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THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON FRIDAY, 17 JUNE 2022

TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT'S CONTINUING RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Mr TIM BULLARD, SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, **Ms JENNY BURGESS**, DEPUTY SECRETARY STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, **Mr KANE SALTER**, DEPUTY SECRETARY CORPORATE AND BUSINESS SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, AND **Mr JAMES BURROWS**, MANAGER, OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Thank you, Minister. We might then move to our COVID-19 response. As you are aware, the PAC is doing a series of follow-up inquiries into various aspects of the COVID-19 response, particularly since our last report and focused on the period around and after the reopening of the borders, where we saw the situation change. The committee has seen a whole-of-government response, which does include a section related to education and the response there. We appreciate the comprehensive response provided in the attachments, which had to be printed and handed out to us because they were too big to email. I assume there is no one to change at the table, Minister, in terms of your support staff?

Mr JAENSCH - No change, Chair.

CHAIR - Thank you, so Hansard has a record of those. I invite you, Minister, if you wish to add anything further to the submission that you provided to the committee, more recent information or anything else you would like to add before we go to questions.

Mr JAENSCH - In the interests of time, Chair, I am happy for us to go straight into questions.

CHAIR - Okay. I am happy to lead off, unless Josh or anyone else wants to.

Mr WILLIE - You start, Chair.

CHAIR - Minister, in terms of the feedback from staff, particularly, we know the whole COVID-19 period, from when it first entered the state in the north and south right through, has been a really stressful time for staff. Can you provide any information about your interaction with the teaching and support staff for schools, in terms of how they are feeling and how they are doing, stress leave, other or personal leave related to the psychological stress and that sort of thing?

Mr JAENSCH - Since I became Minister, I have visited a number of schools and spoken to principals and teaching staff there. I have offered them my thanks, in particular, and congratulations for the way they have managed through these very difficult, changing times, for the innovation they have been able to bring to the response as well, at that individual class and school level. Particularly with things like creating new ways to deliver learning outdoors and in different formats, and finding alternatives to some of the teaching and learning

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opportunities they would have had previously. I was particularly struck by a primary school visit where the pump track had been turned into a maths class - not just time-out, not just burning energy but they built into it opportunities for learning as well. I hope that some of those innovations will stick with us.

I have also had frequently contact with the Australian Education Union and David Genford, and discussions with him. Also, representatives of the Tasmanian school associations and the Tasmanian Principals Association. I have had direct contact with some of the support school principals as well and generally tried to get myself up to speed as quickly as possible with how our workforce and our leadership on the ground in these organisations have been responding.

I have found that, yes, they have all been expressing that there is additional work and there have been uncertainty and pressures on people, particularly with regard to dealing with staff absences in the period where close contact rules were moving a lot of staff out of the school environment, and the need to be able to secure relief or backfill.

I know that the department's efforts to establish a register of available relief teachers was a mighty effort and there were around 1700 on that list in term 1. I understand that in the order of 1000 or so of those were deployed, taken up by schools. Every school had a different approach to doing that as well. Talking with principals, some were very keen to reach out for the supports available to bring additional teaching staff on site. Some went to great lengths to ensure that they did not bring new staff on site but, instead, were innovative in the way that they divided the workload across existing staff and increased the hours maybe of some of the people they already had familiar to them.

This is still changing. The environment will change again before the end of this term in response to public health advice and what is happening in our broader community with regard to COVID-19. We are incredibly proud of the people we have at all levels and the work they have undertaken to deal with this practically. I am so glad that we have been able to keep our schools open for face-to-face learning. The vast majority of young people have been able to continue in a modified way to learn at school. Those who have not been able to have been supported to learn at home.

What we now need to do, as we move to the next stages of COVID-19 recovery and exit, is we are encouraging all students and all families to re-engage with face-to-face learning if they haven't been. That is where our kids need to be to get the best experience of these years. Every day of learning really counts for their future success and their ability to reach their potential.

In terms of other supports for staff through this process, I might ask the Secretary if he wants to comment further.

CHAIR - Before you go, Minister, the other question was, how many staff are on sick leave at the moment? Some of these questions may have been asked in both Estimates. I do not know because I am not on that committee. If evidence was provided there before the committee, I don't want to repeat stuff, if you have access to the public record there.

Mr WILLIE - The sick leave one was not asked. We asked about teachers who had been stood down because of vaccination status.

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Mr JAENSCH - How would you like to frame your question, Madam Chair? With sick leave, if that is what you are asking, are you referring to COVID-19 or leave generally and absences?

CHAIR - Do you have it broken down by those staff who have been impacted by COVID-19 as a close contact or having COVID-19 themselves, or is it just you are on sick leave regardless of the reason? I am just not sure what data you have, Minister.

Mr JAENSCH - I will ask the Secretary what he is able to share at the table and what may be needed to be taken on notice of data we have.

Mr BULLARD - If I understand your question, Ms Forrest, it would be all sick leave with a sub-category of sick leave for COVID-19?

CHAIR - Is that done separately? Is the COVID-19 related sick leave not taken out of their sick leave component, if you like?

Mr BULLARD - There is COVID-19 leave, but that leave takes effect once they've run their sick leave balance down, so they effectively get 20 extra days. That's as I understand it, I'll just check with Mr Salter.

Mr SALTER - I think that the COVID-19 leave is automatically accessed when they've got COVID-19.

Mr BULLARD - There is an additional 20 days that sit beside your sick leave allocation. We can't provide the breakdown here, but we can provide it. Would you like it as at today?

CHAIR - We can take it on notice; we'll write to you to get that breakdown.

Mr BULLARD - That's absolutely fine, thank you.

Ms WEBB - Chair, I think we'd be interested to see what the pattern had been across first term with that leave rather than as at today. Is that the sort of information you'd be looking for, or were you looking for a total as at today?

CHAIR - Yes, it would be helpful to see a trend because I'm sure there was more significant sick leave when schoolkids went back as opposed to during the holidays. The borders opened on 16 December, and school didn't return until February, so maybe data by term would be helpful.

Mr BULLARD - We could provide term 1 data and COVID-19 leave.

Ms WEBB - Would that be sufficient, Chair? They have just suggested they could provide term 1 data around COVID-19 leave; did you want it broader than that?

CHAIR - Yes, sick leave and COVID-19 leave. If you can break it up, that's fine, I'm not sure whether you are able to do that, that's the question.

Mr BULLARD - Yes, we can provide that.

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CHAIR - Okay.

Ms WEBB - I'm interested to know about the level at which relief teachers were utilised across first term. It may have been asked in Estimates; Josh is nodding his head, so perhaps we don't need to seek this information additionally, we can source it.

Mr WILLIE - I think it's ready to hand here, but I could add to it from Estimates. The Secretary was able to provide the current relief teaching pool, the number of part-time staff that could relief teach on the days that they weren't teaching, and also the people deployed. I am also interested in the departmental staff that work within the department - not in schools - how many of them were redeployed into schools too, as part of that relief teaching effort.

CHAIR - Are you able to provide that level of detail, Minister?

Mr JAENSCH - I will seek the department's advice on that.

Mr SALTER - Just to clarify, the first part around numbers that we did talk about at Estimates committee?

Mr WILLIE - Yes.

Mr SALTER - For term 1: genuine relief - that is, additional people who have already been doing part-time work - that number was 781. Part-time staff paid relief were 911 people, who undertook relief outside their normal part-time hours.

Mr WILLIE - And the additional staff from head office who had teaching qualifications and were deployed - are they captured in that data?

Mr SALTER - They are not captured in that data. I'd need to get that figure.

Mr WILLIE - Take that on notice?

Mr SALTER - Yes.

Mr JAENSCH - Is head office specific enough -

Mr WILLIE - Well, people not currently working in schools who have teaching qualifications that were redeployed to schools, if that's clearer.

Mr JAENSCH - Your good self?

CHAIR - Other short-term staffing jobs, you mean?

Mr WILLIE - Might have happened after my election; I think the Secretary was kind of hopeful.

CHAIR - If I can just take you back to your submission, Minister. On page 29, there's a list of public health measures prepared for the return to school - 'supporting staff, parents/carers and students'. There's a range of key measures there - I'm sorry, I can't find what I was looking at. If any other member has something to go on with -

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Mr WILLIE - Yes, I have some questions.

Ms WEBB - I have a staff-related question.

Mr WILLIE - Okay, you go on the staff question before I move off that.

Ms WEBB - I have a staff-related question that we might as well slot in here because we've just been talking about staff.

I noticed on page 29 of the response we received, it talked about staff wellbeing webinars being made available. Do you have records of what usage has been made of those webinars and what topics are covered with those webinars?

Mr BULLARD - Responding to the additional impacts on staff wellbeing - which is a priority of the agency - we ran a number of webinars across the period of term 1 for all staff. They were voluntary. There were 1500 attendees to those different webinars. They covered: recharging the batteries; managing energy and motivation; living with uncertainty and making space for growth; understanding and harnessing your strengths; thriving into the new normal; and understanding your wellbeing and supporting others.

In addition to that general support for staff, we had a particular focus - and continue to - on principals, knowing that they are the leaders at the frontline who are at risk of being most impacted. A principal wellbeing team provided targeted support for 42 principals in the north and 19 in the south, as well as providing general support through an ongoing contract that we have with occupational psychologists where principals can choose to engage with that company when, and if, they need help.

Ms WEBB - From that answer, it sounds like there was a lot more take-up of that support for principals in the north than in the south. Those numbers are quite substantially weighted to the north. Was a reason identified for that?

Mr BULLARD - I would need to seek that information. We'd need to understand what was going on in terms of the north and south. I don't have that to hand.

Ms WEBB - Was that reliant on the principals putting themselves forward to seek support, or how was it offered?

Mr BULLARD - The way in which we run principal support is universal to targeted. There's a universal level for principal wellbeing where they can engage in wellbeing check-ins. Then there are ongoing resources at a universal level: 'I'm tracking okay but I want to take care of my wellbeing'; and that can escalate up to 'I need some particular support for the issues that I'm managing'. The targeted support there would have been where there had been, either the principal wellbeing team had identified that a principal needed additional support in terms of the discussions that they were having or information we're receiving from the school, or principals always know that they have the ability to be proactive and ask for more.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. A final one on the staff and principal wellbeing measures that were put in place. It looks like quite a concerted effort. How has that been assessed for impact and outcomes and quality? Are we going to assess by interacting with the staff and the

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principals about how well it was done, and how well the outcomes that were sought were achieved?

Mr BULLARD - In terms of gaining feedback about the principals, FBG Group provides that support on our behalf or in collaboration with us, and they provide feedback. I think it's annually. They do a check-in about 'how useful have you found it', et cetera. I'd need to check in on how we were assessing the staff wellbeing webinars; FBG provided those as well so we'd need to see what metrics they had attached.

Ms WEBB - Apart from those specific measures, is there a way that the department is going to go out to all teaching staff and principals to say, how well did we do in supporting you across this period of time, and in some way evaluate that?

Mr BULLARD - One of the pieces of work that is underway now is evaluating staff wellbeing and having an evaluation tool through our staff wellbeing team that will provide that level of data. I wouldn't want the committee to think that we'd stopped there. There are additional rounds of webinars which we're going to run throughout the course of this year and the principal support is ongoing.

CHAIR - I would like to talk about the students, if that's alright? This might have been asked in Estimates and perhaps we can access it in other ways and you might have the information there, Minister. I need to get an understanding about the ongoing assessment of a child's wellbeing. I note that there have been the wellbeing surveys and strategies. However, particularly the numbers of students who may have engaged with the virtual learning centre, what length of time? Or, because of a particular vulnerability are there some who are engaged with it on a full-time basis? Who otherwise might be home schooled or what's being done at home? I assume there will be a number too who were engaged with the virtual learning centre whilst they've had COVID-19 or had been excluded from school through being close contact.

I'm interested in information about the use and access of the virtual learning centre and what the future is for that?

Mr JAENSCH - I will ask Jenny Burgess to respond to this. My understanding though is that the virtual learning centre has been very successful in ensuring continuity of learning. I think at the peak periods where we had the most students absent from school due to COVID-19 positive or close contact rules at the time, we had the majority of those children, more than two-thirds of them at the peaks, who were able to continue learning from home.

I understand that the virtual learning centre approach was very much to support that short-term absence due to illness, family vulnerability or close contact as well. There have been - for other students who have had longer periods away or reasons for longer absence from school, other things have kicked in. Virtual learning is not meant to replace face-to-face learning for extended periods of time. Schools have been engaging with those families regarding their learners' needs, if there are reasons why they can't return to the school environment after a short absence due to COVID-19 cases.

I might pass to Ms Burgess.

CHAIR - I am checking for the numbers.

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Ms BURGESS - I want to give it a bit more detail and context because it's important to understand that the virtual learning centre was just one of the measures that we put in place. The virtual learning centre was established for short-term bursts of learning opportunities where students were isolated either because they were a close contact or they had COVID-19 and were still able to learn or they were living in a family where there was a vulnerable context. It was designed specifically for short-term bursts of learning, rather than longer term, as the Minister indicated.

In addition to that, families that had children in the 0-4 age groups were also supported through Launching into Learning (LiL) programs twice a week, online. And the virtual learning centre was really for prep to year 10 and we supported students in years 11 and 12 through Virtual Learning Tasmania. I think it's important that you understand that there was a broad spectrum of measures.

The data that we have for those students with regard to longevity of participation, the average through the term 1 process was about 80 per cent of the students were there for about four days. Also, remembering too, that schools had in place additional mechanisms for students. Some schools didn't encourage their students to use virtual learning, but had their own supports for students. In addition, we also had written materials and packs for those students who were unable to access virtual learning. We also had stationery packs and supplies for students as well, so those who weren't able to have those resources at home, could have them.

The participation data shows that approximately 500 students per day were learning from home, and that's from about the second week. That has fluctuated throughout the term but over the course of term 1, our data shows that we had about 12 700 students accessing VLC courses. The breakdown of that shows that 40 per cent of those were close contacts, 33 per cent were COVID-19 positive, 22 per cent had other and about 6 per cent were medically vulnerable. That data is only as solid as the information that we received from the families, carers and parents but that's the data that we have to date.

CHAIR - What is the future of the virtual learning centre?

Ms BURGESS - With regard to the virtual learning centre we have learnt that it does provide additional resources both to schools and to families. One of the benefits for us is that we've been able to make sure that our curriculum documentation is up to speed so the teachers know exactly what the students have been learning while they've been in the virtual learning environment. We would anticipate that we will maintain that site so that if schools have students who for whatever reason are not able to return to a learning normal environment and they're not moving into the Tasmanian eSchool, would actually be able to use and have that as a support for their ongoing learning.

Mr JAENSCH - Chair, the other thing is that we can't assume that we won't need to bring on a number of the mechanisms for dealing with future waves of COVID-19 or other types of events in the future and where we've developed solutions and new muscles and synapses to deal with these sorts of events, we need to hold on to them so that they can be deployed rapidly when we need them again. This is similar to the additional investment that we've made in the pool of devices, laptops and tablets and dongles that are available so that we can ensure everyone who needs one can access learning wherever they are if they can't be at school.

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Mr WILLIE - Just on the virtual learning centre still. Minister, you said two-thirds of students at the peak, what did you mean by that? Two-thirds of students were accessing the virtual learning centre or two-thirds of students were close contacts and had COVID-19?

Mr JAENSCH - No, two-thirds of students who were absent from school due to COVID-19, either direct cases or close contacts, were participating in learning from home.

Mr WILLIE - There are a couple of other questions on this. I am interested in whether the department or yourself thinks that there will be an impact to student outcomes through this period? The virtual learning centre is great, I've logged on with my son who's in prep but there was a level of instruction. It's not just this virtual learning world where the kids just go off on a journey themselves. It's obviously not a level playing field in every home. Do you think that this period of time will impact student learning because of the disruption?

Mr JAENSCH - This has been a very different time. We've had to do different things and as I said before, I've been incredibly impressed with the way that the department and schools, school leaders, teachers and families have responded, and how kids have responded to the opportunity to learn in different ways. This has been a different period. Attendance has been different. The modes of learning have been different. The aim has always been to ensure that learning continues and we've thrown a lot of resources and ingenuity at ensuring that that happens, with the aim that we don't have a disruption to these kids' learning journeys. Regarding what we might expect to see as legacies of this, in their progress and attainment, I'd ask the department if they wish to comment on that.

Mr BULLARD - I think the short answer is, it's too early to tell because we've got to go through an assessment cycle to see what the impact is. The important thing for us will be to be able to look for any patterns or trends in the data that we're getting back. We discussed at some length in Estimates, for example, the kindergarten development check and the responsive stance that we'd taken once we'd been through that check in 2020 to see that gross motor skills were an area that had been in decline during the COVID-19 period. We'd be doing exactly the same thing.

It will then be a matter for us to provide some really targeted support if we think there are common areas across the learner population that we need to make an effort to ensure that any learning loss is remediated.

Ms BURGESS - There are probably three elements we are thinking about. First is the attendance, which the Minister mentioned. We have to get kids back to school so that they can learn. Then, there is the element around their wellbeing. We are really tuned and focused in on knowing and understanding how those young people are. As you would be aware, we have the wellbeing survey for young people from grades 4-10. That will happen in August, so we will get a sense in August of what measures have changed because we will now have four years of data on that. We will work with schools individually on what their data is telling them.

From a learning perspective, we absolutely understand that there may be impacts. We are really heightened and attuned to the fact that the teachers are focused on making sure that their assessments are appropriate for where the students are in their learning, and making sure that they are not getting any signals that the learning has been impacted across the years of schooling. What that might look like in kindergarten, as you would know, will be different from what it might look like in year 6 or 7. As you would also be aware, we have PAT now,

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too. That is a really valuable and useful tool for us on those key areas of maths and reading. We get a sense and understanding through that data of whether we are getting different trends at both an individual school and system level with regards to that. We can respond either at a school level, network level or system level if we need to adjust our strategies going forward. We are looking at the data with that learning loss potential in mind.

Mr WILLIE - The last question in this area, Minister. I am aware that the gifted program across schools has been impacted to develop the Virtual Learning Centre. Has that been reinstated now or will it be reinstated?

Mr JAENSCH - My advice had been that that was turned back on at the beginning of term 2.

Ms BURGESS - That is correct, Minister.

Mr WILLIE - The other program impacted through this time was Launching into Learning. My understanding is that there was a staffing issue because the department was worried about staffing the school and LIL teachers would potentially have to be redeployed. There were also issues with people coming onto school sites, which might have been able to be overcome by going to libraries or other community spaces. I don't know if you have a comment on that.

Mr JAENSCH - My understanding, again coming in fairly late to it all, was that with the Launching into Learning, a very important program, it was the face-to-face indoor elements of that that were wound back, largely to do with COVID-19 restrictions and risks. But there was a ramping-up of the online content so that there could be continuity of delivery of that and there could be access to it. There were people who were drafted to assist with doing that, including the Secretary and myself recording sessions and content for Launching into Learning. What you have seen is the return to face-to-face and indoor Launching into Learning as restrictions have lifted and we have been able to. My understanding is those were the key drivers of the changes to format of delivery of LIL. The department may care to make additional comment.

Mr WILLIE - It was suspended for term 1 completely.

Ms BURGESS - That is correct. I think it was a combination, as the Minister has indicated, but also schools telling us that they felt that from a wellbeing and safety point of view, they, too, needed some space not to run those additional programs.

It is important also to mention on the gifted approach, while we did divert the resource to support, more broadly, the virtual learning, we also were able to provide access for schools and students falling into the gifted category to be able to access content, information and courses above their year level. There was an opportunity there for those students to be extended through that Virtual Learning Centre as well.

CHAIR - With the next school wellbeing surveys being done in August, how long will it take you to collate that data with the rest of the survey?

Mr JAENSCH - I will ask the department for a comment on that. Ms Burgess?

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Ms BURGESS - We do that survey in collaboration with South Australia. The test data will be back in October at a school, class and gender level. Then we will be running regional sessions to support schools to unpack that data in the context of the four years that most of them will now have. That will occur in November.

CHAIR - When are you expecting a report on that whole process to be publicly available?

Ms BURGESS - We will work with the Minister about the more formal release of that information and data.

CHAIR - Minister, I am just trying to get some sense -

[10:51.19 to 10:51:34 Transmission lost then audio inaudible]

Ms WEBB - We can hear you now but that was quite garbled so you might need to repeat the question.

CHAIR - I am just acknowledging all of the steps that have to occur and the time you'll need, Minister, to consider the work done and results. When do you expect to be able to release it?

Mr JAENSCH - I don't have a date. My expectation is that after the data is available and we have had some assessment of it, and I have received advice, I would be making it available as soon as possible thereafter.

Ms BURGESS - Normally in this sort of process, once we get data back, we like the schools to be able to have it, unpack it in their context and to share that with their staff. After that we would then look to more broadly release the data.

CHAIR - Are we talking about this year or is it likely to be next year? I am just trying to get a sense.

Ms BURGESS - It would normally be after those sessions have been held regionally in November. So sometime either late November or early December.

Mr JAENSCH - Although I understand that last year it was at the end of October. As early as we can.

CHAIR - This is probably something you can provide on notice so we do not take up too much time, but on page 29 there is a series of those measures like the COVID-19 hotline, which it seems was a dedicated hotline for education staff, the back-to-school COVID-19 care packages, additional support for administration staff, et cetera. We could talk about staff wellbeing, which you talked about, but are you able to provide some information to the committee about the uptake of all those measures, like how many calls to the hotline? I am interested in what things were most utilised. There are a lot of measures there and I am sure they all have an impact. I am interested in the utilisation rate in terms of, in the future what might be the things to focus the attention on if we need to?

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you. I don't know what metrics were kept, but there is a lot of -

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Ms BURGESS - It would be good to get that on notice, potentially.

Mr JAENSCH - I don't have the data with me but Ms Burgess might be able to answer there and I am happy to take a question on notice as well.

Ms BURGESS - Certainly with regards to the first five weeks of term, we had 1000 contacts through either our email or our phone system, with regards to questions. We do not have a breakdown of whether that is schools or families, or who they were, but certainly 1000 in that first five weeks. I don't know whether you are aware or have the detail, but we stood up a team of 28 staff as COVID-19 support officers. Some of those were internal staff and some we received more broadly across government. This meant that every school had a key person they could contact. That person then triaged the work and liaised directly with Public Health so that we didn't have to put additional burden on schools. Anecdotally, the reports are that that was very successfully put in place and achieved what it set out to achieve, which was to allow schools to have a key go-to person when they were managing the risks in their schools. In addition to that, we developed an internally facing data dashboard and that data dashboard gave us real-time data on student absences, student illness and staff absences and illnesses. We could then manage what that looked like from a data perspective and whether we were about to trigger either a class outbreak or a site outbreak. That was very well utilised as well.

Mr BULLARD - If I might just use that as a segue to answer Ms Webb's question?

CHAIR - I can't hear who's speaking.

Mr BULLARD - Sorry, it's Tim. If I could just use the mention of outbreaks to bring us back to the difference in principal wellbeing check-in, it was outbreak related. So, there were more in the north and north-west to start off with. As part of the process, once a school hit what we'd call the 'red zone' on our escalation matrix, there'd be a call made automatically to the principal to see what support they needed.

CHAIR - It's proactive as well as reactive, if you like?

Mr BULLARD - Yes, that's right. Targeted.

Mr JAENSCH - I think 'targeted' is the term we've got in here.

CHAIR - Any other questions?

Mr WILLIE - Yes, Chair, I have a couple but they'll probably have to go on notice given the time. They're about the audit for windows. When were those window upgrades completed - a date? What was the total cost and what is the time line of the air purification devices being delivered? How many and how were they distributed? As I said, I am happy for this to go on notice.

It's my understanding now that schools can access specialist help for airflow if they're having particular problems. Could the Minister confirm that and when that came online and was available to schools?

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Mr JAENSCH - Okay. First of all, there was not an audit but there was an assessment undertaken of all perimeter classrooms across the state. I understand -

Mr WILLIE - Assessment, audit. Same thing.

Mr JAENSCH - The word 'audit' has been used quite a bit but the approach taken was because the 'kryptonite' for COVID-19 is ventilation and air movement, opening doors and windows is the way to do that. Every classroom in every school is different. There was an assessment of all rooms with access to open-air and schools were then equipped to be able to manage those spaces and their ventilation to the best of their ability.

That segues through to a program of work to ensure that windows are then operable and the vast majority of those were completed before the return to school in term one and the program has been continuing since then. The other things that schools were provided with was things like air purifiers, particularly for those unable to be ventilated from the outside. I understand the total - about 9000 air purifiers have been purchased and deployed and these are HEPA filter purifiers. Also, that every school has - 8400 is the number deployed. Okay. 9000 also purchased?

Ms BURGESS - There are 600 waiting in reserve in case they are required.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you. And each school has a carbon dioxide monitor and instructions on how to use it. This is a way of measuring the mixing of air and the flow of air. Each school also has access to an occupational physician, someone who is able to assist them with the configuration of the room and the use of natural and artificial ventilation and air circulation to ensure that they're achieving - they're not creating pockets of air where a virus may accumulate and provide a greater risk of infection.

The schools have been given tools and equipment and expertise and guidance on how to ensure each space is safe, noting that each space is different and there is not a central program of doing the same thing in every school and every room because that wouldn't work.

CHAIR - Minister, we might need to wind-up now. I'm sorry, we've got another Minister appearing (words indistinct). There may be questions we could put to you on notice. Otherwise we might have to try to reschedule another hearing for questions that members have. Apologies for that but time is a bit constrained today.

Mr JAENSCH - We're happy to take some additional questions and we will do our best to provide answers for you for the committee. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thanks everyone.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

The Committee suspended from 11 a.m. to 11.08 a.m.