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**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

Ministerial Statement

**Future of Education –
A ten year education strategy**

**Presented by
Yvette Berry MLA
Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development
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Context

The ACT Government went to the 2016 election with a commitment to make our city's education system even better. Our goal was to lay out a plan for how education will be delivered to meet the needs of the next generation, for every ACT student.

I kicked this work off at the beginning of 2017 intending to have a big conversation with the ACT community. My aim was a conversation involving parents, teachers, school leaders, other educators, experts and community organisations. Vitally, children and young people were to have a strong voice as the people most affected by the decisions made today.

I am happy to outline today that a big conversation has in fact been had and the product of this conversation is a *Future of Education Strategy* that lays out a roadmap for work over the coming ten years.

It is aimed at the whole system and all schools, government and non-government, systemic and independent. Alongside it, the

government's Early Childhood Strategy will make sure every child is set up for success.

Education underpinned by equity

I began work on the *Future of Education Strategy* by articulating a value that has remained close throughout everything that has followed.

Every parent wants the very best for their child, both during childhood and into their future lives.

But even in wealthy communities like the ACT children start life in vastly different places, with different backgrounds and circumstances affecting their chance at a good life.

You can see this in schools every day.

Some children come to school ready to learn. They're happy and well – eager to take hold of their world.

Some children, however, are not as fortunate. These children take on greater challenges and face greater barriers than the rest.

Education has an incredible power to level all of this out. Education allows all children to reach their potential.

The ACT Government believes every child deserves a great education and the life chances which flow from it.

Our education system must support all children to overcome and achieve. Our education system must mould mature and resilient adults. It must establish success for the future and broaden horizons.

And it will do this by providing equity. By responding to the personal needs of each individual. Because educational equity is key to achieving a fairer, more equal society free from disadvantage arising from economic, social, cultural or other causes.

Foundations for the Future

The *Future of Education Strategy* rests on four foundations, which are to:

- place students at the centre of their learning
- empower teachers, school leaders and other professionals to meet the learning needs of all students
- build strong communities for learning
- strengthen systems to focus on equity with quality.

These foundations will focus improvements to education on what matters most in the government's efforts over the next ten years.

Students at the centre

At the core of the Strategy is an acknowledgement of the human diversity among students. Every child has their own needs, abilities, motivations, interests and aspirations, which an education system must recognise, support and address.

The ACT education system of the future will be personalised to each child. It will celebrate difference. It will take a holistic view of the people it serves—our children and young people.

Placing students at the centre of their learning is an expression of equity, but also an opportunity to recognise the endeavour of all learning and celebrate achievement and excellence wherever this occurs.

Each student treads their own educational pathway based on their developing interests, knowledge and skills. Every child has a great potential to learn, progress and achieve. Through education children develop into capable adults who have learnt to learn, live productively in society, think, create and work in an increasingly digital future.

Initiatives in the strategy that draw from this foundation will include a continuing implementation of effective, rigorous inquiry and project-based learning models, with an increasing focus on development of the general capabilities in the current curriculum.

Building on work already begun, the government will continue to work on measurement and evaluation of student learning growth. We will aim for each student to achieve a minimum of a year's growth for a year's learning, having regard to their starting point.

The government will also look more closely at transition processes and learning pathways from early childhood education through primary, secondary and senior secondary school to work or further study. This will of course involve the Board of Senior Secondary Studies and the vital work they do.

Importantly, the government will continue to prioritise student wellbeing so that where possible barriers to learning and

development like physical and mental health or social factors are minimised or removed.

Empowered learning professionals

The future of education in the ACT relies on increasingly investing and empowering learning professionals. Teachers and school leaders, together with a team of people including other educators, allied learning professionals, and support staff, make education happen every day.

After personal factors related to a child, teachers are the single most significant factor in student achievement. School leaders have a vital role in this by supporting and mentoring their colleagues, and guiding schools to be happy, productive environments.

Working alongside teachers and school leaders are people providing health, wellbeing and administrative services who are equally committed to student outcomes. Meeting student needs requires schools to collaborate with families, community and human service

providers. Through this schools become inclusive learning communities for all children and young people.

The Strategy begins with an awareness that teachers and school leaders are expert professionals highly skilled at working with their students to lead them through their learning journey.

As the Strategy is implemented initiatives based in this foundation will include design of a workforce plan to increase diversity and expertise in the school workforce, and strengthened internship models for new teachers. It is vital that the right people enter the teaching profession, that initial teacher education meets contemporary needs and delivers classroom ready graduates, and that new teachers are supported through their journey into the profession.

There is an opportunity for an expanded role for the ACT Teacher Quality Institute in this area, building on its work on ensuring high quality professional experience and practicum for student teachers.

Equally, investment in professional learning, mentoring and coaching, and the sharing of effective practice will continue and expand – these elements are essential to the Strategy.

For example, the government will grow its partnership with the University of Canberra. This work is supporting teachers to grow their knowledge and skill in key areas such as facilitating learning in General Capabilities, personalising learning, and working with data to make sure that their teaching is having an impact.

The government will take a more structured approach to strengthening instructional leadership and making sure the right people progress into school leadership roles. Better professional and wellbeing support for school leaders and principals will enhance their ability to deliver school improvement and ensure a focus on quality teaching in every classroom.

The government will also bring a new focus on making sure that teachers and school leaders have the knowledge, skills and

confidence to work as part of a team in a full-service community school.

Strong communities for learning

While the core function of schools is to provide education, schools are also key community hubs providing more than access to learning.

Taking a holistic view of students and their needs, and recognising that teachers and school leaders work in partnership with families, other professionals and support staff, results in a reorientation of schools as multiservice environments, better positioned to meet the diverse range of student academic and wellbeing needs.

Partnerships between schools, government and community service providers also allow schools to be community hubs for people beyond current students, such as their families. Schools are increasingly being asked to facilitate access to a range of services for children, young people and their families.

The Strategy takes advantage of this to support strong school communities focused on enabling learning, but also to enhance wellbeing, resilience and connections throughout the wider community.

Drawing on examples across Australia, such as Doveton College in Victoria, as well as international evidence, the government has begun to explore effective community school models. Arising as an initiative from the Strategy, the government will look to bring community school approaches to the ACT education system.

Additionally, the government recognises that effective business, industry and union partnerships help students to access important learning opportunities and develop capabilities that they will need for adult life. This will be a continuing priority through initiatives such as the Future Skills Academy announced in the 2018 Budget.

The government will also look closely at improved integration of early childhood, community and government service providers to

make sure that young children are set up for success and given a strong start to their education journey.

As schools become more seamlessly engaged with other human services, in the future it may be that children are enrolled in their learning and development journey from birth so that no one 'falls through the gaps'.

The Strategy recognises that achieving this and other aspirations will require a closer look at the organisational systems around our learning communities.

Systems supporting learning

Providing the education of the future requires systems that are harmonious with the directions set by the *Future of Education Strategy*.

Things like legislation, resources, structures, culture, public accountability and reporting, teaching tools, data and IT, in many ways dictate the outcomes achieved.

With the government's increasing focus on equity, on allowing every child the opportunity to achieve excellent outcomes regardless of their background and circumstance, comes a need to align the systems supporting learning with this pursuit.

In some ways this foundation provides the most substantial area of work initiated by the Strategy.

Initiatives arising from it include work towards the government's Early Childhood Strategy, which will emphasise helping each child gain a strong start through quality and accessible early childhood education.

The government will also look at key statutory frameworks such as the *Education Act 2004* and the *ACT Teacher Quality Institute*

Act 2010 to make sure that they are harmonious with the strategic direction that the government is laying out.

The ACT Teacher Quality Institute has been a national leader in supporting an expert teaching profession. The government will look to take the TQI's role in sharing excellent practice and contemporary research evidence even further by exploring the creation of an ACT teaching evidence clearinghouse.

Consistent with the government's existing investment in technology in education, the government will implement digital tools and platforms for a range of purposes such as monitoring and evaluating student progress and enabling personalised learning led by a student in partnership with their teachers and parents.

The government is also intent on making sure that the Strategy has an impact so it will develop and implement an accountability framework that robustly measures the results of this strategy.

Implementing the Strategy

The *Future of Education Strategy* takes the work already happening as a strong base and looks to the next ten years at some of the big things that are possible.

Initiatives arising from the Strategy will be laid out in an implementation plan for the ACT education system as a whole.

Over the coming months the government will work with the Catholic and independent school sectors, key government agencies and community organisations on how the Strategy will be adopted across school contexts.

How the ACT education system works with the foundations also matters, so as the Strategy is implemented work will be guided by:

- Equity, that is, student achievement sets aside economic, social and cultural barriers

- Student agency, which allows students to make decisions about their learning and how their learning environments operate
- Access, so that supports for learning and wellbeing are available and provided to all students, and
- Inclusion, where diversity is embraced, all students are accommodated and a universal sense of belonging fostered.

Importantly, the Future of Education Strategy is not a static or comprehensive list of disjointed actions. It is a roadmap for continued focus and investment from a government committed to the very best future for the ACT's children and young people.