

Principal Wellbeing

Talking points

- Every school leader, worker, and student deserve a safe, respectful school environment.
- The Education Directorate is implementing a range of initiatives to reduce workload and improve occupational violence outcomes.
- As part of the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, \$300,000 will be invested over the first four years for principal health and wellbeing programs, alongside additional funding for workload reduction initiatives.
- The Education Directorate is currently undertaking an Occupational Violence (OV) Review. Under the Review, the Directorate is delivering new education-specific OV procedure and supporting materials for staff, including an OV management checklist to support managers responding to an OV incident and a training catalogue for staff to enhance their skills and knowledge on prevention and management of OV.

Key information

- Data from the annual [Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey](#) (the Survey) was released on 31 March 2025 (reporting against 2024 survey results). The Survey highlighted that:
 - Workload, mental health of students and staff, and other student related issues are key sources of stress for principals
 - One in five school leaders reported moderate to severe depression, while others are at risk of other mental health concerns
 - More than 50 percent of school leaders reported threats of violence
 - Almost half of all principals reported physical violence, with 96.3 percent of violence at the hands of students.
 - Threats of violence by parents/carers remains high.
- Under the Better Fairer Schools Agreement, \$300,000 has been allocated to the ACT Principals Association (ACTPA) over four years (\$75,000 per year) to support principal health and wellbeing initiatives.
- In response to the Survey findings, ACTPA is working with EDU Executives to negotiate a structured principal wellbeing initiative. The agreed approach will utilise the annual funding to support all principals and deputy principals across the ACT.
- The Education Directorate is currently developing new education-specific OV procedure and supporting materials for staff, including an OV management checklist to support managers

responding to an OV incident and a training catalogue for staff to enhance their skills and knowledge on prevention and management of OV. The procedures are due for release during October 2025.

- The ACT Government continues to support our principals to carry out their important work in a safe environment. The *Future of Education Strategy* prioritises strong school leadership, with an ongoing commitment to developing leadership capability and supporting the wellbeing of ACT public school leaders, especially principals.
- The Education Directorate provides structured support to principals to undertake their roles, including student-centred improvement, building leadership capability, and responding to complexities of school operations.
- The Education Directorate offers tailored leadership programs, such as inductions, *Collaborate and Connect* meetings for new school principals, *Principal Coach Mentors*, *Leadership Forums*, and the *Aspiring Senior Leaders Program*, to support principals at all stages of their career.
- The network model, led by Executive Education Leaders, also provides dedicated opportunities for principals to connect, collaborate, and share best practices.
- The ACT Government established the Safe at School Taskforce (the Taskforce); which operated from 21 July 2022 until 30 June 2025. The Taskforce shifted the Directorate's approach from being reactive to safety issues as they arise, to proactive, promoting the importance and value of safe systems of practice and a strong safety culture.
- The Education Directorate has worked with the AEU to establish formal mechanisms to prevent and reduce the risk of occupational violence against staff and support the work health and safety of our entire workforce.
- Last year, the Education Directorate launched its first *Safety and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2026* with a strong focus on the prevention of occupational violence in ACT public schools.

Background information

- The Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Survey was established in 2011 to capture the lived experience of school leaders through the lens of their health and wellbeing. It intended to support their sustainability by providing personalised reports and using the complete dataset to advise policy, research, and the wider community on how best to support school leaders.
- The report is compiled by the Australian Catholic University (ACU) Institute for Positive Psychology and Education.
- One of the authors, Associate Professor Paul Kidson, Australian Catholic University, spoke on Monday morning 31 March 2025 to ABC News Radio about the Survey, its background and the 2024 findings. Following this interview Chris Jones, Co-President of the ACT Principal's Association was interviewed on ABC Canberra where he discussed his experience as a Principal and the ACT context.
- The Canberra Times released an article on 31 March 2025 about Principal workloads and threats of violence occurring in the 2024 school year.

Occupational Violence

Talking points

- The ACT Government is committed to improving safety outcomes across all ACT public schools.
- In January 2024, the Education Directorate launched its inaugural *Safety and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2026* to uplift the safety culture and support the prevention of occupational violence (OV) in ACT public schools.
- ACT public schools adopt the Positive Behaviour for Learning framework to promote positive behaviours at school and develop safe and supportive learning and teaching environments for staff and students. Team Teach is a system wide behaviour management training that provides staff (teachers and other school based staff) with skills and strategies for risk minimisation and de-escalation of complex and challenging students.
- A review into the prevention of occupational violence is currently underway to inform improved prevention and early intervention strategies. In October 2025, the Directorate released new procedures to support schools with preventing and managing occupational violence in ACT public schools.
- The Directorate manages the incidence and impact of OV by supporting staff and addressing the underlying behavioural aspects and supports that may be needed to assist with the management of students with complex behaviours.
- . In July 2024, the Safety Portal was introduced as a new system for hazard and incident reporting across the Whole of Government. The Safety Portal assists staff with system wide work health and safety management and supports. Individual reports in Safety Portal may exceed the number of incidents occurring as they may reflect hazards (where risk has not resulted in an incident) and/or multiple reporters may report the same circumstances.

Key information

- In the 2024-25 financial year 10,547 workplace incident reports of occupational violence were triaged. Of these reports 9,964 were student related and 583 parent/other related.
- In the 2025-26 financial year¹, 3,056 workplace incident reports of occupational violence have been triaged. Of these reports, 2,828 were student related and 228 parent/other related.
- When occupational violence occurs, a formal risk assessment process may be conducted (Occupational Violence Risk Assessment) by the Occupational Violence team. Occupational Violence Risk Assessments are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure mitigation strategies are effective.

¹ As of 8 October 2025

- Supports are available for staff who experience occupational violence through the Early Intervention and Wellbeing team, the Employee Assistance Program, and Early Intervention Physiotherapy if required.
- Wellbeing teams coordinate help for students which may include assistance from a centralised team of senior psychologists, behaviour support experts, and a range of allied health professionals to provide support when a targeted or case management response is required.
- ACT public schools have established safety systems and processes to respond to bullying and violence, including dedicated Safe and Supportive School Contact Officers who are responsible for addressing and preventing bullying, harassment, and violence.

Background information

- The number of distinct work incident reports of occupational violence by financial year (noting that a distinct work incident may generate multiple incident reports if there is impact to multiple staff or if the incident involves multiple students) are:

| | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | 2025-26 (YTD) |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| Student | 5804 | 8732 | 7885 | 9964 | 2828 |
| Parent/Other | 326 | 595 | 571 | 583 | 228 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>6130</i> | <i>9327</i> | <i>8456</i> | <i>10547</i> | <i>3056</i> |

- The Directorate's Occupational Violence (OV) Review is split into two phases:
 - Phase 1: delivery of a literature review and a listening report (complete).
 - Phase 2 (scheduled for release in October 2025): delivery of new education-specific OV procedure and supporting materials for staff, including an OV management checklist to support managers responding to an OV incident and a training catalogue for staff to enhance their skills and knowledge on prevention and management of OV.
- Strategies currently used to reduce the rate and impact of OV incidents in ACT public schools include:
 - Teaching social and emotional learning through the Australian Curriculum, to assist students to manage themselves, relate to others, and resolve conflict.
 - Implementing the Positive Behaviour for Learning framework to promote positive behaviours at school and develop safe and supportive learning environments for staff and students.
 - Team Teach is a system wide behaviour management training that provides staff (teachers and other school-based staff) with skills and strategies for risk minimisation and de-escalation of complex and challenging students.
 - Professional learning such as Trauma Informed Practice and training and coaching for teachers about working with students with complex behaviour needs.
 - Review of student behaviours of concern through risk assessment and tailored prevention strategies, in partnership with the school and allied health specialists.
 - Messaging to school communities through an OV prevention awareness campaign designed to send a clear message that violence and aggression in the workplace is never acceptable and encourage a proactive approach to managing complaints.

- Canberra Times published an article on 19 October 2025 highlighting an increase in reporting of OV related incidents between 2023-24 and 2024-25

Restrictive Practices in ACT Government Schools

Talking points

- The ACT Government is committed to reducing and eliminating the use of restrictive practice in ACT public schools, where possible.
- All staff across the ACT public school network are required to report anything they consider may be a restrictive practice to the Education Directorate's Restrictive Practice team.
- The Education Directorate reports all reported incidents of restrictive practice to the Office of the Senior Practitioner twice weekly in compliance with their obligations under the *Senior Practitioner Act 2018* (the Senior Practitioner Act).

Key information

- A set of education-specific policies, procedures and protocols have been developed and implemented to reflect the unique service provided by the Education Directorate (Directorate) and the individual needs and abilities of ACT public school students.
- These policies and protocols mandate that all incidents of restrictive practice are reported via the Student Administration System within one day of occurrence.
- Each reported incident is followed up by the Restrictive Practice team to assess whether the incident meets the legislative definition of restrictive practice, which triggers the need to report details of the incident to the Office of the Senior Practitioner.
- Restrictive practice data is compiled by the Restrictive Practice team and interrogated by two separate teams within the Education Support Office to ensure data integrity prior to provision to the Office of the Senior Practitioner via email.
- Reports are sent within five calendar days of the incident occurring, as stipulated in the legislation. Prior to 2024, by agreement, reports were sent within five business days consistent with the business cycle of schools.
- The ACT's Restrictive Intervention Data System is administered by Community Services Directorate to record and analyse all incidents of restrictive practice in the ACT.
- The Directorate is not required to use Restrictive Intervention Data System under the Senior Practitioner Act.
- The Directorate utilises a separate comprehensive data and reporting system to accurately and effectively record, monitor, report, assess and track all incidents of restrictive practice and identify any emerging patterns at individual, school, and system level.

Background information

- Restrictive practice is defined by the Senior Practitioner Act as a practice that is used to restrict the rights or freedom of movement of a person for the primary purpose of protecting

the person or others from harm and does not include reasonable action taken to monitor and protect a child or vulnerable person from harm.

- In a school setting “reasonable action” is a community accepted, developmentally appropriate and proportionate action to monitor and protect a student (or another person) from harm.
- If a student engages in a recurring pattern of behaviour that results in frequent disruption or poses a minor risk of harm, schools should consider developing a one-page Behaviour and Safety Plan.
- If behaviour occurs with frequency, duration, and/or intensity resulting in an imminent risk of harm and/or occurs in a location where there is an imminent risk of harm; and less restrictive procedures have been attempted and have not mitigated the risk of harm; and modifications beyond the typical provision for a student are required to maintain safety; then the Restrictive Practice Team assists schools to develop a restrictive practice protocol.
- A restrictive practice protocol is completed in addition to a ‘full’ positive behaviour support plan and requires collaboration and review with the restrictive practice team. The restrictive practice protocol describes when and how to implement a restrictive practice with a focus on safety procedures and a plan to fade the use of the restrictive practice.
- Once the full positive behaviour support plan with restrictive practice protocol has been reviewed by the Restrictive Practice team, the plan is sent to the Education Positive Behaviour Support Panel for approval. The panel can authorise the use of the submitted practice for up to 12 months.
- Following authorisation, the plan is submitted to the Office of the Senior Practitioner (OSP) for decision to register and for the authorisation period or a registration period deemed acceptable by the Senior Practitioner.
- The Directorate currently has no plans registered with the OSP. During the process of developing a positive behaviour support plan with a restrictive practice protocol the Restrictive Practice team engage in a functional behaviour assessment and look to other strategies that may be used to avoid the use of restrictive practice where an alternative can be identified.
- The table below details the number of incidents that were reported by schools to the Directorate between 2019 –26 September 2025, as well as the number of those incidents that met the legislative definition of restrictive practice and were subsequently reported to the OSP.
- There may be some variation in numbers reported by the Directorate and the Senior Practitioner as individual reports can be recorded differently by each organisation depending on the incident circumstances.

| • Year | Incidents of potential restrictive practice reported by schools to the Education Directorate's Restrictive Practice team | Incidents determined to meet the legislative definition of restrictive practice that were then reported to the OSP by the Education Directorate's Restrictive Practice team |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| 2019 | 1378* | 654** |
| 2020 | 731* | 396** |
| 2021 | 433 | 429 |
| 2022 | 348 | 222 |
| 2023 | 499 | 278 |
| 2024 | 403 | 234 |
| 2025 (to 26/09/2025) | 436 | 127 |

* The 2019 and 2020 figures include duplicate downloads from the student administration system. The process in use at the time did not remove duplicate downloads and there is no way of retrospectively correcting these figures. A review of the process of assessing initial reports, then reporting to the OSP, was undertaken between the Education Directorate and the Community Services Directorate in February 2021.

** Prior to 2021, systems in place for the measurement of data on these reports were in development both within the Directorate and the OSP. During this period reports were recorded in several different ways which creates issues in historical reporting. A review of processes relating to reporting to the OSP was undertaken between the Education Directorate and the Community Services Directorate in February 2021 which ensured accurate and robust reporting figures.

Suspensions Policy and Data

Talking points

- The *Suspension, Transfer or Exclusion of an ACT Public School Student Policy and Procedures* was updated on 29 April 2024. These updates aim to strengthen and improve the consistency of school-based suspension processes.
- The updates focus on requirements for alternatives to suspensions, the need to consider, review and implement reasonable supports for students ready to return after their suspension, and ensuring a return to school meeting is considered to assist with a successful return to school.
- Suspension rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with a disability have been above the rate of suspension for all students, over several years.
- Disability, and other vulnerabilities, is integral in the suspensions decision-making process and is highlighted in the updated Policy and Procedures.
- Suspensions cannot be used as a punitive measure. Recent reforms clarify that a student may only be suspended for the purpose of providing the time necessary to ensure a safe and effective learning environment at school.

Key information

- The revised policy and procedures are intended to balance the safety of school-based staff with the rights of students (particularly those with disability) to access education.
- The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability found that students with disability were overrepresented in suspension data in all jurisdictions.
- The ACT Government has recently released the *Inclusive Education: A Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT public schools 2024-2034*. This Strategy will drive a system-wide strengthening of inclusive practices across ACT public schools by making sure schools are supported to meet the needs of all learners.
- The ACT Government continues to honour and strengthen cultural integrity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across ACT public schools.
- Indigenous Education Officers play a key role by building strong relationships between students, families, and community members, and supporting school leaders and classroom teachers to improve their knowledge and practice of cultural integrity.

Background information

- On 6 May 2024, The Canberra Times published an article titled ‘School suspensions climb’, which noted the statistical increase in suspensions and recent reforms to address this. The article also included criticism from the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations and the Australian Catholic University on the practice of informal suspensions and the effectiveness of suspensions in general.
- The reforms limit the length of a suspension to no more than 20 days, prevent concurrent suspensions, and require that a suspended student must be given the materials and support needed to continue to engage with their education during the suspension period.
- The Education Directorate continues to closely monitor suspension data at a system level, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and students with disability, to inform policy improvements in this space.

Table: Suspension rates 2018-2024 (%)

| Year | | All students (K-12) | A&TSI students |
|------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| 2018 | Total Enrolments (K-12) | 43,348 | 1,654 |
| | Suspension Incidents | 2,145 | 354 |
| | <i>Incidents per 100 Students</i> | 5 | 21 |
| | Suspension Days | 4,300 | 743 |
| | <i>Days per 100 Students</i> | 10 | 45 |
| | Students Suspended | 1,089 | 153 |
| | <i>Suspension Rate (%)</i> | 2.5 | 9.3 |
| 2019 | Total Enrolments (K-12) | 44,511 | 1,729 |
| | Suspension Incidents | 3,085 | 489 |
| | <i>Incidents per 100 Students</i> | 7 | 28 |
| | Suspension Days | 5,962 | 989 |
| | <i>Days per 100 Students</i> | 13 | 57 |
| | Students Suspended | 1,435 | 200 |
| | <i>Suspension Rate (%)</i> | 3.2 | 11.6 |
| 2020 | Total Enrolments (K-12) | 45,712 | 1,837 |
| | Suspension Incidents | 2,587 | 445 |
| | <i>Incidents per 100 Students</i> | 6 | 24 |
| | Suspension Days | 5,038 | 863 |
| | <i>Days per 100 Students</i> | 11 | 47 |
| | Students Suspended | 1,337 | 197 |

| | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|--------|-------|
| | <i>Suspension Rate (%)</i> | 2.9 | 10.7 |
| 2021 | Total Enrolments (K-12) | 46,513 | 1,872 |
| | Suspension Incidents | 1,970 | 349 |
| | <i>Incidents per 100 Students</i> | 4 | 19 |
| | Suspension Days | 3,748 | 715 |
| | <i>Days per 100 Students</i> | 8 | 38 |
| | Students Suspended | 1,109 | 156 |
| | <i>Suspension Rate (%)</i> | 2.4 | 8.3 |
| 2022 | Total Enrolments (K-12) | 46,863 | 1,922 |
| | Suspension Incidents | 2,821 | 453 |
| | <i>Incidents per 100 Students</i> | 6 | 24 |
| | Suspension Days | 5,618 | 985 |
| | <i>Days per 100 Students</i> | 12 | 51 |
| | Students Suspended | 1,358 | 181 |
| | <i>Suspension Rate (%)</i> | 2.9 | 9.4 |
| 2023 | Total Enrolments (K-12) | 46,578 | 1916 |
| | Suspension Incidents | 2,986 | 525 |
| | <i>Incidents per 100 Students</i> | 6 | 27 |
| | Suspension Days | 6,284 | 1,213 |
| | <i>Days per 100 Students</i> | 13 | 63 |
| | Students Suspended | 1,446 | 198 |
| | <i>Suspension Rate (%)</i> | 3.1 | 10.3 |
| 2024 | Total Enrolments (K-12) | 46,288 | 2,021 |
| | Suspension Incidents | 2,945 | 512 |
| | <i>Incidents per 100 Students</i> | 6 | 25 |
| | Suspension Days | 6299 | 1119 |
| | <i>Days per 100 Students</i> | 14 | 55 |
| | Students Suspended | 1412 | 197 |
| | <i>Suspension Rate (%)</i> | 3.1 | 9.7 |

* Attendance and suspension rates were impacted by COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021.

Response to Complex Incidents in Schools

Talking points

- ACT public schools have established processes and procedures to address student wellbeing and to respond to incidents involving anti-social behaviour such as bullying, extremist views and beliefs and threats of physical violence and aggressive behaviours.
- The Education Directorate responds to incidents in ACT public schools through a structured incident triage process that ensures immediate actions and necessary supports are coordinated for schools in a timely manner.
- The safety and wellbeing of staff and students is the primary consideration in the incident triaging process, and in all following actions.
- The incident triage process also includes a formal notification process to my office for significant events.
- As incidents are live events, they are continuously triaged and responded to in real time, as they evolve.
- Supports are coordinated with key stakeholders, ensuring that all necessary resources are aligned and able to respond to complex incidents.

Key information

- When responding to complex incidents, the immediate focus is on the needs of students and staff in schools.
- The Education Directorate will triage the incident and may convene an Incident Management Stand Up to support the school in the immediate management of the incident and coordinate ongoing supports and actions.
- As more detailed information regarding complexity emerges, incidents are re-triaged, as necessary, and briefings occur to keep all relevant stakeholders informed.
- Notification thresholds have been established, ensuring that complex incidents are prioritised for immediate action and communications escalated at the appropriate levels based on their complexity.

Anti-extremism

- The issue of radicalisation, particularly of young people, is a very complex one. Like all governments, the ACT Government takes this matter very seriously.
- The Education Directorate has several measures in place in response to reducing the risk of radicalisation leading to violent extremism in young people including:
 - a primary prevention approach through the curriculum with a focus on building skills that contribute to children and young peoples' resilience and supporting social cohesion and community wellbeing.

- training of senior psychologists and school psychologists working in ACT public high schools and colleges in Countering Violent Extremism Awareness.
- The Commonwealth Government has also developed resources to support schools in all states and territories identify the potential threat of violent extremism. These have been available to schools for some time.

Background information

- Mental health and wellbeing supports are prioritised and are, and have been, made available for all impacted staff and students involved in complex incidents.
- School community communications are provided to parents and carers following significant incidents.
- The following complex incidents of student violence have occurred in term 3:
 - On 1 August 2025, a year [redacted] student at [redacted] physically assaulted a year [redacted] student in an unprovoked incident. The year [redacted] student punched the year [redacted] student approximately 20 times in the head while the incident was filmed by another student. The student did not seek further medical treatment following the incident. The parents of the year [redacted] student reported the incident to ACT Policing and have applied for a PPO on behalf of the student. The school has engaged with both students and families to enact safety planning. Wellbeing supports were offered to student witnesses and impacted staff and students.
 - On 4 August 2025, a year [redacted] student at [redacted] became escalated and physically assaulted two staff members by strangling them. Two other staff members used hands on to support safety. The school enacted safety procedures and no students were physically injured. A staff member contacted the student's carers who attended on site but were unable to support de-escalation. ACT Policing attended on site to support safety and assisted the student to leave school grounds. Both impacted staff members sought further medical treatment following the incident. Wellbeing supports were offered to impacted staff and students.
 - On 22 August 2025, a year [redacted] student at [redacted] was physically assaulted by two year [redacted] students in an unprovoked incident at the bus stop after school. School staff provided aid to the injured student. The incident was reported to ACT Policing by the year [redacted] student's parents and applied for a Personal Protection Order following the incident. The school engaged with all students and families to enact safety planning. Wellbeing supports were offered to all impacted students and staff.
 - On 25 September 2025, a year [redacted] student at [redacted] who is [redacted] entered the school playground. The student told the principal they had a gun in their bag, and they intended to kill them. The student's parent arrived onsite and supported the student to leave with the help of school staff. ACT Policing were called and attended onsite however the student had already left school grounds with their parent. Communications were shared with the school community following the incident. Wellbeing supports were offered to all impacted students and staff.
 - On 25 September 2025, a year [redacted] student at [redacted] made threats to enact a school shooting on social media. The threats included voice recordings, images of weapons, videos of actual shootings and references to accessing weapons. The threats were reported to ACT Policing and they attended on site. ACT Policing interviewed the student that made the threats before executing a search warrant in the student's home. Wellbeing supports and safety planning have been offered to impacted students and

wellbeing supports were provided to impacted staff. Safety planning will continue at the commencement of term 4, 2025.

- Key stakeholders within the Education Support Office for complex incidents in above mentioned schools include Inclusive Education, Occupational Violence and Complex Case Management, Clinical Practice, WHS, Allied Health, Risk, Security and Emergency Management, and School Operations.

Teacher Workforce and Recruitment

Talking points

- Recruitment of teachers to work in the ACT public education system remains a key priority for the ACT Government.
- Teacher recruitment campaigns are launched frequently to attract teachers from across Australia to apply for opportunities in the ACT.
- The Directorate's recruitment campaigns commenced early January 2025 and have continued to be advertised nationally and in New Zealand throughout the year.
- As at 20 October 2025, there were 24 vacant positions across 92 public schools.
- Of the 24 vacancies:
 - 2 are permanent/substantive vacancies
 - 22 are temporary vacancies (periods vary up to 12 months)

Key information

- Workforce projections are calculated to inform the number of new full time equivalent teachers, based on projected growth in enrolments and natural attrition.
- Year on year, the Education Directorate reviews the numbers of teachers needed based on the February and August student enrolment census numbers. As at February 2025, the number of FTE needed was 3,771. As of 24 September 2025, the actual number of teachers was 3,906.5 FTE.
- With the ongoing challenge of a national teacher shortage combined with a decline in teaching graduates, the ACT is strengthening its talent acquisition activities, including:
 - Ongoing recruitment campaigns through a variety of online channels, social media sites and job boards – Seek, LinkedIn, Facebook. Adverts remain live on JobsACT and are complemented by advertising bursts on Seek.com.au.
 - Continued advertising in New Zealand and investigating opportunities to extend international recruitment to other countries including Canada and the United Kingdom.
 - Establishing pathways from college to initial teacher education to create a new local teacher pipeline, Home Grown Heroes.
 - Continuing to work with local and interstate universities to engage with soon to graduate teachers informing them of the *New Educator Support Program* initiatives and key benefits of teaching in Canberra.
- Semester 2 budget management measures have been developed to guide schools and ESO budget management. These measures include proposed streamlined recruitment approvals and are designed to support schools to stay on track with their 2025 budgets, while also setting us up for a strong, sustainable workforce in 2026. The Directorate continues to review and refine these processes to minimise any impact on teacher recruitment timeframes.

Background information

- In September 2021, you established a joint AEU-Education Directorate Teacher Shortage Taskforce. The Taskforce delivered its final report on 22 August 2022, and you accepted its recommendations in full on 2 November 2022.
- The 2023–24 Budget included \$8.413 million over 4 years to fund the implementation of the Teacher Shortage Taskforce recommendations.
- As of July 2025, the Education Directorate has completed 14 out of 20 recommendations from the Teacher Shortage Taskforce – Final Report.
- The AEU agreed to the closure of 14 recommendations and remains in discussion with the Directorate about the work required to finalise the remaining 6 recommendations.

Violent Incidents in Schools

Talking points

- ACT public schools have established processes and procedures to address student wellbeing and to respond to incidents involving anti-social behaviour such as bullying, extremist views and beliefs and threats of physical violence and aggressive behaviours.
- The Education Directorate responds to incidents in ACT public schools through a structured incident triage process that ensures immediate actions and necessary supports are coordinated for schools in a timely manner.
- The safety and wellbeing of staff and students is the primary consideration in the incident triaging process, and in all following actions.

Key information

- There have been 47 weapons/sharps-related incidents reported to School Operations to date in 2025.
- There were 44 weapons/sharps-related incidents reported to School Operations in total in 2024.
- The Education Directorate (EDU) advises schools to report weapons/sharps incidents to ACT Policing. Principal discretion may be applied to reporting to Policing considering the circumstances of each incident. Where appropriate, Education Support Office (ESO) referrals from School Operations have included Clinical Practice, Targeted Support Team, and the EDU Risk and Emergency Management and EDU Legal Liaison.
- Of the 47 incidents, 25 involved threatening behaviour or actual violence towards others, 11 incidents involved a weapon reported to have been carried for protection, 9 incidents involved the confiscation of a weapon from a student's possession without incident and 1 incident involved images of a weapon being posted online. These have been managed through a combination of:
 - Immediate student safety plans and short-term risk mitigations
 - Use of suspension, where appropriate under policy
 - Engagement with family and external supports (e.g. Children Youth and Families (CYF, ACT Policing)
 - Post-incident reviews and behaviour support planning with relevant ESO teams and leadership

Background information

- The following complex incidents of student violence involving a weapon or sharp occurred in term 3:
 - On 13 August 2025, a year [redacted] student engaging in the [redacted] became heightened and threatened staff with a knife obtained from a locked kitchen. Staff were eventually able to de-escalate the student and encouraged the student to drop the knife. The school contacted the student's parent to request they transport the

student home. The parent attended on site but refused to transport the student home until the end of the day. Targeted Support and Flexible Education are engaging in planning to support safety and next steps. Wellbeing supports were offered to impacted staff members.

- On 26 August 2025, a year [redacted] student at [redacted] engaged in a verbal altercation with their peers while at an offsite outreach program. The student became heightened and produced a knife and threatened students and staff. Staff supported the student to de-escalate. The incident was reported to ACT Policing however they did not attend onsite. The student was transported back to [redacted] and was suspended to allow time for Support and Safety plans to be updated. Communications were sent to the families of students attending the offsite outreach program. Wellbeing supports were offered to all impacted students and staff.
- On 28 August 2025, a year [redacted] student at [redacted] brought a cap gun to school and threatened harm towards another student. The incident was reported to ACT Policing. The student was suspended. Wellbeing supports were offered to all impacted students and staff and communications were sent to the school community. On 10 September 2025, two year [redacted] students at [redacted] used a replica gun to threaten students and community members at a nearby bus stop. A concerned community member reported the incident to ACT Policing who attended onsite and confiscated the replica weapon. Safety plans were enacted for the students involved. Wellbeing supports were offered to all impacted students and staff and communications were sent to the school community.
- On 15 September 2025, a year [redacted] student at [redacted] brought a small taser to school. The student threatened to harm another student with the taser. ACT Policing were informed of the incident and attended onsite to confiscate the taser. The student was suspended to allow time for Support and Safety plans to be enacted. Wellbeing supports were offered to all impacted students and staff.
- On 24 September 2025, a year [redacted] student at [redacted] was reported to be in possession of a weapon. School staff requested the student hand over the item however the student did not comply and left school grounds. The student then returned to school ground heightened threatening to harm students and staff members. ACT Policing were called and attended onsite taking the student into custody. The student was suspended. Wellbeing supports were offered to all impacted students and staff and communications were sent to the school community.

Out of Area Enrolments

Talking points

- Every ACT young person is guaranteed a place at their local public school, providing high quality, safe and inclusive education.
- The Education Directorate recognises there are circumstances where a student's needs may be better served by attending a school other than their Priority Enrolment Area school. In these circumstances, families may request to enrol at an out-of-area school.
- For 2026, the Directorate has introduced a centralised process for assessing out-of-area enrolment applications based on individual student wellbeing to improve the consistency and equity of decisions, which leverages expert advice available within the Directorate.
- Enrolment decisions are made by the out-of-area school principal, based on the Directorate's recommendation, and are accompanied by a Statement of Reasons explaining the decision and all factors considered. Families may request a Review, then Appeal, of the enrolment decision.

Key information

- **Centralised and consistent decision-making:** The Education Directorate now centrally assesses out-of-area enrolment applications based on individual wellbeing circumstances, with input from inclusion and clinical specialists to support consistent and fair outcomes.
- **Improved transparency and communication:** Each applicant receives a Statement of Reasons outlining the decision and all factors considered, helping principals make informed decisions and reducing school workload.
- **Reinforcing the value of local schools:** All communications emphasise that every ACT child is guaranteed a place at their local public school, which provides a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment.

Background information

- The ACT Education Directorate is working with schools to improve the consistency of enrolment decision-making, and the communication of those decisions to applicants.
- This is in response to feedback from the community and from external review bodies including the Human Rights Commission and the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal.
- All applications to enrol at an out of area school on the grounds of individual circumstances related to student wellbeing are assessed centrally within the Education Directorate Education Support Office. The assessment takes advice on the best interests of individual applicants from the Directorate's specialists in inclusion and clinical practice.

- Education Support Office prepares a Statement of Reasons for every applicant clearly stating the decision, the reasons behind the decision, and all factors taken into consideration. This is provided to principals, who remain the decision-makers, along with a recommendation.
- Initial / anecdotal feedback from community suggests the improved explanations of decisions are appreciated. Feedback from principals to date has been supportive, and the attendant reduction in school workload noted.
- Improved consistency has likely led to applicants being declined who in previous years may have been accepted the enrolment.
- All communications on enrolments to families reinforces:
 - your local public school has a place for your child to learn, develop and reach their potential
 - every ACT child from kindergarten to year 12 is guaranteed a place at their local school within their priority enrolment area
 - ACT public schools continue to be welcoming environments committed to ensuring children feel safe, valued and have the chance to excel and be supported in their learning.

Strong Foundations – Literacy and Numeracy

Talking points

- Phase One of Strong Foundations implementation has commenced.
- Progress on Strong Foundations Phase One Implementation priority actions includes:
 - Development of a Learning and Teaching Policy and implementation guides for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment, following extensive consultation.
 - Development of a multi-tiered systems of support model to target supports for students and schools that need it most.
 - Introduction of a Year 1 Phonics Check
 - Piloting of a whole-system Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT Testing) in Terms 3 and 4
 - A new Quality Assurance Service has been established and has initially reviewed and assessed the quality of a small group of K-2 phonics resources, universal literacy and numeracy resources and intervention programs .
 - Strong Foundations aligned professional learning for teachers on literacy and numeracy has commenced.
 - \$700,000 in funding for K-2 evidence-informed resources including decodable readers is committed and support for schools to purchase evidence-informed literacy and numeracy resources will continue this year.
 - \$755,000 in grant funding was provided to ACT public schools with 3-6 students. These grants are to support the purchasing of evidence-informed literacy and numeracy resources that align with advice from the Expert Panel report.

Key information

- The ACT Government is implementing all 8 recommendations from the Final Report of the Literacy and Numeracy Education Expert Panel, released in May last year.
- *Strong Foundations* is focused on strengthening the consistency of approaches to curriculum, teaching and assessment across ACT public schools, informed by the best available evidence.
- *Strong Foundations* will ensure every student achieves the foundational literacy and numeracy skills they need to succeed in life.
- *Strong Foundations* will contribute to reduced workloads for school staff through more system support. It will also support our staff to collaborate and move between ACT Public schools without needing to learn new tools and systems.
- We know that this is a significant change to our system, so implementation will occur in three phases.

Background information

- On 2 May 2024, the Final Report of the Literacy and Numeracy Education Expert Panel was released with the Government accepting all eight recommendations.
- On 21 June 2024, the ACT Government announced the Strong Foundations program which will deliver full implementation of recommendations from the Literacy and Numeracy Education Expert Panel.

- The eight recommendations of the Expert Panel's Final Report are:
 1. A system-wide approach
 2. A culture of high expectations that prioritises learning
 3. Consistent and centrally supported curriculum
 4. Evidence-informed teaching
 5. Consistent assessment and diagnostic tools
 6. A Multi-Tiered System of Supports in every school
 7. Listen to and engage students, families, and the community
 8. Effective implementation of recommendations in all schools

Condition Assessment of School Buildings

Talking points

- The Education Directorate manages over 100 sites across 93 public schools. The oldest, Tharwa Preschool, was built in 1899.
- Asset Condition Assessments are occurring as part of a multi-year rolling program, which includes site inspections and data integration.
- This data informs maintenance planning, capital upgrades and investment decisions, including through the Asset Renewal Program, Heating & Cooling Fund and budget investments.
- Relocatable Learning Units (RLUs) help manage school capacity and can be used flexibly.
- There are 168 RLU buildings across ACT public schools. This includes 257 learning areas (around 9% of all classrooms).
- RLU buildings range in age from 2 years (Red Hill Primary, 2023) to 79 years (Telopea Park School, 1946).

Key information

- The Strategic Asset Management Framework (SAMF) and Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP), endorsed in 2022, guide how school infrastructure is maintained to support education services in the ACT.
- As of 8 October 2025, a condition assessment inspection has occurred at around 25% of schools, including preschools, primary schools, high schools, colleges and specialist schools.
- Assessments inform strategic planning of infrastructure investment and maintenance ensures safe and suitable school facilities.
- Up to date data collection also supports consistent, evidence-based approach to asset lifecycle planning and informed, more transparent investment. Data helps to prioritise upgrades, reduce reactive maintenance, and improve long-term value for money.
- Assessments identify current risks, such as infrastructure degradation, safety issues and service impacts, and informs risk mitigation and controls.
- Inspections assess visible assets by type (e.g. electrical, mechanical, finishes), quantity, and condition. Data from school facilities maintenance and compliance service providers is also integrated into the data, for a comprehensive asset overview.
- Assessment information identifies indicative lifecycle replacement cost estimates to support financial and asset planning.

Cleared as complete and accurate: [14/10/202511/11/202514/11/2025](#)

Cleared for public release by: Executive Group Manager

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Lead Directorate: Education

TRIM Ref: SUB25/4601

Background information

- The Directorate responded to a Freedom of Information (FOI) request, published on 15 September 2025.
- The ACT Government has committed to auditing public schools against defined standards to guide allocation of \$150 million in upgrades during the term of government. This includes auditing heating and cooling to inform allocation of \$30 million in upgrades, prioritised by need.
- The Asset Renewal Program (ARP) budget is \$27.925 million for the 2025–26 financial year.
- The Repairs and Maintenance Program (R&M) is allocated \$27.901 million in 2025-26.
- The Strategic Asset Management Framework is a structured, data-driven approach to monitoring asset condition, expected to reduce reactive maintenance required over time.