, and the ACT Human Rights community forum held in May 2006.

During all legislative scrutiny, including the development of the Education Amendment Bill 2006, officers from the Department liaised with officers from the Department of Justice and Community Safety to ensure proposals adhered to human rights principles.

All members of staff involved in legislative scrutiny are advised of the requirements under the *Human Rights Act 2004*.

### **For more information contact:**

Director

Governance, Regulation and Risk

Telephone: (02) 6205 7661

## B.3 Access to government strategy

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### **Access to government school education**

The Department's *Disability Access Action Plan*, which aims to increase accessibility to its services for people with a disability, shows that progress against all objectives is well advanced. All tasks from high risk objectives are complete, except for the information technology areas which need to align to the timing of the implementation of the ACT wide content management system.

Achievements in identified key areas include:

- developing and implementing procedures for people with a disability during emergency situations
  - implementing an employment framework to enhance employment opportunities for people with a disability and publishing a brochure, *'Making Reasonable Adjustments'* for recruitment and employment
  - strengthening inclusive consultation practices through changes to the survey methods for the School Review and Development program
- This year the survey was made available online to support all stakeholders including those people who require the use of assistive technologies. Modified surveys were made available for students attending special schools.
- reviewing the Department's online material by the National Information and Library Service, which identified that the content is to a high standard of accessibility
  - improving access to schools, which remains a high priority.

Each year modifications are made to a number of government schools by providing ramps, appropriate toilet facilities and adjustable benches to support students in wheelchairs. The recently opened Amaroo School features automatic doors, ramps and toilet facilities to help people with a disability access all areas of the school.

The Department is developing embedded business procedures for monitoring, reviewing and reporting on improved access to education and training services for people with a disability.

**For more information contact:**

Director  
Governance, Regulation and Risk  
Telephone: (02) 6205 7661

## Access to government schools

*Disability Standards for Education* came into effect in August 2005. The standards outline the obligations of education and training providers to ensure that students with a disability are able to access and participate in education without experiencing discrimination.

The 2005–06 Capital Works program had an allocated budget of \$890 000 for meeting disability standards for education. The program included work either undertaken or completed at two preschools, two colleges, three high schools and six primary schools.

Departmental support for students with a disability included:

- providing external doors for wheelchair access to a number of classrooms
- installing ramps to a new door to make it easier to enter and leave a school library
- installing height adjustable benches and replacing or modifying some joinery in home science and science rooms to provide wheelchair access
- providing alternative access to a junior toilet block
- supplying and installing an electric adjustable change table into existing bathrooms in some preschools
- providing wheelchair access to junior playground equipment at a primary school.

The Department provided access and facilities for people with a disability throughout the senior campus of the Wanniasa School. Among other works, this included ramp adjustments, auto doors, modification of classrooms, and the provision of wheelchair accessible art and technology workbenches, a suitable bathroom area and external pathways/ramps. These works were completed at a cost of around \$190 000.

In addition, the new school at Harrison will include facilities for students with special needs and for some students with high support needs. The school will be able to accommodate a total of up to 25 students with special needs. The facilities for students with special needs include an additional four classrooms; a high support unit classroom and associated facilities, including toilet and change facilities; staff and teachers' assistant offices; and storerooms for all of these classrooms.

**For more information contact:**

Director  
Finance and Facilities  
Telephone: (02) 6205 9108

## Access to vocational education and training

The *Advisory Group on People with a Disability in Vocational Education and Training* continued to provide strategic advice to the Department on matters relating to the participation of people with a disability in vocational education and training (VET). This advice contributes to improvements in the level of participation in VET and forms the basis for an annual *ACT People with a Disability Action Plan*. The work of the advisory group also progressed findings in *The Territory as Parent* report.

The advisory group hosted a forum in November 2005 to inform registered training organisations of the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*.

With ACT and Australian Government funding, a Disability Coordinator was employed to improve and increase access to VET and support services.

People with a disability are defined as a priority within the *ACT Vocational and Education and Training Half Yearly Outlook* and the Strategic Priorities program 2005–08. The Strategic Priorities program supports people through training that will equip them to go on to work or further education. In 2005–06, 78 people with a disability accessed the programs.

All contracts let to registered training organisations to deliver VET services mandate access for people with a disability and, when necessary, intensive individual support is funded.

**For more information contact:**

Director  
Training and Tertiary Education  
Telephone: (02) 6205 7088

## B.4 Community engagement

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Community engagement is central to the work of the Department. The Department uses creativity, innovation and enterprise to facilitate connections, form relationships and enter into conversations with its stakeholders. As an integral part of the consultation process, the Department identifies experts in respective areas to act as a first point of contact for queries on specific community engagements.

In line with the *ACT Government Community Engagement Manual*, the Department undertook a variety of consultation activities with stakeholders and industry groups, including working groups, meetings and other regular contact.

All ACT government schools have school boards that include at least three parent representatives. The School Board Chairs Network was established in 2005 to provide an opportunity for school board chairpersons to meet once a term to share information and discuss important issues with departmental representatives. A *myclasses* network site for school board chairpersons was also established to provide the opportunity to post information, share knowledge and assist email contact.

All ACT government schools have active parents and citizens associations, which serve as a voice for specific, individual school concerns, interests and priorities, as well as supporting schools financially and in kind.

In 2005, school boards reported in their annual reports estimations of the hours spent by volunteers working in our schools. This totalled over 155 000 hours across ACT government schools.

Examples of key reference committees on which parents and the wider community had representation in 2005–06 include:

- Curriculum Renewal Taskforce and Consultative Committee
- the High School Development program Reference Group and committees
- policy working parties, such as the School Canteens Policy Working Party

- ACT School Drug Education Coordinating Committee
- the External Validation Reference Group.

## Canberra Friends of Dili

The Canberra Friends of Dili, the Department of Education and Training and the Australian Education Union are working to support the education system in Dili in the best and most appropriate ways possible. The Friendship Schools program was launched at Calwell High School in 2005 to celebrate the school's links with the 30 de Agosto High School in Dili. A similar celebration occurred at the 30 de Agosto School in July 2005.

## School Volunteer program

The School Volunteer program ACT Branch was launched at North Ainslie Primary School by the Governor-General in October 2005. The program currently has 35 volunteers working as one-on-one mentors to students in 11 primary and four high schools. There are also eight volunteers who offer their time to make one-off visits to schools.

The program seeks to utilise the abilities of mainly seniors and retired people, as well as other community volunteers, to encourage students to achieve their full potential by developing improved life skills. The program also promotes the value of seniors and retired people in our community. Volunteers become a mentor and role model to the student and visit schools during normal school hours. All volunteer mentors are screened and encouraged to attend orientation workshops.

Mentors in the ACT come from a variety of backgrounds and include people involved with the local Indigenous community, seniors, parents, older school students, people with disabilities, retirees, and business and corporate volunteers. The majority of volunteers are retired, with the oldest mentor aged 93 years. The business community has indicated some interest in expanding career mentoring to our students who are considering leaving school to explore the options available to them.

## Curriculum renewal

This year saw the completion of the phase 2 development of the *Curriculum framework for ACT schools – preschool to year 10*. The Curriculum Renewal Taskforce met regularly over this period to oversee this development.

The Curriculum Renewal Taskforce has responsibility for developing a relevant and contemporary curriculum framework for all ACT students in government and non-government schools. The taskforce comprises representatives of all key stakeholders, including government, the Catholic and independent school sectors, universities, parent and teacher union peak bodies, as well as an external expert curriculum consultant.

Development of the phase 2 curriculum framework was based on extensive research and widespread consultation within the ACT community. A consultative committee meets regularly to advise the taskforce. The consultative committee has broad professional and community representation from principal, teacher, parent, union and community organisations. An Exceptional Learning Needs Working Party, made up of school representatives and special needs experts, also provides advice to the taskforce on the inclusiveness of the curriculum framework for all students.

Over the second half of 2005, 34 reference groups comprising 300 teachers, professional association nominees and academics met regularly to provide advice on the development of the framework. In early 2006 the Curriculum Renewal Taskforce also sought the expert advice of teacher professional associations in the ACT.

## Building Better Schools Building Brighter Futures

During the year, the ACT Government commenced consultation on the proposal to close Ginninderra District High School and to rebuild a state-of-the-art, \$45 million facility on the current site, planned to open in 2009. The Government sought views of the community on the future provision of education in West Belconnen. There was six months of community consultation concerning the proposal.

The ACT Government decided to go ahead with a proposal to build a new school for West Belconnen. The new school is due to open in 2009. Ginninderra District High School closed on 25 January 2006.

The Department worked with all students affected by the decision. Forty-six students moved to other schools during semester 2 2005, and all students still enrolled at Ginninderra District High School at the end of 2005 had chosen a new school for 2006. Transition planning for students took account of friendship groups, transport issues and other individual circumstances.

## Towards 2020

On 6 June 2006, the ACT Government announced the proposal, *Towards 2020: Renewing Our Schools*. The proposal is designed to give ACT students access to a diverse range of high quality public schools.

As part of the Towards 2020 proposal, \$90 million is committed over four years to improving school infrastructure. A further \$67 million has been provided by the Government to establish two new schools, and \$1 million is allocated for a feasibility study for a third school, and a number of schools will be closed or amalgamated to better meet the demographic, social and educational needs of the ACT community.

The consultation period began with the announcement on 6 June 2006. A dedicated website was established to provide information on the proposal and the consultation process, and to allow interested persons to submit feedback. The Government wrote to school boards, parents and staff to provide details of how the proposal potentially impacts on individual schools. A series of community meetings were arranged and publicised by letterbox drop, in *The Canberra Times* and *The Chronicle*, and on the Towards 2020 website.

Over the coming months, parents, members of school boards, business organisations and community groups will be provided with further information. Individuals and organisations can ask questions or give feedback via email, the Internet, in writing or by phoning the Department.

The closing date for the consultation period is 6 December 2006. In addition, the Government has called for written submissions from the community and from interested organisations by 3 November 2006.

## Strategic Plan 2006-09

A new *Strategic Plan 2006-09* was developed following an extensive consultation process with internal and external stakeholders throughout 2005 and the first quarter of 2006.

The development process involved submissions, focus groups, interviews with stakeholders, structure meetings and questionnaires.

## Preschool Working Party

The Preschool Working Party was established to implement the ACT Government's 12-hour preschool week initiative. Stage 1 implementation of the initiative occurred in semester 2 2005. Across the ACT, 35 preschools extended their hours to 12 hours per week. Preschools were selected where implementation caused minimum disruption to families and staff. Stage 2 full implementation occurred in semester 1 2006. All preschools in the ACT now offer 12 hours per week for every eligible preschool child.

The Preschool Working Party directed the consultation process; and all staff, parents, unions, primary principals, and any feeder child care centres were contacted during the planning. The final meeting of the Preschool Working Party was held in October 2005.

## Training and adult education

The *Vocational Education and Training Act 2003* established the functions, duties and powers of the Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA) to ensure that the Minister for Education and Training is provided with the best advice on VET. VETA is responsible for functions relating to priority setting, policy development and planning for VET. Through its members, the authority consults widely with representatives of employers, employees, registered training organisations, industry training advisory services, and the Indigenous and general community.

Industry consultation is undertaken primarily through the ACT Industry Training Advisory Association. The association promotes VET to industry and business and provides feedback to the ACT Government on issues impeding the supply of skilled labour to industry. The authority also provides strategic advice that contributes to policy and planning.

With input from the advisory groups in VET, the Department developed the:

- *ACT People With a Disability in VET 2005 Action Plan*
- *ACT Women in VET 2005 Action Plan*
- *ACT Indigenous People in VET 2005 Action Plan*
- *ACT Advisory Council on Adult and Community Education 2005 Action Plan.*

Consultation with the advisory groups that developed these plans helps to improve VET opportunities and outcomes and to better link training and employment.

**For more information contact:**

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### Indigenous Education

Vocational education and training is provided for Indigenous youth justice detainees in the Quamby Youth Detention Centre. Indigenous residents at Quamby's Hindmarsh Education Centre participate in horticulture, furniture construction, small engine maintenance, business studies and a community transition program. Thirteen male and eight female Indigenous residents attended vocational programs in 2005.

## B.5 Multicultural framework

The Department is committed to achieving the goals outlined in the *Multicultural Action Plan 2003-2005*. The Director, Information Management, chaired the ACT Public Service Multicultural Staff Network.

### Embracing cultural and linguistic diversity

The Access Asia and Languages programs support teachers to deliver curriculum that prepares students to:

- live and participate in an Australia that appreciates and respects diverse cultures and religions
- have the knowledge, language and skills needed to communicate and interact within different cultural settings
- know about culture and its impact on how people behave and develop identity
- value the diversity of our local and global community.

The ACT, along with more than 100 educators from around the country, developed the national statement, *Engaging Young Australians with Asia*. The statement was launched in April 2006. The statement provides guidance to schools in developing young people's understanding of Asia and encourages students to value all nations, heritages and cultures.

Since 2002, the Access Asia program has provided opportunities for schools to apply for small grants to enhance participation and understanding of Asia in the curriculum. In 2005, additional grants targeting 'Harmony' related events were awarded to nine ACT schools.

In response to the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami, ACT government school students raised over \$6 800 for the appeal. This was presented to the Indonesian Ambassador to Australia in December 2005.

Training in workplace harassment and discrimination, cultural awareness and cultural diversity is also provided for Staff Equity Contact Officers. All these officers have been provided with an information pack containing awareness raising posters to display in schools and offices.

## Valuing cultural and linguistic diversity

A range of professional learning workshops involving over 350 teachers were delivered during 2005–06, including:

- the Access Asia conference
- Global Education and Beliefs and Practices workshop
- Arts Asia Inspiration workshop
- Intercultural Language Learning – two day workshop
- Intercultural Understanding workshop
- *myclasses* workshop sessions for language teachers
- an evening with the ACT Modern Language Teachers Association, with guest speaker Emeritus Professor Michael Clyne from Melbourne University, who spoke on the topic ‘Multilingualism in Australian schools’.

The ACT Access Asia program subsidised ‘in-country’ professional learning tours for 12 school leaders and teachers. Countries visited were Vietnam, Cambodia, China and Korea. These unique experiences focused on education, contemporary life and traditional culture to support curriculum development in the arts, studies of society and the environment, English, languages, technology and health. On their return to Australia, study tour participants are required to provide materials, produce curriculum documents and visual aids, and to share their experiences with the school and the wider community. Teachers also develop and present workshops at the Access Asia Annual Coordinators’ Conference.

Values education workshops have been held for ACT teachers to embed the nine *Values for Australian Schooling* into the curriculum. The ninth value, Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion, is of particular relevance to intercultural understanding. *Values for Australian Schooling* curriculum packs were delivered to all ACT schools in term 2 2006, and teachers at the workshops were encouraged to make connections between values education and the Access Asia program.

Nine clusters of ACT schools made applications for Values Education Good Practice Schools grants in 2006. All of the applications focused on tolerance, inclusion and respect, and afford further opportunities to address ethnic and cultural diversity within school curriculum.

## Utilising cultural and linguistic diversity

The Department is providing ongoing support for Access Asia coordinators to access the online discussion group, Asia EdNet. Asia EdNet supports teaching practice and develops understanding about the countries and cultures of Asia. This includes newsletters with media highlights, relevant curriculum links, important events and Asian current affairs.

## Developing Access Asia *myclasses*

The Department has developed an Access Asia *myclasses* website, which provides many valuable resources for teachers, including contributions from the Quality Teacher program. Departmental officers presented a workshop to lecturers at the University of Canberra’s Education Faculty demonstrating the scope of *myclasses* and how it incorporates access to the Learning Federation’s Online Learning objects. The Department plans to continue promoting Access Asia *myclasses* through teacher workshops.

In December 2005, schools from across Canberra participated in a program of carol singing and band performances in Garema Place. The program, which operated as a joint venture between the Department and the Canberra Central Project, received positive feedback. The final performance was presented on the last day of the school year by the ACT Combined Schools Senior Concert Band.

## Nara links

The Department continues to participate in the Nara Teacher Exchange program. As part of the program, one ACT teacher travelled to Nara in 2005–06. In October 2005, students and teachers from Nara University High School visited Canberra and attended the Canberra Nara Candle Festival. The visitors were hosted by three ACT colleges and high schools.

### For more information contact:

Director  
Curriculum Support and Professional Learning  
Telephone: (02) 6205 9205



A Canberra high school hosts students and teachers from Japan.

## B.6 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reporting

In this report, the Department identifies its achievements in 2005–06 against two of the indicators listed in the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage, Key Indicators 2005 Report*.

The Department does not have responsibility for actions under all of the COAG indicators. Refer to Appendix 3 for further information.

### Early school engagement and performance (preschool to year 3)

Koori preschools operate on five preschool sites located at Calwell, Wanniasa, Ngunnawal, Holt and Narrabundah. Each site is open two days per week from 9 am to 1 pm. Children aged 0 to 5 years are eligible to attend. Parents and carers are encouraged to participate in the program and are required to attend with children aged under three years.

The *Census of ACT Government Preschools – February 2006* showed that 87 Indigenous students were enrolled in all ACT government preschools (including Jervis Bay Preschool). Thirteen children were enrolled in both Koori and mainstream preschools.

In the 2005 ACT Assessment Program (ACTAP), results for Indigenous year 3 students in ACT government schools showed that 95 per cent were above the benchmark in reading, 93 per cent were above the benchmark in numeracy, and 88 per cent were above the benchmark in writing. (Note: In Parts B.1 Agency performance and D.1.3 Statement of performance, the literacy results are for ACT government school students and show reading and writing as a combined measure.)

### Positive childhood, adolescence and transition to adulthood

In 2005, ACTAP results for Indigenous students in year 5 showed that 81 per cent were above the benchmark in numeracy, 85 per cent were above the benchmark in reading, and 80 per cent were above the benchmark in writing.

Year 7 results show that 76 per cent of Indigenous students were above the benchmark in reading, 79 per cent were above the benchmark in writing, and 62 per cent were above the benchmark in numeracy.

The grade progression of Indigenous students from year 9 to year 10 was 97 per cent. To improve student retention, mentoring programs have been introduced for Indigenous students in years 10 to 12.

Of the 62 Indigenous students in year 12 in 2005, 25 were awarded a Year 12 Certificate. Four of these students received a Universities Admission Index and four were awarded a Vocational Education and Training Certificate.

Twelve year 12 students exited before completion of their year 12 Certificate. Of these, five students went into traineeships, one went to full time employment, one was awarded an apprenticeship and one moved interstate.

The Department has undertaken a process of curriculum renewal. One component of this process is to ensure that the Essential Learning Achievements require students to learn about Indigenous peoples in Australia. While this process continues, schools are implementing learning programs to achieve the current curriculum outcomes. School literacy and numeracy plans are designed in a way that incorporates material that addresses cultural inclusivity and meets the specific needs of Indigenous students.

An Indigenous focus in professional development is maintained through liaison between the Department and professional development providers.

In all instances, schools are encouraged to ensure that Indigenous people are involved in the process of developing curriculum. This includes involvement of local Indigenous custodian representatives. Leading from this, schools are encouraged to investigate comparative study components through the origins of Indigenous parents.

In 2005–06 the ACT Government funded the provision of mentoring and support services for Indigenous trainees and their employers. The project assisted Indigenous people to access employment and training and supported employers who took on an Indigenous trainee.

A total of 23 participants have been, or are currently being, supported by this project. Seven have completed their traineeship with qualifications at Certificate II, III or IV or have received a Statement of Attainment in a nationally recognised vocational qualification.

One hundred and forty-three Indigenous people commenced apprenticeships and traineeships in 2005. Of this number, 40 commenced apprenticeships, mostly in the Building and Construction and Tourism and Hospitality industries. The majority of the 103 trainees were in the Community Services and Health and the Business and Clerical sectors.

The Department, through the ACT Indigenous People in VET Committee, supported forums on 'Vocational Education and Training for Indigenous People in the ACT' in November 2005 and June 2006. Participants discussed current achievements and future challenges for the sector and the 2006 priorities for Indigenous VET programs. Students, vocational education and training and higher education providers, government agencies and industry bodies attended. Strategies were identified to increase opportunities for Indigenous people to participate in vocational education and training, and to gain higher qualifications with employment as an outcome.

**For more information contact:**

Director  
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One Indigenous trainee, Gjai Hoolihan, a Narrabundah College student, won a Prime Minister's Skills of Excellency Award for her School-based New Apprenticeship in Library Studies and has now progressed to a Certificate III traineeship. The award was presented by Ms Mary Porter AM MLA.

### Indigenous Education

Forty-three year 3 students who were identified as being in the lower 20 per cent of results for literacy and/or numeracy in the ACT Assessment program in 2004 were targeted for intensive assistance from three full-time and one part-time Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Consultants during 2005. There will be some indications of the effectiveness of this support when this group of students participates in the ACT Assessment program as year 5 students in 2006.

## B.7 ACT Women's Plan

The *ACT Women's Plan* establishes a shared approach between agencies for working towards the ACT Government's vision to improve the status of all women and girls.

During 2005–06 the Department committed to specific actions to support and progress five of the six key objectives of the *ACT Women's Plan*.

### Objective one: Representation and recognition

The Department's *Equity and Diversity Plan 2003–2005* has been distributed to all staff and was included in induction packages.

An International Women's Day luncheon was arranged as part of the International Women's Day celebrations convened by the Chief Minister's Department.

### Objective two: Good health and well-being

A contact card and an information brochure about services available to women have been developed to improve the availability of information to marginalised groups and awareness of existing services. The contact cards and brochures will be distributed to Department staff during September 2006.

It is a mandatory departmental requirement to complete school safety checks. School safety checks are used to evaluate the extent to which health and safety is actively managed in workplaces, and to identify workplace hazards and work practice that put people at risk of violence.

A youth worker operates at each ACT government high school. The Department is continuing to promote the Health Promoting Schools program to improve the health and well-being of school students.

#### **Objective four: Safe, inclusive communities**

The Department provides online training for managers and supervisors on legal compliance and workplace discrimination and harassment. Training in workplace harassment and discrimination and cultural awareness and diversity has been provided for Staff Equity Contact Officers (SECOs).

A workplace discrimination and harassing behaviours policy and supporting guidelines is currently being developed.

In July 2005, the Department issued an *Injury Prevention and Management Policy Statement*. The statement is a joint agreement with relevant unions and demonstrates a commitment to a workplace that is safe and rejects violence.

During 2005, the Injury Prevention and Management area of the Department organised professional development for staff on 'Building Effective Relationships, and a Workplace Harassment' workshop for supervisors and SECOs. Professional learning opportunities for staff on Work Life Balance, Dealing with Conflict in the Workplace, Achieving and Maintaining Career Satisfaction and Emotional Resilience have been provided. Davidson Trahaire Corpsych, a national corporate psychology and human resources consulting firm, has conducted the training sessions.

In July 2005, the Department's *Emergency Management Framework* was launched. The framework contains policy and guidelines regarding emergencies involving violence, and provides managers and school principals with a concise reference to facilitate emergency management planning. Within this context, schools have been issued with the *Unwelcome Visitors to Schools Handbook* that provides information to assist principals and authorised persons in schools to manage trespassing and/or threatening or violent behaviour on school premises.

The Department has implemented the *National Safe Schools Framework* that requires schools to have anti-bullying policies in place. To heighten awareness of workplace bullying, articles and information about workplace discrimination and harassment are included in the Department's monthly magazine. Each monthly issue includes an equity and diversity information page highlighting current issues.

A code of professional practice for teachers has been developed and distributed to staff. Information sessions on the code have been conducted for all teachers.

School buildings have been assessed and action taken to improve security.

In association with the Department of Justice and Community Safety, Constable Kenny Koala has visited ACT schools to present information about personal safety.

The Office of Women convened an Inter-Departmental Committee to consider issues specific to women. The committee has sub groups, for example the Domestic Violence Prevention Committee, on which the Department has representation.

#### **Objective five: Economic security and opportunities**

During 2005, the Department implemented the *ACT Public Service Employment Framework for People with a Disability* and adjusted recruitment practices in line with the framework to ensure that people, including women with a disability, are able to realise their potential through access to employment opportunities.

#### **Objective six: Flexible education and training**

The Women in VET Committee provides strategic advice to the Department on all matters relating to the participation of women in VET. The purpose of the committee is to provide advice that focuses on improving the level of women's participation and the quality of their experience in VET, and on the social and economic outcomes for female participants in VET. A poster promoting the participation of women in VET has been produced and circulated to education and training sites.

In 2006, the Department provided leadership development opportunities to female Indigenous students under the Indigenous Leadership and Mentoring program. This program provides mentors to support students to remain in school through years 10 to 12.

Canberra College Cares, a program providing support and addressing the needs and responsibilities of young carers and mothers to succeed in education, was launched on 14 June 2006. As a registered playgroup, the program provides onsite free child minding. A community nurse provides fortnightly health checks. Educational and social experiences are organised for young parents and parents to be.

The Canberra College Cares program complements the Eclipse and Stay programs, which have operated for the past seven years in partnership with the Connecting Young Carers to Life Opportunities and Personalised Support program, ACT Health and other community agencies. These programs provide alternative education opportunities for students aged 14 to 21 years.

The Department is committed to supporting women by:

- developing a Pathways to Qualifications program to recognise the existing skills of women who have no formal educational qualifications
- developing further initiatives to improve career guidance for women and girls, including specific career development and career education programs in schools
- providing quality learning programs at the Hindmarsh Education Centre for young women in detention. Ongoing skills development programs will be made available for mature workers
- supporting and encouraging young women to consider Information Technology (IT) studies in schools and colleges, and to undertake work placements and School-based New Apprenticeships in the IT field.

**For more information contact:**

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Measurement, Monitoring and Reporting  
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Launch of Canberra College Cares,  
14 June 2006

