Schools

Group Summary

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Response/Facts

SB23-000343 - **Better and Fairer Education System Review (NSRA Review)**

On 15 December 2022, Commonwealth, State and Territory Education Ministers agreed to establish a panel of experts to undertake a review to inform the next National School Reform Agreement (NSRA). This was publicly announced on 16 December 2022. The Review is a key part of the Australian Government's plan to drive real and measurable improvements for all students, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds.

On 29 March 2023, Minister Clare announced the membership and Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference focus on areas where real and measurable improvements can be identified for students most at risk of falling behind and who need additional support.

On 6 April 2023, Minister Clare joined the Panel for its inaugural meeting which was held at Canley Vale High School. The Panel has conducted over 130 meetings with stakeholders, including several meetings with state and territory Ministers and their departments, as well as webinars to better understand particular issues and cohorts.

On 1 May 2023, Minister Clare announced the membership of the Ministerial Reference Group which provides direct stakeholder perspectives to Education Ministers on the work of the Panel. It is made up of teachers, principals, students, parent organisations, education unions, and other education experts and stakeholders. The first MRG meeting was held in Canberra on 7 July 2023, and the second meeting was held in Hobart on 6 October 2023.

On 24 May 2023, Minister Clare announced the Panel released a survey seeking the views of parents, students and teachers across the country. The survey closed on 23 June 2023, with 25,000 teachers, parents, guardians and students taking part. Insights were reflected in the consultation paper.

On 5 July 2023, Minister Clare announced that a consultation paper had been published, seeking submissions from the public. Submissions to the consultation paper closed on 2 August 2023 and 266 submissions were received.

The Australian Government has committed $2.3 million (Administered) over 2022–23 and 2023–24 to undertake the Review, which is included in the National Schools Reform line on page 54 of the PBS.

SB23-000344 - **Building Boarding Schools on Country (BBSoC)**

The Building Boarding Schools on Country measure will increase boarding places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote and very remote areas, closer to their home communities.

Under a revised scope agreed in Budget 2023–24, the Australian Government will contribute $70.8 million for Studio Schools of Australia (SSA) (over 2021–22 to 2025–26) to:

- build one new on-country residential middle-year Indigenous boarding school – Manjali (pronounced MARN-JA-LEE) Studio School – for Years 7–9 in the Kimberley region of WA
- upgrade one existing Indigenous boarding school facility (Years 10–12) at Yiramalay, also in the Kimberley region of WA
- establish an Indigenous Education Research Centre adjacent to the new school site
- assist with operational costs associated with SSA delivery of the project.

The scope of the measure was revised in response to significant increases in construction costs, particularly in remote areas.

The tender for construction of the new Manjali Studio School and the Education Research Centre is underway, with a contract expected to be awarded in December 2023, for a Term 1, 2025 school opening.

SB23-000345 - **Central Australia Response – On-Country Learning**

The bilateral agreement to support the On-Country Learning measure (the measure) was executed by Ministers Clare and Lawler on 28 September 2023.

The bilateral agreement provides funding as follows:

- $34.7 million to schools per the bilateral schedule
- $4.99 million to central supports
- $0.4 million to NT Government for administration

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The measure recognises that schools in the NT are facing serious resourcing challenges and quality education is a central enabler to improving whole-of-community outcomes. This is particularly the case in Central Australia where the engagement of young people in education is key to addressing social unrest.

Over 85% of funding under this Agreement will be committed to Central Australian schools. The majority of funding will go directly to public schools. The remainder of funding will enable the Northern Territory Government to coordinate additional regional initiatives to support Central Australian schools with allied health, intensive literacy and numeracy and quality learning initiatives.

Funding allocations for each school in Central Australia have been determined in consultation with the Northern Territory Government, taking into consideration the size and level of disadvantage of each school, as well as projected funding levels for 2024.

The first milestone payment of $30 million will be paid in December 2023, after receiving a summary report of progress of development of School Action Plans and any Plans received to date.

The bilateral agreement outlines the requirement for School Action Plans (Plans) to be developed and agreed between schools and communities, in line with the commitment to take a new approach by listening to communities first, because the most effective solutions come from local community. Plans will outline priorities and activities to engage young people in school during the 2024 school year. Once submitted and approved by the Northern Territory Department of Education, the Northern Territory Government will release individual payments to schools.

Agreed Plans between schools and communities will assist to give effect to a partnership approach between schools and communities.

SB23-000346 - Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program

The Australian Government is committed to improving outcomes for students from regional, rural, and remote communities. Regional, rural, and remote communities face considerable challenges – including attracting and retaining experienced staff, providing an adequate breadth of curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities. Student performance and educational opportunities decline with the level of remoteness, which applies to school attendance, school retention, and to academic and post-school transition outcomes.

For families in these communities there can be few, if any, local secondary school options, which is why boarding school is an important option, and may be their only option.

The Australian Government is establishing the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program to better support families of boarding school students from regional, rural, and remote communities with the costs of education.

On 15 March 2023, Assistant Minister for Education, Senator Chisholm, announced 100 scholarships will be available for up to 6 years, starting in 2024.

- 50 scholarships of $20,000 per student per year, for students from low-income families (Tier 1 scholarships)
- 50 scholarships of $10,000 per student per year, for students from low-to-middle income families experiencing financial hardship (Tier 2 scholarships).

3 third party providers will administer the program:

- Cape York Institute (10 Tier 1 scholarships)
- Madalah Limited (10 Tier 1 and 10 Tier 2 scholarships)
- Busy Group (30 Tier 1 and 40 10 Tier 2 scholarships).

Busy Group will open applications for scholarships from Monday 23 October 2023 to Sunday 26 November 2023. Assessment of applications will follow. Scholarships will be in place for the 2024 school year.

Cape York and Madalah will allocate scholarships through existing relationships with partner schools.

On 23 October, the Department will release the Administrative Program Guidelines for the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program, which will include details on eligibility requirements and selection criteria.

SB23-000347 - Disability

All children and young people should be welcomed and able to participate in early childhood and school settings, including those children and young people with disability.

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Currently, more than 20% of school students receive an adjustment because of disability (ACARA, 2022), meaning inclusion and equity should be at the forefront of how early childhood education and care and schooling is delivered.

In 2021, 68.3% of students with disability completed Year 12 or equivalent, compared with 84.3% of those without disability (ACARA, 2021).

A range of measures have been embedded to support children with disability so they can access and participate in schooling on the same basis as their peers; this includes obligations under the Disability Standards for Education 2005, a range of new resources to inform providers, and the student with disability loading under recurrent funding arrangements.

In 2023, the Australian Government will provide an estimated $3.1 billion under School Resourcing Standard student with disability loading; schools and school systems have the flexibility to direct this funding to support their students.

The department also delivers dedicated programs to support children with disability, including the autism focussed Positive Partnerships program, and contributes to improvement action under Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–31.

Reform environment

Several major reviews have implications for children and young people with disability, including the Disability Royal Commission (DRC), the NDIS Review and the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System.

The Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System will inform the next NSRA and drive real and measurable improvements for students, particularly those most at risk of falling behind; students with disability will be a critical consideration.

States and territories regulate and operate schools and any future reform action will need to involve jurisdictions; the department is supporting discussions with jurisdictions on identifying priorities for national collaborative action on children with disability.

The department is finalising a Review of the impact of COVID-19 on school students with disability in in consultation with students and other key stakeholders.

SB23-000348 - **Extension of the current National School Reform Agreement**

On 15 December 2022, Education Ministers agreed to extend the current National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) and its Bilateral Agreements to allow time for an expert panel to undertake a review to inform the next NSRA.

The extension is subject to agreement from First Ministers and Education Ministers.

The Commonwealth's school funding commitment for 2024 remains the same.

SB23-000349 - **NAPLAN**

NAPLAN is one component of the National Assessment Program (NAP), which includes both national and international tests and provides an indication of the educational achievement of students across literacy and numeracy standards, based on the national curriculum.

Individual 2023 NAPLAN results were released to parents in July and August 2023, and school results are scheduled for publication on the My School website in December 2023.

Around two-thirds of students achieved ratings of Strong or Exceeding across all domains, and around 10% of students need additional support.

Demographic results reflect trends in other national assessments and previous NAPLAN results and echo the Productivity Commission review of the National School Reform Agreement which found that persistent differences in reading and numeracy outcomes across cohorts suggest some students face systemic barriers.

However, due to changes to NAPLAN reporting introduced in early 2023, it is not possible to directly compare the 2023 results with those of previous years.

- The new NAPLAN reporting has replaced the 10 achievement bands that had been in place since 2008 with 4 proficiency standards – Exceeding, Strong, Developing and Needs Additional Support.

- These changes provide simpler, clearer and more helpful information for parents at a glance.

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SB23-000350 - **School Refusal**

The increase in school refusal is a growing concern for the educational engagement and attainment of Australia's young people. Research confirms a strong link between poor attendance and lower academic and social outcomes.

The Senate Education and Employment and References Committee released its final report on 10 August 2023 and made 14 recommendations to better identify, manage, and respond to school refusal.

The department is leading the Australian Government Response (AGR) to the senate inquiry report on school refusal.

This response is due to be tabled in Parliament on 10 November 2023. The department has been engaging with all responsible agencies and stakeholders to draft the AGR.

Summary of the Committee's findings:

- The 14 recommendations reflect policy improvements to support students' opportunities to receive best practice supports, increase awareness of school refusal and support student engagement to bridge learning and development gaps, including issues exacerbated due to the pandemic.

- The report highlights that the key barriers to addressing school refusal are a lack of awareness and understanding, absence of a national approach and a lack of consistent data collection.

- Evidence from the inquiry highlighted the negative impact of school refusal on young people, families, schools and service providers, including a focus on neurodivergent young people and those experiencing mental health challenges.

SB23-000351 - **Schools funding assurance and compliance**

State and territory governments have primary regulatory responsibility for schools, including non-government school registration and other requirements, as reflected in their own legislation governing the regulation of schools.

The amount of Commonwealth funding provided to approved authorities for school education is significant and its provision comes with responsibilities.

The department has a robust assurance framework that provides for the monitoring of approved authorities' compliance with the requirements of the *Australian Education Act 2013* (the Act) and the Australian Education Regulations 2023 (the Regulations) and takes action in instances of non-compliance.

The department's compliance approach focuses on:

- Providing/promoting education and information
- monitoring behaviour
- considering risks and consequences of non-compliance or fraud
- investigating suspected breaches and acting accordingly.

The department also works closely with approved authorities where non-compliance is identified. When non-compliance cannot be or is not remedied through these mechanisms the department will take necessary actions commensurate with the severity of the non-compliance. For example, varying the frequency of payments, and imposing conditions on approval. When non-compliance persists, the department will consider further action, including pausing of recurrent funding.

The department does not comment publicly on specific compliance matters.

The Government announced in the 2023-24 Budget that it is strengthening policy and financial assurance and compliance oversight to ensure funding for non-government schools is appropriately used for the intended purpose of school education, as outlined in the Act and the Regulations.

The Budget measure safeguards the Government's significant investment in school education by strengthening and expanding the department's regulatory assurance and compliance activities to prevent, detect and respond to non-compliance and fraud in the non-government school sector.

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SB23-000352 - **Schools Upgrade Fund (SUF)**

The $275.2 million Schools Upgrade Fund promotes equitable access to resources and facilities to support quality education, and to keep students safe and well following disruptions due to COVID-19.

The Fund has 3 components and operates over 2 years to support schools to improve their school infrastructure.

- Targeted Round – $21.6 million over 2022–23 to 2023–24, for 220 priority projects in 216 schools (Government election commitments).
- Open Round – $32 million in 2022–23, up to $25,000 for 1,337 schools (out of over 4,800 applications).
- Government School Capital Funding – $215.8 million in 2023-24
- Departmental funding – $5.8 million (less than 2% of total funding)

Under the Government School Capital Funding component, $215.769 million will support larger-scale capital works in government schools (i.e. projects with a minimum Commonwealth contribution of $250,000).

This funding will prioritise capital investment in schools experiencing the greatest disadvantage, particularly those schools that have not benefited from significant capital investment in the last 2 years.

All public schools will have an opportunity to submit expressions of interest for projects under Round 2. The department is currently working with states and territories on arrangements for implementing Round 2, including when the call for expressions of interest will open.

SB23-000353 - **South Australian 18-month Foundation Program**

In August 2022, the department became aware that some non-government schools in South Australia have been reporting students who are enrolled in an 18-month foundation program, incorrectly for recurrent funding purposes. Students enrolled in the first 6 months of an 18-month foundation program are not eligible for Commonwealth recurrent funding under the *Australian Education Act* 2013.

The Australian Government is providing one-off transitional funding of $24 million to affected schools, which recognises that non-government schools in South Australia have accepted enrolments and planned budgets for 2023, expecting to receive recurrent funding.

The transitional funding will help avoid disruption to students and their families who have made schooling, employment and caring decisions based on the 18-month program being delivered.

SB23-000506 – **SRS Funding**

The Australian Government has committed to work with state and territory governments to get every school on a pathway to 100% of its full and fair funding level through the next National School Reform Agreement (NSRA).

The Australian Government is providing $118.6 billion over 2019–2023 in recurrent funding. This includes $46.6 billion for government schools and $72.1 billion for non-government schools. The Australian Government will provide a further $28.6 billion during the one-year extension of the NSRA in 2024 (a total of $147.2 billion over 2019–2024).

In the 2023 calendar year, the Australian Government is providing $27.3 billion in recurrent funding to schools, a $1.8 billion (6.9%) increase compared to the 2022 calendar year including the base loading and all 6 additional loadings.

Funding for government schools increased by 7% per student over the last year. This includes the impact of indexation, enrolment changes and an overall increase of the Commonwealth share. Average per student funding rose from $3,829 in 2022 to $4,096 in 2023.

Funding for non-government schools increased by 5% per student over the last year. This includes indexation, enrolment changes and an overall increase of the Commonwealth share. Average per student funding rose from $10,905 in 2022 to $11,451 in 2023.

Commonwealth and state and territory shares of the SRS

In 2023, the Australian Government will fund government schools at a minimum of 20% of the SRS and non-government schools at a minimum of 80%.

States and territories are on track to fund between 59% (NT) and 80% (ACT) of the SRS for government schools in 2023 (this year). Only ACT (80%), SA (75%) and WA (75%) will be at or above 75% of the SRS for government schools by 2023.

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NSW and Tasmania have committed to reach 75% of the SRS for government schools by 2027. Note: the new NSW Government election commitment to reach 75% by 2025 has not yet been incorporated into its bilateral agreement.

Victoria has committed to reach 75% by 2028.

Queensland's has committed to reach 75% in 2032.

NT has no current commitment to reach 75% (expected to fund just 59% in 2023).

Using the government sector SRS average, government schools are funded at 92% of the SRS in 2023.

SB23-000354 - **Teacher Workforce**

National Teacher Workforce Action Plan

All Australian governments are working together through the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (Action Plan) to address teacher workforce issues. EMM agreed the Action Plan in December 2022.

The Australian Government is investing $337 million to implement the Action Plan. This includes an initial commitment of $328 million and the 2023-24 Federal Budget provided an additional $9.3 million over 4 years.

There are 27 actions in the Action Plan. Education Ministers monitor implementation.

The Teacher Education Expert Panel (TEEP Action 8), was considered by Education Ministers on 6 July. Ministers supported in-principle all 14 recommendations and work has already been commissioned towards implementing several of the recommendations.

Teacher Workforce

Teacher workforce shortages are particularly acute in some regions and subject areas. AITSL is leading work under the Australia Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) initiative to improve our ability to predict demand and supply.

Recent media on teacher resignations in Western Australia is a reminder that across the country, teachers are leaving the profession. While data on those exiting the workforce is held by teacher employers (government and non-government education authorities), national survey data shows that in 2022[1] 34% of classroom teachers indicated that they intended to leave the profession before retirement.

16,245 new teachers completed an ITE qualification in 2021. While this is an increase on 2020 figures, completions are down with 2,152 fewer graduates compared to 2017.

Teacher salaries are a matter for states and territories.

SB23-000355 - **Voice Referendum**

The referendum was held on Saturday 14 October 2023. The referendum did not pass. The outcome of the vote does not affect work already underway across the government to create better outcomes for First Nations people, or the government's commitment to reconciliation. It does not affect the Government's commitment to reconciliation.

Moving forward, three major education reviews will guide us in building the roadmap for closing the education gap:

- The Productivity Commission inquiry into early childhood education and care,
- The Expert Panel to inform a better and fairer education system, and
- The review to support the Australian Universities Accord.

The Curriculum

States and territories maintain lead responsibility for implementing the Australian Curriculum. Teaching relating to the Referendum should fall under Civics and Citizenship. Teachers use their professional judgement in supporting discussions on civics and citizenship and do so within the scope of jurisdictional processes such as codes of conduct.

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[1] Data for 2022 are preliminary, and provide a timely snapshot of the workforce but should be considered indicative only.

Issue:	**Better and Fairer Education System Review (NSRA Review)**
PBS Pg No.	54 (included in National Schools Reform)
Contact:	**Meg Brighton**
	Ph: s 22
	Deputy Secretary

Budget - Review of National School Reform Agreement

Financial year	2022–23 ($m)	2023–24 ($m)	2024–25 ($m)	2025–26 ($m)	2026–27 ($m)	Total ($m)
Budget Allocation	-1.426	-0.939	0.0	0.0	0.0	-2.365

Key Points

- On 15 December 2022, Commonwealth and state and territory Education Ministers agreed to establish a panel of experts to undertake a review to inform the next National School Reform Agreement (NSRA). This was publicly announced on 16 December 2022.

- The Review is a key part of the Australian Government's plan to drive real and measurable improvements for all students, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- The Terms of Reference focus on areas where real and measurable improvements can be identified for students most at risk of falling behind and who need additional support.

- On 20 January 2023, in the context of the public release of the Productivity Commission's (PC) review of the NSRA, Minister Clare stated that the Review would build on the findings and recommendations of the PC (**Attachment A**).

- On 29 March 2023, Minister Clare announced the Terms of Reference and the 6 members of the Panel for the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System (**Attachment B**).

- On 6 April 2023, Minister Clare joined the Panel for its inaugural meeting which was held at Canley Vale High School.

- On 1 May 2023, Minister Clare announced the membership of the Ministerial Reference Group which is providing direct stakeholder perspectives to Education Ministers on the work of the Panel. It is made up of teachers, parents, students, community organisations, unions and peak bodies. (**Attachment C**).

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- On 24 May 2023, Minister Clare announced the Panel released a survey seeking the views of parents, students and teachers across the country (**Attachment D**). The survey closed on 23 June 2023.

- On 5 July 2023, Minister Clare announced that a consultation paper had been published, seeking submissions from the public (**Attachment E**). Submissions to the consultation paper closed on 2 August 2023.

- On 5 August 2023, Minister Clare announced that nearly 25,000 teachers, parents, guardians and students took part in the national survey released on 23 May 2023 (**Attachment F**).

- To provide time for the Review to occur, the current NSRA and its Bilateral agreements will be extended for a further 12 months subject to agreement from First Ministers and Educations Ministers.
    - Refer to **SB23-000348** for more information on the extension of the current NSRA.

- The Panel will deliver its report to Education Ministers by 31 October 2023.

Review Terms of Reference and Panel

- The purpose of the review is to inform the development and negotiation of the next National School Reform Agreement and Bilateral Agreements with individual states and territories.

- It will provide advice on the specific reforms that should be tied to funding in the next National School Reform Agreement.

- The members of the Panel are:
    - Dr Lisa O'Brien AM, Panel Chair
    - Ms Lisa Paul AO PSM, Deputy Chair
    - Ms Dyonne Anderson
    - Dr Jordana Hunter
    - Professor Stephen Lamb
    - Professor Pasi Sahlberg.

- States and territories were consulted on the Terms of Reference and the membership of the Panel.

- As at 6 October 2023, the Panel has met 13 times both in-person and virtually.
    - Meeting 1 – 6 April 2023, Canley Vale High School, Sydney
    - Meeting 2 – 12 April 2023, virtual
    - Meeting 3 – 26 April 2023, virtual
    - Meeting 4 – 9 & 10 May 2023, Melbourne

- o Meeting 5 – 7 June 2023, Sydney
- o Meeting 6 – 13 June 2023, Sydney
- o Meeting 7 – 19 June 2023, Sydney
- o Meeting 8 – 14 July 2023, Sydney
- o Meeting 9 – 8 & 9 August 2023, Sydney
- o Meeting 10 – 21 & 24 August 2023, Sydney and virtual
- o Meeting 11 – 19 September 2023, virtual
- o Meeting 12 – 25 September 2023, virtual
- o Meeting 13 – 29 September 2023, virtual.

- As at 6 October 2023, the Panel has conducted over 130 meetings with stakeholders, including several meetings with state and territory Ministers and their departments.

Funding for the Review

- The Australian Government has committed $2.3 million (Administered) over 2022–23 and 2023–24 to undertake the Review, which is included in the National Schools Reform line on page 54 of the PBS.

- This funding covers panel remuneration and travel, public consultations, commissioned research and analysis, and graphic design and communications.

Consultation and engagement

- The Panel has consulted widely with stakeholders, including teachers, school leaders and support staff, education unions, national education agencies, non-government sector school stakeholders, parents, youth and student bodies, and other key stakeholder groups. A list of stakeholders and dates they met with the Panel is available at **Attachment G**.

- This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations from regional, rural and remote Australia, people with disability, and young Australians experiencing disadvantage.

- Panel Chair, Dr Lisa O'Brien, has met with all state and territory Education Ministers and Directors-General.

- The Panel has travelled extensively across Australia, visiting schools in each state and territory. This has provided invaluable insight into the diverse contexts and communities in which schools operate. As at 6 October 2023, the Panel have visited 86 schools, including 70 Government schools, 8 Independent schools, and 8 Catholic schools. A list of schools and dates visited by the Panel is available at **Attachment H**.

- Due to the remoteness of some of these locations, the Panel had to be flown via charter flight. This occurred in the following visits:
  - Northern Territory – from 24 July to 27 July 2023
  - APY Lands (border SA/WA/NT) – from 28 August to 30 August 2023
  - Far North Queensland – from 4 September to 8 September 2023
  - Kimberley (WA) – from 13 September to 15 September 2023.

- Schools were selected due to a number of factors, including:
  - Recommended by Panel members, state and territory Governments, Catholic and Independent organisations and other stakeholders the Panel has consulted with.
  - Schools that have difficulties attracting or retaining staff (or have previously had this issue but have been able to improve retention).
  - Schools that have created very strong school cultures, especially where there is an emphasis on cultural safety and inclusion. There is interest in being able to see a school with strong parental/community engagement or codesign approaches.
  - Schools that have lifted student attendance and/or outcomes.

Survey

- A survey was launched to provide an opportunity for teachers, parents and students to contribute their perspectives and help shape the future of education in Australia.

- Participants were asked about student mental health and wellbeing, teacher recruitment and retention, funding transparency and accountability and what targets and reforms should be included in the next national education agreement. Insights were then reflected in the consultation paper.

- The Department of Education engaged the Social Research Centre (SRC) in a procurement via a standing offer arrangement.
  The SRC proposal:
  - was assessed as value for money.
  - demonstrated they could provide assurance about data storage (100% onshore and with redundancy) and data privacy.
  - demonstrated they could reach a large number of respondents through their panels and beyond.
  - demonstrated they could provide quality analysis of results.

- The total cost of the procurement was $202,202.35 (GST incl.) for work conducted from 8 May 2023 to 7 July 2023.

Webinars

- The department has held the following webinars to better understand particular issues or cohorts:
  - Youth Webinar, held on 18 July 2023
  - First Nations Educators Webinar, held on 14 August 2023
  - Mental Health Practitioners Webinar, held on 24 August 2023.

- The Department of Education engaged The Social Deck to facilitate the webinars through a Request for Quotation panel arrangement. The Social Deck proposal:
  - was assessed as value for money
  - demonstrated their ability to provide the services the department required, after assessing their quote against market research and similar work the department has previously received from suppliers.

- The Social Deck provided advice on the structure and approach to the webinars, provided 2 facilitators for each webinar, utilised a range of digital tools to gather information from participants, managed the discussions and provided a report on the findings of each webinar.

- The total cost of the procurement was $21,450 for work conducted from 14 July 2023 to 15 September 2023.

Consultation Paper

- A consultation paper was released online and invited submissions between 5 July and 2 August 2023 (**Attachment I**).

- The Panel is using the submissions to inform the development of recommendations for the final report, which will advise Education Ministers on what targets and reforms should be included in the next national education agreement.

- 266 submissions were received, including state and territory education departments, education peak bodies, academics and schools:
  - 189 were received via email
  - 77 were received via the online form.

- The Panel intends to publish the submissions on the department's website in due course, but there is a redaction process (for example removing the names and phone numbers of individuals) to be undertaken before any submission can be published. Publication is at the discretion of the author.

Commissioned Research and Analysis

- The Department of Education sought research and evaluation expertise to analyse submissions to the Consultation Paper through a Request for Quotation under panel arrangement Standing Offer Notice (SON) 3352211 on 18 July 2023.
  - Nous Group Pty Ltd was selected as the successful provider, demonstrating:
    - The technical expertise to provide all of the required services
    - A comprehensive understanding of the scale and priority of the project
    - Experience successfully completing a similar project for the department with the Analysis of Submissions to the Australian Universities Accord (UA) Discussion Paper
    - Resource flexibility (i.e. the ability to draw on other team members should one or more of the specified personnel become unavailable)
    - Value for money.
  - The final cost of $168,300 (GST incl.) was consistent with the figure determined by the department, which was based on the cost of the UA work.
  - The timeframe for this project was 1 August 2023 to 21 September 2023.
- The Department of Education sought research expertise on international approaches to increase socio-economic diversity in schools through a Request for Quotation under panel arrangement Standing Offer Notice (SON) 3352211 in August 2023.
  - The purpose of this work was to review the effectiveness of international policy approaches to increase the socio-economic diversity of schools.
  - The responses to this RFQ were of a very high standard with the department assessing all respondents as capable of undertaking the work.
  - A university was chosen as the successful provider but declined the offer as a result of the timeframe to deliver the required services.
  - As the second preferred provider, Nous Group Pty Ltd, was approached, and agreed, to deliver the project.

- o Nous Group Pty Ltd demonstrated significant technical expertise, both nationally and internationally, to deliver the required services; a proven ability to deliver high-profile reports to government; and an understanding of the challenges of the project.
- o The total estimated cost of $142,120 (GST incl.) was assessed as competitive by the department with consideration of the scope of services to be delivered.
- o The timeframe for this project is 5 September 2023 to 27 October 2023.

Ministerial Reference Group

- The Ministerial Reference Group (MRG) was announced by Minister Clare on Friday, 1 May 2023. The purpose of the MRG is to provide stakeholder perspectives to Ministers on ideas and issues being discussed by the Panel.

- The MRG is chaired by Minister Clare and includes experts and representatives from education stakeholders, including unions and representatives from the non-government sector, teachers and students (a full list of members who attended each meeting is at **Attachment J**).

- A facilitator was procured for both meetings, Virginia Haussegger AM (AusTender ID:CN3988867).

- The first MRG meeting was held in Canberra at Australian Parliament House on 7 July 2023 (agenda is at **Attachment K**).

  - o 52 members attended, along with Expert Panel members, the Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education, the Hon Dr Anne Aly MP, Minister for Early Childhood Education and Youth, Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm, Assistant Minister for Education and state and territory Education Ministers (except Victoria and Tasmania).
  - o The group discussed questions from the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System Consultation Paper along with findings from the Review's national survey for teachers, students and parents.
  - o As of 6 October 2023, the amount of $47,274.37 has been spent on the first MRG. This is detailed below.

Activity	2022–23	2023–24	Total
Travel and accommodation	$25,916.85	$4,344.5	$30,261.35
Venue hire, catering and other	0	$5,463.02	$5,463.02
Facilitator	0	$11,550	$11,550
Total Expenditure	$25,916.85	$21,357.52	$47,274.37

- o Travel and accommodation were booked for 33 members this includes 6 students and their 6 chaperones.

- The Second Ministerial Reference Group Meeting was held in Hobart on 6 October 2023 (agenda is at **Attachment L**).

  - o 47 members attended, along with Expert Panel members, the Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education, and state and territory Education Ministers (except New South Wales, Queensland, and Western Australian).
  - o The MRG discussed the Expert Panel's proposed reforms.
  - o As of 6 October 2023 the amount of $72,484.60 has been spent on the second MRG. This is detailed below.

Activity	2023–24
Travel and accommodation	$49,409.91
Venue hire, catering and other	$11,524.69
Facilitator	$11,550
Total Expenditure	$72,484.60

  - o Travel and accommodation were booked for 43 members, this includes 8 students and their 8 chaperones.

Stakeholder Response

Stakeholder	Response summary
Australian Education Union ([29 March 23 and 2 Aug 2023](#))	29/3/23 AEU – welcomed the announcement, and especially the Federal Government's commitment to get every school on a path to 100% of recommended funding, and to consult with teachers as an essential part of the review process. - Stresses the need for a clear timeline for when funding reforms will come to fruition. 2/8/23 – AEU launched the For Every Child campaign with the aim of securing full funding by 2028 to allow public schools to reduce class sizes, increase the one-to-one support for students and provide more time and classroom assistance for teachers.

Opposition (11 April 23 and 6 Sep 23)	11/4/23 – Commenting on the *Education Policy Outlook in Australia* report by the OECD, Shadow Minister for Education Sarah Henderson claimed the Government is 'caught up in a vortex of education reviews,' delaying action to lift standards in classrooms. 6/9/23 - Shadow Minister for Education Sarah Henderson claimed that funding to government schools had been cut under the Labor Government, and that there needs to be an investment in the things that will help students and teachers to excel, evidence-based teaching and learning, fixing the overcrowded curriculum and improving initial teacher education. Stresses the growing teacher shortage crisis, particularly across regional Australia.
Greens (18 Dec 22, 20 Jan 23, 7 Feb 23 and 23 Aug 2023)	18/12/22 - Oppose the decision to extend the NSRA and establish the Review, describing the Government's December announcement as a 'kick in the teeth'. - Hold they will explore options to remove the legislated 20% cap on the Commonwealth's contribution to public school funding. - Argue the decision delays additional funding to schools and places further strain on under-resourced teachers and schools. 20/1/23 - Argue that the Review is not required 'because Gonski did the work already'. "We don't need more analysis, more accountability mechanisms, more working groups, more inquiries or more reports. Our public schools need more money, and they need it yesterday." 7/2/23 - Argue new data from the Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services shows that Australian governments have abandoned the Gonski reforms, with funding growth to the private sector outstripping increases to public schools by 10% over the past decade. - Argue that "There is currently no pathway to full public funding for the vast majority of public schools in Australia…The Greens will continue to fight to ensure that all public schools receive at least 100% of their Schooling Resource Standard at the start of the next NSRA." 23/8/23 - Argue that the NAPLAN results are evidence that Australia's two-tiered school system is contributing to disadvantage and are calling for an overhaul of the approach to school funding.
Independents	Did not issue a media release following announcement of the Panel and Terms of Reference.

Media

- ***Minister announces expert panel to tackle funding, disadvantage crisis in Australia's schools, The Educator Online, 29 March 2023***

The article summarised the Panel and TOR announcement and included quotes from the Australian Education Union (AEU) and the Australian Government Primary Principals Association (AGPPA). The AEU (spokesperson Correna Haythorpe) welcomed the announcement, the commitment to fair funding and the focus on priority cohorts but expressed the need for a clear timeline for when the funding reforms will come to fruition. The AGPPA (spokesperson Pat Murphy) expressed concerns at the delay to renegotiate the NSRA as it will mean public schools will continue to receive 10% below the funding amount recommended by the Gonski Review.

- ***Billions in school funding will be tied to learning targets, Australian Financial Review, 30 March 2023***

  The article summarised key elements of the announcement, noting that billions of dollars of funding will be put towards reforms and targets to improve academic achievement, especially for poorer students, improving mental health, and reducing administrative burden for teachers. The article highlighted that schools will not be financially punished if they do not meet targets. The article stated that the Panel will provide recommendations for benchmarks that school systems must adopt to be eligible for funding under the next agreement.

- ***'We need excellence and equity': Teachers and parents reveal what Australian schools need most, The Age, 7 July 2023***

  The article summarised the findings of the national Teachers, Parents/Guardians and Students survey and includes quotes from the Australian Education Union (AEU). The AEU (spokesperson Correna Haythorpe) expressed concerns around unsustainable workloads leading to teachers leaving schools and making it harder for teachers to meet the growing and diverse needs of students and argued for the need for fully funded schools by 2028.

Attachments

Attachment A – 20 January 2023 Media Release

Attachment B – 29 March 2023 Media Release

Attachment C – 01 May 2023 Media Release

Attachment D – 24 May 2023 Media Release

Attachment E – 5 July 2023 Media Release

Attachment F – 5 August 2023 Media Release

Attachment G – List of stakeholders met with during consultations

Attachment H – List of schools visited by Panel

Attachment I – Consultation Paper

Attachment J – Attendees at MRG

Attachment K – 7 July MRG Agenda

Attachment L – 6 October MRG Agenda

Date Last Cleared	17 October 2023

MINISTERS' MEDIA CENTRE
Ministers of the Education Portfolio

Media Release

20 January 2023

Productivity Commission - Review of the National School Reform Agreement

The Hon Jason Clare MP
  Minister for Education

This report makes it clear that serious reform is required.

It is very critical of the current National School Reform Agreement developed by the former Coalition Government.

In particular, it points out that the current agreement:

- has only one single weak target for academic achievement;
- lacks targeted reforms to improve outcomes for students from poor backgrounds, from the regions, indigenous students and students who do not meet the minimum standards for literacy and numeracy;
- doesn't include sufficient clear, measurable targets to drive reform; and
- lacks transparent, independent and meaningful reporting on the reform activity of governments.

It also makes it clear that the implementation of this agreement over the last four years has been slow and has had little impact.

This is damning.

The report also makes a number of recommendations to fix this. They include:

- clear and measurable targets for academic achievement of all students, in particular students from priority equity cohorts;
- targets to reduce the proportion of students who do not meet minimum standards of literacy and numeracy;
- public reporting on progress on implementing reforms and achieving targets; and
- a focus on student wellbeing.

This is an important report and it will play a key role in the development of a new National School Reform Agreement.

Work on that has now begun.

The Albanese Government is committed to working with State and Territory Governments to get all schools to 100 per cent of their fair funding level.

In future, funding needs to be tied to reforms that will make a real, practical difference.

In December, Education Ministers agreed to establish an Expert Panel to advise us on what these detailed reforms should be.

Shortly I will announce the team that will conduct that work and their Terms of Reference.

The Productivity Commission's report sets out in broad terms the key areas where reform is most needed.

The Expert Panel will build substantially on this and will work with State and Territory Governments, teachers, principals and other education experts on what these detailed reforms should be.

MINISTERS' MEDIA CENTRE
Ministers of the Education Portfolio

Media Release

29 March 2023

Expert panel to inform a better and fairer education system

The Hon Jason Clare MP
        Minister for Education

Today I am announcing the appointment of Dr Lisa O'Brien AM to chair an expert panel that will advise Education Ministers on the key targets and specific reforms that should be tied to funding in the next National School Reform Agreement.

Australia has a good school education system, but it can be a lot better and a lot fairer.

This expert panel will zero in on how we can drive real and measurable improvements for students most at risk of falling behind and who need additional support.

There will be a particular focus on students from low socio-economic backgrounds, regional and remote Australia, First Nations students, students with disability and students from a language background other than English.

It will also look at how we ensure public funding is delivering on national agreements and that all school authorities are transparent and accountable to the community for how funding is invested and measured.

Dr O'Brien is the Chair of the Australian Education Research Organisation and former CEO of the Smith Family, an organisation focussed on helping young people overcome educational inequity.

She will chair a panel of experts with significant and diverse experience in school education, including:

- Ms Lisa Paul AO PSM, former Secretary of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and former Chair of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review.
- Professor Stephen Lamb, Emeritus Professor at the Centre for International Research on Education Systems at Victoria University and member of the National School Resourcing Board.
- Dr Jordana Hunter, School Education Program Director at the Grattan Institute.
- Ms Dyonne Anderson, President of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Principals Association and Principal at Cabbage Tree Island Public School.
- Professor Pasi Sahlberg, Professor of Educational Leadership at University of Melbourne.

The expert panel will deliver its report to Education Ministers by 31 October 2023.

I will also chair a Ministerial Reference Group which will include experts and representation from school education stakeholders, including unions and representatives of the non-government sector.

I will announce the membership of the Ministerial Reference Group in the coming weeks.

The Albanese Government is committed to working with State and Territory Governments to get every school to 100 per cent of its fair funding level.

The recommendations of the Expert Panel will inform the negotiations next year between the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments on the detail of the next school reform agreement.

Comment attributable to Minister for Education Jason Clare:

"At the election we made a commitment to work with State and Territory Governments to get every school on a path to 100 percent of its fair funding level.

"Funding is critical, but so is what it does.

"If you're a child today from a poor family, or from the bush, or you're an Indigenous child, then you're three times more likely to fall behind at school.

"Fifteen years ago, the gap in the reading skills of 8-year-olds from poor and wealthy backgrounds was a bit over a year. Now it is over two and with every year, that gap grows bigger.

"This expert panel will provide us with the advice we need to put in place the specific reforms to help turn this around."

Comment attributable to Dr Lisa O'Brien AM:

"Every child deserves the opportunity to receive a good education. My work at The Smith Family showed me time and time again how educational achievement can bring positive change to a young person's life. ()

"That's why I am grateful and excited for the opportunity to lead this critical work with such a team of experts.

"I look forward consulting broadly to ensure sure we provide Ministers evidence informed advice on the types of reforms that can make a lasting difference to our young people and boost educational outcomes for all Australian students – no matter what their background." () ()

Expert panel to inform a better and fairer education system

Terms of Reference

The Australian Government is committed to working with State and Territory Governments to get every school to 100 per cent of its fair funding level. The Australian Government and State and Territory Governments are committed to working together in good faith towards this outcome.

A decade on from the first Gonski report, it is essential that we conduct a Review to determine where national focus should be directed to deliver world-class schools to close gaps in educational outcomes.

The purpose of this review is to inform the development and negotiation of the next National School Reform Agreement and Bilateral Agreements with individual states and territories. It will build on the work of the Productivity Commission's Review of the National School Reform Agreement, which recommended a focus on a smaller number of reforms where a coordinated national approach will help lift student outcomes. It will provide advice on the specific reforms that should be tied to funding in the next National School Reform Agreement.

The Review will focus on driving real improvements in learning and wellbeing outcomes for students. It will consider reforms that are evidence-based, leverage existing systems and high-impact initiatives and consider the impacts on teacher and school leader workload. It will also consider how funding and reforms can be more transparent and better demonstrate links to student outcomes. It will not revisit how the School Resourcing Standard is calculated.

After this review is finalised the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments will start negotiations regarding policy and funding.

The current National School Reform Agreement will be extended for 12 months to 31 December 2024, subject to the agreement of First Ministers to enable sufficient time for this to occur.

Scope

The Review will advise Education Ministers:

1. **What targets and reforms should be included in the next agreement** to drive real improvements in student outcomes, with a particular focus on students who are most at risk of falling behind and in need of more assistance - **for students from low socio-economic backgrounds, regional, rural and remote**

23

Australia, students with disability, First Nations students and students from a language background other than English
2. How the next agreement can contribute to improving **student mental health and wellbeing**, by addressing in-school factors while acknowledging the impact of non-school factors on wellbeing
3. How the next agreement can support schools to attract and retain teachers
4. How data collection can best inform decision-making and boost student outcomes
5. How to ensure public funding is delivering on national agreements and that all school authorities are **transparent and accountable** to the community for how funding is invested and measuring the impacts of this investment.

In providing this advice, the Review will take into consideration the recommendations and findings of the Productivity Commission's Review into the National School Reform Agreement 2023, the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan and existing Government commitments under the other national agreements, including Closing the Gap where appropriate.

Membership

The Review will be led by an Expert Panel that will comprise six members and will be chaired by Dr Lisa O'Brien AM, Chair of the Australian Education Research Organisation and former CEO of the Smith Family.

Other members of the panel are:

- Ms Dyonne Anderson, President of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Principals Association and Principal at Cabbage Tree Island Public School
- Dr Jordana Hunter, Education Program Director at the Grattan Institute
- Professor Stephen Lamb, Emeritus Professor at the Centre for International Research on Education Systems at Victoria University and member of the National School Resourcing Board
- Ms Lisa Paul AO PSM, former Secretary of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
- Professor Pasi Sahlberg, Professor of Educational Leadership at University of Melbourne.

The Expert Panel will be supported by a secretariat from the Australian Government Department of Education.

Consultation

The Expert Panel will consult closely with State and Territory governments given their role as school system managers and majority funders for government schools, and to reflect their unique delivery contexts and local expertise.

The Expert Panel will consult widely with stakeholders, including teachers, school leaders and support staff, education unions, national education agencies, non-government sector school stakeholders, parents, youth and student bodies, and other key stakeholder groups. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations from regional, rural and remote Australia, people with disability, and young Australians experiencing disadvantage.

Timing

The Expert Panel will deliver its final report to Education Ministers by 31 October 2023.

MINISTERS' MEDIA CENTRE
Ministers of the Education Portfolio

Media Release

1 May 2023

National School Reform Agreement Ministerial Reference Group

The Hon Jason Clare MP
Minister for Education

Today I am announcing the members of the National School Reform Agreement Ministerial Reference Group.

In March I announced (https://ministers.education.gov.au/clare/expert-panel-inform-better-and-fairer-education-system) an Expert Panel, led by Dr Lisa O'Brien AM, that will advise Education Ministers on the specific reforms that should be tied to funding in the next National School Reform Agreement.

This Ministerial Reference Group will be a sounding board and source of advice to the Expert Panel.

The Group will be chaired by me and includes teachers, principals, students, parent organisations, education unions, and other education experts and stakeholders.

The next Education Ministers' Meeting will dedicate half a day for a discussion with the Expert Panel and the Ministerial Reference Group.

The names of the teachers, principals, and students on the Ministerial Reference Group will be announced closer to this meeting.

Members of the Ministerial Reference Group include:

- **Teacher nominees** from each State and Territory
- **Student representatives** from each State and Territory
- **Dianne Giblin AM – CEO**, Australian Council of State School Organisations
- **Jenny Branch-Allen** – President, Australian Parents Council
- **Andrea Obeyesekere** – Catholic Schools Parents Association
- **Alana Moller** – Federal President, Isolated Children's Parents' Association
- **Andrew Pierpoint** – President, Australian Secondary Principals Council

- **Dr Rory Gallagher/Professor David Halpern CBE** – Behavioural Insights
- **Skye Kakoschke-Moore** – CEO, Children and Young People with Disability Australia
- **Hayley McQuire** – CEO, National Indigenous Education Coalition
- **Christopher Wardlaw PSM OLY** – Deputy Chair, Non-Executive Director AITSL
- **Natalie Howson** – Chair, ACT Teacher Quality Institute
- **Professor Alan Reid** – Professor Emeritus at the University of South Australia, and Chair of the Public Education Advisory Committee

- **Sally Ruston AM** – Acting President, Australian Primary Principals Association
- **Matthew Johnson** – National President, Australian Special Education Principals' Association
- **Anne Keary** – President, Australian Council of TESOL Associations
- **Correna Haythorpe** – President, Australian Education Union
- **Kevin Bates** – Secretary, Australian Education Union
- **Meredith Peace** – Deputy President, Australian Education Union
- **Brad Hayes** – Federal Secretary, Independent Education Union
- **The Hon Jacinta Collins** – Executive Director, National Catholic Education Commission
- **Graham Catt** – CEO, Independent Schools Australia
- **Doug Taylor** – CEO, The Smith Family
- **Travers McLeod** – Executive Director, Brotherhood of St. Laurence
- **Professor Linda Graham** – Director, QUT Centre for Inclusive Education
- **David Bromhead** – Wellbeing EDvantage
- **Professor Maree Teesson AC** – Centre Director, The Matilda Centre – University of Sydney

- **Adjunct Professor Susan Pascoe AM** – Adjunct Professor at the University of Western Australia and Chair of the Australian Council for International Development
- **Robyn Evans** – President, NSW Primary Principals Association
- **Valerie Gould** – Former Executive Director, Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia
- **Professor Ruth Wallace** – Dean of College of Indigenous Futures, Arts and Society, and Director of the Northern Institute, Charles Darwin University
- **Dr Regan Neumann** – Board of the Queensland College of Teachers
- **Dr Sally Milbourne** – Former President of Tasmanian Principals Association
- **Derek Scott** – Chair, Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
- **Mark Grant PSM** – CEO, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
- **The Hon Fiona Nash** – Regional Education Commissioner
- **Associate Professor Jae Jung** – Director, GERRIC – University of New South Wales
- **Karen Batt** – Federal Secretary, CPSU State Public Service Federation

MINISTERS' MEDIA CENTRE
Ministers of the Education Portfolio

Media Release

24 May 2023

Teachers, parents and students encouraged to have their say on the future of education

The Hon Jason Clare MP
Minister for Education

Teachers, parents and students are being encouraged to take part in a national survey to help shape the future of school education.

The survey is being released today as part of the Expert Panel Review into the next National School Reform Agreement.

This is all about ensuring those directly involved in the education system get a say in how we make it better and fairer.

Survey participants can have their say on range of issues including:

- Improving education outcomes
- Supporting student health and wellbeing, and
- Supporting and retaining teachers.

The Expert Panel, led by Dr Lisa O'Brien AM, will report to Education Ministers at the end of October on the practical reforms that should be tied to funding in the next National School Reform Agreement.

The survey is available to complete here (https://www.education.gov.au/review-inform-better-and-fairer-education-system/consultations/review-inform-better-and-fairer-education-system-consultation) and will be open until Friday, 23 June 2023.

Comment attributable to Minister for Education Jason Clare:

"Australia has a good education system, but it can be a lot better and a lot fairer.

"I want to hear what teachers, parents and students have to say. The views and experiences of teachers, parents and students are crucial to building a better and fairer education system."

Comment attributable to Expert Panel Chair Dr Lisa O'Brien AM:

"The expert panel is seeking the views of teachers, parents and students through the survey released today to help inform the development of recommendations for our report, due to all Australian Education Ministers at the end of October.

"In addition to the survey we will be consulting widely with stakeholders and we will be visiting schools across the country. We want to hear from everyone connected to Australia's schools about what is working, what isn't working, and what more is required to improve student learning and wellbeing outcomes."

MINISTERS' MEDIA CENTRE
Ministers of the Education Portfolio

Media Release

5 July 2023

New school reform consultation paper released ahead of meeting with teachers, principals and students

The Hon Jason Clare MP
Minister for Education

The first meeting of the National School Reform Agreement Ministerial Reference Group, made up of teachers, principals, students and key education stakeholders, will be held this Friday in Canberra.

This Ministerial Reference Group is a sounding board and source of advice to the Expert Panel Review (https://www.education.gov.au/review-inform-better-and-fairer-education-system/review-inform-better-and-fairer-education-system-terms-reference) to inform the next National School Reform Agreement (NSRA).

Today, the teacher, principal and student representatives of the Group are being announced and can be found here (https://www.education.gov.au/review-inform-better-and-fairer-education-system/ministerial-reference-group/) .

Ahead of Friday's meeting, a consultation paper is also being released, which gives Australians the opportunity to have their say on the reforms needed in the next NSRA.

The paper focuses on a range of issues crucial to building a better and fairer education system, including:

- Improving education outcomes
- Supporting student health and wellbeing
- Supporting and retaining teachers
- Improving data collection and use, and
- Improving transparency and accountability around funding.

Submissions from the public will be considered by the Panel with their final report to be provided to Education Ministers by 31 October 2023.

Those interested in having their say can read the consultation paper and make a submission here (https://www.education.gov.au/review-inform-better-and-fairer-education-system/consultations/review-inform-better-and-fairer-education-system-consultation) . Submissions are open until 11.59pm (AEST) on 2 August 2023.

The Panel has so far met with more than 50 organisations and experts and visited 20 schools.

In the coming months, the Panel will continue to visit schools and meet with stakeholders across the country.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education Jason Clare:

"The Albanese Government is calling on individuals and organisations to have their say on what reforms are needed to build a better and fairer education system.

"We are committed to working with State and Territory Governments to get every school on a path to 100 per cent of its fair funding level.

"Funding is critical, but so is what it does. That's why we want to hear what practical reforms are needed to help students who fall behind and help more students finish high school."

[ENDS]

MINISTERS' MEDIA CENTRE
Ministers of the Education Portfolio

Media Release

5 August 2023

Teachers, parents and students have their say on future of school education

The Hon Jason Clare MP
        Minister for Education

Nearly 25,000 teachers, parents, guardians and students have taken part in a national survey to help shape the future of school education.

The survey responses are being considered by the Expert Panel review (https://www.education.gov.au/review-inform-better-and-fairer-education-system/resources/initial-consultation-surveys-summary-report) into the next National School Reform Agreement (NSRA), chaired by Dr Lisa O'Brien AM.

Key feedback from the survey includes:

- 87 per cent of parents and 78 per cent of students said teachers give students the encouragement they needed.
- 82 per cent of students say their school makes them feel welcome.
- 74 per cent of teachers said reducing workload would help lift student outcomes.
- 35 per cent of parents and 40 per cent of students are concerned about classroom disruption and its impact on learning.
- 55 per cent of parents said access to small group and individual tutoring would support their child.
- 77 per cent of parents and 59 per cent of teachers support improved access to allied health professionals, including occupational therapists and speech pathologists.

In total, 13,684 teachers, 8,494 parents/guardians and 2,790 students took part in the survey.

The Expert Panel will provide a final report to Education Ministers by 31 October 2023 advising on the reforms that should be tied to funding in the next NSRA.

The survey results can be found here (https://www.education.gov.au/review-inform-better-and-fairer-education-system/resources/initial-consultation-surveys-summary-report) .

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education Jason Clare:

"Thank you to the teachers, parents and students who took part in this survey which will help shape a better and fairer education system.

"The results underscore just how important our teachers are and the incredible job they are doing in our schools.

"The survey also highlights the practical reforms that could make our education system a lot better and a lot fairer.

"We are committed to working with State and Territory Governments to get every school on a path to 100 per cent of its fair funding level.

"That funding is important, but so is what it's spent on. This survey will help identify the practical things that are needed to help students who fall behind catch up and help more students finish high school."

Meetings with groups and individuals	Date of Meeting
ACT Education Directorate	19 May 2023 4 July 2023
Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Education (ACT)	19 May 2023 27 September 2023
NSW Department of Education	12 May 2023 4 July 2023 31 July 2023 3 October 2023
The Hon. Prue Car MP, Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning (NSW)	12 May 2023
VIC Department of Education	9 May 2023 6 June 2023 3 October 2023
The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP, Minister for Education (VIC)	9 May 2023 3 October 2023
Department of Education NT	29 May 2023 26 June 2023
The Hon. Eva Lawler, Treasurer; Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics; Minister for Education; Minister for Territory Development (NT)	29 May 2023 4 October 2023
QLD Department of Education	18 May 2023 26 June 2023
The Hon. Grace Grace MP, Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing (QLD)	18 May 2023 27 September 2023
Department of Education WA	23 May 2023 26 June 2023 10 August 2023
The Hon. Dr Tony Buti MLA, Minister for Education (WA)	23 May 2023 10 August 2023 27 September 2023
Department for Education SA	17 May 2023 26 June 2023 18 August 2023
Office of The Hon. Blair Boyer MP, Minister for Education, Training and Skills (SA)	27 September 2023
Department for Education, Children and Young People (TAS)	11 May 2023 26 June 2023 15 August 2023
The Hon. Roger Jaensch MP, Minister for Education, Children and Youth (TAS)	11 May 2023 15 August 2023 4 October 2023
Mr Michael Brennan, Dr Malcolm Roberts, Ms Dominique Lowe, and Ms Jessica Read - Productivity Commission	12 April 2023 9 May 2023
Ms Natalie Siegel-Brown – Productivity Commission	26 April 2023 15 June 2023
National Mental Health Commission	26 April 2023

Mr Robert Gotts (Chief Minister's Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, ACT Government)	26 April 2023
Headspace	26 April 2023
Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority	9 May 2023 31 May 2023
Australian Education Research Organisation	9 May 2023 15 June 2023 24 August 2023
The Smith Family	9 May 2023 6 June 2023
Professor Pamela Snow (La Trobe University)	9 May 2023
s 47F (University of Queensland)	9 May 2023
National School Resourcing Board	10 May 2023
Teacher Education Expert Panel	10 May 2023
Menzies Foundation	31 May 2023
Education Services Australia	31 May 2023
Australian Council for Educational Research	31 May 2023
Save the Children	31 May 2023
Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership	31 May 2023
Australian Education Union	31 May 2023 18 August 2023 24 August 2023
Foundation for Young Australians	31 May 2023
Dr Kate de Bruin (Monash University)	31 May 2023
Beyond Blue	31 May 2023
Children and Young People with Disability Australia	31 May 2023
Schools Plus	5 June 2023
The Refugee Education Special Interest Group	5 June 2023
Paul Ramsay Foundation	5 June 2023
Police Citizens Youth Clubs NSW	5 June 2023
Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented	5 June 2023
National Catholic Education Commission	5 June 2023 28 September 2023
Korn Ferry	5 June 2023
Reach Out	5 June 2023
Aurora Education Foundation	6 June 2023
Australian Special Education Principals' Association	6 June 2023
Lutheran Education Australia	6 June 2023
Montessori Australia	6 June 2023
Australian Council of State School Organisations	6 June 2023
Barnardos Australia	6 June 2023
13YARN	6 June 2023

Raise Foundation	6 June 2023
Regional Education Support Network	6 June 2023
Indigenous Education Consultative Committee	15 June 2023
Ms Fiona Nash (Regional Education Commissioner)	15 June 2023
Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia	15 June 2023
Independent Education Union	15 June 2023
Australian Council of Deans of Education	15 June 2023
Settlement Council of Australia	15 June 2023
Black Dog Institute	15 June 2023
Isolated Children's Parents Association	16 June 2023
SANE Australia	16 June 2023
Independent Schools Australia	16 June 2023
Social Ventures Australia	16 June 2023
Remote Indigenous Parents Association	16 June 2023
Australian Secondary Principals Association	4 July 2023
Melbourne Graduate School of Education (Professor Sandra Milligan)	4 July 2023
Australian Primary Principals Association	4 July 2023
The Australian Federation of SPELD Associations	13 July 2023
Emeritus Professor John Sweller (University of NSW)	13 July 2023
First Peoples Disability Network	13 July 2023
New Metrix Network	13 July 2023
Ms Anne Hollonds (National Children's Commissioner)	13 July 2023
Stronger Smarter Institute	13 July 2023
Mr Glenn Fahey (Centre for Independent Studies)	13 July 2023
Dr Nathaniel Swan (Think Forward Educators)	13 July 2023
Professor Sharon Goldfeld	17 July 2023
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Principals Association	17 July 2023
Associate Professor Glenn Savage (Melbourne Graduate School of Education)	17 July 2023
Australian Association of Special Education	17 July 2023
Ochre Education	17 July 2023
Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth	17 July 2023
Dr Greg Ashman	17 July 2023
Ms Elena Douglas (Knowledge Society)	17 July 2023
Catholic Education - Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn	17 July 2023
Group of certified Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers	17 July 2023
Australian Government Primary Principals Association	18 July 2023
Australian Government Department of Health	21 July 2023
Coalition of Australian Principals	21 July 2023
NSW Education Standards Authority	8 August 2023

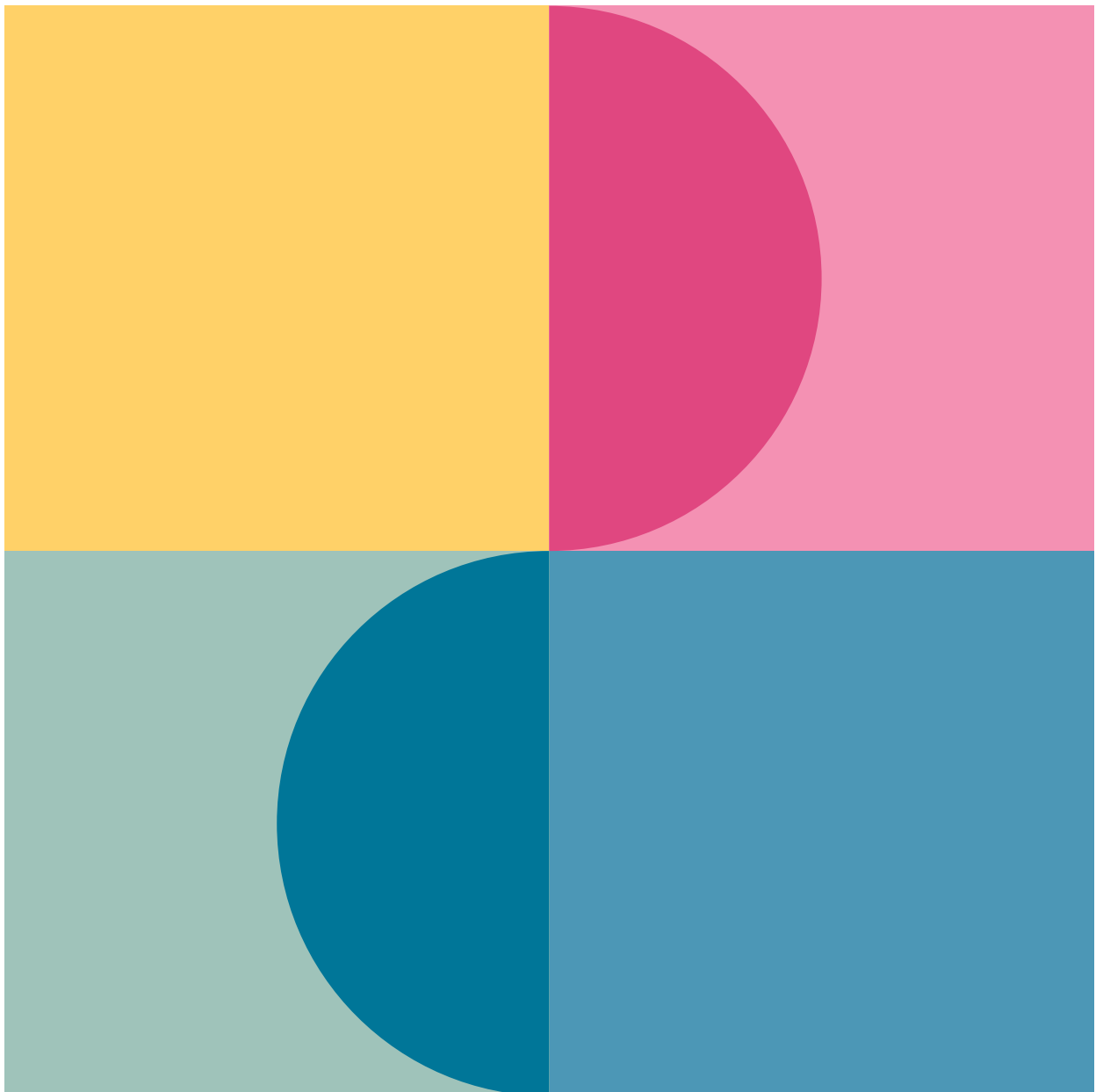|	
Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority	8 August 2023
Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority	8 August 2023
WA School Curriculum Authority	8 August 2023
Healing Foundation	8 August 2023
NPY Women's Council	29 August 2023
AEU TAS Branch	4 September 2023
AEU VIC Branch	4 September 2023
NSW Teachers Federation Branch (AEU)	4 September 2023
State School Teachers Union of Western Australia	4 September 2023
Australian Catholic Parents Association	7 September 2023
AEU SA Branch	18 September 2023
Queensland Teachers Union	18 September 2023
AEU ACT Branch	18 September 2023
AEU NT Branch	18 September 2023
Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation	19 September 2023
Children's Ground	19 September 2023
National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition (NIYEC)	19 September 2023

Attachment H – List of Schools visited by Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System Panel

School	State	System	Date of visit
Canley Vale High School	NSW	Government	6 April 2023
University High School	VIC	Government	8 May 2023
Homebush West Public School	NSW	Government	11 May 2023
Prospect North Primary	SA	Government	17 May 2023
Mark Oliphant School	SA	Government	17 May 2023
Y Vocational School	QLD	Independent	18 May 2023
Marsden State High School	QLD	Government	18 May 2023
Charles Weston School	ACT	Government	19 May 2023
Punchbowl Boys High School	NSW	Government	7 June 2023
Elizabeth Park Primary School	NSW	Government	8 June 2023
Elizabeth Vale Primary School	NSW	Government	8 June 2023
Specialised Assistance School for Youth	NSW	Independent	8 June 2023
Parafield Gardens High School	NSW	Government	8 June 2023
Churchill Primary School	VIC	Government	8 June 2023
Balwyn Primary School	VIC	Government	8 June 2023
Aldercourt Primary School	VIC	Government	8 June 2023
Whyalla Secondary College	SA	Government	5 July 2023
Hincks Avenue Primary School	SA	Government	5 July 2023
Whyalla Stuart Primary School	SA	Government	5 July 2023
Manunda Tce Primary School	NT	Government	24 July 2023
Millner Primary School	NT	Government	24 July 2023
Haileybury Rendall School	NT	Independent	24 July 2023
Henbury Special School	NT	Government	24 July 2023
Moil Primary School	NT	Government	24 July 2023
Dripstone Middle School	NT	Government	24 July 2023
Gray Primary School	NT	Government	25 July 2023
Moulden Park Primary School	NT	Government	25 July 2023
Katherine High School	NT	Government	25 July 2023
MacFarlane Primary School	NT	Government	25 July 2023
Centralian Middle School	NT	Government	25 July 2023
Katherine Sth Primary School	NT	Government	26 July 2023
Ngukurr School	NT	Government	26 July 2023
Centralian Senior College	NT	Government	26 July 2023
Gillen Primary School	NT	Government	26 July 2023
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart	NT	Catholic	26 July 2023
Dhupuma Barker School	NT	Government	27 July 2023
Yirrkala Homelands School	NT	Government	27 July 2023
Gapuwiyak School	NT	Government	27 July 2023
Rosny College	TAS	Government	29 June 2023
Kingston High School	TAS	Government	29 June 2023
Tarremah Steiner School	TAS	Independent	29 June 2023
Goodwood Primary	TAS	Government	29 June 2023
Challis Primary School	WA	Government	10 August 2023
Belmont City College School	WA	Government	10 August 2023
Westfield Park Primary School	WA	Government	10 August 2023

Aveley Secondary School	WA	Government	10 August 2023
Boyare School	WA	Government	10 August 2023
Gladys Newton School	WA	Government	10 August 2023
Mercy College	WA	Catholic	11 August 2023
School of Isolated and Distance Education	WA	Government	11 August 2023
Port School	WA	Independent	11 August 2023
Boddington District High School	WA	Government	11 August 2023
Serpentine Primary School	WA	Government	11 August 2023
Clontarf Aboriginal Academy	WA	Catholic	11 August 2023
New Town Primary School	TAS	Government	15 August 2023
Hobart City High School	TAS	Government	15 August 2023
Canadian Lead Primary	VIC	Government	18 August 2023
Yuille Primary School	VIC	Government	18 August 2023
ET Secondary College	NSW	Independent	22 August 2023
Hunter Sports High School	NSW	Government	22 August 2023
Indulkana Anangu School	SA	Government	29 August 2023
Mimili Anangu School	SA	Government	29 August 2023
Ernabella Anangu School	SA	Government	30 August 2023
Bwgcolman Community School	QLD	Government	4 September 2023
St Michael's Catholic School	QLD	Catholic	4 September 2023
St Joseph's Catholic Primary	QLD	Catholic	5 September 2023
Spinifex State College	QLD	Government	5 September 2023
Charters Towers Central State	QLD	Government	5 September 2023
Charters Towers School of Distance Education	QLD	Government	5 September 2023
Djarragun College, Yarrabah	QLD	Independent	6 September 2023
Cape York Girl Academy Cairns	QLD	Independent	6 September 2023
Newman Catholic College	QLD	Catholic	6 September 2023
Mount St Bernard College	QLD	Catholic	7 September 2023
Aurukun State	QLD	Government	7 September 2023
Pormpuraaw State	QLD	Government	7 September 2023
Worree State	QLD	Government	7 September 2023
Trinity Bay High School	QLD	Government	8 September 2023
Broome Primary School	WA	Government	13 September 2023
Broome Senior High School	WA	Government	13 September 2023
Cable Beach Primary School	WA	Government	13 September 2023
St Mary's College	WA	Catholic	13 September 2023
Broome Residential College	WA	Government	13 September 2023
Fitzroy Valley District High School	WA	Government	14 September 2023
Bayulu RCS	WA	Government	14 September 2023
Wyndham District High School	WA	Government	15 September 2023
East Kimberley College	WA	Government	15 September 2023

Review to Inform a
Better and Fairer Education System

Consultation Paper

Contents

Chapter 1: Meeting the needs of all students and shaping the nation's future

Education transforms lives – it is the key to unlocking the ability of individuals to reach their full potential, contribute to society and engage in the workforce. It is the key to improving social equity and lifting social and economic outcomes for individuals and their families and communities.

Australia's current education system already provides this to many students – but not to all.

In addition, Australia's future prosperity and international competitiveness depend on an education system that promotes excellence and equity. All Education Ministers committed to this in the *2019 Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (the Mparntwe Education Declaration).

The Expert Panel (the Panel) leading the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System (the Review) firmly believes that the next National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) can help bring the Mparntwe Education Declaration to life by providing young Australians the best educational opportunities. We consider that this will need firm action by all governments, systems and schools, but with national effort and commitment, we see a positive future for Australian education.

Education should support young Australians to become successful lifelong learners who have strong literacy and numeracy skills and deep knowledge of the world, are able to think creatively, logically and inquisitively, can adapt to new ways of learning, and can continue to improve through formal and informal learning. Schools should also be inspiring and rewarding places to work for our best and brightest.

To fulfill this vision of education requires evidence-informed education policies, reforms and classroom practices. In addition, it requires an innovative and aspirational spirit among all involved to drive continuous improvement. It requires valuing every student and every staff member, and being able to identify and provide the supports necessary for all members of the school community to thrive. It requires national agreement on the purpose of education and cooperation on reform.

1.1 Getting ready for further transformation

The NSRA is a joint agreement between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments that sets out reforms in areas where national collaboration will have the greatest impact on lifting student outcomes across Australian schools. The Panel has been asked to advise Education Ministers on the targets and reforms that will drive improvements to support better student outcomes. The Panel is tasked with delivering recommendations on reforms in five key areas:

1. Lifting student outcomes
2. Improving student mental health and wellbeing
3. Attracting and retaining teachers
4. Data collection
5. Transparency of and accountability for school funding.

The Review will not examine the calculation of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS).

The Panel notes the Commonwealth Education Minister's commitment to working with state and territory governments to put schools on a path to full and fair funding.[1] As the Commonwealth Education Minister has noted, what is even more important than full and fair funding is what this funding does, what reforms it is tied to and what difference it makes to students.[2] The same sentiment was emphasised in the final report of the 2011 *Review of Funding for Schooling* led by David Gonski AC:

> The panel accepts that resources alone will not be sufficient to fully address Australia's schooling challenges and achieve a high-quality, internationally respected schooling system. The new funding arrangements must be accompanied by continued and renewed efforts to strengthen and reform Australia's schooling system.[3]

The Panel considers that Australia's school systems should deliver strong literacy and numeracy skills and academic knowledge, alongside a broader range of student outcomes. Evidence-based initiatives are of particular interest. Panel members are keen to hear about approaches that have been proven to support student learning and wellbeing and how these could be applied.

About the National School Reform Agreement

The NSRA is supported by bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and each state and territory. The bilateral agreements set out:

- jurisdiction-specific actions to improve student outcomes
- each jurisdiction's minimum required funding contributions as a condition of receiving Commonwealth funding.

The current NSRA commenced in 2019 and was due to expire at the end of 2023. It is being extended until the end of 2024 to enable the Review to advise all Education Ministers on the specific reforms and targets that should be tied to funding in the next NSRA.

The Review was launched on 29 March 2023, with the announcement of its terms of reference (see Attachment A) and Expert Panel: Dr Lisa O'Brien AM (Chair), Ms Lisa Paul AO PSM (Deputy Chair), Ms Dyonne Anderson, Dr Jordana Hunter, Professor Stephen Lamb and Professor Pasi Sahlberg.

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1. The Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education, 29 March 2023.
2. The Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education, 5 May 2023.
3. Gonski et al. 2011, p. xix.

Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System - Consultation Paper

1.2 Australia's education system is set within a complex strategic landscape and requires cooperation to excel

The Commonwealth, state and territory governments share responsibility for school education and have traditionally worked together to determine priorities and develop the architecture, funding mechanisms and resources required to meet shared goals.

Constitutional responsibility for school education mainly rests with states and territories, all of which have their own regulatory frameworks, policies and priorities intended to maximise local students' educational outcomes. The Commonwealth contributes to education policy through national agreements and payments to the states and territories.

A number of national bodies support and monitor the education system including:

- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)
- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited (AITSL)
- Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO)
- Education Services Australia (ESA)
- The National School Resourcing Board (NSRB).

In developing this consultation paper, the Panel has taken into consideration the findings and recommendations of recent reviews, reports and initiatives including the 2023 review of the current NSRA (www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/school-agreement/report) by the Productivity Commission, the 2022 National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (www.education.gov.au/teaching-and-school-leadership/resources/ national-teacher-workforce-action-plan), the 2022 Quality Initial Teacher Education Review (QITE Review) (www.education.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review) and the current work of the Teacher Education Expert Panel (TEEP) (www.education.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review/ teacher-education-expert-panel).

The Productivity Commission examined how well national policy initiatives set by the Commonwealth and by state and territory governments have achieved the objectives and outcomes set out in the current NSRA. The Productivity Commission recommended redesigning the agreement to focus more attention on lifting academic results for all students, supporting quality teaching and school leadership, and promoting student wellbeing.

Many other recent and current reviews are highly relevant to the Panel. These will be considered as part of the final report to Education Ministers.

The Panel also acknowledges that other key reviews into education are currently underway: the Productivity Commission's inquiry into early childhood education and care (led by Professor Deborah Brennan AM), and the Australian Universities Accord higher education review (led by Professor Mary O'Kane AC). These concurrent processes provide a unique opportunity to look at the education system as a whole and transform the end-to-end education journey to ensure its elements work cohesively to deliver excellence and equity.

With respect to equity, the Review is also an opportunity to ensure alignment across the next NSRA and other key national strategies and agreements, including the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031. Further information on the definition and scope of equity is considered in Chapter 2.

School statistics
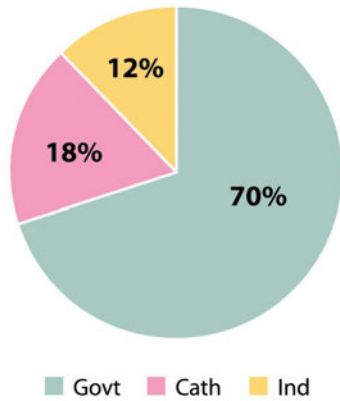
In 2022, there were **9,614 schools** in Australia. **70%** were government schools, **18%** Catholic schools and **12%** independent schools.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2022) Schools Australia, Table 90a
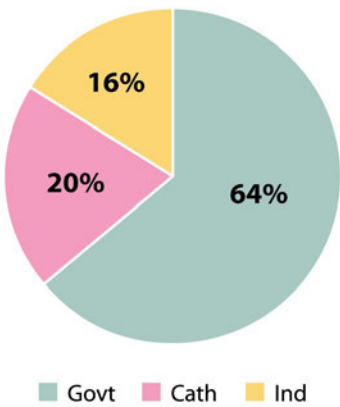
In 2022, **64%** of students* were enrolled in government schools, **20%** in Catholic schools and **16%** in independent schools.

Source: ABS (2022) Schools Australia, Table 43a
*Full time equivalent (FTE) students
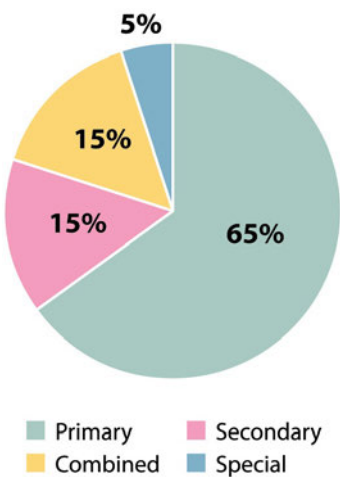
Almost two-thirds of all schools in Australia are **primary schools**.

Source: ABS (2022) Schools Australia, Table 35b

Student statistics

In 2022, there were **4,042,512 students** in Australia.

Source: ABS (2022),, Schools Release Table 90a

6.3% of all students enrolled in Australian schools identified as **Aboriginal** or **Torres Strait Islander**.

Source: ABS (2022), Schools Release, Table 90a

22.5% of school students in Australia had a **disability**.

Source: ACARA (2022) National Report on Schooling Data Portal

27.3% of students* were enrolled in **inner regional**, **outer regional, remote** or **very remote** areas of Australia.

Source: ABS (2022) Schools Release, Table 46a

* FTE students

In 2021, **total recurrent government funding** of **$61.26 billion** was provided to schools:

$37.44 billion (61.1%) was provided by **states and territories**

$23.82 billion (38.9%) was provided by the **Commonwealth**

$11.61 billion (15.6%) was provided through income from **fees**, **charges**, and **parent contributions.**

$1.68 billion (2.3%) was provided through income from **other private sources.**
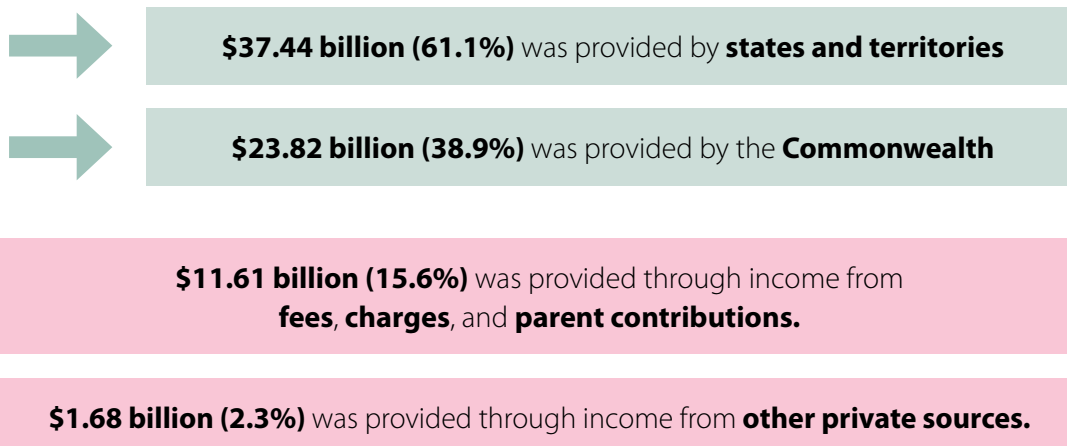
Source: ACARA (2023) The National Report on Schooling in Australia 2021, School income and capital expenditure for government and non-government schools (calendar year)

Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System - Consultation Paper

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1.3 Your views are important to us

The purpose of this consultation paper is to gather more information on the issues and opportunities that the Panel considers the next NSRA should prioritise. This paper asks for your views on the key areas of focus for the Review. The Panel invites submissions on the questions raised in this paper, as well as any other ideas you might have to improve Australia's education system. The Panel wants to hear a variety of perspectives from across the education system, including teachers, parents, students, school leaders, unions, assistants, administrators, government and non-government organisations, stakeholders and researchers.

The Panel has already undertaken a number of consultations in the lead-up to this paper, talking to people in every state and territory, meeting with Education Ministers, departments, stakeholders and experts, and visiting a range of schools to understand the issues faced on the ground. The Panel will continue to undertake extensive consultation in coming months, focusing on the issues outlined in this paper. The Panel has also sought the views of students, teachers and parents/guardians through a survey conducted by the Social Research Centre. The survey asked about issues including student health and wellbeing, and teacher attraction and retention.

The NSRA Ministerial Reference Group (MRG) has been established and will be a sounding board and source of advice to Education Ministers and the Panel. The MRG includes teachers, students, parent organisations, education unions, and other education experts and stakeholders.

1.4 A national approach to delivering on common goals that can advance every student at every school

The Mparntwe Education Declaration, signed by all Education Ministers, sets out two education goals for Australia which remain relevant: (1) the Australian education system promotes excellence and equity, and (2) all young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community.

The Mparntwe Education Declaration demonstrates Australia's aspiration for a world-class education system, and for many students it delivers. However, while there are many examples of excellence in Australian education, there are still too many students who are left behind in their learning.

Excellence in education should enable all students to achieve their ambitions and realise their potential. The delivery of an excellent education needs to be attuned to the needs of students from all backgrounds, including First Nations students, students with disability, students in regional, rural and remote areas, students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, and students from a non-English speaking background. To do this means supporting education systems and schools to implement evidence-based practice consistently and to learn from one another.

Schools where students achieve regardless of their circumstance or background tend to have a number of features in common.

- They pursue an explicit improvement agenda – they know what they want to see improve and they know how they will monitor success.
- The staff of the school work together as a team, supporting each other and sharing a clear focus on supporting quality teaching and learning in the school.
- Efforts are made to identify and understand the learning needs of students in the school and to use available human and physical resources to address those needs.
- The school builds relationships with parents and others outside the school in support of its improvement agenda.[4]

Targets and reforms in the next NSRA should be based on the best available evidence. This evidence needs to include a solid understanding of what works in successful education systems and how to implement reforms effectively. Evidence-based initiatives should clearly demonstrate their impact on student outcomes, with accountability for effective delivery at both the system level (e.g. Approved Authority – see section 6.2) and the school level. Student outcomes should encompass the foundational knowledge and both generic and specific skills students are expected to develop each year to be able to engage in the curriculum, as well as key achievement and attainment milestones within and beyond school.

Every student should be supported as a whole person and enabled to meet their potential by having their learning needs met. Education should be inclusive and delivered in a culturally responsive manner. It should achieve equity across all schools, recognising the needs of all students. Finally, appropriate measures of success should be clearly defined, while leveraging existing data.

The Panel considers that the next NSRA should contain reforms and targets which focus attention and investment on priority areas. The ambition needs to be clearly stated through firm targets and reform priorities. Achieving these targets and reforms may require tailored responses across and within jurisdictions. This tailored approach would need to be matched by stronger accountability mechanisms to ensure all parties to the agreement are delivering on the shared ambition. This recognises that individual education systems may have needs that are unique to their schools, students and communities.

Importantly, the goal of accountability is not to reduce funding for underperforming schools but to better identify and implement reforms to improve student outcomes.

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4. Seifert and Hartnell-Young 2015, p. 1.

Chapter 2: Improving student outcomes – including for students most at risk of falling behind

2.1 Equity and excellence

2.1.1 Defining equity and excellence in education

The OECD makes clear that equity and excellence are interconnected, stating that 'the highest performing education systems across OECD countries combine quality with equity'.[5] The Panel places equity and excellence at the core of its approach to improving student outcomes.

Although 'equity' is a commonly referenced goal in education policies, it remains poorly defined, with a wide range of interpretations. Educational equity is often described using terms such as fairness, inclusion, social justice, non-discrimination and equal opportunity. These are all important principles in developing education, but they do not provide a guide for what equity means in policy and practice. In the absence of a common definition of educational equity, it is difficult to make much progress.

The Panel supports the Productivity Commission's description of equity as involving two distinct concepts. According to the Productivity Commission:

> The first is to ensure schooling equips each student with the basic skills required for success in life (equity in minimum or basic skills). The second is to reduce or eliminate differences in outcomes across students with different backgrounds, experiences and needs (equity across students), particularly for the 'priority equity cohorts' in the NSRA – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students living in regional, rural and remote locations, students with disability and students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.[6]

The Panel considers that a system that delivered equity and excellence would be evident in a greater proportion of students achieving at the highest levels of academic performance, and the likelihood of being a high achiever not being predicted by the level of socio-economic advantage that a student has in their household, school or community.

2.1.2 Excellence and equity in education is critical for individuals and the nation

Excellence and equity are important because of their capacity to help Australia deliver on key national values and aspirations – to leave no-one behind, to be fair, and to ensure that individuals and the nation at large benefit from the fully realised potential of all its people.

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5.   OECD 2012, p. 37.
6.   Productivity Commission 2022, p. 18.

For individuals, improved educational outcomes have a well-documented positive impact on a range of lifetime social, health, employment and income benefits.[7] For example:

- People who complete secondary school have, on average, annual incomes 14 per cent higher[8] and are less likely to be unemployed compared to people who do not complete secondary school.[9]

- Proficiency in foundation skills such as literacy and numeracy underpin a student's ability to learn and succeed at school, as well as having significant implications for health, employment, social inclusion and equality outcomes into adulthood.[10]

- At a society-level the economic and social benefits of educational excellence and equity are high, including greater innovation and productivity, economic resilience, social stability, and the capacity to respond to current and future crises.[11]

2.2 Australia's education system performs well for many but not for all

Overall, Australia has a robust and effective education system that is comparable to or exceeds the performance of many education systems across the OECD.[12] However, looking at averages masks important differences in student outcomes.

There are persistent challenges for particular groups of students who face historical, cultural and systemic barriers that hinder their ability to reach their full learning potential.

The current NSRA identifies particular cohorts of students who are more likely to encounter systemic barriers within the education system that make them less likely to achieve strong educational outcomes.[13] These are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students living in regional, rural and remote locations, students with disability and students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.[14]

In its review of the current NSRA, the Productivity Commission identified other students who are likely to face significant barriers that impact their educational outcomes. These are students in out-of-home care, some students with English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D), students from refugee backgrounds, and students in the youth justice systems.[15]

The Panel notes that it does not view students who belong to these equity cohorts as being *intrinsically disadvantaged* based on who they are. The Panel recognises that many students within particular equity cohorts achieve excellent educational outcomes across a range of measures and find the assumption that equity cohort status implies disadvantage to be an educational barrier in and of itself – one that promotes a culture of deficit

7. Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2019.
8. Productivity Commission 2022, p. 54.
9. Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2019.
10. Australian Education Research Organisation 2023b; Productivity Commission 2014, p. 2; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020, p. 175. The Commonwealth Government's Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program (https://www.dewr.gov.au/ foundation-skills) also has a focus on foundation skills, which 'can have a direct and positive impact on [participants'] future economic and social wellbeing'.
11. OECD 2012.
12. OECD 2012.
13. Productivity Commission 2022, p. 53.
14. There is no definition for 'educationally disadvantaged background' in the NSRA and no agreed definition in the literature. In this paper, 'students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds' is taken to mean students with parents with low levels of educational attainment, as this is reported in NAPLAN datasets.
15. The Productivity Commission also noted that outcomes for these students are currently difficult to monitor due to data limitations. Productivity Commission 2022, p. 63.

discourse and low expectations.[16] This is particularly true for First Nations students, many students with disability and some migrant groups. The characteristics that place a student in an equity cohort can be a source of pride and strength for some, and unimportant to others.

The Panel considers that every young Australian is worthy of the greatest respect. The education system should provide the support all students require to succeed, while being careful not to introduce additional forms of disadvantage through the design of the education system itself.

2.3 How are Australian students performing?

The performance of Australia's education system is assessed and reported on against various metrics in the three areas of student achievement, participation and attainment. As discussed in Chapter 6, there are significant data gaps (particularly for equity cohorts and certain learning domains) and inconsistencies in how jurisdictions collect and report data, resulting in imperfect knowledge of how the current education system is serving particular students.

However, too many students are starting school behind or are falling behind in minimum literacy and numeracy standards. Analysis also shows that students from priority equity cohorts – such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students living in regional, rural and remote locations, students with disability and students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds – are three times more likely to fall below minimum standards.[17] Concerningly, the learning gap between those in equity cohorts and other students increases over time, meaning that, on average, these students not only stay behind their peers but also fall further behind.[18]

The evidence suggests that the learning outcomes of students who are behind, falling behind or at risk of falling behind are negatively influenced in schools with higher concentrations of students experiencing educational disadvantage. For example, students performing below minimum standards for the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) were less likely to be performing at or above the minimum standard two years later. Similarly, students from priority equity cohorts demonstrated less learning growth on average if they attended schools with higher concentrations of students experiencing educational disadvantage.[19]

2.3.1 Achievement data suggests core skills are improving in some domains and year levels but not in others, and inequality is entrenched

While there are different ways of measuring student academic performance, a key one is standardised literacy and numeracy testing. Domestically, Australia has measured its performance annually through the NAPLAN.

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16. In their submission to the NSRA Report, the Indigenous Education Consultative Meeting noted: '[The] labelling of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families as disadvantaged continues to play into a culture of deficit discourse and low expectations that stymie Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' ability to thrive in their education … while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities face a range of complex and compounding circumstances that impact their educational engagement and outcomes, they are not inherently disadvantaged by being Indigenous'. Indigenous Education Consultative Meeting 2022, p. 3.
17. Productivity Commission 2022, p. 21.
18. Productivity Commission 2022, p. 66.
19. Productivity Commission 2022, p. 17.

Table 1: Percentage of students at or below the national minimum standards – NAPLAN 2022

Year level	3	5	7	9
Numeracy	16.3%	17.9%	20.6%	20.4%
Reading	13.0%	12.7%	16.9%	25.1%

Source: ACARA NAPLAN National Report (www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia-data-portal/naplan-national-report)

As shown in Table 1, the proportion of students who perform at or below the national minimum standard tends to increase as students progress through school.[20] Significant achievement gaps exist for specific equity cohorts, and these gaps get wider as students move through school.

Figure 1: Achievement gaps between high-SES* and low-SES students
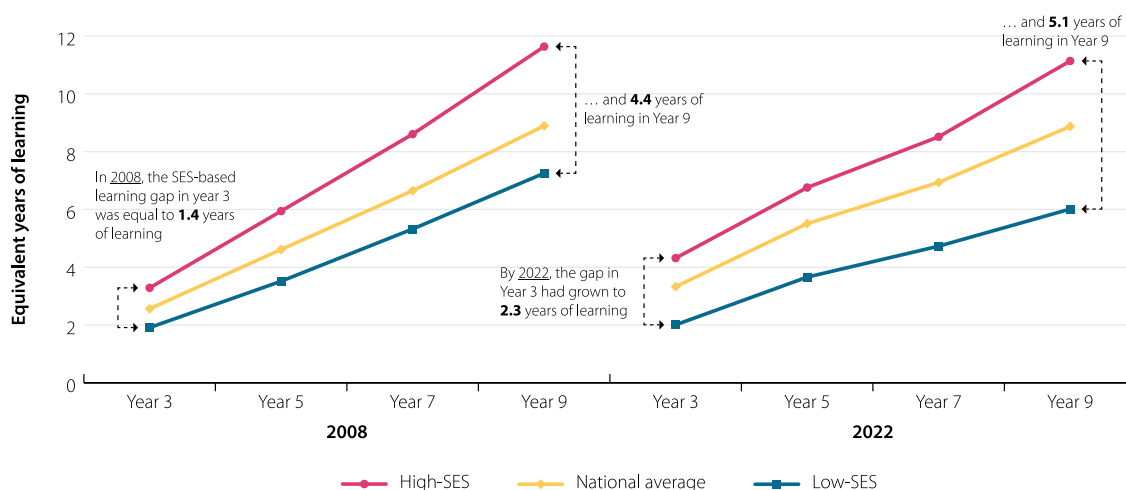
Source: Department of Education analysis of NAPLAN 2008–2022 (NAPLAN data accessible via ACARA, National Report on Schooling Data Portal. (www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia) [21])

* SES = socio-economic status

As shown in Figure 1, reading skills for eight-year-olds from disadvantaged backgrounds have improved over the past 15 years; however, the learning gap is still widening between these students and students from advantaged backgrounds. For example, in 2008 the gap between high and low socio-economic status (SES) Year 3 students was 1.4 years, but it had increased to 2.3 years by 2022.

The learning gap is also pronounced for First Nations students. For First Nations students, the Year 9 reading gap is over three years, compared to the average for non-First Nations Year 9 students.[22] There is also significant variation within the First Nations student cohort. By Year 9, average NAPLAN reading results for First Nations students who attend school in remote areas are 13 months behind the average for all other First Nations students. Similarly, by Year 9, average reading results for First Nations students whose parents have low educational attainment are nine months behind the average for other First Nations students.[23]

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20. The Panel notes that from 2023, students will be assessed against new measures of proficiency in the NAPLAN assessments, providing a clearer picture of the proportion of students who are on track with their learning in key domains. ACARA 2023b.
21. Reading data is used to illustrate. Parental education is used as a proxy for SES. High SES is considered as parents with a bachelor's degree or higher. Low-SES is considered as parents who did not complete Year 12.
22. Australian Education Research Organisation 2023b, p. 34.
23. Productivity Commission 2022.

It is important to note that although NAPLAN tests are intended to be taken by every Australian student in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, not all students sit the tests. Students from remote and very remote locations, students with lower levels of parental education, and First Nations students have rates of participation much lower than the average. Lower than desired participation in NAPLAN can reduce the effectiveness of NAPLAN as an accurate and reflective assessment of student performance in priority equity cohorts.[24]

Australia also measures student performance through participation in international assessments. These include:

- the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which measures 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge. Australia remains a relatively high performer in PISA, although it has experienced a significant decline in PISA scores since its first participation in 2000, particularly in mathematics.[25] In 2018, over two in five Australian students fell short of Australia's proficiency standard in each of PISA's three domains.

- the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), which assesses mathematics and science knowledge at the Year 4 and Year 8 levels. Recent results (2019) were mixed: Australia's average performance has improved, but we remain well behind the leading country, Singapore, and we have not reduced the proportion of students with low achievement (20 to 30 per cent of students not meeting the minimum standard, varying by year level and domain).[26]

- the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), which measures reading achievement in Year 4. Gains in Australia's average performance between 2011 and 2016 were sustained but not improved on in the five years to 2021. In 2021, 20 per cent of students did not meet Australia's proficiency standard in PIRLS (compared with only 14 per cent in England, and 8 per cent in the leading country, Hong Kong).[27]

These assessments tell a picture of broadly improving performance in primary school but stagnating or declining performance in the secondary sector. International assessment indicates that the proportion of low achievers is growing and that there has been no progress in reducing the achievement range, with average student performance for equity cohorts remaining behind the Australian average for all students.

2.3.2 Student attendance has been declining over time and COVID exacerbated pre-existing issues

Student participation and engagement is critical for learning. Because it is difficult to measure, the reporting metrics focus on observable behaviours such as attendance rates and levels. Attendance levels are measured as the proportion of students in Years 1–10 attending school for at least 90 per cent of the time in semester 1.[28]

School attendance in Australia has been in steady decline since at least 2015, when this measure was first adopted. In 2015, 77.8 per cent of students attended school at least 90 per cent of the time but by 2019, attendance levels had declined to 73.1 per cent. Attendance for First Nations students was significantly lower at 49.2 per cent in 2015, declining to 46.9 per cent in 2019. COVID-19 precipitated further declines, with national attendance levels dropping to 71.2 per cent in 2021 and to 49.9 per cent in 2022 (with First Nations levels at 41.3 per cent and 26.6 per cent in 2021 and 2022 respectively).[29] In addition to declining attendance rates, high school retention rates dropped from 84.8 per cent to 80.5 per cent between 2017 and 2022, demonstrating less student engagement in education.[30]

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24. Australian Education Research Organisation 2023c, p. 11.
25. OECD 2023.
26. Thomson et al. 2019.
27. Hillman et a.l 2023.
28. Attendance rate is defined as the number of actual full-time equivalent student days attended by full-time students in Years 1–10 as a percentage of the total number of possible student days attended over the period. Attendance level is defined as the proportion of full-time students in Years 1–10 whose attendance rate in semester 1 is equal to or greater than 90 per cent. ACARA, National Report on Schooling Data Portal (https://www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia).
29. ACARA 2022c.
30. ACARA 2022a.

2.3.3 Educational attainment has increased but there is room for improvement

The current measure of educational attainment is defined as completing Year 12 or gaining a non-school qualification at Certificate III level or above. The average attainment has steadily increased from 80 per cent in 2004 to 90 per cent in 2022.[31]

However, there is a pronounced gap in high school attainment rates. In 2017, 83 per cent of students from high socio-economic backgrounds completed high school; by 2021 this had risen to 84.8 per cent. However, for students from low socio-economic backgrounds, the rate was 76 per cent in 2017 and fell to 74 per cent by 2021.[32]

The Productivity Commission Closing the Gap Dashboard reports that the target to increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attaining Year 12 or equivalent to 96 per cent is improving but not on track. The attainment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students narrowed from 33.5 percentage points in 2011 to 22.6 percentage points in 2021, driven by fast gains in Indigenous attainment (rising from 51.8 per cent in 2011 to 68.1 per cent in 2021).[33] While the increase is promising, the 2021 figure remains short of the 74.1 per cent required to be on track to meeting the 2030 target.

Considerable work remains to reach the attainment target, particularly for remote First Nations students. The proportion of First Nations people aged 20 to 24 who have attained Year 12 or equivalent is highest in major cities (75.9 per cent in 2021) and declines as remoteness increases (41.7 per cent in 2021 for First Nations people living in very remote areas).[34]

2.4 What contributes to poor performance?

2.4.1 Australia's schools are highly segregated along socio-economic lines

In Australia, 51 per cent of students experiencing socio-economic disadvantage attend schools with students from similar backgrounds. This is one of the highest concentrations in the OECD, and disadvantage is rapidly becoming more concentrated.[35]

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31. ACARA 2022b.
32. ACARA 2021.
33. Productivity Commission 2020b.
34. Productivity Commission 2021.
35. OECD 2018a.

Figure 2: Australia's concentration of disadvantaged students is increasing at the second fastest rate in the OECD
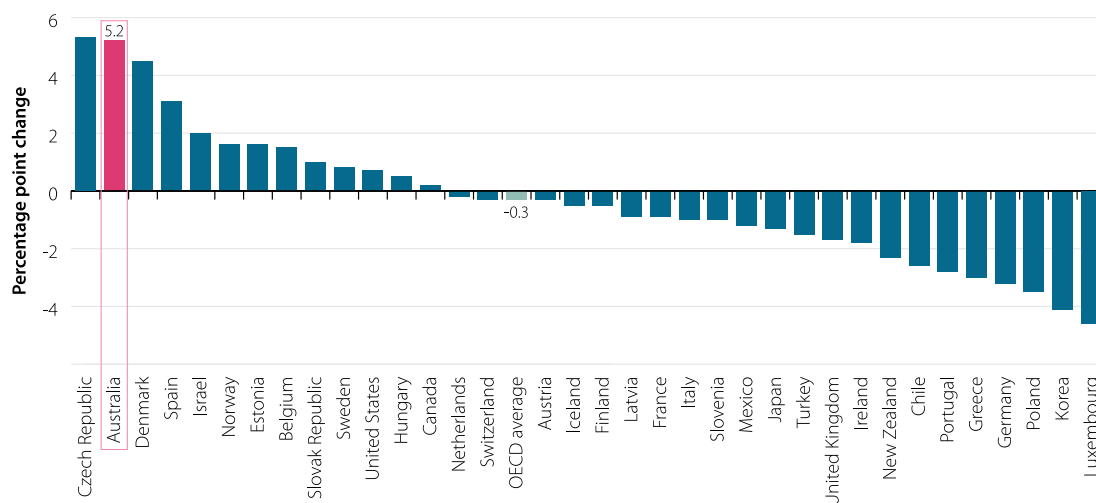
Reducing the concentration of disadvantage in Australian schools could produce better outcomes, as a student's results are often improved when surrounded by higher performing students. OECD analysis suggests that students experiencing disadvantage who attend advantaged schools score 86 points higher in PISA science testing, the equivalent of three years of school, than their peers experiencing disadvantage who attend disadvantaged schools.[36] Similar effects can be seen in NAPLAN results. Further analysis is needed to identify the full impact on student learning of concentrations of disadvantage in the Australian education system.

2.4.2 Intersectionality and compounding disadvantage is a challenge for some

Some students face multiple educational barriers related to their individual characteristics, circumstances and background. This means there is often overlap between priority equity cohort groups, which can further compound these barriers. For example, students with disability often present with comorbidities, and the prevalence of some disorders is correlated with a range of socio-demographic characteristics.[37] The National Agreement on Closing the Gap also notes that First Nations people experience disability at much higher rates, which can compound educational disadvantage for First Nations students.[38]

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36. OECD 2018b
37. Deloitte Access Economics 2019.
38. NSW data provided to the Disability Royal Commission shows that exclusionary discipline rates compound for First Nations students with disability (i.e., higher rates of expulsion for students with disability and First Nations students compared with other students – but much higher rates for First Nations students with disability compared to other students with disability or First Nation students without disability).

2.4.3 Learning gaps emerge early and widen over time

Evidence indicates that students who do not meet age-appropriate learning outcomes tend to remain on that trajectory throughout their schooling, unless they are identified early and receive appropriate intervention support. AERO analysis shows that if a student who has been identified as falling behind does not catch up by Year 5, they are less likely to have future learning success and instead fall further behind.[39] This demonstrates the value of timely and targeted learning interventions to identify students falling behind and support them to catch up as early as possible in their schooling.

2.4.4 Out-of-school factors

School-specific factors account for about 40 to 50 per cent of the variability in student achievement.[40] It is clear that schools cannot fix existing education inequities alone.

A multitude of out-of-school factors are strongly associated with learning outcomes. They include student background factors such as socio-economic status, income, health (including mental health) status and access to support services; lifestyle factors such as exercise, sleep, and nutrition; and innate skills, interests and attributes. Factors in the immediate environment such as levels of parental/carer engagement, peer relations and community environment, as well as exposure to adverse experiences such as racism, stigma and discrimination, home care arrangements, trauma, contact with the justice system and family and domestic violence are among the most complex but influential drivers of educational outcomes.[41]

These factors are generally outside schools' control and indicate limits to what schools are able – and should be expected – to do. On the other hand, schools have an obligation to support student learning regardless of students' personal circumstances or background characteristics. To do this well, schools need to have systems in place to identify and address students' additional needs where possible, and the ability to connect students to appropriate services, resources and communities to address other barriers that prevent students from reaching their potential.

2.4.5 Quality teaching and curriculum resources

Quality teaching is the most important in-school factor affecting student learning.[42] Evidence-based instructional practices, supported by a well-designed and well-delivered curriculum, are key to meeting Australia's goal of excellent and equitable learning outcomes for all students.

Research by the Productivity Commission and the Grattan Institute suggests that evidence-based small group tuition can improve learning outcomes in reading and numeracy by up to four months.[43] Small group tuition involves a trained teacher, teaching assistant or tutor working with a small group of students to provide an 'additional dose' of instruction and more focused attention, with greater opportunities for interaction and feedback, to help students catch up to their peers.

These programs are most effective when integrated into a whole-school approach to high-quality teaching, where the curriculum focus and instructional practices used in the small group tutoring environment are reinforced in the classroom. An example of this is the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) model, which includes a school-wide, multi-level system of instruction; high-quality classroom instruction; universal student screening; evidence-based interventions provided on a sliding scale of intensity; and continuous, data-based progress monitoring. This model supports individual students' learning needs, including the needs of those

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39. AERO 2023.
40. Hattie 2003.
41. Productivity Commission 2022, Figure 5.1.
42. Hattie 2003.
43. Productivity Commission 2022; Sonnemann and Hunter 2023.

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who are falling behind or at risk of falling behind (Tier 3 and Tier 2). Evidence also suggests that high-quality Tier 1 instruction is suitable for approximately 80 per cent of students, including students who are performing well, and may assist them in reaching higher levels of student achievement.

A successful MTSS model requires quality classroom instruction. As the Grattan Institute has noted, quality teaching in the classroom relies heavily on high-quality curriculum materials and planning which carefully sequences the teaching of key knowledge and skills across subjects and year levels. A coordinated whole-school approach to curriculum planning and delivery is necessary to give students the best chance of developing deep knowledge and skills mastery over time.[44] Many teachers face significant challenges in developing high-quality materials on their own, given workload challenges, the need for deep subject matter knowledge and curriculum expertise, and the need for a whole-school approach.

One answer to this could be for governments to increase the availability of comprehensive, quality-assured curriculum and assessment materials that schools could choose to adopt. Teachers could use their professional judgement to determine how to use or adapt these materials to their classroom and students.

High-quality resources and curriculum materials should promote inclusion of First Nations students, by authentically and respectfully referencing First Nations perspectives and ways of learning. This would enable teachers and all students to learn about, acknowledge and respect the First Nations histories and cultures, increasing cultural competence.[45]

Assessment also matters because it helps establish frameworks to identify students who require additional tiers of support and further develops the evidence base around which types of interventions are most effective for particular student needs.

Quality pedagogical[46] approaches also depend on the knowledge and skills of the teacher. These are dependent on the training and mentorship that they receive in their initial teacher education (ITE) program, in the induction and mentoring provided at the beginning their career, and in their ongoing, professional development. The advice from the TEEP on strengthening ITE to equip teaching graduates with evidence-based teaching practices will be considered by Education Ministers in July 2023. The next NSRA could consider the recommendations from the TEEP and other levers to drive the uptake of evidence-based pedagogical models in the classroom.

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44. Hunter, Haywood and Parkinson 2022.
45. AITSL 2020, p.16.
46. Pedagogy refers to how the curriculum is taught. It encompasses the nature and purpose of effective learning, as well as interactions between teachers, students, the learning environment and learning tasks. Warring and Evans 2014

2.4.6 Learning environment

The school and classroom learning environment can have a significant impact on education outcomes.[47]

Safety (encompassing cultural, psychological and physical aspects) and belonging are recognised factors that are critical to wellbeing (see Chapter 3), but they are also prerequisites to learning.

Students who do not engage with classroom learning or who are disruptive in class are more likely to perform poorly in reading and numeracy than their more productive peers.[48] Analysis of NAPLAN has shown that a Year 7 student who is attentive in class could be six months ahead in their learning by Year 9, compared to a student who is disruptive or breaks school rules.[49] Evidence also shows that disruption in classrooms can negatively impact the learning outcomes of other students.[50] AERO analysis has found that classroom management maximises students' on-task learning time by minimising disruptive behaviour and disengagement.[51] Evidence also shows that a productive learning environment that reduces classroom disruption may benefit students' sense of belonging at school.[52]

A number of jurisdictions have implemented programs like Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL), an evidence-based approach to creating a safe and positive learning environment. The effectiveness of these learning environment models is highly dependent on the fidelity of implementation at a school and classroom level.[53]

2.5 The role of the next NSRA in improving student outcomes

The next NSRA could contain targets and reforms centred on improving student outcomes, particularly for students in equity cohorts, those who start school behind, and those who fall behind. The Panel is seeking your views on what these targets and reforms should be.

The next NSRA could have targets and reforms to include additional indicators, to deliver learning interventions for students and to provide effective support for students in need. Targets in the next NSRA should link to the commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031.

The success of reforms will be contingent on improving parental and community engagement, especially where the needs being addressed require a culturally responsive or multidisciplinary approach. As recognised in the Closing the Gap Agreement, enhancing partnership and empowering local decision-making is essential to lifting outcomes for First Nations students. But the principle of engagement would likely benefit other students too. Previous and current approaches, such as the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) program and co-design models being trialled in jurisdictions, could be considered as mechanisms to support reform and increase the likelihood of success.

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47. OECD 2012.
48. Angus et al. 2010.
49. CESE 2017.
50. Angus et al. 2010.
51. AERO 2021.
52. OECD 2017.
53. Poed and Whitefield 2020 (citing Pas and Bradshaw 2012).

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Questions

1. What are the most important student outcomes for Australian school students that should be measured in the next NSRA? Should these go beyond academic performance (for example, attendance and engagement)?

2. What are the evidence-based practices that teachers, schools, systems and sectors can put in place to improve student outcomes, particularly for those most at risk of falling behind? Are different approaches required for different at-risk cohorts?

3. How can all students at risk of falling behind be identified early on to enable swift learning interventions?

4. Should the next NSRA add additional priority equity cohorts? For example, should it add children and young people living in out-of-home care and students who speak English as an additional language or dialect? What are the risks and benefits of identifying additional cohorts?

5. What should the specific targets in the next NSRA be? Should the targets be different for primary and secondary schools? If so, how? What changes are required to current measurement frameworks, and what new measures might be required?

6. How can the targets in the next NSRA be structured to ensure that evidence-based approaches underpin a nationally coherent reform agenda while allowing jurisdictions and schools the flexibility to respond to individual student circumstances and needs?

7. How should progress towards any new targets in the next NSRA be reported on?

Chapter 3: Improving student mental health and wellbeing

3.1 Students' mental health and wellbeing impacts their learning ability

3.1.1 Good mental health and wellbeing is the ability to participate in life and cope with its challenges

As noted in Chapter 2, mental health and wellbeing is linked to proficiency in the foundational skills that underpin an individual's ability to succeed at school and beyond.

The terms 'mental health' and 'wellbeing' are often used together and sometimes interchangeably. While there are clinical definitions of 'mental health', the Panel considers that for the purpose of discussion about mental health and wellbeing in a school context, 'good mental health and wellbeing' refers to a state of social, psychological and emotional wellbeing where a student has the resilience, skills and capacity to deal with life's usual stressors and meaningfully participate in their daily life, including the learning and social opportunities afforded through their education.

This concept of mental health and wellbeing centres around an ecological model of the child, where mental health and wellbeing is influenced by various risk and protective factors within the child's environment, their developmental progress, and their biology. It is important to note that 'mental health and wellbeing' exists on a continuum and that while people will inevitably have times of greater stress or challenge, a person with good mental health and wellbeing will be able to meet these challenges by using skills such as perseverance and self-management and by seeking outside assistance and support.

3.1.2 Learning and wellbeing are inextricably linked

Students with good social and emotional wellbeing are more engaged with learning and tend to have higher levels of academic achievement and attainment.[54] Conversely, poor wellbeing can negatively affect students' ability to learn, their social interactions at school, and their ability to engage.[55] Stakeholder submissions to and consultations with young people as part of the Productivity Commission's review of the NSRA underscore these findings.

Data indicates that students experiencing poor mental health have double the number of absent days and by Year 9 are on average 1.5 years to two years behind in literacy and numeracy outcomes.[56] Research has also shown a significant association between literacy and mental health outcomes, indicating that people with poor literacy are more likely to suffer poor mental health such as loneliness, depression, and anxiety.[57]

Hence, a positive learning and wellbeing relationship creates a virtuous cycle in which wellbeing supports learning and development, which in turn reinforces good mental health and wellbeing. However, students who struggle significantly with learning gaps that are not addressed can face declining mental health outcomes, which in turn can undermine future learning.

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54. Productivity Commission 2022, p. 139; Noble and Wyatt 2010, p. 67.
55. Centre for Community Child Health 2022; Save the Children 2022; National Catholic Education Commission 2022.
56. Goodsell et al. 2017.
57. Hunn et al. 2023.

To this end, wellbeing and learning cannot be decoupled. Positive outcomes in one are essential for positive outcomes in the other.

3.1.3 Schools play an important part in the wellbeing of students, particularly when it comes to belonging

School is the key environment beyond the home for nearly all Australian children. Experiences of school can be either a risk factor or a protective factor for a child's mental health and wellbeing, and the impacts – in either direction – can be significant. Schools that support good mental health and wellbeing are not only meeting their duty of care requirements but also delivering the environment required for students to learn.

However, this is not to say that good mental health and wellbeing is the sole responsibility of schools, or that schools are solely responsible for the mental health and wellbeing of their students. Given the broad risk and protective factors at play, there are many aspects of student mental health and wellbeing that need to be addressed outside the school gates. But, given that schools are a near-universal touchpoint for Australian children and adolescents, schools can play an important role in creating safe and inclusive environments that promote good mental health and wellbeing. Schools are also uniquely placed to identify students who may require support and refer them on appropriately[58] and are an important window for early intervention, given that many mental health issues emerge in childhood and adolescence.[59]

This role of schools – focused on student belonging, safety and inclusion – is broadly accepted, as demonstrated by the many recommendations, programs and frameworks that have been developed in Australia to support student mental health and wellbeing outcomes. AERO's research shows many examples across the country of schools that are doing this well – usually because of school structures and policies that facilitate connectedness between students and the school, and committed school leaders and teachers.[60]

3.2 Poor mental health and wellbeing is a growing issue

3.2.1 Poor mental health and wellbeing affects a number of children, but impacts some cohorts more than others

The Productivity Commission noted, based on the limited data available, concerning rates of poor health and wellbeing among Australian children and young people, with as many as one in five experiencing poor social and emotional wellbeing.[61]

The Young Minds Matter survey found that one in seven children aged four to 11 had a mental health disorder and that only half of these children received support services in the previous 12 months.[62] As this data is now a decade old, it is likely that the prevalence of mental health disorders has increased, consistent with the overarching trend for the Australian population.[63]

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58. Productivity Commission 2022, p. 138.
59. Productivity Commission 2020a, p. 193.
60. Australian Education Research Organisation 2023a.
61. Productivity Commission 2022, p. 71.
62. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020.
63. Data from the 2020–21 National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing found an increase in mental health disorder prevalence in Australians aged 16 to 85 when compared with the data from the previous study taken in 2007.

Furthermore, young people are reporting that mental health and wellbeing is a concern and among the biggest challenges in their lives – alongside their education. In Mission Australia's 2022 Youth Survey of 18,800 people aged 15 to 19:

- mental health came in as the third most important issue, after the environment and equity and discrimination
- 41.5 per cent reported that school challenges (including academic pressure, high workload, challenges with teachers, and learning difficulties) were their top personal challenge
- 27.7 per cent identified mental health (including stress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and self-harm) as the next biggest personal challenge, ahead of relationship issues (19.7 per cent).

Poor mental health and wellbeing can also be more pronounced for students who experience challenges in engagement and inclusion in school. This includes students in out of home care[64] and priority equity cohorts such as students from low socio-economic backgrounds, those in rural and remote areas, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.[65] Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual and more (LGBTQIA+) students are also highly vulnerable, frequently experiencing negative or hostile school environments, bullying and discrimination,[66] which contributes to poor mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

Bullying in schools, and associated cyber bullying, is also a key contributor to poor student mental health and wellbeing outcomes. It can lead to emotional and physical harm, loss of self-esteem, feelings of shame and anxiety, and concentration and learning difficulties.[67] In Australia it is estimated that one in four children have experienced some form of bullying, with one in five Year 4 students experiencing bullying on a weekly basis.[68]

3.3 Jurisdictions, systems, sectors and schools are all acting to support student wellbeing, but challenges remain

All governments have made substantial investments in student mental health and wellbeing initiatives, including well-established programs focused on early intervention and primary care in schools. These can include in-house supports such as coordinators, school wellbeing leaders and dedicated non-teaching staff, as well as in-house or externally accessible resources such as referral pathways to allied community and health services, school counsellors and psychologists. In addition, both governments and the private sector have developed resources such as online information hubs, programs and surveys to help schools support their students. Many of these initiatives have been developed by jurisdictions, given their primary role in education delivery.

While this indicates substantial goodwill and reflects a shared understanding of the importance of student mental health and wellbeing, stakeholders have described the current landscape as cluttered, fragmented and difficult to navigate. Stakeholders also expressed the need for simple decision-making supports and greater guidance on appropriate interventions and how they should be accessed, implemented and evaluated. Furthermore, despite the expectation that schools play a greater role in supporting student mental health and wellbeing, the allocation of resources can often take place via blanket approaches based on student numbers that do not reflect the complexity of individual schools or the level of support needed (often more than monthly or weekly access).

64. National Mental Health Commission 2022, p. 3.
65. Australian Early Development Census 2022, *Australian Early Development Census National Report 2021: Early Childhood Development in Australia*, p. 31, 35, 41 – results show increases in the numbers of developmentally vulnerable or at-risk children from these cohorts in the domain of physical health and wellbeing.
66. Russell et al. 2021.
67. Australian Human Rights Commission n.d.
68. Holt n.d.; Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study 2015, p. 176.

3.3.1 Supports for teachers and schools

The Productivity Commission inquiry into mental health (2020) identified a number of challenges with the delivery of mental health and wellbeing supports in schools:

- Teachers feeling overloaded by the expectation that they solve students' social and emotional issues
- Overlapping policies and programs for schools (not all of which were evidence based)
- Lack of teacher training to support wellbeing
- Variation in adjustments for students with social-emotional disability
- Incoherent pathways for support within schools, and blurred responsibilities among school staff.

Other issues include lack of skills, training and planning for wellbeing initiatives, no clear guidance or capacity to implement them, continuing stigma (and self-stigma), and little transparency on student outcomes. Educators also frequently report barriers to accessing services that support students' health.[69]

The mental health and wellbeing of teachers is also a key issue. The Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Mental Health reported that teachers report feeling overwhelmed and under-supported in managing student mental health and wellbeing challenges.[70] For school leaders, poor student mental health was one of the top four sources of stress in 2019 and 2020.[71]

3.3.2 Lack of reliable and consistent data to assess which interventions work

Most states and territories collect data on and measure a variety of student wellbeing domains. However, approaches and methodologies are highly variable, making it inherently difficult to measure changes in wellbeing and intervention outcomes over time and between jurisdictions. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare analysis indicates that while Commonwealth data alone provides a solid foundation for national reporting on children's wellbeing more broadly, it also contains key gaps, including data for education settings and disaggregated data for sub-populations such as culturally and linguistically diverse groups, students with disability, and students by socio-economic status.[72]

At a macro level, the last survey of Australian child and adolescent mental health was undertaken in 2013–14; there is a need for more up-to-date data and regular data collection to support a population-level understanding of mental health for school-aged Australians and contribute to evidence-based interventions.

The lack of shared understanding of definitions, indicators and measures means there is no comprehensive national set of data and information on student health and wellbeing. This makes it difficult to evaluate whether current interventions and investments are effective. The Productivity Commission concluded that there is a strong in-principle case for developing a national wellbeing indicator, especially if governments elect to include wellbeing as an outcome of the next intergovernmental agreement.[73]

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69.   Smith et al. 2021.
70.   Productivity Commission, 2020a, p. 216.
71.   See et. al 2002, p. 21.
72.   Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019.
73.   Productivity Commission 2022.

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3.4 The role of the next NSRA in supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools

There is an opportunity for the next NSRA to improve broader outcomes of schooling by taking a more systemic view of the links between students' wellbeing and learning outcomes. There is scope for better coordination and consistency across and within school systems to help improve wellbeing outcomes for students and foster a longer-term, preventive approach to mental health and wellbeing more broadly.

3.4.1 Training and resources to support student wellbeing

The next NSRA offers the opportunity to improve the capacity of schools to implement evidence-based interventions to support student mental health and wellbeing. Beyond training and resources for individual educators, this could also include resources such as non-teaching staff; improvements to the accreditation and endorsement of programs and resources; and simple, clear guidelines to support correct implementation of programs or referral pathways.[74] There is also the potential to better align the NSRA with approaches across government portfolios, such as the three reform areas put forward by the National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy: a wellbeing culture, targeted responses and well-equipped educators.[75]

More work is also needed to ensure comprehensive access to (and appropriate delivery of) programs and frameworks that work for particular student cohorts, such as First Nations students or students with disability.[76] The next NSRA is an opportunity to ensure wellbeing-focused targets and reforms align with the Closing the Gap Agreement's ambitions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing. First Nations models of social and emotional wellbeing are holistic and centred on identity. It may be useful to consider applying these models more broadly to benefit all students.[77]

3.4.2 Improving data and reporting

To ensure that the next NSRA can support meaningful improvements in student mental health and wellbeing, we need a shared understanding of national wellbeing indicators to enable targets and outcomes to be tracked over time. However, as noted in section 3.1.1, a range of different approaches to defining, measuring and evaluating wellbeing are in use.

It is also important that the next NSRA does not seek to 'reinvent the wheel' or overlook the significant efforts of schools and all governments to improve student mental health and wellbeing to date. There is an opportunity for the next NSRA to leverage these existing efforts, setting strong targets and outcomes for wellbeing while retaining the ability of jurisdictions to meet targets and deliver on outcomes using the interventions best suited to their needs and circumstances.

Key issues in setting national indicators are what and how to measure. For 'what', potential domains include sense of student safety and belonging at school, subjective state of wellbeing, school climate and classroom disruption. For 'how', wellbeing interventions can measure processes (inputs) and/or subjective outcomes, but the latter can only be meaningfully measured with longitudinal data.

There is currently limited longitudinal data on wellbeing domains at the national level. An additional student survey on wellbeing and school climate, delivered as part of the annual NAPLAN assessments of students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, could be an effective mechanism for collecting this information. However, assessing changes in these outcomes will not be possible for some time, as it requires a longitudinal dataset to be established.

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74. Productivity Commission 2020a.
75. National Mental Health Commission 2021.
76. Productivity Commission 2020a.
77. Productivity Commission 2022.

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Questions

8. What does it look like when a school is supporting student mental health and wellbeing effectively? What is needed from schools, systems, government and the community to deliver this?

9. What evidence-based wellbeing approaches currently being implemented by schools and communities should be considered as part of a national reform agenda?

10. Should a wellbeing target be included in the next NSRA? Could this use existing data collections, or is additional data required?

11. Would there be benefit in surveying students to help understand student perceptions of safety and belonging at school, subjective state of wellbeing, school climate and classroom disruption? Would there be value in incorporating this into existing National Assessment Program surveys such as NAPLAN?

12. To what extent do school leaders and teachers have the skills and training to support students struggling with mental health?

13. What can be done to establish stronger partnerships between schools, Local Health Networks and Primary Health Networks?

14. What can be done to ensure schools can easily refer students to services outside the school gate that they need to support their wellbeing? How can this be done without adding to teacher and leader workload?

Chapter 4: Our current and future teachers

4.1 Attracting and retaining teachers is a critical issue

Teachers are the most influential in-school factor in student outcomes.[78] Ensuring an adequate supply of effective teachers is critical to improving student outcomes, particularly for those most at risk of falling behind.

However, teacher supply is a global issue[79] and Australia is experiencing significant supply challenges influenced by increasing demand from a growing student population,[80] an ageing teacher and leadership workforce,[81] and declining ITE commencements and graduates.[82] Teacher supply challenges also exist within a context of broader workforce supply challenges across the Australian economy.

Australia has highly capable teachers; however, their role has increased in complexity and responsibility to meet modern social and economic needs and they may require additional support. There are currently significant attrition rates, with around one in five beginning teachers leaving within the first three years of entering the teaching profession[83] and 45 per cent of teachers aged 50 and over intending to leave the profession in the next five years.[84] Some segments of the teacher workforce are more likely to report plans to leave within 10 years. For example, 18 per cent of early career teachers and 17 per cent of inner regional teachers report this intention.[85]

Further, Australia is struggling to attract teachers into the profession. ITE commencements are declining and 37 per cent of those who commenced an ITE qualification in 2016 did not complete their studies within the first six years.[86]

Attracting and retaining highly competent school leaders is also critical.[87] School leaders, including principals, assistant principals and middle leaders, have increasingly complex roles. They are responsible for the educational leadership, management and accountability of schools. They are essential for establishing whole-school approaches to quality teaching, student engagement and school improvement.

Some schools find it more difficult to attract and retain skilled teachers and leaders. Hard to staff schools are often in rural, regional and remote locations and some are in areas with high levels of low socio-economic advantage.[88] The data suggests that supply and retention challenges disproportionately affect areas of educational disadvantage[89] and further increase challenges for teachers in these settings. Examples include increased instances of out-of-field teaching and higher workloads to cover for shortages.[90]

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78. Hattie 2011.
79. UNESCO 2022.
80. Australian Government Department of Education's School Funding Model as at Budget 2023-24.
81. AITSL 2021.
82. Department of Education, Higher Education Statistics. (www.education.gov.au/higher-education-statistics)
83. Social Research Centre 2023a.
84. OECD 2020.
85. AITSL 2021.
86. Department of Education, Higher Education Statistics. (www.education.gov.au/higher-education-statistics)
87. Productivity Commission 2022.
88. Jo Lampert et.al. 2021.
89. OECD 2012.
90. Productivity Commission 2022.

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Australia is also having difficulty attracting and retaining a teacher workforce that reflects the diversity of Australian communities, schools and student populations. There is a significant disparity between the percentage of teachers who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (2 per cent) and the percentage of students with that background (6 per cent).[91] A diverse teaching workforce helps provide a safe learning environment for students. Attendance and engagement is improved for First Nations students when schools are culturally responsive, cater for diverse student needs and provide a culturally safe learning environment that reflects their identity.

4.2 It is hard to attract new teachers, and many are leaving the profession early

Teaching is a specialist profession requiring high-quality training and development. Teachers perform a critical role in lifting student outcomes and supporting Australia's economy by teaching foundational skills and capabilities to the nation's future workforce. Teachers need to continuously update their practice to maintain the skills and expertise to meet the evolving educational needs of individual students and society.

However, many teachers are leaving the profession early. Teachers identify work/life balance, unsustainable and increasingly complex workloads, high levels of stress, impact on wellbeing or health, the demands of professional regulation, and changes imposed on schools from outside as key factors in leaving the workforce.[92] High workload continues to be the most significant stress factor identified by school leaders and teachers, with school leaders reporting that increasing workloads are affecting their health and wellbeing.[93] There is also preliminary evidence that teachers' levels of stress and wellbeing can influence student outcomes.[94]

In addition, 24.5 per cent of participants in Monash University's 2022 Teachers' Perceptions Survey reported feeling unsafe in their workplace.[95] The reasons cited for this include student behaviour and violence, parent abuse, and negative relationships with staff, including leaders.[96] Many First Nations teachers also feel their workplaces are culturally unsafe and have identified experiences of racism as contributing to teacher attrition.[97]

The Commonwealth Behavioural Economics Team (BETA) found that the perceived status of teachers and unfavourable working conditions were identified as deterrents for school leavers to enter the profession. They also found that the perception of low salary was a key deterrent for young high achievers to enter the profession. In 2022, starting salaries for teacher education graduates were the fourth highest in Australia;[98] however, many high achievers who chose a profession other than teaching underestimate both teachers' starting pay and teachers' top pay. BETA also found that even if young high achievers had accurate expectations of teachers' top salary, 56 per cent expected to earn more in their chosen career.[99]

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91. Productivity Commission 2022.
92. AITSL 2023; AEU 2022; IEU 2022.
93. See et al. 2022.
94. Carroll et al 2021.
95. Longmuir et al 2022.
96. Longmuir et al 2022.
97. NSW Department of Education 2021.
98. Social Research Centre 2023b.
99. BETA 2022.

The final report of the QITE Review, *Next steps*, found that career progression was also a contributing factor for people choosing a career other than teaching.[100] The Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) certification is the primary mechanism in Australia for recognising highly skilled teachers. However, HALTs currently make up less than one per cent of the teaching workforce.[101] The *Next steps* also found that diverse cohorts may be deterred from entering the profession due to a lack of existing diversity in the workforce and concerns that they will not be welcomed.[102]

As well as attracting new teachers and retaining current teachers, there may be opportunities to attract those who have left teaching back into the profession. This is particularly important given the high level of investment that teachers have made in their professional qualifications to work as a teacher. To work in a classroom, teachers must not only complete a four-year undergraduate or two-year post-graduate education course but meet the requirements of the teacher registration authority in their jurisdiction. This may include a certain number of hours of professional development to maintain registration.

4.2.1 All states and territories are trying to attract more teachers

A number of initiatives have been implemented at national, state, territory and sector levels over a long period of time to attract more people to the profession. Many of these initiatives have little published evaluation, so there is uncertainty around their quality and their overall success in increasing the teacher workforce.

Traditionally jurisdictions, sectors, systems and schools have not worked at a national level to strategically address the attraction and retention of teachers. Recently there has been a more coordinated national effort to address teacher shortages through the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan and the Australian Teacher Workforce Data collection initiative, which connects initial teacher education data and teacher workforce data from states and territories to improve the information available for teacher workforce planning at a national level.

Education Ministers released the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan in December 2022 to strengthen the profession. It includes actions to improve teacher supply, strengthen ITE, retain teachers already in the workforce and better understand workforce needs.[103] The plan includes $337.3 million in Commonwealth investment. Its initiatives include streamlining HALT processes, with a target of 10,000 HALTs by 2025; providing $56 million for 5,000 bursaries to help attract high-quality candidates into the teaching profession; and developing national guidelines to support early career teachers and new school leaders, including mentoring and induction.

State and territory governments also offer a range of financial incentives to attract people into ITE courses. Many provide alternative pathways into ITE, including fast-tracked ITE programs for prospective undergraduate students and mid-career changers undertaking postgraduate pathways. Most states and territories also offer financial incentives to attract existing teachers to work in hard to staff subjects or locations where teacher shortages are more severe.

Jurisdictions have also implemented initiatives that look to support teachers, including programs to reduce workload, increase class-planning time, increase permanent positions, and induction and mentoring initiatives.

The TEEP's advice to Education Ministers about reforms to ITE to assist in improving attraction and retention of teachers will be considered at the Education Ministers Meeting in July 2023. This includes strengthening ITE to deliver confident, effective, classroom-ready graduates and improving postgraduate ITE for mid-career entrants.[104]

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100. Paul et al. 2021.
101. AITSL 2022.
102. Paul et al. 2021.
103. Education Ministers Meeting 2022.
104. Teacher Education Expert Panel 2022.

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4.3 The next NSRA could improve the working environment of teachers

Teacher workload is a key issue influencing the attractiveness of the profession. More can be done to support existing initiatives to address this issue.

The Grattan Institute's *Making time for great teaching* report noted that while governments have devoted attention to reducing onerous administration and paperwork in teachers' jobs, more attention should be given to helping teachers in core aspects of teaching work, such as curriculum planning.[105] It pointed to research suggesting that using high-quality shared curriculum resources could save teachers up to three hours a week, while also boosting learning outcomes for students.[106] Teachers may also benefit from reforms which provide them with additional scope for collaboration with colleagues to ensure classes are inclusive, effective and engaging for all students.

The Productivity Commission's *Review of the National School Reform Agreement* report also recommended creating a common bank of high-quality curriculum resources for teachers and school leaders to cut teacher workload and support quality teaching.[107] The Grattan Institute found that new curriculum resources should be comprehensive and be quality-assured by an independent body, so that teachers can have confidence that new materials are consistent with evidence-based practice, aligned to mandated curriculum frameworks and easy to use and adapt in the classroom.[108]

Digital technology has the capability to both enhance teacher effectiveness and expand education services in areas where teacher shortages are having an acute impact on student access and education delivery. An expanding body of evidence shows that high-quality 'edtech', when used in the right environment, can improve outcomes for disadvantaged students through better supporting teachers, earlier diagnosis of learning needs, and greater access to personalised learning.[109] For example, online learning platforms have been developed to assist teachers and students in delivering and accessing personalised learning using evidence-based teaching practices.

The Grattan Institute recommended restructuring teacher career paths to recognise expert teachers and give them clearly defined roles with greater responsibility by creating subject-specific 'Master Teacher' and 'Instructional Specialist' positions. These roles would build on the existing HALT frameworks to provide additional career progression for expert teachers and could help retain them in the classroom, where their knowledge and skills can be used more effectively to support and develop other teachers. Their expertise could also be recognised with additional remuneration commensurate with their increased role and responsibilities.[110]

As AITSL stated in its 2018 report *One teaching profession: teacher registration in Australia*, 'registration is one of the most important mechanisms to assure the safety, competency and quality of a profession. Its design is underpinned by a clear intent to set and uphold high standards of professional practice'.[111] National registration of teachers is one mechanism to enhance the status of teachers as high-quality registered professionals and better facilitate mobility of the teacher workforce, increasing its attractiveness as a profession.

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105. Hunter et al. 2022a.
106. Hunter et al. 2022b.
107. Productivity Commission 2022.
108. Hunter et al. 2022b.
109. Loble and Hawcroft 2022.
110. Goss and Sonnemann 2020.
111. Wardlaw et al. 2018, p. ii.

The Productivity Commission recommended that the next NSRA should include a commitment to identifying and eliminating racism and instituting cultural safety requirements.[112] All jurisdictions, as part of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, have committed to the development of a national First Nations teachers strategy. This strategy could look to address the cultural safety and inclusivity of teachers and school leaders, which could make the profession more attractive to First Nations people and contribute to greater diversity in the teacher workforce.

There may be opportunities to attract teachers who have left, back into the profession. The National Teacher Workforce Action Plan includes an action to create pathways for qualified teachers to return to the classroom, and Victoria's Tutor Learning Initiative encourages retired teachers to re-register with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.[113] There is also an opportunity to explore the barriers to maintaining teacher registration and professional development to encourage ex-teachers back into the profession.

Questions

15. What change(s) would attract more students into the teaching profession?

16. What change(s) would support teachers to remain in the profession?

17. What change(s) would support qualified teachers to return to the profession?

18. What additional reforms are needed to ensure that the schools most in need can support and retain highly effective teachers?

19. What can be done to attract a diverse group of people into the teaching profession to ensure it looks like the broader community?

20. What can be done to attract more First Nations teachers? What can be done to improve the retention of First Nations teachers?

21. What reforms could enable the existing teacher workforce to be deployed more effectively?

22. How can teacher career pathways, such as master teachers and instructional specialists, be improved to attract and retain teachers? How should this interact with HALT certification and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers?

23. Are there examples of resources, such as curriculum materials, being used to improve teacher workload or streamline their administrative tasks?

24. How should digital technology be used to support education delivery, reduce teacher workload and improve teacher effectiveness? What examples are you aware of?

25. Are there benefits for the teaching profession in moving to a national registration system? If so, what are they?

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112. Productivity Commission 2022.
113. Victorian Department of Education 2023.

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Chapter 5: Collecting data to inform decision-making and boost student outcomes

5.1 Data collection and reporting can improve our understanding of system performance and help lift student outcomes

The collection and publication of data are critical pillars in holding all governments to account for their collective commitment to improve educational outcomes in Australia. Without the ability to track changes in outcomes, governments and the public are unable to determine the effectiveness of changes in policy or additional funding commitments. Publication of the data is important to support transparency and is the bedrock of enabling the public to hold governments to account.

Good data facilitates research on what works and what doesn't, creating an evidence base to support optimising resource allocation to get the best outcomes. As AERO stated in its submission to the Productivity Commission, 'high performing systems across the world not only collect data, but also use it effectively to measure outcomes and drive improvements'.[114] Further, 'high performing systems gather, analyse and share data on system performance, and use data as a tool to direct the allocation of system support'.[115]

There is a significant amount of data collected about education in Australia. This occurs at the school, sector, system, jurisdiction and national levels. However, as the Productivity Commission has found, there is no single, standalone place where all NSRA outcomes and performance are reported.[116] This inhibits the ability of the community to determine what has been achieved and meaningfully engage in a conversation about the success, or otherwise, of education reform.

The next NSRA provides an opportunity to consider how data collection, sharing and reporting can be improved to ensure that:

• we focus data collection and reporting on the things that matter
• the impacts of policy changes on student outcomes can be identified, shared and incorporated into future policy reform processes.

5.2 What data is currently collected and how is it used?

The Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia (MFSA) is one of the key mechanisms for reporting on educational outcomes at a national level and is the agreed basis for reporting to the community on progress towards the Mparntwe Education Declaration.[117] The MFSA contains nationally agreed key performance measures which are reported on in the annual National Report on Schooling in Australia and the Key Performance Measures for Schooling in Australia dashboard and dataset.[118]

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114. Barber and Mourshed 2007.
115. Mourshed et al. 2010.
116. Productivity Commission 2022, p. 264.
117. Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2023.
118. Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2023.

However, as the Productivity Commission has identified, the MFSA is not designed and not intended to report on NSRA outcomes and has substantial gaps in reporting on outcomes for students from the current NSRA priority equity cohorts.[119] For example, there is limited data collected on students with disability.

Schools, systems and jurisdictions also collect a significant amount of data, but this data is not regularly shared. Recently Education Ministers agreed on a model to roll out the Unique Student Identifier (USI) nationally to all school students. The USI is a government-issued individual education number for life. This initiative has the potential to transform our understanding of student learning trajectories. Its initial use will be limited to the inclusion of the USI in the agreed dataset under the Student Data Transfer Protocol, with no further uses considered until the initiative is fully implemented and every school student has a national USI.

Connecting datasets across jurisdictions would significantly increase our understanding of what makes a difference in improving student outcomes in Australia. Greater linkage of data presents an opportunity for governments to have greater insight into schooling, which they can use for research and policy development. It will aid in evaluating the success of programs, identifying areas in need of greater resources, and tracking trends and developing interventions to overcome challenges. It would also enrich our understanding of how education intersects with other policy areas. An example of data linkage and the benefits it provides is the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Multi-Agency Data Integration Project (MADIP). With this, the ABS can analyse complex questions about the Australian population, providing new insights that would be impossible from a single data source.

While increased data sharing is essential to tracking the outcomes of students and the success of education reform, both the quality and quantity of data are important to ensure that insights are accurate and are available for all students. To successfully use data in assessing education reform, parties should work together to identify and share the most appropriate data to provide the required insights.

Where data involves First Nations people it is essential that appropriate data governance is established for the collection and use of this data. These mechanisms must actively involve First Nations people and be protective and respectful towards First Nations individual and collective interests.

The prospect of data sharing may also raise concerns around privacy-related issues, the creation of league tables, and increased resource and administrative burdens on teachers and schools. Relevant parties must take these concerns into consideration and set out appropriate rules and protocols to ensure data sharing is done in a safe and secure manner.

5.3 There are a number of data gaps to be filled, but this must be considered against the burden it would place on teachers and schools

A series of shortfalls limit the ability of governments, systems, schools, and teachers to analyse and measure individual student performance and growth over time, recognise and address the learning needs of students in an effective and timely manner, and track return on investment from policy initiatives.

The next NSRA provides an opportunity for governments to set new targets and outcomes, which may require the collection of new data. Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 6 of the consultation paper canvass possible targets and reforms for inclusion in the next NSRA which would necessitate the collection of relevant data. It will be critical to ensure that new data is only collected if the benefits of understanding the data outweigh the costs of acquiring the data, including any impact on teacher and principal workload.

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119. Productivity Commission 2022, p. 267. The Productivity Commission NSRA Performance Reporting Dashboard provides the official public reporting on the NSRA targets and outcomes; however, this is currently limited.

Several reviews have highlighted the gap in reporting on outcomes for students with disability.[120] In addition, the Productivity Commission recommended consideration of a broader list of priority equity cohorts in the next NSRA, including students living in out-of-home care, students with English as an additional language or dialect, students in youth detention and refugee students.[121] The current data collection and reporting framework does not allow for reporting on these cohorts.

The current national reporting mechanism is not NSRA specific, which limits the capacity for the community to track progress on commitments. The next NSRA provides an opportunity for all jurisdictions to recommit to transparency and accountability in this regard – for example, through a tailored reporting mechanism designed to track progress on the targets and reforms included in the next NSRA.

Establishing a tailored reporting mechanism will not only enable policymakers to more easily identify successful reforms and interventions but also result in greater transparency to the public. This will provide communities with a better understanding of how the education system is performing and better enable them to become partners in the schooling system.

Schools, systems, sectors and jurisdictions have access to a significant amount of data which has the potential to improve the evidence base for policymaking in Australia. This includes data on the impact that pilots and programs have had on student outcomes. However, this information does not appear to be effectively collated and transmitted to enable others to learn from the experience. There is merit in considering what systems would be necessary to facilitate more routine information sharing between all jurisdictions, to provide a national perspective. For example, would having a single agency responsible for holding such data in a secure and protected manner and providing analysis of the data to all jurisdictions be an effective mechanism?

5.4 The next NSRA could improve data reporting and quality

Two possible means by which the next NSRA could improve data usage are data reform and data improvement.

Data reform involves changes to what education data is collected and/or how it is reported. For example, the creation of the *MySchool* website (www.myschool.edu.au) in 2010 enabled the community to see NAPLAN results and other information at the school level. This generated a deeper understanding of how levels of socio-economic advantage and other factors at the school level impact on outcomes.

Data improvement involves increasing the quality, scope, coverage and/or integration of existing datasets. This would include such things as adding additional equity groups to existing reporting, publishing the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability on MySchool, and sharing data to enable national insights across all students.

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120. Productivity Commission 2022, p. 267; Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2020, p. 52.
121. Productivity Commission 2022, p 116.

Questions

26. What types of data are of most value to you and how accessible are these for you?

27. Is there any data not currently collected and reported on that is vital to understanding education in Australia? Why is this data important?

28. Should data measurement and reporting on outcomes of students with disability be a priority under the next NSRA? If so, how can this data be most efficiently collected?

29. Is there a need to establish a report which tracks progress on the targets and reforms in the next NSRA? Should it report at a jurisdictional and a national level? What should be included in the report?

30. Is there data collected by schools, systems, sectors or jurisdictions that could be made more available to inform policy design and implementation? What systems would be necessary to make this data available safely and efficiently?

31. The Productivity Commission and AERO have identified the need for longitudinal data to identify the actual students at risk of falling behind based on their performance (and not on equity groups alone) and to monitor these students' progress over time. Should this be the key data reform for the next NSRA?

32. Should an independent body be responsible for collecting and holding data? What rules should be in place to govern the sharing of data through this body?

33. Is there data being collected that is no longer required?

34. How could the national USI support improved outcomes for students?

Chapter 6: Funding transparency and accountability

6.1 Funding transparency and accountability is important for students, parents, policymakers and the community

Transparency[122] and accountability[123] are important interlinked concepts that are integral to ensuring confidence in public expenditure.

The *Australian Education Act 2013* (the Act) includes a set of requirements for Approved Authorities[124] – the legal entities that the Australian Government holds responsible for the administration of Commonwealth funding to schools – that are to be applied in the distribution of needs-based recurrent funding to schools. The requirements are that the funding arrangements and allocations to schools comprise both base and needs-based loadings, and are publicly available and transparent. Consistent with the requirements, Approved Authorities have the flexibility to allocate and expend funding in response to local educational priorities and needs. This may be different to the allocations of the SRS, recognising that Approved Authorities have more detailed knowledge of the needs of their students and schools. This reflects subsidiarity, one of the four principles of Commonwealth school funding policy. The four principles are:

1. Needs-based – Higher levels of funding are targeted to disadvantaged students and schools, with the objective of reducing educational inequity.
2. Subsidiarity – Approved Authorities and schools have the flexibility to allocate funding in a manner which they see fit to meet educational priorities and needs.
3. Accountability – Jurisdictions and non-government authorities are required to provide assurance that Commonwealth funding is spent for educational purposes outlined in the Act and the Australian Education Regulation 2013 (the Regulation).
4. Consistency – Commonwealth funding shares are clear and consistent within each sector, and funding changes predictably across time to minimise disruptions for schools.

Given that Approved Authorities can allocate public funding according to local needs, there must be appropriate transparency in the use of these funds. This helps to ensure that Approved Authorities are accountable for how they are allocating funds as well as for the educational outcomes sought through that funding.

The final report of the *Review of Funding for Schooling* made clear that parents, educators and the broader community should be able to understand in practice how school funding arrangements take place at the local level.[125] The report recognised the importance of rigorous accountability to the successful implementation of Australia's needs-based model. A lack of transparency and accountability makes it difficult for school communities to understand their rights and needs, [126] and ensure these are being met.

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122. Transparency reveals reliable information about institutional performance, including specifying officials' responsibilities, as well as where public funds go. Fox 2007.
123. Accountability can be understood through the distinctions of soft and hard accountability. Soft accountability requires those in authority to justify their decisions ('answerability'). Hard accountability involves answerability plus the possibility of sanctions. Fox 2007.
124. An approved authority for a school is the legal entity the Australian Government holds responsible for the administration of the school. For a government school located in a state or territory, the Approved Authority is the state or territory department established to oversee education. For a non-government school, the Approved Authority is a body corporate that is approved by the Commonwealth Education Minister. *Australian Education Act 2013*, s 4.
125. Gonski et al. 2011, pp. 48-49, 151.
126. Gonski et al. p. 96.

A review of needs-based funding requirements under the Act conducted by the National School Resourcing Board (NSRB) concluded that the transparency of needs-based funding arrangements is enhanced through publishing information about Approved Authorities' distributions of funding.[127] To increase the transparency of needs-based funding arrangements and support public understanding of how these arrangements distribute funding to schools, the NSRB recommended that consideration be given to consulting with the state and territory governments to amend reporting requirements to cover base and loading allocations to schools.

There has been significant progress over the last decade with the establishment of *MySchool* and reporting requirements under the Act. However, further work is required to meet community expectations. For example, the Productivity Commission noted that the data provided on *MySchool* is not granular enough to offer insight into how funding is used to lift outcomes for students from priority cohorts.[128]

Ensuring greater clarity and transparency in the funding system will provide the community, as well as researchers and policy makers, opportunities to understand how and why money is provided to schools, and what it is spent on. This will build confidence in the methodologies used and a greater understanding of Approved Authority and school priorities.

6.2 We don't have a clear picture of how funding is allocated or spent

The Commonwealth distributes its share of funding to Approved Authorities responsible for the administration and operation of schools. For government schools, the Approved Authority is the state or territory government department established to oversee education. Authorities for non-government schools are incorporated bodies approved by the Commonwealth Education Minister. These bodies could be for a single school or could encompass a number of schools, as in the case of a state Catholic Education Commission.

All Approved Authorities are required to complete reporting to the Commonwealth demonstrating whether funding is being spent in accordance with, and schools are meeting their obligations under, the Act. However, current practice is that information provided to the Commonwealth depends on the sector of the Approved Authority and how many schools it represents, resulting in variations in the level of transparency and accountability provided.

The mechanisms for transparency between the Commonwealth and Approved Authorities do not always provide clear line of sight between SRS allocations and what is actually provided to schools or how the funding is being spent. For example, the Commonwealth receives Block Allocation Reports from Approved Authorities responsible for more than one school. These encourage reporting to be disaggregated according to the amounts distributed for base funding, loadings, administrative costs, and centralised expenditure. This includes information showing allocations for each school, determined in accordance with the Approved Authority's needs-based funding arrangement. However, the Regulation does not officially prescribe the provision of this information, unless requested in writing by the Commonwealth Education Minister.[129] Without the transparency around the allocation of funding and the way it is being used by schools, it is difficult for the Commonwealth and the Approved Authorities to be confident in their understanding of how funding is being used to support students and lift outcomes.

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127. Chaney et al. 2020, p. 26.
128. Productivity Commission (2022), p. 133.
129. Australian Education Regulation 2013, reg 35(1A).

Providing communities with funding information about their local school enables parents and community members to engage as members of the school community and, by understanding the allocation of funding, have confidence in the government commitment to their school. Some information is made publicly available, such as the *MySchool* website's information on state and territory budgets, each school's aggregate recurrent income (by funding source) and capital expenditure, and school annual reports. However, the allocation of funds to schools in Australia remains a challenge for the public to understand, and it is not always possible to see how and where public funding is allocated and distributed and how that funding is spent. This makes it more difficult for communities to gain a sound knowledge of funding and resource allocation and may reduce the community's confidence in the way public funding is invested.

6.3 Where are the gaps?

6.3.1 Information on funding is needed to increase understanding of links with student outcomes

There is currently insufficient visibility of funding data to effectively evaluate how funding impacts student outcomes.

Most Approved Authorities collect data and undertake evaluations. They hold this information centrally but do not publish or share it due to constraints and sensitivities that could arise when making comparisons between different jurisdictions and schools. This limits opportunities to create a national picture of where schools are performing well and where more support is needed, and consequently limits the ability to recommend new initiatives or the expansion of existing ones to drive improved performance across schools. Further, there is a lack of visibility as to how Approved Authorities use the evaluations they undertake to determine the allocation of funds to improve student outcomes.

6.3.2 School funding allocations and levels of funding should be targeted to those that need it most

Submissions to the Productivity Commission review expressed the desire for more visibility as to how money is distributed and spent, down to a school level, with a particular emphasis on how funds are used to support priority equity cohorts.[130]

Currently the amount the Commonwealth provides to each Approved Authority is known, and the total funding for schools is provided on *MySchool*. However, information on the methodologies used by Approved Authorities to calculate and allocate funding and resources and the amounts allocated for schools and different cohorts is not transparent to stakeholders. Greater transparency about methodologies, allocations and expenditure could include information on different funding mechanisms, including base per student, additional loadings, school/operational level funding, centralised funding and targeted centralised programs.

Providing greater transparency about funding allocations and expenditure from all government funding streams through to schools is useful to the community, researchers and policymakers as an expression of priorities. Further, greater transparency about how schools expend funding to support students would provide the community with the assurance they need that funding is used appropriately to help those it is intended for.

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130. National School Resourcing Board 2022, p. 7; Indigenous Education Consultative Meeting 2022, pp. 5-6.

6.4 The next NSRA could increase funding accountability and transparency

The next NSRA will be an opportunity to establish new outcomes, targets, sub-outcomes and reforms. Options that could be pursued to increase funding transparency and accountability include:

- The next NSRA could establish mutual obligations between the Commonwealth and states and territories to share relevant data and evaluations for the purpose of improving student outcomes. This will inform more effective targeting of funding to students most in need, including priority equity cohorts. This could further be supported by giving an organisation in the existing education architecture responsibility for analysing and evaluating data to better understand funding and how it relates to student outcomes. This would ensure a level of independence due to the distance between the assessor and system leaders.

- The next NSRA could set new initiatives requiring Approved Authorities to publish information about the methodologies used to calculate and distribute funding and resources to schools, allocations to schools broken down by base and loadings, and the aggregate amount for different cohorts. This could include requirements to publish up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive descriptions of the models and methodologies underpinning funding distributions, information on the allocations to schools broken down by base and loadings, and the proportion of resources (expended centrally in programs run by Approved Authorities or distributed directly to schools) which are allocated and used to support priority equity cohorts.

- Schools could be required to report to the public on how funding is used to support the students it is intended for. For example, the next NSRA could seek agreed commitments to set new guidelines to establish additional transparency of funding allocations and distributions to schools, broken down by base and loadings. Therefore, if an amount, either through a loading or otherwise, is provided from an Approved Authority to support First Nations students, schools could report on how those funds are used to support First Nations students.

Questions

35. Are there other objectives for funding accountability and transparency we have missed?

36. How can governments make better use of the information already collected and/or published to achieve the objectives?

37. What other funding accountability and transparency information regarding schools (both your school and the education system more generally) would be useful?

38. What are the priority gaps in the current funding transparency and accountability arrangements from your perspective?

Attachment A

Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System – five key areas from the terms of reference

1. What targets and reforms should be included in the next NSRA to drive real improvements in student outcomes, with a particular focus on students who are most at risk of falling behind and in need of more assistance - for students from low socio-economic backgrounds, regional, rural and remote Australia, students with disability, First Nations students and students from a language background other than English.

2. How the next agreement can contribute to improving student mental health and wellbeing, by addressing in-school factors while acknowledging the impact of non-school factors on wellbeing.

3. How the next agreement can support schools to attract and retain teachers.

4. How data collection can best inform decision-making and boost student outcomes.

5. How to ensure public funding is delivering on national agreements and that all school authorities are transparent and accountable to the community for how funding is invested and measuring the impacts of this investment.

Attachment B

Current methods through which Approved Authorities provide transparency as to the use of Commonwealth funding

Document	Transparency and accountability provided
Financial Questionnaire	For all non-government Australian schools receiving Commonwealth Government recurrent funding. Provides to the Commonwealth calendar year financial information, including income; expenditure; assets; and liabilities.[131]
Acquittal Certificate	For all Approved System Authorities. Certifies that the financial assistance provided by the Commonwealth Government has been spent, or is committed to be spent, in accordance with relevant provisions of the Act.[132]
Block Allocation Report	For all Approved System Authorities with responsibility for more than one school. Details how Commonwealth recurrent funding was distributed to each school. [133]
Section 78 (5) of the Act	Requires Approved System Authorities to use a needs-based funding arrangement when distributing funding to member schools, and to make this model publicly available and transparent[134].
Section 22a of the Act	For states and territories, a sector-level funding report setting out its total funding for each sector. A consolidated report is then undertaken by the National School Resourcing Board and published.

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131. Australian Education Regulation 2013, reg 36.
132. Australian Education Regulation 2013, reg 34.
133. Australian Education Regulation 2013, regs 35, 36.
134. The National School Resourcing Board conducted a review of Approved System Authority needs-based funding arrangements and public availability in 2019. National School Resourcing Board (2019) Review of needs-based funding requirements: final report December 2019 (www.education.gov.au/national-school-resourcing-board/resources/review-needs-based-funding-requirements-final-report-december-2019), Department of Education.

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Attachment C

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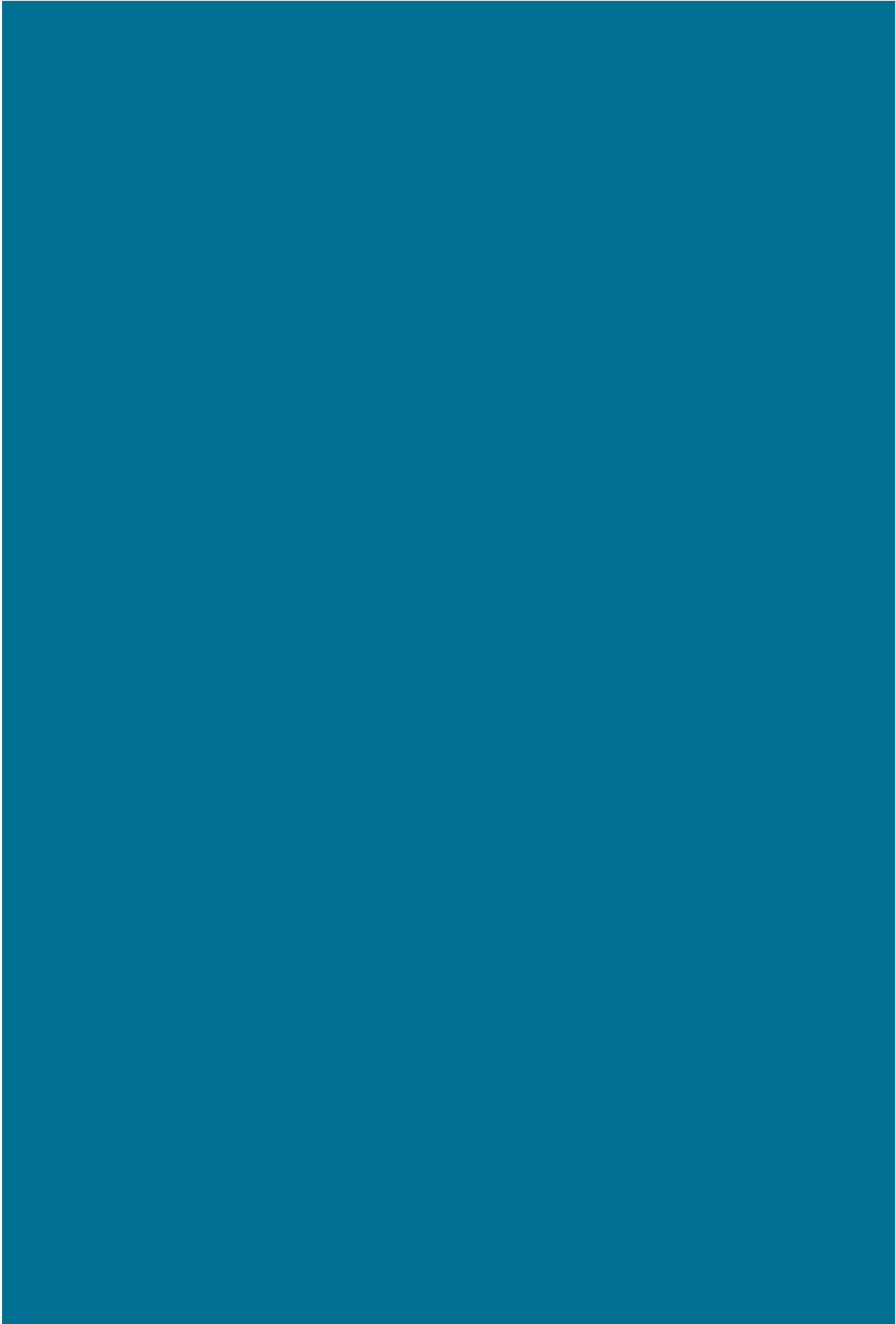
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Attachment J – List of attendees at Ministerial Reference Group (MRG) meeting

		7 July MRG	6 October MRG
1.	**Emeritus Professor Alan Reid AM** – Professor Emeritus at the University of South Australia, and Chair of the Public Education Advisory Committee	**Attended**	**Apology**
2.	**Alana Moller –** Former Federal President, Isolated Children's Parents' Association s 47F	**Alana Moller Attended**	**Alana Moller Attended**
3.	**Andrea Obeyesekere** – Chair, Catholic School Parents Australia Proxy - Ms Siobhan Allen, Catholic School Parents Australia	**Attended**	**Proxy Attended**
4.	**Andrew Pierpoint – F**ormer President, Australian Secondary Principals Council s 47F	**Andrew Pierpoint Attended**	s 47F
5.	**Angela Falkenberg –** President, Australian Primary Principals' Association	**Attended**	**Attended**
6.	**Dr Anne Keary** – President, Australian Council of TESOL Associations	**Attended**	**Attended**
7.	s 47F	**NA**	**Attended**
8.	**Brad Hayes** – Federal Secretary, Independent Education Union	**Attended**	**Attended**
9.	**Christopher Wardlaw PSM OLY** – Deputy Chair, Non-Executive Director AITSL	**Attended**	**Attended**
10.	**Cheryl Brennan** – President, Australian Professional Teachers Association	**N/A**	**Attended**
11.	s 47F	**NA**	**Attended**
12.	**Emeritus Professor Colleen Hayward AM** – Deputy Chair, Australian Education Research Organisation	**Attended**	**Apology**
13.	**Correna Haythorpe** – President, Australian Education Union	**Attended**	**Apology**
14.	**David Bromhead** – Director, Wellbeing EDvantage	**Attended**	**Attended**
15.	**Professor David Halpern CBE –** President and Founding Director, Behavioural Insights	**Apology**	**Apology**
16.	**Derek Scott –** Chair, Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority	**Attended**	**Attended**
17.	**Diane Joseph –** Board Chair, Education Services Australia	**Attended**	**Attended**
18.	**Dianne Giblin AM –** CEO, Australian Council of State School Organisations	**Attended**	**Attended**
19.	**Doug Taylor –** CEO, The Smith Family	**Attended**	**Attended**
20.	s 47F	**Attended**	**Apology**
21.		**Attended**	**Attended**

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22.	s 47F	NA	Attended
23.	s 47F		
24.	**The Hon Fiona Nash** – Regional Education Commissioner	Attended	Apology
25.	s 47F	Attended	Attended
26.	**Graham Catt** – CEO, Independent Schools Australia	Attended	Attended
27.	**Hayley McQuire** – CEO, National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition	Attended	Apology
28.	**The Hon Jacinta Collins** – Executive Director, National Catholic Education Commission	Attended	Attended
29.	**Associate Professor Jae Jung** – Director, GERRIC – University of New South Wales	Attended	Attended
30.	**Jenny Branch-Allen** – President, Australian Parents Council	Attended	Attended
31.	s 47F	Attended	Apology
32.	s 47F	N/A	Attended
33.	**Karen Batt** – Federal Secretary, CPSU State Public Service Federation s 47F	Attended	Proxy Attended
34.	s 47F	NA	Attended
35.		Attended	Apology
36.	**Kevin Bates** – Secretary, Australian Education Union Proxy- Mr David Genford Australian Education Union	Attended	Proxy Attended
37.	s 47F	Attended	Apology
38.		Attended	Attended
39.	**Professor Linda Graham** – Director, QUT Centre for Inclusive Education Proxy- Associate Professor Jenna Gillett-Swan	Attended	Proxy Attended
40.	s 47F	Attended	Attended
41.	**Professor Maree Teesson AC** – Centre Director, The Matilda Centre – University of Sydney	Attended	Apology
42.	**Mark Grant PSM** – CEO, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership	Attended	Attended
43.	**Matthew Johnson** – National President, Australian Special Education Principals' Association	Attended	Attended

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44.	**Meredith Peace –** Deputy President, Australian Education Union	**Attended**	**Attended**
45.	**Dr Michele Bruniges AM – C**hair, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership	**Attended**	**Apology**
46.	**Natalie Howson –** Chair, ACT Teacher Quality Institute	**Attended**	**Attended**
47.	s 47F	**Attended**	**Attended**
48.		**Attended**	**Attended**
49.		**Apology**	**Attended**
50.		**Attended**	**Attended**
51.	**Regan Neumann –** Managing Director, Board of the Queensland College of Teachers	**Attended**	**Attended**
52.	**Robyn Evans –** President, NSW Primary Principals Association	**Attended**	**Attended**
53.	**Rory Gallagher –** Managing Director, Australia and Asia-Pacific Behavioural Insights	**Attended**	**Attended**
54.	**Professor Ruth Wallace –** Dean of College of Indigenous Futures, Arts and Society, and Director of the Northern Institute, Charles Darwin University	**Attended**	**Apology**
55.	**Sally Milbourne –** Former President of Tasmanian Principals Association	**Apology**	**Attended**
56.	**Skye Kakoschke-Moore –** CEO, Children and Young People with Disability Australia	**Attended**	**Attended**
57.	s 47F	**Attended**	**Attended**
58.	**Susan Pascoe AM –** Adjunct Professor at the University of Western Australia and Chair of the Australian Council for International Development	**Attended**	**Apology**
59.	s 47F	**Attended**	**Attended**
60.	**Travers McLeod –** Executive Director, Brotherhood of St. Laurence	**Attended**	**Attended**
61.	**Valerie Gould –** Former Executive Director, Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia	**Attended**	**Attended**

- 6 members were added to the MRG membership from the first MRG meeting to the second meeting, these members are included in the list above and have NA in the column of the 7 July Meeting.
- 5 Proxies attended the 6 October MRG meeting as Minister Clare allowed members to send proxies to represent their organisation in instances that the members were unavailable to attend. These proxies are listed below the member and have proxy attended in the 6 October column.

Australian Government
Department of Education

National School Reform Agreement Ministerial Reference Group

Meeting 1: 7 July 2023, 10:00am – 2:30pm

Location: Main Committee Room, Australian Parliament House

Agenda

	Item	Lead	Time
1.	**Welcome and Introductions**	Minister Clare	10:00am – 10:05am *(5 min)*
2.	**Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System**	Dr Lisa O'Brien AM *Expert Panel Chair*	10:05am – 10:20am *(15 min)*
3.	**Outline of day**	Ms Virginia Haussegger AM *Facilitator*	10:20am – 10:30am *(10 min)*
4.	**Session 1: Improving student outcomes with a focus on students at risk of falling behind.** *Tables will be provided **with a different question prompt** for each session, which are based on questions from the **Consultation Paper**. A rapporteur will be nominated to report discussions back to the wider group. Each table will be asked to nominate a scribe for note taking. Participants will be asked to provide further detailed feedback following the session as part of the Consultation Paper process.*	MRG members	10:30am – 11:10am *(40 min)*

Item	Lead	Time
Table 1: • What are the evidence-based practices that systems and sectors can put in place to improve student outcomes, particularly for those most at risk of falling behind? Are different approaches required for different at-risk cohorts? Table 2: • What are the most important student outcomes for Australian school students that should be measured in the next Agreement? Should these go beyond academic performance (for example, attendance and engagement)? Table 3: • How can all students at risk of falling behind be identified early on to enable swift learning interventions? Table 4: • Should the next Agreement add additional priority equity cohorts? For example, should it add children and young people living in out-of-home care and students who speak English as an additional language or dialect? What are the risks and benefits of identifying additional cohorts? Table 5: • What should the specific targets in the next Agreement be? Should the targets be different for primary and secondary schools? If so, how? What changes are required to current measurement frameworks, and what new measures might be required? Table 6: • How can the targets in the next Agreement be structured to ensure that evidence-based approaches underpin a nationally coherent reform agenda while allowing jurisdictions and schools the flexibility to respond to individual student circumstances and needs?		

	Item	Lead	Time

	Table 7:
	  • What are the evidence-based practices that teachers and schools can put in place to improve student outcomes, particularly for those most at risk of falling behind? Are different approaches required for different at-risk cohorts?
	
	Table 8:
	  • How should progress towards any new targets in the next Agreement be reported on?
	
	Table 9 (student table)
	  • What does your school currently provide or do to help students learn? How can students from all different backgrounds be supported to learn?		

5.	**Tables report back on their answers**	MRG rapporteurs /Facilitator	11:10am – 11:30am *(20 min)*
6.	**Summary of Session 1**	Facilitator	11:30am – 11:40pm *(10 min)*

7.	**Session 2: Improving student health and wellbeing.**
	
	Table 1:
	  • Should a wellbeing target be included in the next Agreement? Could this use existing data collections, or is additional data required?
	
	Table 2:
	  • What evidence-based wellbeing approaches currently being implemented by schools and communities should be considered as part of a national reform agenda?
	
	Table 3:
	  • What does it look like when a school is supporting student mental health and wellbeing effectively?
		MRG members	11:40pm – 12:20pm
			
			(40 min)

Item	Lead	Time
Table 4: • What can be done to ensure schools can easily refer students to services outside the school gate that they need to support their wellbeing? How can this be done without adding to teacher and leader workload? Table 5: • What is needed from schools, systems, government and the community to deliver support for student mental health and wellbeing effectively? Table 6: • What can be done to establish stronger partnerships between schools, Local Health Networks and Primary Health Networks? Table 7: • To what extent do school leaders and teachers have the skills and training to support students struggling with mental health? Table 8: • Would there be benefit in surveying students to help understand student perceptions of safety and belonging at school, subjective state of wellbeing, school climate and classroom disruption? Would there be value in incorporating this into existing National Assessment Program surveys such as NAPLAN? Table 9 (student table) • What does your school currently do to support your health and wellbeing? Are there other ideas or programs that you know of which could help students?		
8. **Tables report back on their answers**	MRG rapporteur /Facilitator	12:20pm – 12:40pm *(20 min)*

	Item	Lead	Time
9.	**Summary of Session 2**	Facilitator	12:40m – 12:50pm *(10 min)*
10.	*Lunch break*	All	12:50pm – 1:10pm *(20 min)*
11.	**Session 3: Attracting and Retaining Teachers** Table 1: • What change(s) would support teachers to remain in the profession? Table 2: • What change(s) would attract more students into the teaching profession? Table 3: • We know we need to attract more First Nations teachers to the profession. What can be done to improve the retention of First Nations teachers? Table 4 • What change(s) would support qualified teachers to return to the profession? What is currently working and what haven't we tried? Table 5: • What additional reforms are needed to ensure that the schools most in need can support and retain highly effective teachers? Table 6: • In terms of teacher retention, are there approaches to reducing administrative burden that can be delivered nationally? Are there examples of resources, such as curriculum materials, being used to improve teacher workload or streamline their administrative tasks? Table 7: • Are there benefits for the teaching profession in moving to a national registration system? If so, what are they?	MRG members	1:10pm – 1:50 pm *(40 min)*

	Item	Lead	Time
	Table 8: • What reforms could enable the existing teacher workforce to be deployed more effectively? Table 9 (student table): • Have you experienced teachers leaving, in particular those you have really liked? If so, how has it affected your schooling? Have you also noticed a lot of teachers leaving the profession? What do you think could be done to keep teachers working or encourage more people to become teachers?		
12.	**Tables report back on their answers**	MRG rapporteur /Facilitator	1:50pm – 2:10pm (20 min)
13.	**Summary of Session 3**	Facilitator	2:10pm – 2:20pm (10 min)
14.	**Conclusion**	Facilitator	2:20pm – 2:30pm (10 min)

Australian Government
Department of Education

National School Reform Agreement Ministerial Reference Group

Meeting 2: 6 October 2023, 9:30am – 2:30pm

Location: Crowne Plaza, Hobart

Agenda

	Item	Lead	Time
1.	**Welcome and Introductions**	Facilitator Minister Clare	09:30am - 09:35am *(5 min)*
2.	**Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System**	Dr Lisa O'Brien AM	09:35am – 09:50am *(15 min)*
3.	**Outline of day**	Facilitator	09:50am – 10:00am *(10 min)*
4.	**Session 1: Addressing disadvantage and supporting all students to realise their potential**	MRG members	10:00am – 10:45am *(45min)*

5.	**Tables report back on their answers** ~ 2 minutes each – three key points	MRG rapporteur /Facilitator	10:45am – 11:05am *(20 min)*
6.	**Summary of Session 1** Summary of outcomes/actions	Facilitator	11:05m – 11:15am *(10 min)*
7.	**Session 2: Greater understanding of student wellbeing, impact of policy changes and public accountability**	MRG members	11:15am – 11:55pm *(40 min)*
8.	**Tables report back on their answers**	MRG rapporteur /Facilitator	11:55pm – 12:15pm *(20 min)*
9.	**Summary of Session 2** Summary of outcomes/actions	Facilitator	12:15pm – 12:25pm *(10 min)*
10.	*Lunch break*	All	12:25pm – 1:05pm *(40 min)*
11.	**Session 3: Attracting and retaining teachers and educators**	MRG members	1:05pm – 1:45pm *(40 min)*
12.	**Tables report back on their answers**	MRG rapporteur /Facilitator	1:45pm – 2:05pm *(20 min)*
13.	**Summary of Session 3** Summary of outcomes/actions	Facilitator	2:05pm – 2:15pm *(10 min)*
14.	**Conclusion** • Summary of day • Next steps • Invite Minister to share his closing thoughts	Facilitator	2:15pm – 2:30pm *(15 min)*

2023 - 2024 Supplementary Budget Estimates
SB23-000344

Issue:	**Building Boarding Schools on Country (BBSoC)**
PBS Pg No.	PBS pg 45 (Under Schools Support Closing the Gap Initiatives)
MYEFO Pg No.	Budget Paper 2, pg 100-101 (Under First Nations – supporting education outcomes)
Contact:	**Meg Brighton**
	Ph: s 22
	Deputy Secretary, Schools Group

Key Points

- The Building Boarding Schools on Country (BBSoC) measure will increase boarding places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote and very remote areas, closer to their home communities.

- Under a revised scope agreed in Budget 2023–24, the Australian Government will contribute **$70.8 million** for Studio Schools of Australia (over 2021–22 to 2025–26) to:

  o build **one new** on-country residential middle-year Indigenous boarding school – **Manjali** (pronounced MARN-JA-LEE) **Studio School** – for Years 7–9 in the Kimberley region of Western Australia (WA)

  o **upgrade one** existing Indigenous boarding school facility (Years 10–12) at **Yiramalay**, also in the Kimberley region of WA

  o establish an **Indigenous Education Research Centre** adjacent to the new school site

  o assist with **operational costs** associated with Studio Schools of Australia delivery of the project.

- The scope of the measure was revised in response to significant increases in construction costs, particularly in remote areas.

- The tender for construction of the new Manjali Studio School and the Education Research Centre is underway, with a contract expected to be awarded in December 2023.

  o An Early Contractor Involvement Process is being used to engage the construction contractor. Firms are invited to work with the proponent and develop a design and construct contract for a fixed price. This process provides greater assurance that required works will be completed within the available project budget.

  o Building works are scheduled to commence in February 2024 for a Term 1, 2025 school opening.

- This measure contributes to Closing the Gap Target 5:
By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (aged 20-24) attaining Year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96 per cent.

- The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) has been working with the department and Studio Schools of Australia on the implementation of this measure.

Project rescope and implementation

- The previous government committed $74.9 million over 2021–2022 to 2025–2026 for BBSoC to:

  o build **3** new on-country residential middle-year First Nations boarding schools (Years 7–9)

  o upgrade the existing Indigenous boarding school facility (Years 10–12) at **Yiramalay** in the Kimberley region of WA

  o construct an **Indigenous Education Research Centre** to provide a program of professional development for staff.

- There were significant delays in implementation due to COVID-19 border closures, unseasonably wet weather, finalising state government land and planning approvals, and finalising Indigenous Land Use Agreements.

- Studio Schools of Australia advised the department in July 2022 that it faced significant cost pressures, and the scope of the measure was becoming unviable within the original funding envelope.

- In late August 2022, Studio Schools of Australia further advised that it faced increased operational and administrative costs, in part due to uncertainty about the trajectory of new student enrolments and because of variable enrolment numbers at the Yiramalay school, post COVID-19 and floods.

- The total funding shortfall to complete the original project, as advised by Studio Schools of Australia in late 2022, was in the order of $118 million.

- The department, Studio Schools of Australia and the NIAA have worked closely over this time to identify a way forward.

- In May 2023, Studio Schools of Australia advised its intention to build the new boarding school at an alternative site to the previously announced Bandilngan (WA) (pronounced BUN-DIL-YARN) location following the significant flood event in January 2023.

- On 10 August 2023, the Minister for Education agreed to the new Manjali Studio School site at Kurrajong, which is in the Kimberley region and approximately 55 km from Bandilngan.

- The Studio Schools of Australia website identifies the three schools intended to be built in addition to Yirmalay under their intended 'system' of Studio Schools; Dhupuma (NT), Windjana (WA; now Manjali), and Roebourne (WA).

2023 - 2024 Supplementary Budget Estimates
SB23-000344

Financial Implications

- The changed scope of this measure reduced the Australian Government's original contribution of $74.9 million to $70.8 million (over 2021–22 to 2025–26; detailed breakdown at **Attachment A**).

- The saving of $4.2 million has been redirected to other measures within the Education portfolio.

Media

- ***Labor's 'lies' on boarding schools, The Daily Telegraph, 19 October 2023***
  The article outlines claims from Senator Henderson that Minister Clare did not tell the truth in relation to the rescoping of the BBSoC measure. This is on the basis that while Minister Clare has stated that the measure was not adequately funded by the previous Government, the article outlines that the present Government was not made aware of a shortfall until after it took power.

- ***Yes to a Voice but No to a boarding school, The Daily Telegraph, 10 August 2023***
  The article notes that two new boarding schools planned for East Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory and the Pilbara region in WA (around Roebourne) will not be built because of the rescoping of the BBSoC measure.

- ***Blame Game as schools defunded**, The Daily Telegraph, 10 August 2023*
  The article notes a boarding school that would have provided educational services for East Arnhem Land's Yolngu people is not proceeding. Minister's Clare's response was that the previous Coalition government did not allocate enough funding to deliver on their commitment to build these schools.

Attachments

- **Attachment A**: BBSoC change in project costs

- **Attachment B**: Budget factsheet

- **Attachment C**: Question on Notice – SQ23-000679

Date Last Cleared	23 October 2023

Attachment A

BBSoC project costs

($ million excl. GST)

	Original funding allocation (Oct 2021)	Revised costs advised SSA (Nov 2022)	Budget 2023-24 (May 2023)	Expended to date (Oct 2023)	Not yet expended (Oct 2023)
Project costs					
New school – Manjali (MARN-JA-LEE) Studio School, Kimberley Region, WA	22.000	45.300	45.300		
New school - East Arnhem Region, NT	22.000	56.000	n/a		
New school - Pilbara Region, WA	22.000	64.000	n/a	52.000[5]	0.000
Upgrade to existing Yiramalay Studio School	2.000	2.200[2]	2.200		
Construction of an Indigenous Education Research Centre (IERC)	4.000	5.000	4.500[3]		
Total Construction costs	**72.000[1]**	**172.500**	**52.000**	**52.000**	**0.000**
Other Administration Costs					
SSA costs	n/a	18.200	16.200	16.200[5]	0.000
Block Grant Authority Administration	0.450	0.450	0.500	0.500	0.000
Program Evaluation	0.520	0.520	0.520	0.170	0.350
Departmental Administration	1.538	1.538	1.538	1.189	0.349
Unallocated (contingency)	0.398	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total administration costs	**2.908**	**20.708**	**18.758**	**1.859**	**0.699**
Total Project and Administration Costs	**74.908**	**193.208**	**70.758[4]**	**70.059**	**0.699**

1. In November 2021, $6.800 million was re-allocated from Education to the NIAA.

2. The revised project scope for upgrades at Yiramalay requested $2.2 million. The revised scope noted that other enhancements at Yiramalay, of approximately $2.3 million, had been funded though the NIAA managed funding of $6.8 million. These include enhancements to security, ablution facilities and solar power.

3. SSA advised a revised total cost for the IERC of $5 million. SSA noted a philanthropic donation of $500,000 reduced the amount of Commonwealth funding required to $4.5 million.

4. The NPP (revised scope) reflects project construction costs estimated at that time; it recognised final costs will be determined subject to tender evaluation.

5. The BGA is responsible for making payments to SSA in accordance with contractually agreed construction milestones. The Western Australian Independent Block Grant Authority (BGA) has received $60.05 million ($52.0 million project costs and $16.2 million SSA costs) in anticipation of the construction contract being signed in December 2023.

Australian Government
Department of Education

Budget
2023–24

First Nations – supporting education outcomes
Building Boarding Schools On-Country

Studio Schools of Australia will build a new middle year secondary boarding school at Bandilngan (Windjana Gorge) in the Kimberley, upgrade their existing Yiramalay Studio School, and establish a new Indigenous Education and Research Centre.

This measure revises the scope of the Building Boarding Schools On-Country program.

Construction costs have increased across Australia, particularly in remote areas. This has significantly impacted what is possible within the Building Boarding Schools On-Country program.

Why is this important?

Supporting boarding options reduces the challenges that students from remote communities face in accessing school while staying connected to Country and family.

Programs that support student engagement and pathways to further education and employment are critical to retention and longer-term success of First Nations students.

The Building Boarding Schools On-Country program contributes to Closing the Gap Target 5: *By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (aged 20-24) attaining Year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96 per cent*.

Who will benefit?

In line with community agreements in place, the Bandilngan site has been nominated by Studio Schools Australia as the most appropriate location for constructing a new Studio School.

When constructed, the school will support up to 78 middle years (Years 7 to 9) students and provide a supportive and culturally safe learning environment on-Country.

How much will it cost?

The Government is committing $70.8 million to deliver the revised program scope, with savings of $4.2 million to be redirected to other measures within the Education portfolio.

education.gov.au

Standing Committees on Education and Employment

QUESTION ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2023 - 2024

Outcome: Schools

Department of Education Question No. SQ23-000679

Senator Sarah Henderson provided in writing.

Also, refer to previous hearing Question No. SQ23-000228, SQ23-000380

Studio Schools

Question
1. Please provide detail on the original funding for the Studio Schools Program.
2. Please provide detail on the original commitments under the Studio Schools Program.
3. Please outline the cost against each original commitment under the Studio Schools Program.
4. At what point was the Department of Education notified that the elements would cost more than was originally costed because of price increases/inflation? Please provide a copy of the advice received by the delivery partner.
5. Please provide detail on the increased prices against each element/commitment under the Studio Schools Program.
6. The Department advised during Estimates the increased costings had been 'stress tested'. Please outline what was 'stress tested', how this was undertaken, by whom this was undertaken and what report was developed as a result of this. Please submit the findings of this 'stress test'.
7. Did the Department brief the Minister on the increased prices to the Program?
   – If not, why not?
   – If yes, please provide the dates of the briefs provided to the Minister, the reference number of each brief and the date each brief was signed by the Minister and returned to the Department.
8. Please provide a copy of all briefs provided to the Minister on the Studio Schools Program.
9. Please provide a copy of the Indigenous Education and Research Centre's project proposal and the operating costs over the next 10 years requested for this element of the Studio Schools Program.
10. Who made the decision not to proceed with the two boarding schools in East Arnhem and the Pilbara?
    – Did the Department make a recommendation to the Minister that these two Boarding Schools not proceed?
    – Did the Department make the recommendation that the other elements of the Studio Schools Program proceed? If not, who made that recommendation?
    – Did the Minister make the final decision on which elements of the Program would proceed and which would not?
    – If the Minister did not make this decision who did?
11. What is the current funding allocated to the Studio Schools Program?
12. Where were the 'saves' from the Studio Schools Program redirected to? Which new or existing Program were the 'saves' attributed to?
13. What are the operational costs for the Studio Schools program?
    – Who is the delivery partner for this program?
    – Please provide the funding allocation for delivery of this program broken down by departmental costs and the delivery partners costs by financial year for the next 10 financial years.

Answer

Question 1

The Building Boarding Schools On Country program was announced in August 2021 providing $75 million measure under the Australian Government's Closing the Gap Implementation Plan.

Question 2 and 3

Commonwealth funding of $74.908 million over 2021–2022 to 2024–2025 was provided to:

- construct three new on-country residential middle-year (Years 7–9) Indigenous boarding schools in the following remote locations:
  - Bandilngan/Windjana, Kimberley Region, Western Australia ($22 million excluding GST)
  - Dhupuma, East Arnhem Region, Northern Territory ($22 million excluding GST)
  - Pilbara Region, Western Australia ($22 million excluding GST).
- upgrade Studio Schools of Australia's (SSA) existing senior years (Years 10–12) Indigenous boarding school at Yiramalay (Kimberley Region, Western Australia) ($2 million excluding GST)
- establish an Indigenous Education Research Centre near one of the new school sites ($4 million excluding GST).

Funding provided for the measure also included $0.45 million (excluding GST) to be provided to Block Grant Authorities (BGAs) to oversee implementation of construction activities on the Commonwealth's behalf, $0.52 million (excluding GST) for program evaluation activities and $1.54 million for departmental expenses. $0.398 million was unallocated.

Question 4

On 24 July 2022, SSA advised the department that the cost of building the Bandilngan/Windjana Studio School had increased from $22 million to $45.3 million. The relevant email is attached (refer Attachment A).

Question 5

The table below shows the original and revised cost estimates for each element:

	Original cost estimates (excluding GST)	Revised cost estimates (excluding GST)
Bandilngan/Windjana Studio School in the Kimberley Region of Western Australia	$22,000,000	$45,300,000
East Arnhem Region of the Northern Territory	$22,000,000	$56,000,000
Pilbara Region of Western Australia	$22,000,000	$64,000,000
Upgrade to the Yiramalay Studio School	$2,000,000	$2,200,000
Construction of an Indigenous Education Research Centre	$4,000,000	$5,000,000

Question 6

Cost increases associated with capital works were detailed in an SSA Briefing Paper of September 2022 (Attachment B) The SSA Briefing Paper was informed by an August 2022 Quantity Surveyor costing based on SSA's proposed building plans (Attachment C).
The department has assessed this information and has confidence that it has been prepared by industry experts and reflects construction cost increases for remote infrastructure projects since the original costing was prepared.

Question 7 and 8

The revised measure was considered by Government as part of the 2023–24 Budget.

Question 9

Information on the Indigenous Education and Research Centre (IERC) is included in SSA's September 2021 *System Business and Operational Plan* at Attachment D (refer Pages 14-16, 64-65, 90, and 120-121). IERC annual operating costs will be met by funding from other sources (philanthropy etc.) and operating surpluses from the system schools.

Question 10

Due to the increased construction costs, the Budget allocation only allowed for the construction of one new school, refurbishment of the existing school, and the construction of the IERC.
The Government proceeded with the new school build that was the most progressed, being the Bandilngan (Windjana Gorge) site.

Question 11

Total current funding to be provided under the program is $70.758 million (GST exclusive).

Question 12

Savings realised through the reduction of the program scope were used to offset expenditure on other Education portfolio measures.

Question 13

The program is being delivered by SSA and the Western Australian Independent Block Grant Authority (AISWA Capital Grant Association Inc) is overseeing the project.

Funding allocation for delivery ($m; GST exclusive)

	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031	2031-2032	TOTAL
SSA	2.500	6.675	7.025	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16.2
BGA	-	0.250	0.250	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.5
Departmental	0.307	0.535	0.347	0.349	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.538
TOTAL	**2.807**	**7.460**	**7.622**	**0.349**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**18.238**

2023 - 2024 Supplementary Budget Estimates
SB23-000345

Issue:	**Central Australia Response – On-Country Learning**
PBS Pg No.	2023–24 PBS, Pg 16 (Entity overview and resources), 23 (2023-24 Education Budget measures table) 36 (offset and departmental funding). Budget paper 3 Pg 42 (funding to Treasury for Federation Funding Agreement Schedule payment).
Contact:	**Meg Brighton**
	Ph: s 22
	Deputy Secretary

Budget - On-Country Learning to Improve School Engagement and Attendance

Financial year	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26	Total
Budget Allocation		$30,000,000	$10,000,000		$40,000,000
Committed		$30,000,000	$10,000,000		$40,000,000
Uncommitted					

Key Points

- The bilateral agreement to support the **On-Country Learning measure** (the measure) was executed by Ministers Clare and Lawler on 28 September 2023.

- The bilateral agreement provides funding as follows:
  - $34.7 million to schools per the bilateral schedule
  - $4.9 million to central supports
  - $0.4 million to the Northern Territory Government for administration.

- The measure recognises that schools in the Northern Territory are facing serious resourcing challenges and quality education is a central enabler to improving whole-of-community outcomes. This is particularly the case in Central Australia where the engagement of young people in education is key to addressing social unrest.

- Draft funding allocations per school as at 29 July 2023 were tabled in response to a Question on Notice from Senator Henderson (Attachment A, answered 25 August 2023).

- Final funding allocations per school are included in the bilateral schedule (Attachment B).

- o Funding allocations for each school in Central Australia have been determined in consultation with the Northern Territory Government, taking into consideration the size and level of disadvantage of each school, as well as projected funding levels for 2024.
- o Projected 2024 funding levels carry forward 2022 enrolment data as this was the latest available at the time funding allocations were calculated.
- o The majority of funding will go directly to public schools in Central Australia.
- o Of the 46 schools in Central Australia, 45 are operating and will receive funding through this measure.
- o Final funding allocations are the same as the draft allocations advised to Principals and listed in the above QoN, with the exception of Laramba School. The funding for Laramba was listed as "TBC" in the QoN, as its operating status in 2024 was uncertain when funding levels were initially calculated. When the Northern Territory Government advised it would be operating in 2024 its funding was calculated at $572,718.

- The first milestone payment of $30 million is due to be paid in December 2023, after receiving a summary report of progress of development of School Action Plans (Plans) and any Plans received to date.

- Letters have been sent to school principals informing them of their final funding amounts to enable the development of Plans with their communities (letters sent 5 October 2023).

  The agreement outlines the requirement for Plans to be developed and agreed between schools and communities, in line with the commitment to take a new approach by listening to communities first, because the most effective solutions come from local community.

- Plans—to be approved by an appropriate community representative and the school principal—will outline priorities and activities to engage young people in school during the 2024 school year. Once submitted and approved by the Northern Territory Department of Education, the Northern Territory Government will release individual payments to schools.

- Timing for payments to be made to schools will vary, noting schools are being provided the time to develop their plans in conjunction with, tailored to, and agreed by their communities.

- Over 85 per cent of funding under this Agreement will be committed to Central Australian schools.

- The remainder of funding will enable the Northern Territory Government to coordinate additional regional initiatives to support Central Australian schools with allied health, intensive literacy and numeracy and quality learning initiatives.

- The majority of funding under this Agreement will go directly to public schools in Central Australia.
    - On average, public schools in the Northern Territory are the most underfunded schools in the country.
    - They receive approximately 80 per cent of their Schooling Resource Standard (SRS), and, under current funding arrangements, are not on track to achieve 100 per cent of the SRS before 2050.

Specific issues

If asked about the definition of On-Country Learning

- Communities, families and students have raised the importance of On-Country Learning through recent conversations and consultations as a means of culturally meaningful and relevant engagement.

- On-Country Learning is a conceptual term relating to educational instruction and engagement which enables students to connect with their surroundings. The Government acknowledges that On-Country Learning can mean different things to different communities.

- For government, On-Country Learning means improving the cultural responsiveness of education, including how it is led locally, so that more students and their families engage in education and pathways to employment On-Country.

If asked about what activities are being funded through the measure

- School plans will require endorsement by relevant community representatives as well as school leaders and may include the following types of activities within schools:
    - intensive foundational literacy and numeracy support
    - increased flexible learning for secondary students with a focus on students obtaining qualifications that align to jobs in the industries in their communities and regions
    - increased employment of local Aboriginal staff in schools to support cultural wellbeing and identity
    - targeted engagement, re-engagement and attendance initiatives, which are culturally responsive
    - On-Country Learning initiatives that support two-way learning opportunities, foster culturally responsive learning

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environments, and invite culture and language into the day-to-day delivery of curriculum (where community support exists).

If asked about student accommodation in Central Australia

- The Australian and Northern Territory Governments have directed officials to conduct an assessment of boarding school options and capacity in Central Australia.

- This will be conducted by the National Indigenous Australians Agency, the Commonwealth Department of Education and the Northern Territory Department of Education.

- There are two schools currently offering boarding in the Central Australia Region. These are non-government schools, both located in Alice Springs:
    - St Philip's College is a Uniting Church co-educational boarding and day school for students in years 7–12 with 550 enrolments including 110 Indigenous enrolments (2022). There is capacity for up to 60 boarders.
    - Yirara College is a co-educational Lutheran secondary and boarding college for Aboriginal students with 177 enrolments (2022). All students board.

- Yipirinya School (Yipirinya), another non-government school in Alice Springs, is also proposing to establish a boarding facility on site. (*Further detail in Yipirinya-specific points below*)

- All relevant stakeholders, including the Central Australian Aboriginal Leadership Group, the Central Australian Regional Controller and local schools seeking to establish or expand accommodation options will be consulted as part of the assessment into boarding options and capacity.
    - This will include all three schools referenced above – Yipirinya School, Yirara College, St Philip's College.

- This assessment will consider proposals to establish, expand or improve boarding accommodation to deliver the best outcome for the entire Central Australian community.

- This assessment builds on the $40 million On-Country Learning investment and will also be informed by the findings of the Northern Territory Government's Review of Secondary Schooling.

- Advice will be provided by the end of 2023.

If asked about Yipirinya School's Boarding Proposal

- Yipirinya School (Yipirinya) in Alice Springs has been engaging with the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) regarding a proposal for student and staff accommodation on site.

- Yipirinya primarily services students from Alice Springs and surrounding Town Camps. The boarding accommodation is intended to support those students who have limited access to safe accommodation in Alice Springs in order to support the ongoing engagement of these students with school.

- Yipirinya reports strong support from their Board and school community and expect strong demand that would likely see the facility fully utilised.

- This proposal, its broader context, and boarding capacity and need in Central Australia more generally will be considered in an assessment conducted by officials from the department, the NIAA and the Northern Territory Department of Education.

- This assessment was requested by the Australian and Northern Territory Governments, and advice will be provided by the end of 2023.

- The department also provides recurrent school funding to Yipirinya School's Approved Authority (Yipirinya School Council Inc), based on the actual students they enrol.

- Funding increased significantly in 2022 compared to 2021 as a result of a significant increase in enrolments (108 in 2021 to 273 in 2022, *MySchool*), however 2021 is the latest public funding data.

Stakeholder Response

Stakeholder	Response summary
Opposition	The Federal Opposition has been critical of the Australian Government's response to the situation in Central Australia. In mid-April 2023, the Leader of the Opposition visited Central Australia and said crime remains a serious problem and requires urgent action, calling for more police resources to assist, including the AFP. The Leader of the Opposition also repeated claims about widespread child sexual abuse in the region.
	Senators Price and Henderson have expressed concern over the Australian Government's response to Yipirinya School's boarding facility proposal, and its allocation of funding under the measure.
Northern Territory Government	The NT Government has been working with the Australian Government on the response to the situation in Central Australia. On 24 January 2023, the Prime Minister and Northern Territory Chief Minister announced the appointment of a Central Australian

	Regional Controller to coordinate government's response to the current situation in Alice Springs.
NT Regional Controller	On 1 February 2023, the Central Australian Regional Controller provided a report to the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory Government – *Proposed actions for alcohol related harm in Central Australian communities.* The Regional Controller has also been working with the local communities, the NT Government, and the Australian Government on the broader response package.
Alice Springs Mayor	In January 2023, the Mayor of Alice Springs urged the Australian Government to intervene, amid sustained claims the NT Government has "lost control" of the streets of Alice Springs. In August 2023, the Mayor stated his opinion that the extension of alcohol restrictions would not stop youth crime.
Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)	In the context of the situation in Central Australia and the Federal Opposition's recent statements, the Chief Executive of SNAICC, which advocates for Indigenous children and families nationwide, has said the Opposition's rhetoric around sexual abuse in Central Australia was exaggerated and harmful. Ms Liddle has called for greater investment in preventative measures and healing supports on the ground, to ensure child abuse didn't happen in the first place.

Media

- ***Schools Crucial to Community Life, The Australian, 26 September 2023***

  Part of a series of articles from the Australian on education and schools in the Northern Territory, this wide-ranging piece focuses on Yipirinya School as an example of the difficulties facing NT First Nations youth, including secure housing, mental health and developmental challenges, and other interruptions to schooling. Like other articles in the series, it cites that NT schools are underfunded, advocates for further investment, and argues that education should be the primary response to disadvantage and poverty.

- ***Vandals break into Yipirinya School, cultural precinct and cafe in overnight Alice Springs crime spree, ABC Online, 25 August 2023***

  The article reports the third break in three weeks at Yipirinya, the damage caused to the front office, and Principal Gavin Morris' disappointment around the physical damage and damage to morale caused by the incident.

- ***Plans underway to tackle Alice Springs' summer crime spike, police minister backs behavioural program, ABC Online, 22 August 2023***

  The article describes police preparedness for the summer period in Alice Springs and focuses on an NT Government diversion program for children called *On the Right Track,* to which several children under 12 involved in vehicle thefts have been referred. The NT Police Minister highlights the responsibility of parents to know the whereabouts of their children.

- ***Alice Springs young people say lack of affordable housing a driver behind youth crime spike, ABC Online, 12 August 2023***

  The article outlines that both a lack of affordability and a lack of safety at home in Alice Springs are causing young people to be homeless and/or increasing their engagement with the criminal justice system. It reports calls from NT Shelter for a "Youth Foyer", youth-specific accommodation in Alice Springs.

- ***Alice Springs school principal calls for Territory Families to intervene after students allegedly steal bus, ABC Online, 11 August 2023***

  The article reports the alleged theft of a Yipirinya School bus by students, and Principal Gavin Morris' reaction, including the effect on the school community's morale. The children, under the age of criminal responsibility, were conveyed home.

- ***A Better Safer Future for Central Australia, PM Media Release, 6 February 2023***

  The media release outlines that Australian and Northern Territory governments announced a landmark package for Central Australia that will improve community safety, tackle alcohol related harm, and provide more opportunities for young people, and contains 6 elements, including: improved community safety and cohesion, job creation, better services, preventing and addressing the issues caused by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, investing in families, and on-Country learning. This package was in addition to the $48 million investment in community safety announced by the Australian Government on 24 January 2023.

Other documentation / Attachments

Attachment A: Question on Notice - SQ23-000687.
Senator Henderson asked a detailed Question on Notice during the 2023–24 Budget estimates hearing. The question went to the schools to be supported through the measure's funding, criteria for school selection, and the mechanics of the measure's operation, including the design of programs for student engagement.

Attachment B: Schedule to the Federation Finding Agreement Education and Skills

Background

- As part of the Government's response to the situation in Central Australia, and the $250 million *Better, Safer Future for Central Australia*, the **On-Country Learning measure** (the measure) will provide $40 million to support all operating schools in Central Australia to respond flexibly to the needs of their communities and support young people to increase school engagement and attendance.

  o Public announcements referred to $40.4 million; this comprises the $40 million in additional funding for schools and $0.4 million in departmental to deliver the measure ($0.257m in 2023–24 and $0.130m in 2024–25).

- The measure's identified area is the Northern Territory Government region of Central Australia as defined by the Northern Territory Department of Education. This includes the Alice Springs, MacDonnell and Central Desert Local Government Areas and Yulara unincorporated area. This includes 46 schools (45 currently operating), of which 36 are government schools, 3 are catholic schools and 7 are independent schools.

Date Last Cleared	18 October 2023

Standing Committees on Education and Employment

QUESTION ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2023 - 2024

Outcome: Schools

Department of Education Question No. SQ23-000687

Senator Sarah Henderson provided in writing.

Increased support for Central Australian schools

Question
1. The $40.4 million announced by Minister Clare for the 'increased support for Central Australian schools' is to support student enrolment and engagement and learning outcomes across 46 schools. Please provide a list of the schools that will receive funding.

2. How were the 46 schools selected?

3. What parameters were used to select the 46 schools?

4. Please provide the current attendance rate and attendance level data for each of the 46 schools for the most recent collected year, by school sector, year group, gender and Indigenous status.

5. What specific measures will be put in place to increase student attendance?

6. Please define what is meant by student engagement for the purposes of this measure.

7. Please provide the current measures of engagement for each of the 46 schools.

8. What specific measures will be put in place to increase 'engagement'?

9. Please provide the definition being applied to improving learning outcomes for the purposes of this measure.

10. How will improved learning outcomes for students be measured?

11. How will the funding be split across each of the 46 schools? Please provide the funding profile for each of the 46 schools?

12. When will the funding be provided to the schools for their use to action each this commitment?

13. Is any component of the $40.4 million for departmental or administrative expenditure either by the Federal Government or the Northern Territory Government? If, yes please advise how much will be retained by each level of government for administration expenditure (including staffing).

14. Has the Department engaged with the Central Australian Regional Controller, Dorelle Anderson in the development of this measure? If so, please provide the dates of each engagement.

15. Will the measures being funded use principles and methods that have proven effective or will they be trialling new concepts?

16. Has any employee from the Department of Education been to Central Australia since this package was announced to meet with schools, community or the Northern Territory Government?

17. How was this measure funded? Was this new money or was this as a result of savings from other programs or redirected funds from other programs.

18. Was this proposal reviewed by the Office of Impact Analysis? If not, why not? If yes, please provide a copy of the advice from the Office of Impact Analysis.

Answer

Please note: This response also addresses SQ23-000286 and SQ23-000376.

1. The Commonwealth will enter into an agreement with the Northern Territory Government under the Education and Skills Federation Funding Agreement to deliver $40 million in additional funding to schools in Central Australia, as part of the Australian Government's $250 million investment in the *Better, safer future for Central Australia Plan*.

   The Department of Education is developing a schedule under the Education and Skills Federation Funding Agreement (the Schedule) which is currently under negotiation with the Northern Territory Government and will include reporting requirements.

2. The identified region (Northern Territory Government's Central Australia region) includes 46 schools, of which, 36 are government schools; 3 are Catholic schools; and 7 are independent schools.

3. The parameters for the 46 schools were set by the Northern Territory Government's Central Australia region and have been used for the purpose of the On Country Learning measure. This area includes the 46 selected schools.

4. The Northern Territory Government is currently charged with measuring engagement and other relevant data for each of the 46 schools. Publicly held data from 2022 sourced through MySchool outlines attendance and enrolment for the identified schools as set out in Attachment A. Attendance data is not publicly available by year group and gender for each school.

5. On-Country Learning seeks to increase student attendance and engagement by prioritising community engagement and locally identified, driven and tailored activities in partnership with local leadership organisations and schools. The activities will differ between schools and communities and are still being developed.

6-10. Student engagement and improving learning outcomes for the purposes of On-Country Learning may be demonstrated through:
   - student participation with locally identified, driven and tailored activities at each school
   - student attendance at each school by those participating in On Country Learning activities
   - overall student attendance at each school
   - overall student enrolment at each school
   - other additional outcomes related to participation in On Country Learning activities (i.e. intensive literacy and/or numeracy outcomes, qualification attainment).

11. Allocation of funds to schools will be informed by consideration of existing funding levels and finalised through the Schedule. The final funding distribution to individual schools under the agreement is yet to be finalised with the Northern Territory Department of Education. The draft projected funding for each school is at Attachment B.

Funding under the *Australian Education Act 2013* is determined at the Approved Authority (AA) level, not school level. For Northern Territory public schools, the AA is the Northern Territory Government and is projected to receive as at Budget 2023–24 the following amounts for all public schools:

Item	2023	2024	2025
Commonwealth share of SRS	21.5%	21.2%	20.8%
Commonwealth total funding ($m)	214.7	219.3	222.6
Commonwealth average per student funding	7,345	7,500	7,594

Note: The Commonwealth's recurrent funding for schools is based on actual enrolments in each year, not Budget projections. The above figures are projections and subject to change.

Publicly held data from 2021 relating to school funding is also outlined at Attachment B (Australian Government and Northern Territory Government funding for each school) and Attachment C (loadings information for each Approved Authority, noting this is not available by each school, and only represents the Commonwealth contribution to the Schooling Resource Standard. Data on the Northern Territory Government contribution by loadings is not available). Further notes are included in each attachment as relevant to the data contained therein.

12. The funding will be managed by the Schedule and provided over two financial years ($30 million in 2023–24 and $10 million in 2024–25). The majority of funds to support activities in the 2024 calendar year are expected to be released in December 2023.

13. $40 million of this measure is administered funding. Allocation of this will be informed by the Schedule negotiations to support the 46 identified schools in Central Australia. The remaining $0.4 million is departmental allocation for the department and will be used towards staffing and administrative costs.

14,16. Representatives from the department have participated in community consultations led by the Office of Central Australian Regional Controller (OCARC) and has a staff member based in Alice Springs supporting the coordination of the On Country Learning Program. The department meets regularly with the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) and Northern Territory Government stakeholders including the OCARC through a number of forums including where departmental staff have attended Alice Springs in July 2023 to participate in NIAA/OCARC led community consultations and other stakeholder meetings.

15. The activities will differ between schools and communities and are still being developed.

17. The On-Country Learning measure has been funded through offsets.

18. It is a requirement that all New Policy Proposals are reviewed by the Office of Impact Analysis.

Targeted Schools Data 2022

- 46 schools in Alice Springs, MacDonnell and Central Desert LGAs and Yulara (this includes 36 government schools, 3 Catholic schools and 7 independent schools)

	Sector	School	Local Gov't Area	Girls Enrolments	Boys Enrolments	Attendance rate in Sem 1 (%)	Attendance rate in Sem 1 by Indigenous (%)	Attendance rate in Sem 1 by non-Indigenous (%)	Attendance level in Sem 1 (%)	Attendance level in Sem 1 by Indigenous (%)	Attendance level in Sem 1 by non-Indigenous (%)
	Total	Total									
	Government	**Total**									
1	Government	Yuendumu School	Central Desert (R)	71	88	48	-	-	3	-	-
2	Government	Alice Springs School of the Air	Alice Springs (T)	33	51	90	65	98	81	38	96
3	Government	Amoonguna School	MacDonnell (R)	5	5	70	-	-	16	-	-
4	Government	Areyonga School	MacDonnell (R)	15	19	58	-	-	12	-	-
5	Government	Bradshaw Primary School	Alice Springs (T)	216	224	84	72	91	55	32	67
6	Government	Braitling Primary School	Alice Springs (T)	99	109	79	71	85	34	20	46
7	Government	Gillen Primary School	Alice Springs (T)	94	92	64	56	89	25	12	64
8	Government	Haasts Bluff School	MacDonnell (R)	8	9	68	-	-	21	-	-
9	Government	Papunya School	MacDonnell (R)	48	48	35	-	-	0	-	-
10	Government	Ross Park Primary School	Alice Springs (T)	189	202	86	82	87	44	26	48
11	Government	Sadadeen Primary School	Alice Springs (T)	55	76	65	64	71	13	11	21
12	Government	Ti Tree School	Central Desert (R)	30	25	49	-	-	4	-	-
13	Government	Willowra School	Central Desert (R)	49	42	34	-	-	2	-	-
14	Government	Yulara School	Unincorporated NT	25	22	87	79	89	59	38	66
15	Government	Watiyawanu School	MacDonnell (R)	28	19	64	-	-	3	-	-
16	Government	Stirling School	Central Desert (R)	3	6	22	-	-	0	-	-
17	Government	Finke School	MacDonnell (R)	12	31	58	-	-	4	-	-
18	Government	Larapinta Primary School	Alice Springs (T)	141	149	80	66	88	36	14	49
19	Government	Acacia Hill School	Alice Springs (T)	23	68	76	73	84	30	23	53
20	Government	Alcoota School	Central Desert (R)	13	12	47	-	-	0	-	-
21	Government	Centralian Senior College	Alice Springs (T)	189	198	67	57	77	26	13	40
22	Government	Harts Range School	Central Desert (R)	31	16	56	-	-	3	-	-
23	Government	Imanpa School	MacDonnell (R)	9	14	54	-	-	13	-	-
24	Government	Laramba School	Central Desert (R)	19	24	44	-	-	0	-	-
25	Government	Watarrka School[1]	MacDonnell (R)								
26	Government	Mbunghara School	MacDonnell (R)	5	6	41	-	-	0	-	-
27	Government	Mount Allan School	Central Desert (R)	21	29	43	-	-	4	-	-
28	Government	Mutitjulu School	MacDonnell (R)	23	21	41	-	-	0	-	-
29	Government	Ntaria School	MacDonnell (R)	58	68	48	-	-	3	-	-
30	Government	Nyirripi School	Central Desert (R)	25	24	49	-	-	5	-	-
31	Government	Titjikala School	MacDonnell (R)	20	11	49	-	-	4	-	-
32	Government	Wallace Rockhole School	MacDonnell (R)	4	12	45	-	-	6	-	-
33	Government	Walungurru School	MacDonnell (R)	25	36	56	-	-	5	-	-
34	Government	Bonya School	Central Desert (R)	6	4	62	-	-	0	-	-
35	Government	Centralian Middle School	Alice Springs (T)	175	172	66	59	78	16	9	25
36	Government	Mulga Bore School	Central Desert (R)	3	7	49	-	-	0	-	-
	Catholic	**Total**									

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[1] Watarrka School does not have an entry on *My School* so there is no data for it. The Australian Schools List (Home (acara.edu.au)) states that the school is closed.

Attachment A

	Sector	School	Local Gov't Area	Girls Enrolments	Boys Enrolments	Attendance rate in Sem 1 (%)	Attendance rate in Sem 1 by Indigenous (%)	Attendance rate in Sem 1 by non-Indigenous (%)	Attendance level in Sem 1 (%)	Attendance level in Sem 1 by Indigenous (%)	Attendance level in Sem 1 by non-Indigenous (%)
1	Catholic	Ltyentye Apurte CEC[2]	MacDonnell (R)	66	55	54	-	-	4	-	-
2	Catholic	OLSH - Traeger Avenue Campus[3]	Alice Springs (T)	342	353	87	79	88	51	17	56
3	Catholic	St Joseph's Catholic Flexible Learning Centre	Alice Springs (T)	41	58	41	-	-	3	-	-
	Independent	**Total**									
1	Independent	Yipirinya School[4]	Alice Springs (T)	134	139	31	-	-	1	-	-
2	Independent	Living Waters Lutheran School	Alice Springs (T)	103	121	87	78	88	49	25	51
3	Independent	St Philip's College	Alice Springs (T)	282	268	86	83	87	40	25	45
4	Independent	Yirara College[5]	Alice Springs (T)	59	118	42	-	-	4	-	-
5	Independent	Nyangatjatjara College[5]	MacDonnell (R)	34	29	32	-	-	0	-	-
6	Independent	Araluen Christian College	Alice Springs (T)	54	72	86	83	86	50	30	52
7	Independent	The Alice Springs Steiner School	Alice Springs (T)	74	64	85	74	86	35	15	38

Sources: *My School* website

Definition:

- Attendance rate. The number of actual full-time equivalent student-days attended by full-time students in Years 1-10 in Semester 1 as a percentage of the total number of possible student-days attended in Semester 1.
- Attendance level. The proportion of full-time students in Years 1-10 whose attendance rate in Semester 1 is equal to or greater than 90 per cent.

Note:

- *My School* does not have enrolments by grade so we have provided total enrolments by gender. Also, *My School* does not have attendance by grade or gender so we have provided attendance rates and levels for the whole school.
- When a school's results are unavailable or there are fewer than, or equal to, five Indigenous or non-Indigenous students, a dash '-' will be displayed. This is to protect the privacy of students.

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[2] We have assumed that "Ltyentye Apurte CEC" is the same as "Ltyntye Apurte Catholic School" listed on *My School*.
[3] Data was not available by campus for the schools with multiple campuses. The data in the table is for the whole school.
[4] The data for attendance rate and attendance level in Semester 1 is for 2021. Data is not available for 2022.
[5] Data was not available by campus for the schools with multiple campuses. The data in the table is for the whole school.

Attachment B

2021 total and per student recurrent funding amount by Australian and Northern Territory (NT) Government and estimated On-Country learning measure per school funding

School	Sector	Australian Govt recurrent amount ($)#	Australian Govt recurrent per student amount ($)#	NT Govt recurrent amount ($)#	NT Govt recurrent per student amount ($)#	On-Country Learning estimated funding*
Acacia Hill School	G	2,152,136	24,880	4,420,483	51,104	1,371,566
Alcoota School	G	221,273	13,830	525,954	32,872	414,442
Alice Springs School of the Air	G	1,180,803	13,120	2,391,335	26,570	283,750
Amoonguna School	G	183,617	9,181	412,237	20,612	155,584
Araluen Christian College	I	1,947,668	15,964	391,578	3,210	88,270
Areyonga School	G	441,659	14,247	983,332	31,720	438,222
Bonya School	G	194,293	24,287	458,797	57,350	192,624
Bradshaw Primary School	G	2,683,191	5,833	5,188,607	11,280	2,354,585
Braitling Primary School	G	1,520,960	6,836	3,461,626	15,558	1,394,517
Centralian Middle School	G	4,021,396	11,233	7,210,015	20,140	3,120,070
Centralian Senior College	G	4,531,617	11,620	8,602,163	22,057	2,919,423
Finke School	G	248,944	6,728	592,239	16,006	574,146
Gillen Primary School	G	1,795,467	8,758	3,068,128	14,966	1,695,930
Haasts Bluff School	G	202,004	13,931	464,077	32,005	268,208
Harts Range School	G	396,037	9,659	942,388	22,985	573,758
Imanpa School	G	192,606	9,172	480,031	22,859	40,743^
Laramba School	G	488,343	7,888	1,024,798	16,553	TBC^
Larapinta Primary School	G	1,978,194	6,381	3,853,415	12,430	1,683,095
Living Waters Lutheran School	I	3,125,616	11,750	832,109	3,128	116,647
Ltyentye Apurte Catholic School	C	4,409,297	34,181	621,814	4,820	183,769
Mbunghara School	G	187,560	17,051	452,886	41,171	241,241
Mount Allan School	G	429,414	8,368	940,055	18,318	661,444
Mulga Bore School	G	245,423	17,530	549,027	39,216	223,990
Mutitjulu School	G	351,308	9,495	597,566	16,150	570,239
Ntaria School	G	1,160,733	8,174	2,577,002	18,148	1,734,553
Nyangatjatjara College	I	3,440,423	52,930	351,627	5,410	120,064
Nyirripi School	G	437,054	6,199	898,936	12,751	665,500
OLSH - Traeger Avenue Campus	C	11,878,896	16,778	2,335,634	3,299	388,645
Papunya School	G	768,378	7,801	1,765,503	17,924	1,220,421
Ross Park Primary School	G	2,562,289	5,837	4,907,738	11,179	1,881,527
Sadadeen Primary School	G	1,307,728	12,377	2,602,730	24,634	989,280
St Joseph's Catholic Flexible Learning Centre	C	2,928,733	45,057	758,248	11,665	201,561
St Philip's College	I	8,381,926	14,064	2,057,676	3,452	314,899
Stirling School	G	149,062	14,906	367,360	36,736	180,790

Attachment B

School	Sector	Australian Govt recurrent amount ($)#	Australian Govt recurrent per student amount ($)#	NT Govt recurrent amount ($)#	NT Govt recurrent per student amount ($)#	On-Country Learning estimated funding*
The Alice Springs Steiner School	I	1,982,497	10,893	498,262	2,738	85,320
Ti Tree School	G	449,565	6,770	1,022,892	15,403	685,347
Titjikala School	G	271,349	9,691	638,519	22,804	397,432
Wallace Rockhole School	G	175,597	9,755	444,755	24,709	242,848
Walungurru School	G	389,886	9,046	939,763	21,804	730,119
Watarrka School**	G	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Watiyawanu School	G	449,877	7,690	1,008,255	17,235	507,543
Willowra School	G	582,471	6,702	1,308,125	15,052	1,205,141
Yipirinya School	I	4,194,366	38,837	388,678	3,599	329,535
Yirara College	I	8,626,226	39,752	592,825	2,732	328,513
Yuendumu School	G	1,975,633	11,520	4,488,986	26,175	1,952,461
Yulara School	G	394,933	11,365	846,417	24,357	372,241

Note:

Recurrent funding amounts reflect the established responsibilities for school funding. The Australian Government provides the majority of the public recurrent funding for non-government schools while state and territory governments provide the majority of the public recurrent funding for government schools. The Australian Government's funding is transitioning each year from 2017 funding levels to the target SRS shares, which are 20 per cent of the SRS for government schools by 2027 and 80 per cent of the SRS for non-government schools by 2029.

 # Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, MySchool 2021 financial data, as at 21 June 2023
*Estimated On-country learning funding is indicative only and current as at 24 July 2023.
**Financial data for Watarrka School is not available in MySchool dataset as the school reported nil enrolment in 2022 through 2022 School Census data collection process. Watarrka school has been closed since 2021 and is expected to remain closed in 2024.
^ Funding to be confirmed based on advice from the Northern Territory Government.

Attachment C

2021 Recurrent funding to approved authorities by base and loadings

AA Name	Base ($)	Student with disability ($)	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ($)	Low English proficiency ($)	Socio-educational disadvantage ($)	Location ($)	Size ($)
Department of Education NT	89,047,017	26,261,190	35,198,281	1,600,769	21,966,173	32,852,072	5,682,867
Catholic Church of the Diocese of Darwin Property Trust Inc	39,740,706	14,312,988	14,029,862	896,463	9,182,405	14,129,329	2,407,655
Yipirinya School Council Inc	1,034,700	354,576	1,241,639	93,124	517,350	358,748	161,128
St Philip's College Alice Springs	4,356,617	780,166	518,157	14,284	503,876	2,086,090	119,722
Nyangatjatjara Aboriginal Corporation	707,503	482,587	825,225	63,675	329,902	672,747	201,614
NT Christian Schools	10,923,009	3,004,183	1,239,747	87,976	1,725,658	4,011,398	1,187,531
The Alice Springs Steiner Association	1,127,323	135,134	64,386	890	54,997	447,833	145,906
Lutheran Education South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia Incorporated	126,797,519	12,247,477	4,663,618	390,284	13,314,463	7,345,864	2,247,953

Source: Department of Education, Australian Government Schools Funding Report 2021

Note:

1. Australian Government Schools Funding Report is an annual report to meet the requirements under section 127 of the *Australian Education Act 2013* (the Act) and the Act recognises that Approved Authorities (AAs) are best placed to understand the individual needs of their students and schools.
2. Australian Government recurrent funding for schools is based on the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS). This funding is passed onto AAs who are responsible for the administration and operation of schools. For government schools, the AA is the relevant state or territory. For non-government schools, the AA is the body corporate approved by the Minister for the school. Some AAs may include schools in multiple states/territories.
3. The information extracted from Australian Government Schools Funding Report 2021 is Australian Government's financial assistance in the 2021 school year only. It does not include Northern Territory Government's contribution.
4. All figures are exclusive of Goods and Services Tax (GST).
5. These recurrent funding amounts reflect the established responsibilities for school funding. The Australian Government provides the majority of the public recurrent funding for non-government schools while state and territory governments provide the majority of the public recurrent funding for government schools. The Australian Government's funding is transitioning each year from 2017 funding levels to the target SRS shares, which are 20 per cent of the SRS for government schools by 2027 and 80 per cent of the SRS for non-government schools by 2029.

September 2023

Schedule

Central Australia Plan: On-Country Learning

FEDERATION FUNDING AGREEMENT – EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Table 1: Formalities and operation of schedule	
Parties	Commonwealth Northern Territory
Duration	This Schedule will expire on the later of 31 December 2024, or completion of deliverables, including final performance report and processing of final payments against milestones.
Purpose	The funding under this Schedule forms part of the Australian Government's *A Better, Safer Future for Central Australia* plan, specifically the On-Country Learning measure which will support improved student enrolment, engagement, wellbeing, and learning outcomes at schools in Central Australia through community driven responses supporting improved community engagement. A list of the schools in scope of this measure is included at Appendix A. This additional funding will support the following types of activities within schools in Central Australia: • Intensive literacy and numeracy support; • Increased quality flexible learning for secondary students with a focus on students obtaining qualifications that align to jobs in the industries in their communities and regions and/or provide skills in industries that support community life (such as permaculture); • Increased employment of local Aboriginal staff in schools to support cultural wellbeing, music, art, language and identity; • Targeted engagement, re-engagement and attendance initiatives, which are culturally responsive; • On-Country Learning initiatives that support two-way learning opportunities, foster culturally responsive learning environments, and invite Indigenous language and culture (ILC) into the day-to-day delivery of curriculum, including through bilingual education programs (where community support exists); • Increased allied health services to deliver a selection of universal and targeted services to support inclusion of all students in learning.

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	Funding provided through the On-Country Learning measure cannot be used for infrastructure initiatives. Where possible, the additional funding should be used to provide secure employment. School Action Plans (plans) will identify priorities, consistent with activities listed, to be delivered at each school and should outline how the initiatives align with broader School Improvement Plans. These plans will be developed in partnership with community, including First Nations families, staff, and students, and reflect community aspirations for education, and embody the partnership between schools and communities. The plans will clearly reflect the feedback provided through engagements undertaken by the Office of the Central Australia Regional Controller (OCARC) as part of the Central Australia response. These plans will require endorsement by the school principal, the school representative body where in place, and relevant community representatives for both government and non-government schools. All schools receiving the On-Country Learning measure are required to provide a plan. The allocation of funding to each of the identified schools under this Schedule is detailed at <u>Appendix A</u>.
Estimated financial contributions	The Commonwealth will provide a total financial contribution of $40 million to the Northern Territory in respect of this Schedule.

Table 1

($ million)	2023-24	2024-25	Total
Estimated total budget	**30.0**	**10.0**	**40.0**
Less estimated National Partnership Payments	*30.0*	*10.0*	*40.0*
Balance of non-Commonwealth contributions	0.0	0.0	0.0

Additional terms	*Role of the Commonwealth*

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August 2023

1. In addition to Clause 19 of the FFA (Role of the Commonwealth), the Commonwealth will be responsible for:

    a. overseeing the Northern Territory's implementation of the measure and, where relevant, participating in planning discussions and community consultations.

    b. allowing the Northern Territory to use $4.9 million of the funding for the provision of regionally coordinated services for the benefit of government and non-government schools and students in the region. Agreed regionally coordinated services include expanding access to allied health professionals and additional teaching and learning supports, including intensive literacy and numeracy, Indigenous Languages and Culture (ILC) and English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) programs, as well as quality flexible learning pathways.

    c. allowing the Northern Territory to use up to one per cent (1%) of total Schedule funding for the administration of the Schedule.

    d. enabling information and data sharing between the Northern Territory Government, Commonwealth agencies, affected government and non-government schools and communities to support delivery of the measure.

Role of the Northern Territory

2. In addition to Clause 20 of the FFA (Role of the States and Territories), the Northern Territory will be responsible for:

    a. distributing funding to schools in accordance with Appendix A of this Schedule, via exchange of letters, for use responsibly and in line with activities and priorities set out in the endorsed school action plan.

    b. supporting On-Country Learning components, including outreach and engagement efforts in recognition of the importance of schools supporting connection to culture and Country.

    c. supporting Government School Principals to manage increased school resourcing, whilst maintaining the autonomy of schools to respond to the local context.

    d. supporting and monitoring government schools' compliance with appropriate governance accountability, and mechanisms for financial resource management and reporting, including but not limited to procurement,

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August 2023

contract management, financial and physical resources, and human resources.

e. distributing the funding to all identified schools, or non-government representative bodies for distribution to relevant schools, in accordance with Appendix A of this Schedule.

f. ensuring that the Northern Territory's total financial investment for Central Australian schools (i.e. those schools listed at Appendix A), increases in 2024 compared to a 2023 baseline, noting that the NT investment should not decrease year-on-year.

g. notifying and requesting approval from the Commonwealth to include additional 'regionally coordinated services for the benefit of schools in the region' not identified at Additional Term 1(b).

Shared Roles and Responsibilities

3. In addition to Clause 21 of the FFA (Shared roles and responsibilities), the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory agree to cooperate to fulfil the requirements of this Schedule.

4. Engage in shared governance arrangements that bring together agreed education and Central Australia Aboriginal stakeholders. This may be achieved through establishing a specific forum or utilising an existing forum and inviting additional stakeholders as required (e.g. the Office of the Central Australia Regional Controller, and the Central Australia Aboriginal Leadership Group).

Funding

5. The allocation of funding to each of the identified schools under this Schedule is detailed at Appendix A.

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Table 2: Performance requirements, reporting and payment summary			
Output	**Performance milestones**	**Report due**	**Payment**
1. Confirmation of agreed activities	The Northern Territory provides a summary report of progress including copies of approved school action plans (as at 17 November 2023) to the Commonwealth, including an outline of the range of activities to be undertaken across the identified schools. In recognition of the need for community agreement to school action plans, the Northern Territory will distribute payments to schools as and when individual school action plans are ready and approved. Each school action plan must: • articulate the themes of community aspirations for education, • set out the activities to be delivered, • be endorsed by an appropriate community representative and the school principal.	17/11/2023	$30.00m
2. Initial Report	The Northern Territory provides the initial Report to the Commonwealth as outlined under *Reporting Arrangements.* At a minimum, the initial Report should include: • outcomes of the community, student and staff consultations on school action plans, • the final allocation of funding against the identified schools, detailing the activities that will be funded in each site, • implementation updates of activities funded at each site, • implementation updates of centrally delivered supports, • student enrolment and attendance (baseline in 2023 and updates in 2024) at the commencement of the measure, • number and proportion of First Nations students enrolled at each school, • total recurrent funding provided to each school in Central Australia (per Appendix A) in the 2023 school year. • summary of community feedback and involvement at the commencement of the measure.	31/07/2024	$8.0m

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3. Final Report	The Northern Territory provides the final Report to the Commonwealth as outlined under *Reporting Arrangements.* At a minimum, the final Report should include: • implementation of activities funded at each site, including details of community involvement. • implementation of centrally delivered supports. • student enrolment and attendance (baseline in 2023 and updates in 2024) at the commencement and completion of the measure, • number and proportion of First Nations students enrolled at each school, • total recurrent funding provided to each school in Central Australia (per Appendix A) in the 2024 school year, and • summary of community feedback and involvement at the commencement and completion of the measure.	31/03/2025 or completion of deliverables.	$2.0m

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The Parties have confirmed their commitment to this Schedule as follows:

Signed *for and on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia by*

Signed *for and on behalf of the Northern Territory by*

_____

The Honourable Jason Clare MP
Minister for Education

September 2023

_____

The Honourable Eva Lawler MLA
Minister for Education

September 2023

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Appendix A

Schools in scope of measure

Central Australia Plan: Estimated 2024 funding

School	Sector	Total funding
Centralian Middle School	G	3,120,070
Centralian Senior College	G	2,919,423
Bradshaw Primary School	G	2,354,585
Yuendumu School	G	1,952,461
Ross Park Primary School	G	1,881,527
Ntaria School	G	1,734,553
Gillen Primary School	G	1,695,930
Larapinta Primary School	G	1,683,095
Braitling Primary School	G	1,394,517
Acacia Hill School	G	1,371,566
Papunya School	G	1,220,421
Willowra School	G	1,205,141
Sadadeen Primary School	G	989,280
Walungurru School	G	730,119
Ti Tree School	G	685,347
Nyirripi School	G	665,500
Mount Allan School	G	661,444
Finke School	G	574,146
Harts Range School	G	573,758
Laramba School	G	572,718
Mutitjulu School	G	570,239
Alice Springs School of the Air	G	283,750
Watiyawanu School	G	507,543
Areyonga School	G	438,222
Alcoota School	G	414,442
Titjikala School	G	397,432
Yulara School	G	372,241
Haasts Bluff School	G	268,208
Wallace Rockhole School	G	242,848
Mbunghara School	G	241,241
Mulga Bore School	G	223,990
Bonya School	G	192,624
Stirling School	G	180,790
Amoonguna School	G	155,584
Imanpa School*	G	40,743
Watarrka School^	G	-
OLSH - Traeger Avenue Campus	C	388,645
St Joseph's Catholic Flexible Learning Centre	C	201,561

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School	Sector	Total funding
Ltyentye Apurte CEC	C	183,769
Yipirinya School	I	329,535
Yirara College	I	328,513
St Philip's College	I	314,899
Nyangatjatjara College	I	120,064
Living Waters Lutheran School	I	116,647
Araluen Christian College	I	88,270
The Alice Springs Steiner School	I	85,320
TOTAL	**ALL**	**34,672,721**

^: Watarrka School has been closed since 2021 and is expected to remain closed in 2024.

*: Imanpa School has been calculated as a non-government school in anticipation of a potential transition in 2024.

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Issue:	**Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program**
PBS Pg No.	Page 29
Contact:	**Meg Brighton**
	Ph s 22
	Deputy Secretary, Schools Group

Budget: Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program

Financial year	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26	2026–27	Total
Budget Allocation	$2.25m	$1.7m	$1.7m	$1.7m	$10.85m GST excl. over 7 years (2023–24 to 2029–30)
Committed	$2.25m	$1.7m	$1.7m	$1.7m	$7.35m GST excl. (2023–24 to 2026–27)
Uncommitted					

Key Points

- The Australian Government is committed to improving outcomes for students from regional, rural, and remote communities.

- Regional, rural, and remote communities face considerable challenges – including attracting and retaining experienced staff, providing an adequate breadth of curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities.

- Student performance and educational opportunities decline with the level of remoteness, which applies to school attendance, school retention, and to academic and post-school transition outcomes.

- For families in these communities there can be few, if any, local secondary school options, which is why boarding school is an important option, and may be their only option.

- The Australian Government is establishing the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program to better support families of boarding school students from regional, rural, and remote communities with the costs of education.

- On 20 October, Assistant Minister Chisholm announced, via media release (**Attachment A**) the opening of scholarship applications from 23 October 2023.
  - In addition, the department released the Administrative Program Guidelines for scholarships on its external website.
  - These guidelines include details on eligibility requirements, selection criteria and a comprehensive list of documentation required from applicants.

- All scholarship providers (Busy Group, Cape York Institute, and Madalah Limited) will assess scholarship applicants against the eligibility and selection criteria as outlined in the Administrative Program Guidelines.

- Busy Group have undertaken a nationwide process for their 70 scholarships.

  o Applications opened on Monday, 23 October 2023, and will close on Sunday, 26 November 2023. The application period will be open for 5 weeks.

  o Application assessment will follow, and scholarships will be in place for the 2024 school year.

- Cape York Institute and Madalah Limited are currently using their existing application and assessment processes, in line with the Administrative Program Guidelines, to allocate their 30 scholarships in collaboration with partner schools.

- On 15 March 2023, Assistant Minister for Education, Senator Chisholm, announced 100 scholarships will be available for up to 6 years, starting in 2024.

  o 50 scholarships of $20,000 per student per year, for students from low-income families (Tier 1 scholarships).

  o 50 scholarships of $10,000 per student per year, for students from low-to-middle income families experiencing financial hardship (Tier 2 scholarships).

- 3 third party providers will administer the program:

  o Busy Group (30 Tier 1 and 40 10 Tier 2 scholarships), who will administer scholarships to eligible students across Australia via an open application process

  o Madalah Limited (10 Tier 1 and 10 Tier 2 scholarships), who will administer scholarships to First Nations students from regional, rural and remote communities in Western Australia

  o Cape York Institute (10 Tier 1 scholarships), who will administer scholarships to First Nations students from the Cape York region.

- To be eligible for a scholarship, the Scholarship Applicant (student) must:

  o be commencing or undertaking secondary school education in Australia in 2024 and be able to provide proof of enrolment in an eligible boarding school or facility;

  o have a permanent home address in a regional or remote area as defined by the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS);

- o be able to demonstrate financial need (through evidence provided by their parents/guardians); and
  - o be an Australian citizen, permanent resident, or holder of a permanent visa.

- Further details on requirements for Tier 1 or Tier 2 scholarships (including requirements for establishing financial need), as well as eligible boarding schools or facilities, are provided in the Administrative Program Guidelines available on the department's website.

- Two grant rounds were used to identify the 3 third party providers.
  - o A targeted competitive grant opportunity was conducted with the Community Grants Hub during 12 April to 3 May 2023 (grant reference number GO6207).
    - ▪ Madalah Limited were awarded 20 scholarships and Cape York Institute were awarded 10 scholarships.
  - o A closed non-competitive grant round was necessary to engage a national provider to administer the remaining 70 scholarships for the program during 28 August to 5 September 2023 (grant reference number GO6428).
    - ▪ Busy Group were awarded the remaining 70 scholarships.

Financial allocations

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Madalah	$450,000	$340,000	$340,000	$340,000
Cape York	$275,000	$220,000	$220,000	$220,000
Busy Group	$1,525,000	$1,140,000	$1,140,000	$1,140,000

Stakeholder Response

- The department consulted with the Regional Education Commissioner, Isolated Children's Parents' Association, Australian Boarding School Association and the relevant Australian Government departments to design the eligibility and selection criteria for the program and to ensure it is appropriately tailored to families from regional, rural, and remote Australia.

- At their Annual Federal Conference in July 2023, the Isolated Children's Parents' Association passed a motion to advocate the program include:

  - o higher income limits for students from remote communities

  - o tapered income limits for families with multiple children

  - o no eligibility requirement for students to receive any other Commonwealth funding.

Media

- **Bridging the divide through new scholarship program, Media Release by Assistant Minister for Education, 20 October 2023**

  The media release announced that applications for the national intake of scholarships opened on Monday 23 October. The media release included quotes from the Federal President of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association and the Regional Education Commissioner in support of the program.

- **Numbers show the 'home away from home' is here to stay, The Australian, 6 September 2023**
  The article states that the importance of boarding as an option for students is reinforced by the federal government's announcement of this program.

Date Last Cleared	20 October 2023

Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm

Assistant Minister for Education
Assistant Minister for Regional Development
Senator for Queensland

MEDIA RELEASE

20 October 2023

BRIDGING THE STUDENT DIVIDE THROUGH NEW SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Eligible families across regional, rural and remote Australia will be able to apply for up to $20,000 per year to go towards boarding school fees from Monday 23 October 2023.

Assistant Minister for Education & Regional Development, Senator Anthony Chisholm said the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program will help reduce the cost of boarding school for secondary students from regional, rural and remote communities.

"We're committed to supporting all students and their families, no matter where they live, to access the education they need to help them achieve their goals," Assistant Minister Chisholm said.

"Students in country areas are less likely to complete Year 12 and pursue further studies at university or TAFE, so we know there is an education gap for these students.

"Today's announcement is about ensuring we provide more opportunities to help secondary school students living outside of our major cities and towns to succeed at school and further their studies."

Up to 100 scholarships will be available under the pilot program. Fifty scholarships of $20,000 per student, per year will be available to support low-income families meet the cost of boarding school.

A second tier of scholarships worth $10,000 per student per year will also be available to 50 students from low-to-middle-income families experiencing financial hardship.

Assistant Minister Chisholm also praised the advocacy of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA) who welcomed today's announcement. Federal President, Louise Martin said the program reflects the additional financial burden associated with education costs and fluctuating incomes common to families from regional, rural and remote areas.

Regional Education Commissioner, the Hon Fiona Nash, said families from regional, rural and remote communities are often challenged by the limited options available for their children's education.

"This scholarship program will have a positive impact on families by helping children who might otherwise not be able to access high quality education because of where they live," Ms Nash said.

Assistant Minister Chisholm thanked the Regional Education Commissioner for her input into the design of the program.

The pilot program provides scholarships for up to six years so students can be supported until they complete Year 12 or equivalent.

You can find out more information about the program, including how to apply here.

ENDS

Media contact: James Laidler – 0458 729 475

Issue:	**Disability**
Contact:	**Meg Brighton**
	Ph: s 22
	Deputy Secretary

Key Points

Note: *see **SB23-000468** for general students with disability information*

- All children should be welcomed and able to participate in early childhood and school settings, including those with disability.

- Currently, more than 20% of school students receive an adjustment because of disability (ACARA, 2022), meaning inclusion and equity should be at the forefront of how early childhood education and care and schooling is delivered.

- Students with disability are experiencing lower educational attainment. In 2021, 68.3% of students with disability completed Year 12 or equivalent, compared with 84.3% of those without disability (ACARA, 2021).

- In Australia, all schools are required under the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* to provide reasonable adjustments for students with disability.

- The level of adjustment a student with disability receives is recorded in the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) using a professional judgement model, where formal diagnosis of disability is not required, and disability can be imputed.

- The Schooling Resource Standard loading for students with disability is based on the NCCD. In 2023, the Australian Government will provide an estimated $3.1 billion for the disability loading.

- The department has commissioned a range of new resources (including case studies and videos demonstrating good practice) to support better understanding of obligations under the *Disability Standards for Education 2005.*

- The department continues to deliver the Positive Partnerships program and contributes to improvement action under Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31.

- Moving forward, the department will listen to what reviews and stakeholders are saying, look to build on reform efforts to date, and work with states, territories and the non-government sector on action needed to ensure children with disability are supported to reach their full potential.

Reform environment

- Several major reviews have implications for children with disability, including the Disability Royal Commission (DRC), the NDIS Review and the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System.

- Emerging disability policy issues include sector capability in delivery of inclusive education, data and accountability issues, and joined-up service delivery in mainstream settings.

- This intersecting review environment requires holistic consideration; rather than taking piecemeal action. We need to fully consider the issues and work with states, territories and the non-government sector on how best to respond across reviews to support children with disability from a national and school level.

- The Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System will inform the next National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) and drive real and measurable improvements for students, particularly those most at risk of falling behind; students with disability will be a critical consideration.

- States and territories regulate and operate schools and any future reform action will need to involve jurisdictions; the department is supporting discussions with jurisdictions on identifying priorities for potential national collaborative action on children with disability.

- Cross sector collaboration will be essential where system changes are being suggested, so that individuals are not disadvantaged and transition arrangements, if needed, are well planned.

- The department will work with the Department of Social Services and other Commonwealth agencies on whole of government considerations, including through Senior Executive Interdepartmental Committees which are currently underway.

- The Government will carefully consider final review reports before commenting on individual recommendations.

- The department undertook a Review of the impact of COVID-19 on school students with disability in 2022 and 2023, in consultation with students and stakeholders; the final report will be published.

- This Covid Review will be considered alongside the findings and opportunities of other major reviews with a view to maximising the experience and outcomes for students with disability.

Key Facts

- The Australian Government has held initial discussions with state and territory counterparts on the need to identify priorities for potential national collaborative action concerning children and students with disability.

- There is a lack of national data and reporting around students with disability, which has been highlighted through current reviews; this is a priority area for consideration with jurisdictions.

- The DRC released its final report on 29 September 2023, with a range of education recommendations, including around data and reporting, enforcing rights under the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, inclusion training of staff, and dissenting views on specialist schools.

- On 29 September 2023, the Australian Government announced the establishment of the Commonwealth Disability Royal Commission Taskforce, led from the Department of Social Services.

- The Taskforce will coordinate the Australian Government's response; the department will work closely with the Taskforce to act upon the recommendations.

- The NSRA review and the NDIS Review reports are expected by the end of October 2023, and an interim report of the Productivity Commission's inquiry into Australia's early childhood education and care (ECEC) system is expected by end of November 2023.

- The NDIS Review Co-Chair has noted areas of focus include building early intervention and foundational supports in mainstream settings outside of the NDIS, including ECEC and school settings.

Disability data and funding

- Students with disability are the only priority equity cohort not reported at a school level on *My School*. Education Ministers have previously agreed that Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on school students with disability (NCCD) data would be published on *My School* from 2016, subject to the quality of the data being determined to be sufficient. This has yet to occur. Discussions are continuing with jurisdictions.

- In 2023, the Australian Government will provide an estimated $3.1 billion under School Resourcing Standard student with disability loading; schools and school systems have the flexibility to direct this funding to support their students.

- In 2020, following the National School Resourcing Board report on the student with disability loading, the department commissioned PWC to conduct a review of the loading settings. This concluded in December 2022 and, while it provides useful insights, it cannot be considered in isolation. Further evidence is required to make a persuasive case for change. A priority is working with jurisdictions to address a lack of national data and reporting on students with disability.

- See **SB23-000497** for more on the disability loading and enrolments.

Media

- ***Advocates reissue calls to close down 'special schools' after disability royal commission split, ABC News, 1 October 2023***
  The article outlines calls from disability advocates to close special schools in light of dissenting views from commissioners on whether segregated education should continue.

- ***Findings of the Disability Royal Commission,* Rishworth/ Shorten Media Release, 29 September 2023**
  The media release welcomes the final report of the Disability Royal Commission and announces the initial government response, including the establishment of the Taskforce.

- ***More support for children outside the NDIS, staff training and a new deal with states: NDIS Review chair flags key areas for reform, ABC News, 8 September 2023***
  The article outlined NDIS reform areas included increasing early intervention and foundational supports in ECEC and schools.

- ***'A form of discrimination': Australia's school system accused of failing neurodiverse kids, The Guardian, 17 August 2023***
  The article reported on CYDA findings that school systems were failing to support students with additional learning needs and calling on funding in the next NSRA. Minister Clare was quoted saying the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System will focus on students most at risk of falling behind, including students with disability, and that the Panel is looking at what is going to improve student outcomes and wellbeing.

- ***The NDIS review has participants and people with disability on edge. These are the areas it's most concerned about, ABC News, 30 June 2023.***
  The article reported many more young children are entering the NDIS than anticipated, partly due to underestimated rates of disability and a lack of support for such children outside the NDIS.

Date Last Cleared	20 October 2023

Issue:	**Extension of the current National School Reform Agreement**
PBS Pg No.	36, 40
Contact:	**Meg Brighton**
	Ph: s 22
	Deputy Secretary

Key Points

- On 15 December 2022, Education Ministers agreed to extend the current National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) and its Bilateral Agreements to allow time for an expert panel to undertake a review to inform the next NSRA.

- On 29 March 2023, the Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education, announced the membership and Terms of Reference for the expert panel.

    o Refer to **SB23-000343** for more information on the Review.

Extension of the current NSRA

How will the current NSRA be extended?

- The extension of the current NSRA involves collaboration between First Ministers, Treasurers and Education Ministers.

- Education Ministers will consider variations that may be required to the current NSRA to give effect to the 12-month extension.

- Education Ministers have been provided with copies of the Variation Agreements extending the Head Agreement and their respective Bilateral Agreements for their endorsement. Once Education Ministers have endorsed the Variation Agreements extending the Head Agreement and their respective Bilateral Agreements, the Bilateral Agreements will be provided to the relevant state and territory Treasurer for their endorsement through the Council on Federal Financial Relations.

- The extension will be completed once First Ministers and Education Ministers formalise their agreement to the extension of the Head Agreement and the Bilateral Agreements:

    o First Ministers will sign the Variation Agreement extending the Head Agreement.

    o Education Ministers will sign their jurisdiction's Variation Agreement extending the Bilateral Agreement.

Will a 12-month extension hurt public schools?

- The extension does not change the Australian Government's existing commitment for government school funding which is legislated under the *Australian Education Act 2013*.

- The Review and extension do not change the Government's commitment to **meet its target of contributing 20%** of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) for **government schools** by 2023. This will be maintained in 2024 and is up from the 2018 average of 17.5%.
  - This share of total public funding for government schools has grown from 12.7% in 2013–14.
  - Responsibility for school funding is shared between the Government and state and territory governments.
  - As the majority funder for government schools, state and territory governments have agreed minimum school funding commitments from 2018 to 2023 in individual bilateral agreements with the Commonwealth.
  - The Review and extension of the NSRA is the first step in the Government working with state and territory governments to get every school to 100% of its fair funding level.
  - Refer to **SB23-000343** for more information about schools recurrent funding.

Settling milestones for National Policy Initiatives (NPIs)

- At the 15 December 2022 Education Ministers Meeting, Education Ministers endorsed a path forward on the Online Formative Assessment Initiative and agreed on a model to roll-out the Unique Student Identifier nationally to all students.

- All other NPIs are on track or complete.

Funding contributions for 2024

- The Commonwealth's school funding commitment for 2024 remains the same. Funding is set out in the Budget for 2023–24 and over the forward estimates.

- Individual state and territory funding commitments will be part of discussions between Education Ministers.

- Some non-government schools are in the process of transitioning down to 100% of the SRS by 2029. This is a legislated transition that remains unchanged.

2023 - 2024 Supplementary Budget Estimates
SB23-000348

Stakeholder Response

Stakeholder	Response summary
Greens (18 Dec 22)	• Oppose the decision to extend the NSRA and establish the Review, describing the Government's December announcement as a 'kick in the teeth'. • Hold they will explore options to remove the legislated 20% cap on the Commonwealth's contribution to public school funding.
Australian Education Union (20 Dec 22)	• Argues the extension of the NSRA denies students in public schools the funding they need, particularly children with a disadvantaged background.

Media

- ***Labor's delay on public schools funding deal a 'betrayal' of disadvantaged students, advocates say, The Guardian, 19 December 2022***
  The article summarised criticism of the Government's decision to extend the NSRA to undertake the Review made by the Greens, the Australian Education Union (AEU) and Mr Trevor Cobbold, the national convenor of Save Our Schools. Mr Cobbold is reported to have said the delay to the new NSRA is "Labor perfidy at its worst" amounting to a "betrayal of underfunded public schools and disadvantaged students". The article noted that prior to the 2019 election, the Labor Party had promised $14 billion over 10 years for public education, but the policy was dropped after it was identified as an expensive item requiring more revenue raising measures.

- ***Principals demand action on school funding gap, The Educator, 1 March 2023***
  The article raises the concerns of the Australian Government Primary Principals Association and AEU about what impact the delay in negotiations will have on providing funding for already disadvantaged students.

Date Last Cleared	17 October 2023

BACKGROUND

- The current NSRA commenced on 1 January 2019 and expires on 31 December 2023.

- Clause 20 of the NSRA provides that the Agreement may be varied or extended at any time with agreement in writing of First Ministers with the terms and conditions as agreed by all the Parties.

Issue:	**NAPLAN** – **National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy**
PBS Pg No.	2023–24 pages 33, 35, 37, 39, 42, 44, 89, 90
Contact:	**Meg Brighton**
	Ph: s 22
	Deputy Secretary

Budget: ACARA NAPLAN budget

Financial year	2022–23 $m	2023–24 $m	2024–25 $m	2025–26 $m	2026–27 $m	Total $m
Budget Allocation	$13,667.9	$13,170.9	$13,170.9	$13,170.9	$13,170.9	$66,351.5
Committed	$13.667.9	$13,170.9	$13,170.9			
Uncommitted				$13,170.9	$13,170.9	$13,170.9

Key Points

- NAPLAN is one component of the National Assessment Program (NAP), which includes both national and international tests, and provides an indication of educational achievement of students across literacy and numeracy standards, based on the national curriculum.

- NAPLAN is one measure that gives parents and teachers an insight into their child's academic progress against national benchmarks and helps inform decisions about their education needs.
  - o NAPLAN plays a complementary role to teacher and school-based assessments.

2023 NAPLAN Release of Information

- Individual results were released to parents by education authorities in July and August 2023.
  - o School NAPLAN results are scheduled for release in December 2023 on My School.
- On 23 August, the 2023 NAPLAN national results were released.
  - o Minister Clare and ACARA issued separate, but complementary, media releases on the day (**Attachment A** and **Attachment B**).

2023 National Results

- Nationally, approximately two thirds of students achieved ratings of Strong or Exceeding across all domains, and approximately 10 per cent of students need additional support.

- For students in the 'Needs Additional Support' category, getting the results earlier in the year is particularly important, as this gives teachers and parents the information they need to give those students the right support at the earliest opportunity.

- Demographic results reflect trends in other national assessments and previous NAPLAN results, including (a table on national results and equity cohorts is at **Attachment C**):

  o girls outperformed boys in literacy, boys outperformed girls in numeracy

  o around a third of First Nations students 'need additional support' – compared to just under 10 per cent of all students

  o around a quarter of students with parents who did not finish high school (Year 11 equivalent and below) 'need additional support' – compared to around 3 per cent of students with parents with a higher level of education

  o more than 70 per cent of students from very remote schools did not achieve the higher expectations in the top two levels – compared to 40 per cent of students from major city schools.

- These findings are echoed in the Productivity Commission review of the National School Reform Agreement, which also found that persistent differences in reading and numeracy outcomes across cohorts suggest some students face systemic barriers.

2023 Participation

- Nationally, participation rates have bounced back.

- A record 4.4 million online tests were submitted by more than 1.3 million students in 9,390 campuses and schools across Australia.

- Participation rates ranged from 88.4 per cent (Year 9 numeracy) to 95.9 per cent (Year 5 reading).

NAPLAN reporting reforms

- On 10 February 2023, Education Ministers agreed to fundamental changes to NAPLAN reporting, including introducing proficiency standards, bringing forward the testing date, fully online and adaptive testing, resetting the NAPLAN scale, and restarting the NAPLAN time series.

  o These changes were the biggest since NAPLAN was established 14 years ago, in 2008.

- The new NAPLAN reporting removes the 10 achievement bands that had been in place since 2008, and instead implements 4 proficiency standards – Exceeding, Strong, Developing, and Needs Additional Support.

- o These proficiency standards were set by an expert panel of teachers at a challenging, but reasonable level of achievement.
- These changes were designed to help parents recognise their child's capability at a glance, and to prompt them to engage with their child's teacher/school to support learning if and as required.
- The result of these significant changes mean it is not possible to directly compare 2023 results with those of previous years.

AERO Insights Paper – learning outcomes of students with early low NAPLAN performance as they progress through school

- The AERO Insights Paper (**Attachment D**) has received numerous references from media outlets and was referenced in Minister Clare's media release.
- AERO tracked the NAPLAN performance of 190,000 students who performed at or below the national minimum standard in Year 3 between 2009 and 2015.
- AERO's research indicates that only one in five students who are below the minimum standard in Year 3, catch up in Year 5 and stay up by Year 9.
- Over a third of Year 3 students continued to be below the minimum standard through to Year 9, and almost half performed inconsistently through to Year 9.
- The AERO Insights Paper supports the need for early identification of students falling behind, and the provision of high-quality and tailored interventions such as small group tutoring within comprehensive support frameworks.

Media

- ***One third of Australian students fail to meet new NAPLAN benchmarks, The Age, 23 August 2023***
- ***NAPLAN benchmarks have changed, but bad results stay the same, AFR, 23 August 2023***
- ***One in three school students not meeting numeracy and literacy expectations, NAPLAN results show, ABC Online, 23 August 2023***
- ***One in 10 students are falling behind on literacy and numeracy, revamped Naplan finds, The Guardian, 23 August 2023***
- ***Declining NAPLAN results are a national embarrassment, Senator Sarah Henderson Media Release, 23 August 2023***

2023 - 2024 Supplementary Budget Estimates
SB23-000349

Attachments

Attachment A – Minister Clare Media Release – NAPLAN (23 August)

Attachment B – ACARA NAPLAN Media Release (23 August)

Attachment C – Table on national results and equity cohorts

Attachment D – AERO Insights Paper on learning outcomes of students with early low NAPLAN performance

Date Last Cleared	14 September 2023

MINISTERS' MEDIA CENTRE
Ministers of the Education Portfolio

Media Release

23 August 2023

NAPLAN raises the bar to identify and help children who need additional support

The Hon Jason Clare MP
       Minister for Education

Nearly 10 per cent of school students need additional support to meet minimum standards in literacy and numeracy, the 2023 NAPLAN (https://www.nap.edu.au/naplan/results-and-reports) national report released today shows.

This compares to around 7 per cent of students who did not meet the minimum standard in the last NAPLAN national report.

This is the result of changes Education Ministers made this year to the NAPLAN minimum standards, deliberately raising the bar, or the standard, students are expected to meet.

Ministers did this to make sure students who need additional support are properly identified. The next step is to provide them with the additional support.

The revised NAPLAN grades students into four levels of proficiency: Exceeding, Strong, Developing and Needs Additional Support.

This year's NAPLAN results make it clear that the education of your parents, where you live, and your background has a massive impact on your likelihood to start behind or fall behind at school.

In the Needs Additional Support level are:

- Around one in three First Nations students.
- Around a quarter of students in remote locations.
- Half of all students in very remote locations.
- Around a quarter of students whose parents did not complete high school.
- Around 3 per cent of students with a parent who finished university.

[Research (https://www.edresearch.edu.au/resources/learning-outcomes-students-early-low-naplan-performance)](https://www.edresearch.edu.au/resources/learning-outcomes-students-early-low-naplan-performance) released this week by the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) also reveals that currently very few students who start behind or fall behind, catch up.

AERO's research indicates that only one in five students who are below the minimum standard in Year 3 are above it in Year 9.

This shows that early identification and intervention is critical.

That's why Ministers have made changes to raise the bar and more clearly identify students who are behind and need additional support.

The next step is to provide that additional support.

The Albanese Government is committed to working with State and Territory Governments to get every school on a path to 100 per cent of its fair funding level.

We need to tie that funding to the things that will make a difference.

That's what the O'Brien Review is all about. It will make recommendations to Ministers about what we should be tie funding to in next year's new National School Reform Agreement to help children who fall behind to catch up, keep up and finish school.

More information about NAPLAN can be found at [www.nap.edu.au (http://www.nap.edu.au/)](http://www.nap.edu.au/)

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education Jason Clare:

"These results show the changes we have made to NAPLAN have raised the bar.

"We have done this on purpose.

"We have raised the minimum standard students are now expected to meet so we can really identify the students who need additional support.

"The next step is to provide them with that support.

"The evidence shows if you have fall behind at school it's really hard to catch up. Only one in five students who are behind the minimum standard in literacy and numeracy in Year 3 are above it in Year 9. This is what we have got to fix.

"Early identification and intervention is critical.

"That's what the O'Brien Review into the next National School Reform Agreement is all about. Making sure we are tying funding to the sort of things that help children who fall behind to catch up, keep up and finish school."

[ENDS]

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MEDIA RELEASE

23 August 2023

ONE IN 10 STUDENTS "NEED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT" TO MEET HIGHER NAPLAN EXPECTATIONS

Around 10 per cent of students across Australia need additional support in literacy and numeracy to meet higher NAPLAN expectations, according to the latest data released today by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in the new-look 2023 NAPLAN national results.

The latest figures also show that approximately 65 per cent of students across Australia are meeting the higher literacy and numeracy expectations, achieving in the 'Strong' and 'Exceeding' proficiency levels, while around 23 per cent of students are in the 'Developing' level and working towards meeting expectations.[1]

Participation rates nationally have bounced back in 2023, increasing on average by 2 percentage points across all years and domains, compared to 2022, from 91.4 per cent to 93.3 per cent. This was "a very good sign" ACARA CEO David de Carvalho said, reversing a downward trend apparent in recent years and exacerbated by the impact of the COVID pandemic.

"This year's NAPLAN results are the first to reflect the new reporting changes. They show strong performance among Australian students in literacy and numeracy skills, but also provide clear information on areas requiring improvement," Mr de Carvalho said.

Under the new approach, students are assessed against 4 levels of proficiency based on previous years of schooling: Exceeding, Strong, Developing and Needs additional support. The new reporting system more clearly and simply shows NAPLAN achievement, identifying where expectations are being met.

"Importantly, with expectations set at a higher level than in previous years, the new reporting is showing those areas where we need to focus our efforts on supporting more students to meet expectations and succeed," Mr de Carvalho said.

"The results also continue to highlight the educational disparities of students from non-urban areas, Indigenous Australian heritage and those with low socio-educational backgrounds."

Key highlights from this year's NAPLAN national results include:

- Across year level groups on average, 65 per cent of students in Year 3, 68 per cent in Year 5, 67 per cent in Year 7 and 62 per cent in Year 9 met the higher expectations (were in the 'Exceeding' and 'Strong' levels) for literacy and numeracy.
- In numeracy, on average, the proportion of students who achieved at 'Exceeding' and 'Strong' levels in 2023 increases from Year 3 (64.7 per cent) to Year 5 (67.7 per cent) and Year 7 (67.2 per cent) and then drops in Year 9 (63.9 per cent), apart from Western Australia (69.4 per cent).

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[1] *Two per cent of students were exempt - students with a language background other than English who arrived from overseas less than a year before the tests, and students with significant disabilities may have been exempted from testing.*

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- In writing, primary students were more likely to achieve at 'Exceeding' or 'Strong' levels than secondary students, with 76.0 per cent of Year 3 students and 66.2 per cent of Year 5 students meeting expectations compared to 62.5 per cent in Year 7 and 58.0 per cent in Year 9.
- Nationally, participation rates have bounced back. For primary years, it increased from 93.8 per cent to 95.1 per cent. For secondary years, it increased from 88.9 per cent to 91.6 per cent.
- Participation rates ranged from 88.4 per cent (Year 9 numeracy) to 95.9 per cent (Year 5 reading).
- Demographic results reflect trends in other national assessments and previous NAPLAN results with girls outperforming boys in literacy, and higher results tending to align with students from the highest socio-educational backgrounds, in urban areas, or from non-Indigenous backgrounds. Specifically:

  o Nationally, just under 10 per cent of students (on average across all year levels and domains) are in the 'Needs additional support' level while, on average across all year levels and domains, around a third of Indigenous students 'need additional support'.
  o Average NAPLAN scores for all year levels and all domains for students from the highest socio-educational background were substantially above those from the lowest.
  o Fewer than 3 in 10 students (30 per cent) in very remote schools are rated as 'Strong' or 'Exceeding' in any domain or year level, while at least 3 in 5 students (60 per cent) in major city schools are rated 'Strong' or 'Exceeding' across almost all domains and year levels.
  o Girls outperformed boys in writing, achieving average NAPLAN scores above boys in every year group, with higher percentages of girls at 'Strong' or 'Exceeding' levels, notably 70.0 per cent of girls compared to 55.4 per cent of boys in Year 7 and 66.3 per cent of girls compared to 50.2 per cent of boys in Year 9.
  o Boys generally outperformed girls in numeracy. The difference was statistically significant in Year 5, with 6 per cent fewer girls in that year level achieving in the 'Exceeding' level compared to boys.

The new approach to NAPLAN reporting also complements the other recent NAPLAN improvements endorsed by education ministers. With online adaptive NAPLAN testing now in place in all schools, a new measurement scale has been developed that means results do not have to be equated back to the paper test results of previous years. This delivers the full benefit of the more precise data derived from online testing. In combination with shifting the NAPLAN test window to March instead of May, this means that these results cannot be compared to previous years.

Both of these changes were recommended by the independent review of NAPLAN completed in 2020. Restarting the time-series has set a new and better baseline for future comparisons and will provide ministers with valuable insights as they progress their discussions about the next National Schools Reform Agreement.

From next year, results will come to schools much earlier now that improvements introduced for 2023 have been implemented.

To access the full 2023 NAPLAN national results, including information about the socio-educational profile of each jurisdiction, please visit: https://www.acara.edu.au/naplanresults.

//ENDS

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BACKGROUND

The NAPLAN national results provide nationally comparable data on the 2023 national and state/territory results for each test domain and year level assessed, and for each level by gender, Indigenous status and language background other than English.

NAPLAN was successfully undertaken in schools across the country and this was the first year that the annual assessments were taken in March instead of May. A record 4.4 million online tests were submitted by more than 1.3 million students in 9,390 campuses and schools across Australia.

The new way of reporting means that NAPLAN results from 2023 cannot be compared to NAPLAN results from previous years. Reporting on NAPLAN changes over time will start this year, building upon the 2023 results.

The new proficiency levels are:

- **Exceeding**: the student's result exceeds expectations at the time of testing.
- **Strong**: the student's result meets challenging but reasonable expectations at the time of testing.
- **Developing**: the student's result indicates that they are working towards expectations at the time of testing.
- **Needs additional support**: the student's result indicates that they are not achieving the learning outcomes that are expected at the time of testing. They are likely to need additional support to progress satisfactorily.

Additional information on the proficiency levels and the literacy and numeracy skills at each level is available on the National Assessment Program (NAP) website (www.nap.edu.au). The proficiency levels were validated by the expert judgement of teachers who used student responses to NAPLAN questions linked to the Australian Curriculum to identify what students should be able to answer at the time of testing in each year to be considered as having met a challenging but reasonable expectation.

NAPLAN tests are one aspect of a school's assessment and reporting process. They assess numeracy and literacy only. Parents and carers should speak to their child's school or teacher to discuss their child's overall progress.

3

National Results and Equity Cohorts

(Source: NAPLAN 2023 National Report – Departmental Summary)

Table A.1: Proficiency by Domain at National level, 2023 (per cent)

Year	Domain	Not Proficient (excl. exempt)		Proficient	
		Needs Assistance	Developing	Strong	Exceeding
3	Reading	9.1	22.2	48.5	18.3
	Numeracy	10.0	23.5	52.4	12.3
	Writing	6.1	16.0	66.9	9.1
	Grammar & Punctuation	13.3	30.5	45.7	8.6
	Spelling	11.1	26.2	44.1	16.7
5	Reading	7.0	17.2	52.9	21.3
	Numeracy	9.3	21.4	55.8	12.0
	Writing	9.6	22.6	54.7	11.5
	Grammar & Punctuation	10.1	24.3	50.8	13.1
	Spelling	8.7	20.7	48.4	20.6
7	Reading	9.0	21.0	49.3	19.2
	Numeracy	9.3	22.0	54.5	12.6
	Writing	10.9	25.1	47.7	14.8
	Grammar & Punctuation	10.6	23.9	50.2	13.8
	Spelling	7.5	18.2	50.9	21.8
9	Reading	10.6	24.7	45.9	16.9
	Numeracy	10.2	24.1	54.0	9.9
	Writing	12.1	28.1	40.5	17.6
	Grammar & Punctuation	12.9	29.4	42.4	13.5
	Spelling	7.9	19.4	52.9	18.0

*In 2023, new proficiency levels with four levels of achievement have replaced the previous ten-band structure and NMS

Table A.2: Proficiency by Domain and First Nations status at National level, 2023 (per cent)

Year	Domain	First Nations				Non-First Nations			
		Not Proficient (excl. exempt)		Proficient		Not Proficient (excl. exempt)		Proficient	
		Needs Assistance	Developing	Strong	Exceeding	Needs Assistance	Developing	Strong	Exceeding
3	Reading	30.5	31.6	30.8	4.2	7.5	21.5	49.9	19.4
	Numeracy	34.2	32.0	28.9	2.0	8.2	22.8	54.3	13.0
	Writing	25.9	28.3	41.5	1.5	4.7	15.0	68.9	9.7
	Grammar & Punctuation	40.0	34.3	21.6	1.2	11.2	30.3	47.6	9.2
	Spelling	34.7	30.4	27.4	4.7	9.4	25.9	45.4	17.6
5	Reading	27.7	28.7	36.2	4.7	5.5	16.4	54.1	22.5
	Numeracy	34.3	30.9	30.7	1.5	7.5	20.7	57.6	12.7
	Writing	32.7	30.9	31.4	2.2	7.9	22.0	56.5	12.2
	Grammar & Punctuation	36.1	32.5	26.8	1.9	8.2	23.8	52.6	13.9
	Spelling	28.2	28.5	34.9	5.6	7.3	20.2	49.3	21.7
7	Reading	32.6	30.9	30.0	3.8	7.3	20.3	50.7	20.2
	Numeracy	35.0	32.1	28.6	1.5	7.4	21.3	56.5	13.4
	Writing	35.7	31.6	26.7	3.2	9.1	24.6	49.3	15.6
	Grammar & Punctuation	37.2	31.6	26.4	2.0	8.7	23.4	51.9	14.6
	Spelling	25.1	27.5	38.3	6.2	6.3	17.5	51.9	22.9
9	Reading	33.0	34.9	25.7	3.1	9.0	24.0	47.4	17.9
	Numeracy	34.7	35.3	25.8	0.9	8.4	23.3	56.1	10.6
	Writing	37.4	34.1	21.0	4.3	10.2	27.6	41.9	18.5
	Grammer & Punctuation	38.8	36.1	19.9	2.0	11.0	28.9	44.0	14.4
	Spelling	24.4	30.1	37.8	4.5	6.7	18.6	54.0	19.0

*In 2023, new proficiency levels with four levels of achievement have replaced the previous ten-band structure and NMS

Table A.3: Proficiency by Domain and Gender at National level, 2023 (per cent)

Year	Domain	Male				Female			
		Not Proficient (excl. exempt)		Proficient		Not Proficient (excl. exempt)		Proficient	
		Needs Assistance	Developing	Strong	Exceeding	Needs Assistance	Developing	Strong	Exceeding
3	Reading	10.7	24.4	46.3	16.1	7.4	20.0	50.8	20.6
	Numeracy	9.3	21.3	51.9	15.1	10.8	25.8	52.9	9.2
	Writing	8.1	19.1	63.2	7.1	4.0	12.7	70.8	11.3
	Grammar & Punctuation	15.0	31.6	42.9	8.1	11.5	29.5	48.6	9.3
	Spelling	12.5	26.2	42.2	16.6	9.7	26.2	46.1	16.8
5	Reading	8.7	18.9	50.9	19.4	5.2	15.4	55.0	23.3
	Numeracy	8.6	19.0	55.3	15.0	9.9	24.0	56.2	8.8
	Writing	12.4	25.1	51.1	9.2	6.6	19.9	58.5	13.9
	Grammar & Punctuation	12.3	25.9	47.8	11.9	7.8	22.6	54.0	14.4
	Spelling	10.3	21.2	46.6	19.8	7.0	20.2	50.2	21.5
7	Reading	11.3	22.2	46.8	17.8	6.6	19.8	51.9	20.7
	Numeracy	9.2	19.7	53.8	15.3	9.4	24.4	55.3	9.9
	Writing	14.4	28.3	44.1	11.3	7.2	21.7	51.6	18.4
	Grammar & Punctuation	13.5	25.8	46.6	12.1	7.6	21.9	53.9	15.6
	Spelling	9.2	19.6	48.5	20.7	5.7	16.7	53.5	23.0
9	Reading	13.4	25.5	43.3	15.4	7.7	23.9	48.7	18.4
	Numeracy	10.4	22.3	53.1	11.9	9.9	26.0	54.9	7.8
	Writing	16.1	31.5	37.2	13.0	7.9	24.5	44.0	22.4
	Grammer & Punctuation	16.6	30.9	38.7	11.5	8.9	27.9	46.2	15.6
	Spelling	9.7	20.6	50.6	16.8	5.9	18.1	55.4	19.3

*In 2023, new proficiency levels with four levels of achievement have replaced the previous ten-band structure and NMS

Table A.4: Proficiency by Domain and Parental Education at National level, 2023 (per cent)

Year	Domain	Year 11				Bachelor			
		Not Proficient (excl. exempt)		Proficient		Not Proficient (excl. exempt)		Proficient	
		Needs Assistance	Developing	Strong	Exceeding	Needs Assistance	Developing	Strong	Exceeding
3	Reading	27.3	33.7	31.6	3.4	3.2	14.7	52.3	28.5
	Numeracy	30.5	34.5	29.3	1.7	3.5	15.6	59.5	20.1
	Writing	21.3	27.9	45.2	1.7	1.8	9.4	73.0	14.5
	Grammar & Punctuation	36.2	36.8	21.9	1.1	5.2	23.3	55.7	14.5
	Spelling	30.6	30.0	29.6	5.8	4.5	20.9	48.9	24.4
5	Reading	23.5	30.5	38.2	3.9	2.1	9.3	53.8	33.8
	Numeracy	29.5	33.1	32.0	1.5	2.9	12.8	62.8	20.5
	Writing	26.2	30.6	36.5	2.8	3.7	15.9	61.1	18.2
	Grammar & Punctuation	31.2	35.0	28.1	1.8	3.2	15.5	58.1	22.1
	Spelling	23.9	27.7	37.5	7.0	3.4	14.7	50.3	30.5
7	Reading	28.7	33.1	31.2	3.3	2.7	12.0	53.0	31.4
	Numeracy	30.0	33.7	30.8	1.7	2.6	12.7	62.1	21.7
	Writing	30.0	32.8	29.9	3.5	4.2	18.0	53.9	23.0
	Grammar & Punctuation	32.9	34.1	27.2	1.9	3.3	15.0	57.5	23.3
	Spelling	22.0	27.0	39.9	7.4	2.9	12.1	51.8	32.3
9	Reading	28.2	36.0	28.0	3.3	3.4	14.9	51.9	28.8
	Numeracy	28.1	35.9	30.0	1.5	3.0	13.7	64.0	18.2
	Writing	29.9	35.5	24.9	5.3	4.7	20.5	46.6	27.3
	Grammar & Punctuation	33.5	37.5	22.0	2.5	4.3	19.8	51.3	23.6
	Spelling	20.7	29.1	39.3	6.4	3.0	12.2	55.9	27.9

*In 2023, new proficiency levels with four levels of achievement have replaced the previous ten-band structure and NMS

Table A.5: Proficiency by Domain and Language Background at National level, 2023 (per cent)

Year	Domain	LBOTE				Non-LBOTE			
		Not Proficient (excl. exempt)		Proficient		Not Proficient (excl. exempt)		Proficient	
		Needs Assistance	Developing	Strong	Exceeding	Needs Assistance	Developing	Strong	Exceeding
3	Reading	8.1	19.9	48.2	21.3	9.4	23.2	48.8	17.1
	Numeracy	9.8	20.7	50.3	16.7	9.9	24.7	53.6	10.3
	Writing	5.2	12.4	66.4	13.5	6.4	17.5	67.2	7.3
	Grammar & Punctuation	10.8	26.0	47.6	13.1	14.2	32.6	45.0	6.7
	Spelling	8.0	18.4	45.5	25.5	12.4	29.7	43.6	12.9
5	Reading	6.9	15.3	49.8	25.7	6.9	17.9	54.3	19.6
	Numeracy	8.7	17.4	52.2	19.5	9.3	23.0	57.5	8.8
	Writing	7.2	16.8	56.4	17.5	10.5	25.0	54.2	9.0
	Grammar & Punctuation	8.7	19.8	49.5	19.8	10.6	26.2	51.6	10.3
	Spelling	5.9	13.7	45.9	32.2	9.8	23.6	49.5	15.8
7	Reading	8.7	18.5	47.2	23.8	9.0	21.9	50.2	17.6
	Numeracy	8.5	17.9	51.2	20.6	9.4	23.5	55.9	9.7
	Writing	8.6	20.6	49.1	19.9	11.6	26.7	47.3	13.0
	Grammar & Punctuation	9.5	19.9	48.5	20.3	10.8	25.3	51.0	11.5
	Spelling	5.9	12.7	46.9	32.8	8.1	20.2	52.5	17.8
9	Reading	10.3	22.6	44.1	20.6	10.6	25.3	46.6	15.8
	Numeracy	8.9	20.1	51.5	17.2	10.5	25.4	55.0	7.5
	Writing	10.2	24.7	40.9	21.9	12.6	29.1	40.4	16.3
	Grammer & Punctuation	11.5	25.2	41.2	19.7	13.2	30.7	42.9	11.6
	Spelling	6.4	14.4	49.2	27.6	8.3	21.0	54.2	14.9

*In 2023, new proficiency levels with four levels of achievement have replaced the previous ten-band structure and NMS

Analytical Insights Paper #2

Learning outcomes of students with early low NAPLAN performance

August 2023
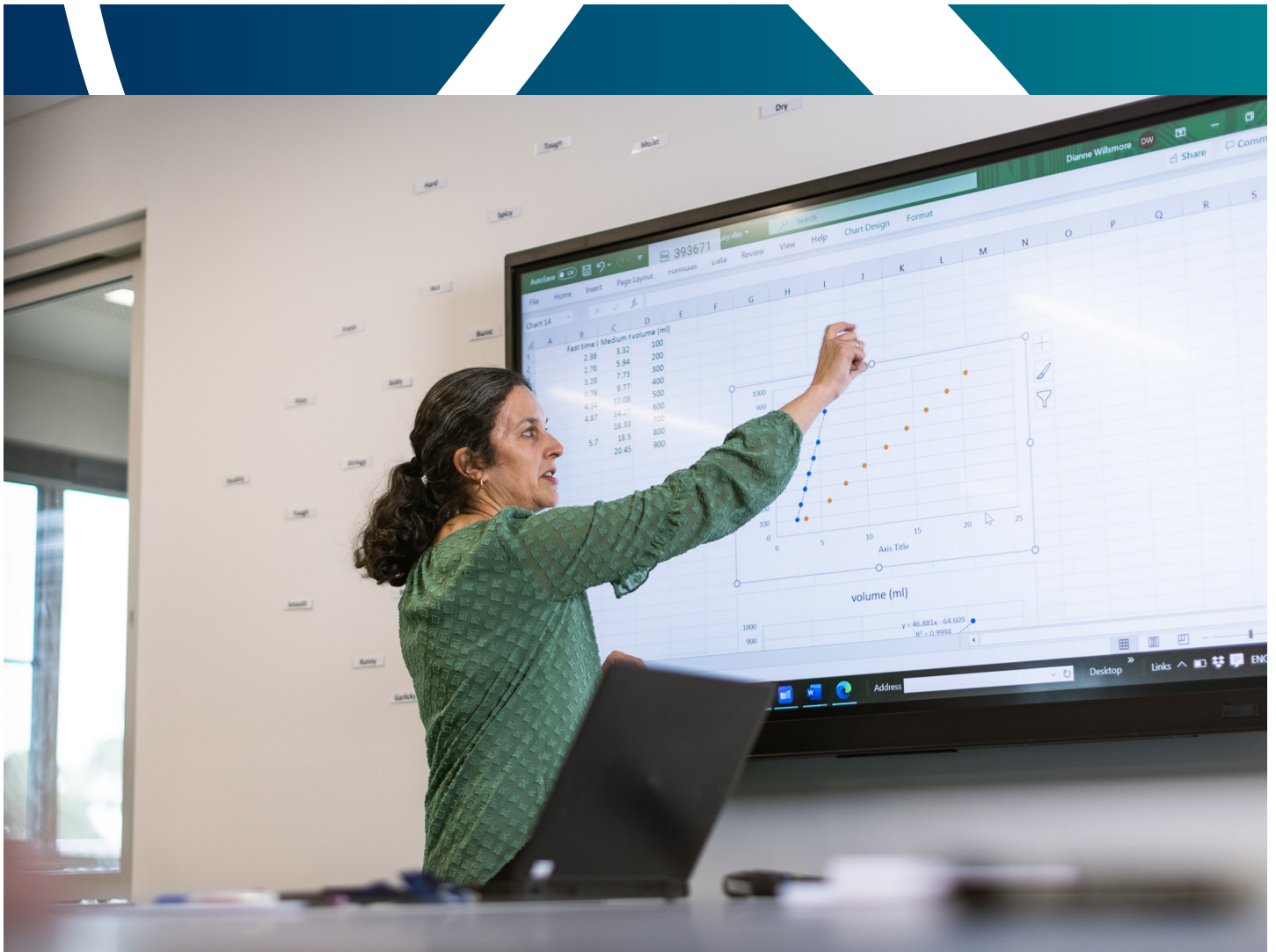
The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) is Australia's national education evidence body, working to achieve excellence and equity in educational outcomes for all children and young people.

Acknowledgement of Country

AERO acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waterways, skies, islands and sea Country across Australia. We pay our deepest respects to First Nations cultures and Elders past and present. We endeavour to continually value and learn from First Nations knowledges and educational practices.

Authors

Dr Lisa Williams, Dr Olivia Groves, Dr Wai Yin Wan, Dr Eunro Lee and Dr Lucy Lu.

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How to cite

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AERO

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO)'s analytical insights papers provide accessible, up-to-date analysis of educational data.

This insights paper presents findings related to student progress in reading and numeracy. The findings were obtained from our new longitudinal literacy and numeracy in Australia (LLANIA) dataset that links individual student National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results from Year 3 through to Year 9 across Australia. This paper is the first in a series that uses the LLANIA dataset to explore educational questions.

Key points

- Year 3 students who perform below learning expectations are at a high risk of continuing to perform at that level throughout their schooling.[1] This shows the importance of early assessment of student progress against expected outcomes.

- Many students with early low performance did not catch up to their peers, highlighting that intervention is needed to boost the literacy and numeracy skills of those identified early.

- Of students with early low performance, the largest movement back onto a pathway of improved performance appears to happen between Year 3 and Year 5. This suggests that the best time to intervene to catch students up is as soon as they have been identified as not meeting learning expectations (early intervention).

- Catching up and staying caught up is not easy to achieve. When students with low Year 3 performance move to achieving expectations in Year 5, only around half of that group continue to perform this way until Year 9. The other half drop back down to below expectations in secondary school. This indicates that it is difficult for students to maintain improvements in learning gains as they move through school.

- Students from equity groups[2] are overrepresented among students who are consistently at/below National Minimum Standards (NMS) from Years 3 to 9 for both reading and numeracy.

- It is important that any student learning interventions that are adopted are monitored and assessed for their effectiveness. Longitudinal national datasets such as AERO's new LLANIA dataset (See AERO's Longitudinal Literacy and Numeracy in Australia dataset) offer opportunities to track student progress over time and assess the effectiveness of learning interventions so that equity and excellence can be achieved in Australia's education system.

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1   In this paper, we use at/below the National Minimum Standards (NMS) as indicative of not meeting learning expectations. See footnote 3 for further rationale for this choice.
2   See footnote 11 for definition of equity groups.

Learning outcomes of students with early low NAPLAN performance   AERO

Our analysis

Identifying and supporting students who fall behind expected learning standards is critical to achieving equity and excellence in Australia's education system. Educational systems invest resources in providing support to students to help them catch up if they fall behind. Understanding when and how those supports should be used is important for ensuring their effectiveness.

To inform efforts to support students who, for various reasons, do not achieve expected learning outcomes early on, we looked at what happened to those students who performed at or below the NMS in Year 3 as they progressed through school.[3]

Using our new linked NAPLAN dataset, we tracked the performance of approximately 190,000[4] Year 3 students who did not perform above NMS. We used Sankey diagrams[5] to describe the pathways of those students relative to their later NAPLAN performance. We did this for 2 domains: reading and numeracy.

AERO's Longitudinal Literacy and Numeracy in Australia (LLANIA) dataset

The NAPLAN analysis presented in this paper is based on AERO's new LLANIA dataset. The dataset includes longitudinal, cross-sectoral data from all states and territories in Australia. The dataset links test results, participation and student and school demographics of over 6 million students between 2008 and 2021 from their first to their latest (or last) engagement with NAPLAN. Within this dataset, over 80% of Year 3 students (or 1.6 million, from 2008 to 2015, excluding 2014) who could be matched to Year 9, had a complete record linking their Year 3 test round through Year 5 and Year 7 to Year 9.

LLANIA is a new national linked dataset that can be used to generate substantial benefits for Australian education research. It provides an opportunity to understand the learning trajectories of Australian students from different backgrounds, across states and territories, and to evaluate policy impact with more precision and stronger validity.

For more information about this dataset, see our technical report.

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3   Prior to 2023, the time period from which data for this analysis was drawn, student progress was reported in relation to NMS. There is wide agreement that the previous NMS were set too low (Goss & Sonnemann, 2016). Consequently, new proficiency benchmarks were established for 2023 NAPLAN and onwards. To more accurately capture students with low performance, this paper considers performance *at/below* NMS as a proxy for not achieving the expected standards.

4   The analysis uses the results of approximately 190,000 students who sat Year 3 NAPLAN between 2008 and 2015 (excluding 2014) and performed at/below NMS. These students had complete data in 4 NAPLAN measurement time points (i.e., Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 results). The 2014 Year 3 results could not be linked to Year 9 because of the cancellation of 2020 NAPLAN.

5   A Sankey diagram is a visualisation used to depict a flow from one set of values to another. They are useful to show multiple paths through a set of stages (Google Charts, 2023).

Learning outcomes of students with early low NAPLAN performance   AERO

Pathway analysis

The Sankey diagrams (Figure 1 and Figure 2) start with all the students in our linked dataset who performed at/below NMS in their Year 3 NAPLAN assessment. The diagrams map the pathways relative to performance at/below and above NMS through Years 5, 7 and 9.

Figure 1: Pathways for students who were at/below reading NMS in Year 3 (2008–2015, excluding 2014)
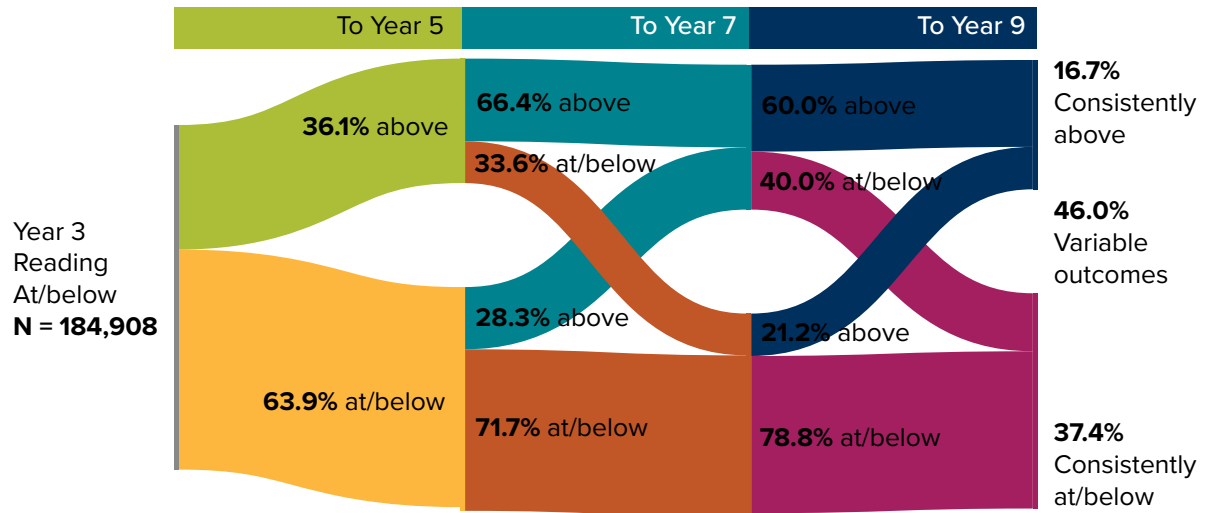
Figure 2: Pathways for students who were at/below numeracy NMS in Year 3 (2008–2015, excluding 2014)

Learning outcomes of students with early low NAPLAN performance

AERO
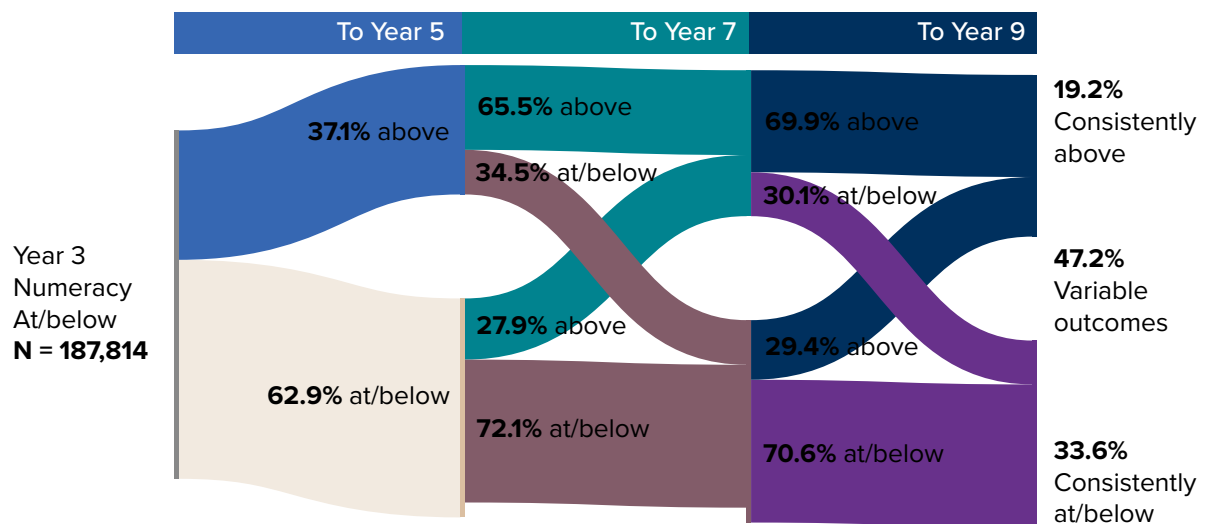
Insights

This section explores 5 key insights from the pathway analysis.

Our analysis shows that students who were at/below NMS in Year 3 can follow 8 pathways through to Year 9. We summarised these into 3 meaningful pathways:

1. *Consistently below*: students continue to perform at/below NMS in Years 5, 7 and 9.

2. *Variable outcomes*: students vary in their performance from year to year; sometimes they perform above NMS, and sometimes at/below.

3. *Consistently above*: students perform above NMS in Year 5 and continue to do so until Year 9.

1. Most students who do not meet Year 3 learning expectations continue to perform below expectations or inconsistently through school

Pathway 3, *consistently above*, represents the best of the 3 possible pathways. This group of students did not perform above NMS in Year 3, but demonstrated performance above NMS in Year 5 and after. Their initial weaknesses in reading and numeracy were overcome and they went on to perform at expected[6] levels. Unfortunately, the proportion of the group that was initially below expectations that went on to take this pathway was only 17% in reading and 19% in numeracy (see Figure 3).[7]

Approximately half of the Year 3 student group (46% in reading and 47% in numeracy) experienced pathway 2: *variable outcomes*. This group performed above NMS in one or 2 years out of Year 5, 7 or 9. Their pathway was inconsistent, sometimes performing well, and at other times, at/below expectations.[8]

Pathway 1, *consistently below*, was a group of students who remained at/below NMS through to Year 9. Concerningly, this pathway was taken by a little over a third of the Year 3 students who performed at/below NMS (37% for reading and 34% for numeracy).

When pathways 1 and 2 are considered in combination, most students who performed at/below NMS in Year 3 performed below expectations or inconsistently to Year 9.[9]

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6   See footnote 3 about NMS having been set too low leading to our decision to consider students performing at/below NMS as the group whose performance is below expectations.

7   The cohort of students used for the pathway analysis (i.e., Year 3 students who were tracked to Year 9) are slightly more socio-educationally advantaged than the broader Year 3 populations (see our technical report). This means the figures reported for the *consistently above* group are likely to be slightly overestimated, and those for *consistently below* are likely to be slightly underestimated.

8   The large proportion of students in this cohort with variable outcomes demonstrates the difficulty of making a sustained change to a student's pathway towards performance that is consistently above standard. This observation was instrumental in the decision in this paper to view pathway 3, consistent performance above NMS from Year 5 to Year 9, as indicative of a student having caught up successfully, rather than using Year 9 performance above NMS in isolation.

9   Additional analysis shows that, if we look at the Year 9 performance in isolation of the path students had taken up to that point, most of the students with early low performance (62.5% in reading and 53.6% in numeracy) performed at/below NMS in Year 9.

Learning outcomes of students with early low NAPLAN performance   AERO

Figure 3: Proportion of students who catch up to their peers (indicated in light green) determined by performance against NMS
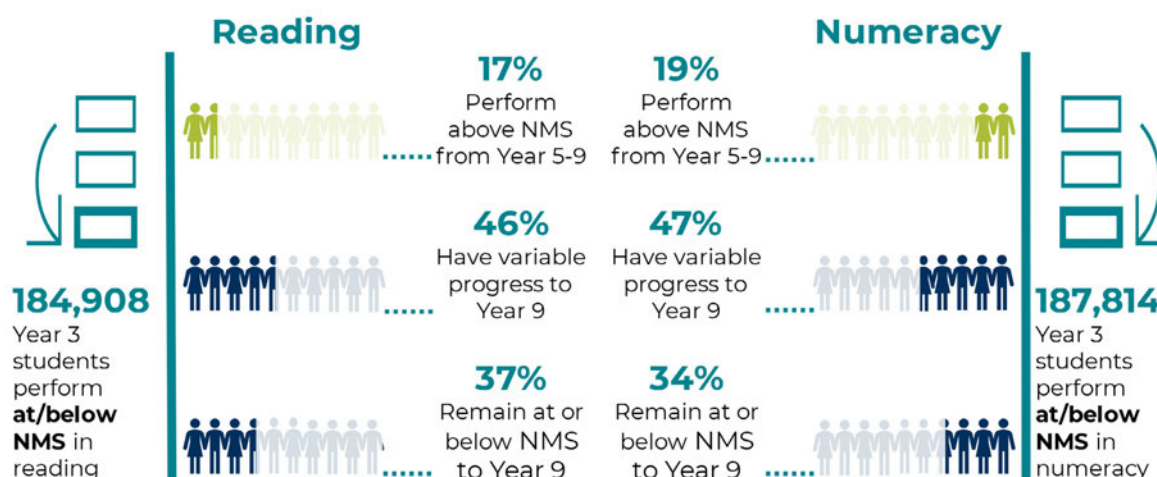
2. The greatest movement to performing above NMS appears to occur between Year 3 and Year 5

Among the students in Year 3 who performed at/below NMS, the largest movement of students back into the group performing above NMS happened between Year 3 and Year 5.[10] This can be seen in <u>Figure 1</u> where 36.1% of the initial group of students moved to performing above NMS in reading between Years 3 and 5. This is a much higher proportion than the 28.3% that made the same shift between Years 5 and 7, and the 21.2% that showed this improvement in performance between Years 7 and 9.

There is a similar pattern for numeracy, in which 37.1% of students moved to performing above NMS between Year 3 and Year 5, compared to 27.9% between Years 5 and 7, and 29.4% between Years 7 and 9.

3. Many of the students who moved into the group performing above NMS in Year 5 did not maintain this in secondary school

Many students did not maintain improvements in learning gains as they continued through schooling. While over a third of students moved from at/below NMS to above NMS in reading and numeracy between Year 3 and Year 5, a large proportion of them performed at/below NMS again in secondary school. Additional analysis suggests that, of the initial group of students moving from at/below NMS in Year 3 to above in Year 5, only around half maintained those gains through Year 7 and Year 9 (see <u>Figure 4</u>).

---

10 Note that this pattern was observed in relation to the chosen comparison point of the NMS. Differently chosen comparison points, based on curriculum or other benchmarks, should be considered in future research to confirm and deepen understanding of results about future learning pathways of Year 3 students whose performance is identified as being low.

Figure 4: Proportion of students with early low performance who do not maintain learning gains in secondary school (indicated in dark blue)

36 out of 100 students moved from at/below NMS to above in **reading** between Year 3 and Year 5. **17** of them remained above standard. **19** dropped back down in either Year 7 or Year 9.

37 out of 100 students moved from at/below NMS to above in **numeracy** between Year 3 and Year 5. **19** of them remained above standard. **18** dropped back down in either Year 7 or Year 9.
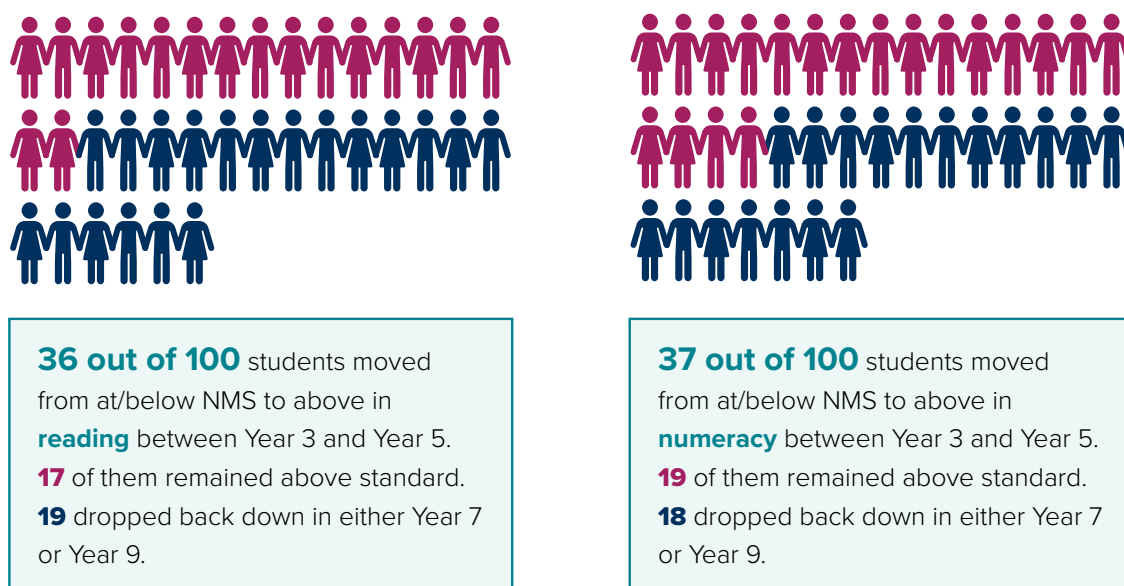
4. Equity groups are overrepresented among students who remain consistently at/below NMS

Equity groups[11] are overrepresented among students who are consistently at/below NMS from Years 3 to 9 (pathway 1) for both reading and numeracy. This analysis shows that students from remote and very remote locations, students of parents with education levels of Year 11 and below, and First Nations students are overrepresented in this group. Males were also slightly overrepresented in reading, and females in numeracy, but not to the extent of those priority equity groups.

The column graph in Figure 5 shows the proportions of students who experienced pathway 1 by demographic characteristic. A yellow dot indicates the rate at which each demographic characteristic appears in the whole cohort (Year 3 populations from 2008 to 2015 excluding 2014). If trajectories were equitable, we would expect the yellow dots to align with the columns. The greater the difference between these, the more over- or under-represented the groups are.

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11   Priority equity groups include First Nations students, students living in regional, rural and remote areas, students with disability and students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds (Council of Australian Governments, 2021). Note: not all priority equity groups can be analysed through NAPLAN data. Additionally, we have analysed the performance of females for numeracy and males for reading. As a result, we use the term equity groups to refer to groups of students that research shows have inequitable educational outcomes.

From Figure 5, we can see that for students who performed consistently at/below NMS in reading and numeracy:

- almost 30% had *parents with education at Year 11 or below* – a much larger proportion than the 11% in the whole cohort
- 10% were from *remote or very remote areas* – far greater than the 3% in the whole cohort
- about 24% are *First Nations students* – much greater than the 5% in the whole cohort
- 54% were *female for numeracy* – slightly more than the 49% of females[12] in the whole cohort
- 64% were *male for reading* – more than the 51% of males in the whole cohort.

Figure 5: Demographic characteristics of students who remained consistently at/below NMS from Year 3 to Year 9
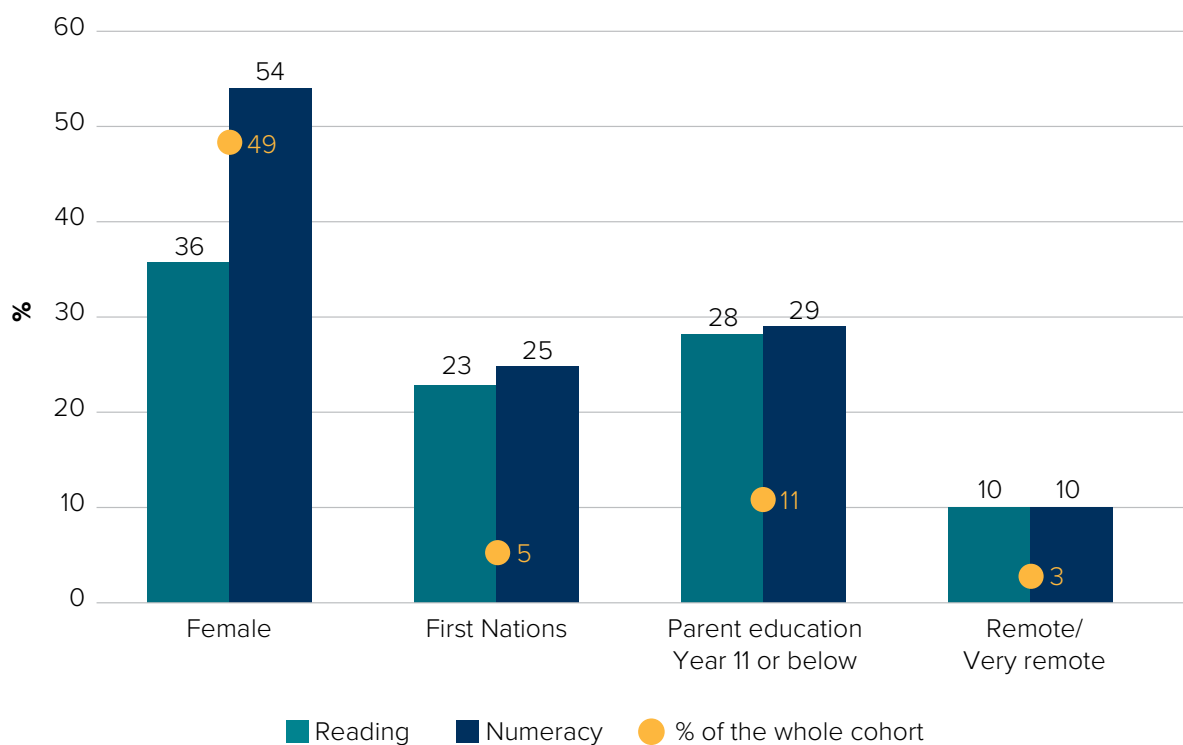
5. Students from equity groups are more likely to remain at/below the NMS

The previous analysis showed an overrepresentation of equity group characteristics in the students experiencing pathway 1. However, students can be in multiple equity groups, and the particular barriers they experience can have compounding effects on their performance. The analysis[13] presented in this section shows the unique relationship between a demographic factor and the chance of following a particular pathway, when holding everything else equal.

Figure 6 shows the likelihood of remaining consistently at/below NMS (pathway 1) compared to consistently above NMS (pathway 3) in reading and numeracy according to demographic background. For each demographic group, the figure shows the number of times more likely that group is to stay at/below the NMS (pathway 1) compared with those who went on to perform consistently above the NMS from Year 5 (pathway 3), while controlling for membership in other demographic groups in the analysis.

In both reading and numeracy, First Nations students are around 4.5 times more likely than non-First Nations students to perform consistently at/below NMS compared to consistently above NMS. Even more strikingly, those students whose parents had education levels of Year 11 or below are over 6 times more likely to consistently perform at/below NMS compared to those who had at least one parent with a bachelor's degree or above.

Figure 6: Number of times more likely to remain consistently at/below NMS from Year 3 to Year 9 by equity group

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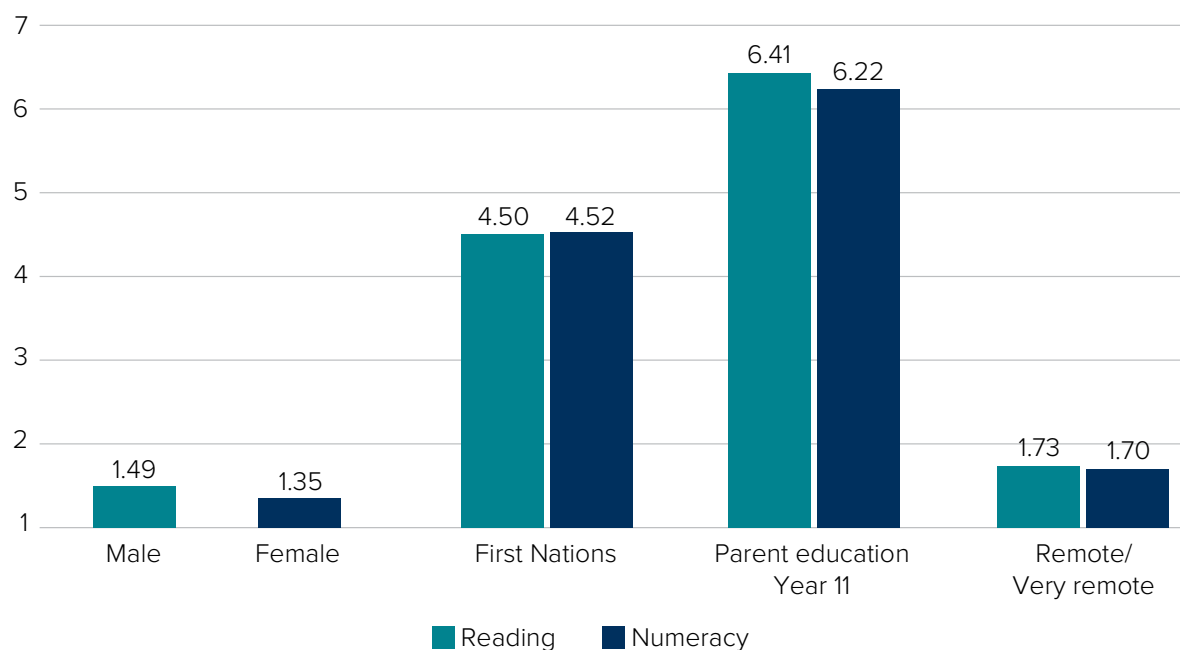
13 Multinomial regressions were performed for reading and numeracy respectively. The dependent categorical variable is whether the students consistently remained at/below NMS, above NMS, or made inconsistent progress from Year 3 to Year 9. The variables included in the model are gender, First Nations status, parental education background and remoteness.

What do these insights mean?

There has been some debate about whether students who begin with low performance levels in Year 3 in Australia are able to catch up to higher performing peers (Goss & Sonnemann, 2016; Larsen & Little, 2023). Our analysis using longitudinal student data clearly demonstrates that Year 3 students who perform at/below NMS – a proxy for not meeting learning expectations – are at a high risk of continuing to perform at that level for the remainder of their schooling. While it is true that some students can catch up, this feat is currently performed by fewer than 1 in 5 students (17% and 19% for reading and numeracy respectively) in the starting group of Year 3 students at/below NMS.

These insights show the value of early identification of at-risk students. Over one-third of students who were at/below NMS in Year 3 remained consistently at/below NMS throughout their schooling. Furthermore, approximately half of the Year 3 student group performed inconsistently in later NAPLAN tests, sometimes performing above, and at other times below expectations. Therefore, most students who performed at/below NMS in Year 3 NAPLAN could be classified as at risk of not meeting expected learning standards throughout their schooling. This underscores the importance of early assessment of student progress against expected outcomes.

This analysis also provides evidence that early intervention is key to lifting and sustaining student outcomes. The analysis did so through showing that for students in Year 3 (the earliest point growth can be tracked through NAPLAN) who did not meet expectations, the largest movement back onto a pathway of improvement in learning happened between Year 3 and Year 5. This result adds to existing evidence[14] that the best time to intervene to catch students up is as soon as students have been identified as not meeting learning expectations.

However, catching up and staying caught up is not easy to achieve, as insights from this paper suggest. When students moved from at/below to above NMS in Year 5, only around half of that group continued to perform above the NMS until Year 9. The other half dropped back down to at/below NMS in secondary school. This indicates that it is difficult for students to maintain improvements in learning gains as they move through schooling.

Equity remains an ongoing problem in the literacy and numeracy performance of Australia's students, as this paper shows. This challenge can be addressed through early identification of students who are falling behind (overrepresented by students from equity groups) and the provision of high-quality intervention tailored to specific needs to support their learning.

The most appropriate interventions to support at-risk students across a wide range of educational settings should continue to be researched. Small group tutoring (Sonnemann & Goss, 2020; Sonnemann & Hunter, 2023) within a multi-tiered system of support framework (de Bruin et al., 2023) is an effective approach to catching up students who have fallen behind.

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14   Other studies (e.g., Lu & Rickard, 2014, p.31–32) provide corroborating evidence that from Year 3 to Year 9 student outcomes are less determined by prior performance and demographics in earlier years than in later years, indicating the best chance to intervene and change a student's learning trajectory is as soon as they are identified as needing support.

It is important that any student learning interventions that are adopted are monitored and assessed for their effectiveness. Going forward, with additional linkage, AERO's new LLANIA dataset offers an opportunity to investigate the impact of teaching and learning interventions on students' literacy and numeracy performance.

AERO is also undertaking further research on the pathways of students with different initial starting performance levels, given a significant number of students[15] who performed at/below NMS in Year 9 achieved above NMS in Year 3 (cohorts not examined in this research). The expanded research will enable us to get a fuller picture of all pathways students can take and the impact of each pathway on future schooling success.

Future research could also investigate why student gains are more easily made in earlier years, and what barriers prevent students from lifting their performance more when they are in Year 7, and more again when they are in Year 9.

Exploring these questions will enable more strategic interventions to put every child on a pathway to sustained learning.

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15   Of the Year 9 students (2014 to 2021, excl. 2020) who were fully matched to Year 3 and who performed at/below NMS in Year 9 reading, 38.9% of them achieved at/below NMS in reading in Year 3. The equivalent figure is 43.2% for numeracy.

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2023 - 2024 Supplementary Budget Estimates
SB23-000350

Issue:	**School Refusal**
Contact:	**Meg Brighton**
	Ph: s 22
	Deputy Secretary

Key Points

- The increase in school refusal is a growing concern for the educational engagement and attainment of Australia's young people.

- Research confirms a strong link between poor attendance and lower academic and social outcomes.

- The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that every Australian child enjoys the benefits of education through evidence informed policy improvements to better support students, families and teachers.

Australian Government Response to Senate Inquiry

- The Senate Education and Employment and References Committee released its final report on 10 August 2023 and made 14 recommendations to better identify, manage, and respond to school refusal.

- The Department of Education is leading the Australian Government Response (AGR) to the Senate inquiry report on school refusal.

- This response is due to be tabled in Parliament on 10 November 2023. The department has been engaging with all responsible agencies and stakeholders to draft the AGR.

- Summary of the Committee's findings:

  o The 14 recommendations reflect policy improvements to support students opportunities to receive best practice supports, increase awareness of school refusal and support student engagement to bridge learning and development gaps, including issues exacerbated due to the pandemic. A copy of the recommendations is included in Attachment B.

  o The report highlights that the key barriers to addressing school refusal are a lack of awareness and understanding, absence of a national approach and a lack of consistent data collection.

- - Evidence from the inquiry highlighted the negative impact of school refusal on young people, families, schools and service providers, including a focus on neurodivergent young people and those experiencing mental health challenges.
  - The inquiry evidence reflects that while students' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the issue, rates of school refusal had been increasing prior to the pandemic.[1]

- The responsibility of implementing the recommendations is shared between the Australian Government, state and territory agencies, and the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL).

- In February 2023, Education Ministers tasked AERO to investigate the causes of declining attendance and provide advice on evidence-based approaches that support attendance. AERO will report back to Education Minister's Meeting in late 2023.

- Current Australian Government initiatives which support student engagement and attendance are included in Attachment A.

Further Information

- School refusal is a form of non-attendance related to anxiety about going to school and can be considered an emotional problem rather than misbehaviour.

- School refusal is associated with a range of complex personal factors including mental health and wellbeing, neurodiversity and disability, bullying and cyberbullying, family circumstances and the classroom environment.

- Data collected by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) reflects a long term, increasing trend of absenteeism.

  - In 2014, students in Years 1–10 attended school on average 93 per cent of school days. That number declined to an average of 87 per cent in Semester 1 of 2022.

- There is currently no existing national data on the reasons students do not attend school. Therefore, the proportion of absenteeism that relates directly to school refusal is not currently known.

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[1] Senate Education and Employment Committees, Parliament of Australia (11 August 2023), *Inquiry into the National Trend of School Refusal and Related Matters*, Report: 2.34–2.46.

- The development of the Unique Student Identifier (USI) will allow jurisdictions and the non-government sector to identify students who may be absent from the compulsory education system, enabling better understanding and support for student engagement.

- In future, USI could link data to create longitudinal datasets, providing insights and evidence to tailor interventions and improve student outcomes.

- Home school registration numbers show an increased rate of home schooling across all jurisdictions in the last decade:
  - There is no national register or data collection mechanism for home schooling and different registration procedures apply across jurisdictions.
  - Anecdotal evidence suggests that the pandemic may have also increased the rate of home schooling however it is difficult to measure the true impact of the pandemic on this.
  - It is also widely recognised that there are a number of unregistered home-schooled students across Australia.

- The Division Brief, **SB23-000474** School Participation, covers the topics of 'attainment, attendance and retention'.

Media

- ***More support needed for parents as Senate report into school refusal outlines path for change, ABC News, 12 August 2023***
This article looks at the impact of school refusal on parents and notes the 'daily battle' that strains relationships, impacts careers and harms the prospects of children who miss out on education. Parents interviewed state they feel validated by the Committee's findings.

- ***Senate report on school refusal recommends subsidised mental health care for students, The Guardian, 10 August 2023***
This article highlights the Committee's recommendation for subsidised student mental health visits and fully funded parent peer support network. It notes improving child health screening for early intervention, incorporating school refusal training in teacher education, and improving trauma-informed practices in schools.

- ***'Anxiety is a very real thing': Spike in school refusal sparks call for national action plan, The Age, 10 August 2023***
  This article explores links between school refusal and anxiety and the impact of the Pandemic. It highlights the Senate report recommendation for Education Ministers to develop a national action plan to tackle refusal, including nationally accepted definition of school refusal, and nationally consistent way of recording reasons for absences.

Other documentation / Attachments

Attachment A **–** Current Australian Government initiatives to support student wellbeing and engagement.

Attachment B – Committee report recommendations

Date Last Cleared	28 September 2023

Attachment A – Current Australian Government initiatives to support student attendance

Australian Government Initiative	*Additional information*
The Student Wellbeing Boost	The Australian Government has committed $203.7 million for the Student Wellbeing Boost to support schools to respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and successive lockdowns on the mental health and wellbeing of students. This is comprised of $202.7 million in administered funding and $1 million in departmental costs. The Boost will provide: $192 million of additional one-off funding to schools to support their students' mental health and wellbeing. **SB23-000148** refers.
Voluntary Mental Health Check Tool	$10.75 million for a new free online Voluntary Mental Health Check Tool to enable schools to undertake a point-in-time assessment of their students' mental health and wellbeing. The Tool will enhance each school's awareness of the current state of wellbeing amongst their students, allowing them to ensure that students are being appropriately supported. The data will assist schools in determining if their student cohort may require further wellbeing assistance, helping them to ensure that students are connected with appropriate service and targeted support.
Student Mental Health and Wellbeing	The Australian Government provides resources and funds initiatives to support good mental health, prevent suicide, address bullying and violence, promote physical health, and keep children safe online. **SB23-000465** refers.
National Student Wellbeing Program (formerly the National School Chaplaincy Program)	The Australian Government provides an annual commitment of $61.43 million for the National Student Wellbeing Program (NSWP). The NSWP is an amendment of the former National School Chaplaincy Program (NSCP), allowing schools the option to hire a qualified Student Wellbeing Officer or Chaplain depending on the need of their students and school community. **SB23-000465** refers.
The Australian Schools Anti-Bullying Collective	The Australian Schools Anti-Bullying Collective develops and delivers evidence informed bullying and cyber bullying resources for schools across Australia. It is responsible for the National Day of Action against bullying and violence and the *Bullying. No Way!* national initiative.

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National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (Department of Health and Aged Care)	The National Children's Mental Health and Welling Strategy provides a framework to guide the development of a comprehensive, integrated system of services to maintain and support the mental health and wellbeing of children aged 0–12 and their families.
National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement	The National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement sets out the shared intention of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to work in partnership to improve the mental health of all Australians, reduce the rate of suicide to zero, and ensure the sustainability and enhance the services of the Australian mental health and suicide prevention system.
National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse	The National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse provides a nationally coordinated, strategic framework for preventing and responding to child sexual abuse. It seeks to reduce the risk, extent and impact of child sexual abuse and related harms in Australia.
Disability initiatives	In Australia, all schools are required under the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Standards) to provide reasonable adjustments for students with disability. The Australian Government provides resources and funds initiatives to support students with disability. **SB23-000347** refers.
Autism Initiatives	The Positive Partnerships program helps parents and teachers to partner in support of children with autism through face-to-face and online learning and workshops. There have been over 47,000 participants in face-to-face and online workshops, webinars, and training since the start of Phase 4 in 2021. Education Services Australia is also being funded to produce online resources for teachers and families to help students with autism transition into school and to support self-regulation when they are feeling overwhelmed by the school environment.
Classroom Behaviours	The Government is investing $3.5 million for the development of evidence-based guidance and tools to help provide teachers and school leaders with the skills and knowledge to manage behaviour and create safe and supportive environments focused on learning. These resources will be developed by the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) and will support: • primary and secondary teachers to develop and implement effective routines and approaches that maximise student engagement in their own classrooms • school leaders and teaching teams to develop and implement whole-school positive behaviour management systems

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	• parents and students to understand the importance of effectively managed classroom environments focused on learning, and how they can best contribute. Specialised resources will also be developed for supporting certain groups of students including, but not limited to: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; students experiencing disability; neuro-diverse students; and students experiencing trauma.
Unique Student Identifier (USI)	Subject to Education Ministers' agreement, potential future uses of school USIs may include supporting jurisdictions and the non-government schools sector to identify students who may be absent from the compulsory education system, enabling better understanding and support for student engagement. In the future, the USI may also link data to create longitudinal datasets, providing insights and evidence to tailor interventions and improve student outcomes.
Be You (Department of Health and Aged Care)	Be You has been proactive in its development of resources, information sessions, webinars, and use of its online and educator networks, to highlight the issue of school refusal, and provide focused guidance and advice for educators and learning communities on how to support students and their families managing school refusal.
Headspace (Department of Health and Aged Care)	Headspace has developed several resources for educators and parents, and students focused on school refusal and relevant issues. These include: • Supporting a young person: school refusal • Supporting a young person: school stress • For young people – how to reduce stress and prepare for exams.
Emerging Minds (Department of Health and Aged Care)	Emerging Minds provides evidence based, online resources and guidance designed for both professionals (including educators) and parents and families on a wide range of topics, which target school refusal and related mental health issues, such as: managing anxiety in school aged children; attachment and separation; bullying; eating and body image; gender and sexuality; social media; and managing challenges associated with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters.
Raising Children Network (Department of Social Services)	The Raising Children Network website, supported by the Department of Social Services, has specific advice to support parents in responding to their child's school refusal.

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List of recommendations

Recommendation 1

6.18   As an initial step in the broader school refusal research agenda, the committee recommends that Education Ministers task the Australian Education Research Organisation with research into:

- the drivers and prevalence of school refusal in Australia; and
- the use, cost, and effectiveness of school refusal interventions used in Australia and overseas, including flexible approaches to school education.

6.19   This research should inform the Australian Education Research Organisation's advice to Education Ministers on the causes of declining school attendance and evidence-based approaches to support educational outcomes (arising from the 27 February 2023 Education Ministers Meeting). It should also inform future school refusal research projects, as well as the development of national school refusal resources (see Recommendation 2). This research should also inform the establishment of a nationally agreed definition of school refusal (see Recommendation 6).

Recommendation 2

6.20   The committee recommends that the Australian Government work with state and territory education authorities and the non-government school sector to develop and promote resources about school refusal, once a nationally agreed definition has been established, for parents, teachers and school leaders.

6.21   These resources should be informed by the research undertaken by the Australian Education Research Organisation as part of Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 3

6.24   The committee recommends that state and territory governments review their child health and development screening programs to identify opportunities to improve early identification of autism, ADHD, specific learning disorders, and anxiety disorders, in order to provide the classroom support these students might need.

Recommendation 4

6.25   The committee recommends that state and territory education authorities and the non-government school sector identify opportunities for earlier identification of students at risk of school withdrawal, particularly at key school transition points. This may include—but should not be limited to—analysis of school absence data and the use of screening tools.

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6.26 The committee encourages state and territory education authorities and the non-government school sector to broaden data collection to account for differences in attendance. The committee acknowledges that there is a difference between absences due to truancy, school withdrawal, or school refusal.

Recommendation 5

6.37 The committee recommends that state and territory education authorities and the non-government school sector investigate ways to increase the flexibility of education delivery, including by:

- identifying ways to enhance flexibility in mainstream school settings for children going through school refusal;
- facilitating easier access to distance education and home schooling for students experiencing school refusal; and
- facilitating the provision of more alternative and specialist school settings that cater for students experiencing school refusal.

Recommendation 6

6.38 The committee recommends that Education Ministers develop a national action plan on school refusal (national action plan), informed by research that has been conducted by the Australian Education Research Organisation (see Recommendation 1). The national action plan should be developed within 12 months and should include:

- a nationally agreed definition and terminology for school refusal;
- a nationally consistent approach to recording school absences, as well as an agreed approach to public reporting of school refusal absences;
- a nationally agreed approach to messaging in relation to school attendance, school refusal, and the recording of school absences;
- a nationally agreed approach to provide support to parents and students going through school refusal by increasing accessibility and awareness of alternative methods of schooling;
- a national commitment to prioritise implementation of the Unique Student Identifier (USI) and agreement about how the USI will be used to identify students at risk of school refusal, facilitate information sharing about those students, and support research into school refusal;
- nationally agreed research priorities, as well as an information sharing and dissemination strategy, particularly to reduce stigma and support understanding of school refusal;
- agreement that a multi-tiered system of support approach be used to guide approaches to, and investments in, school refusal interventions (noting this would be implemented largely at a local level); and

- agreed roles and responsibilities, an implementation timeline, key performance indicators, and a monitoring and evaluation strategy.

6.39 Development of the national action plan should be a collaborative process involving health and education professionals, service providers, and people with lived experience of school refusal—with a particular focus on neurodivergent young people and those with mental health challenges. The national action plan should also align with existing national strategies, where appropriate, and be informed by the recommendations of this inquiry.

6.40 The committee encourages the expert review panel on the National School Reform Agreement to take into consideration the recommendations of this report.

Recommendation 7

6.41 The committee recommends that the Australian Government work with state and territory governments to identify ways to improve awareness and understanding of school refusal—once a nationally agreed definition has been established—within the health sector, with a particular focus on general practice, psychiatry, psychology and other relevant allied health fields.

6.42 Once a nationally agreed definition has been established, the committee would welcome the option to embed school refusal training within relevant tertiary education courses, as well as ongoing professional development requirements.

6.43 To that end, the committee encourages the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership to work with state and territory regulatory authorities to ensure teacher education and training courses incorporate modules on school refusal, once a nationally agreed definition has been established. This could include modules for ongoing professional development requirements.

Recommendation 8

6.51 The committee recommends that state and territory education authorities and the non-government school sector review and update current messaging about the importance of school attendance to ensure that it:

- reflects a nuanced view of attendance that does not further alienate families dealing with school refusal; and
- provides information about how to access support for attendance difficulties such as school refusal; and
- recognises that for some students, where attendance is not possible, that delivering tailored educational outcomes through an alternative method of schooling is the priority.

Recommendation 9

6.57   The committee recommends that state and territory education authorities and the non-government school sector work together to develop resources to support the use of trauma-informed practices in schools, so they can implement best-practice methods to support students to continue with their education.

Recommendation 10

6.58   The committee recommends that state and territory education authorities and the non-government school sector work together to develop and promote stable and ongoing resources to support effective family engagement. This should include the provision of specialist family engagement support staff in schools.

Recommendation 11

6.64   The committee acknowledges that the process of receiving a formal disability diagnosis is expensive and can have extended wait times. To this end, the committee recommends that state and territory education authorities and the non-government school sector work together to identify and implement measures to build the capacity of schools to provide reasonable adjustments for students in line with the requirements of the Disability Standards for Education 2005. This could include the provision of additional specialist support staff in schools and/or providing teachers with the opportunity to acquire Universal Design in Learning skills through additional professional development.

Recommendation 12

6.70   The committee recommends that the Australian Government work with state and territory governments to identify and promote effective models for collaboration between the education and health sectors in relation to school refusal.

Recommendation 13

6.74   The committee recommends that the Australian Government work with state and territory governments to explore funding sources for an independent peer support network for families and schools going through school refusal to receive resources and support. This could include improving resources for parents, including a 'one-stop shop' for information about school refusal and the support options available to students and families.

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6.75   The committee recognises the current situation where there is no nationally recognised school refusal advocacy and support group for parents. To this end, the committee encourages the Australian Government to consider the importance of such support groups for parents.

Recommendation 14

6.76   The committee recommends that the Australian Government investigate increasing the number of subsidised mental health care visits for students experiencing school refusal.

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2023 - 2024 Supplementary Budget Estimates
SB23-000351

Issue:	**Schools funding assurance and compliance**
Contact:	**Meg Brighton**
Ph:	s 22
	Deputy Secretary

Key Points

- The department is responsible for providing Australian Government school funding to approved authorities for the schools they represent.

  o State and territory governments have primary regulatory responsibility for schools, including non-government school registration and other requirements, as reflected in their own legislation governing the regulation of schools.

- Funding is calculated based on the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) and made available to all eligible schools, regardless of religious or other affiliation, provided they meet requirements specified in the *Australian Education Act 2013* (the Act) and the *Australian Education Regulations 2023* (the Regulations).

- The amount of Commonwealth funding provided to approved authorities for school education is significant and its provision comes with responsibilities.

- The department has a robust assurance framework that provides for the monitoring of approved authorities compliance with the requirements of the Act and the Regulations and takes action in instances of non-compliance.

- The department's compliance approach focuses on:

  o providing/promoting education and information

  o monitoring behaviour

  o considering risks and consequences of non-compliance or fraud

  o investigating suspected breaches and acting accordingly.

- The Government announced in the 2023–24 Budget that it is strengthening policy and financial assurance and compliance oversight to ensure funding for non-government schools is appropriately used for the intended purpose of school education, as outlined in the Act and the Regulations.

- The budget measure safeguards the Government's significant investment in school education by strengthening and expanding the department's regulatory assurance and compliance activities to prevent, detect and respond to non-compliance and fraud in the non-government school sector (see also **SB23-000489**).

- The department works closely with approved authorities where non-compliance is identified. When non-compliance cannot be or is not remedied through these mechanisms the department will take necessary actions commensurate with the severity of the non-compliance.

  - For example, varying the frequency of payments, and imposing conditions on approval. When non-compliance persists, the department will consider further action, including pausing of recurrent funding.

- The department does not comment publicly on compliance matters.

- We understand the importance of continuing to build public confidence in the regulatory regime and will consider the merits of further strengthening our compliance posture to release public information on regulatory action – similar to that undertaken by other Commonwealth regulators.

Complaints Handling

- The department has mechanisms in place for receiving feedback which is outlined on the department's website.

- The department is committed to ensuring its management of complaints are fair, accessible, responsive, efficient and integrated. These principles our outlined in the Complaints Factsheet on the department's website at www.education.gov.au/about-department/resources/complaints-factsheet (**Attachment A**).

- The department would not normally refer complainants back to a school they were making a complaint about.

- Depending on the nature of the complaint, the department may suggest the person raise their concerns with the relevant state or territory department or regulatory authority (i.e., in cases where they have jurisdiction to investigate).

- In some circumstances, the department may also directly refer the information to the relevant state or territory department for appropriate action.

Brindabella Christian Education Limited (BCEL)

- On 17 May 2021, a delegate for the Minister of Education made the decision that BCEL was not a fit and proper person under the requirements of the Act, and a number of conditions were imposed in relation to the school's governance and financial viability.

- On 11 June 2021, the department received an application made by BCEL to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) for review of the department's Notice of Decision imposing the above conditions.

- The hearing commenced on 27 March 2023. On 30 March 2023, as part of the AAT hearing, the department and BCEL reached an agreement on a varied set of Conditions on Approval and Timeline of Conditions to those imposed on 17 May 2021.

- On 12 April 2023, the AAT agreed to the varied set of conditions and provided its final decision for this matter, which is publicly available on request through the AAT. The AAT did not alter the delegate's finding of May 2021 that BCEL did not comply with the fit and proper person requirements of the Act.

- Based on the **AAT conditions**, **BCEL is required to meet a number of conditions** in relation to governance, financial management, and financial reporting. This includes quarterly reporting by BCEL to the department.

- The department is monitoring BCEL's compliance under the Act and the Regulations, including their obligations as outlined in the AAT conditions.

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr Catholic College

- During the 2022–23 Supplementary Budget Estimates hearing held on 16 February 2023 (Education and Employment Legislation Committee), Senator Nampijinpa Price raised matters with the department about a school in the community of Wadeye. (SQ23-000077 at **Attachment C** refers).

  o Specifically, that a school in the community of Wadeye "receives $18 million of funding a year" and that its reported "enrolment average has been about 24 per cent, and only about 1 per cent of students attend 90 per cent of the time in that particular school". The Senator also stated that $18 million "is a lot of money when literally one student is attending 90 per cent of the time and the average is 24 per cent".

- Following this, the department wrote to the Catholic Church of the Diocese of Darwin Property Trust Inc on 17 March 2023 (the approved authority of the school in Wadeye), seeking relevant background information and explanation in relation to the student attendance and funding matters raised by Senator Nampijinpa Price.

- A response was provided to the department on 12 April 2023.

- The department is currently reviewing and assessing the information provided by the approved authority, the Catholic Church of the Diocese of Darwin Property Trust. s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a)
  s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a)

Media

- For schools mentioned recently in the media on compliance matters, and actions taken by the department, see **Attachment B**.

Other documentation

- **Attachment A**: Complaints factsheet

- **Attachment B**: Schools mentioned recently in the media on compliance matters

- **Attachment C**: SQ23-000077

Date Last Cleared	20 October 2023

Complaints Factsheet

Principles

The Department of Education (department) welcomes feedback about its operations and services and is committed to ensuring its management of complaints are:

- **fair** – the department deals with complaints impartially, confidentially and with appropriate empathy. There are no adverse repercussions for making a complaint. The department is open about the process, advises complainants of progress, and, where appropriate, gives complainants the opportunity to respond and to seek internal review of complaint outcomes.

- **accessible** – information about how to make a complaint is easily available and complaints can be made using a variety of channels online, verbally and in writing.

- **responsive** – the department will assist or respond appropriately to all complainants including by extending special assistance to vulnerable people and those with particular needs as appropriate.

- **efficient** – complaints are resolved as quickly as possible and preferably, where appropriate, at the point of complaint or promptly upon referral to a line area. Complaints are handled in a way that is proportionate and appropriate to the matter being complained about.

- **integrated** – complaint management is integrated with the department's core business activities so that any lessons or systemic issues can be appropriately actioned.

Making a complaint

Complaints may be made verbally or in writing. Contact details for the department are available on our website, including the department's complaint contact information.

Where a complaint has been lodged verbally and there is uncertainty about the situation, or if the complaint raises complex or serious matters, the department may encourage the complainant to submit the complaint in writing. This will assist the department to thoroughly investigate the complaint.

Where a complaint relates to a matter another organisation is better placed to investigate, the department may be able to assist a complainant to direct the complaint to a relevant organisation such as a service provider, state or territory agency or regulator.

Referral to police or support services

Where a complaint raises a risk of significant harm to one or more individuals or an allegation of criminal conduct, the matter will generally be referred to the police or other appropriate authority.

Anonymous complaints

The department will generally consider anonymous complaints; however, it may not be possible to properly investigate or respond. Where possible, the department will make complainants aware of these limitations.

Confidential complaints

A complainant may prefer to their keep identity confidential. In such situations the department may need to discuss with the complainant how this could affect management of the complaint, including any investigation and resolution.

Unreasonable complainant conduct

Where the department considers a complainant is engaging in unreasonable conduct the matter will be managed in accordance with the Commonwealth Ombudsman Unreasonable Complainant Conduct and the Practice Manual on Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct (a joint project of the Australian Parliamentary Ombudsmen).

Unreasonable complainant conduct can include:

- persistently asking for remedies which are unreasonable, disproportionate, or not possible
- insisting on speaking to the head of the department
- seeking to direct the department how to handle a complaint
- aggressive language or behaviour.

Management of complaints

Where possible and appropriate, the department will endeavour to address complaints quickly and informally. For example, it may be possible to resolve a straightforward issue through feedback or providing information.

Where this is not possible, the process outlined below will generally be applied. However, as complaints vary widely in their nature and content, the department manages complaints on a case-by-case basis and not all steps in the process will be relevant for every complaint. There may also be specific procedures for complaints where a statutory scheme or program guideline applies to a complaint.

1.   Acknowledgement

The department will acknowledge the complaint within five business days. The complainant will be provided an appropriate timeframe for a response and a contact for queries regarding the complaint.

2.   Assessment

The complaint will be allocated and assessed.

3.   Investigation

Where it is not possible for the department to resolve the complaint at the initial point of contact, an investigation may be undertaken. The purpose of an investigation is to resolve a complaint by reaching a fair and independent view on the issues raised. The investigation should resolve factual issues and consider options for complaint resolution.

4.   Response

The department endeavours to provide clear and informative responses to complainants.

The length of time it takes for the department to investigate and respond to a complaint will depend on the nature and complexity of the issues involved. The complainant will be kept informed of progress with the investigation until the matter is finalised.

The response may include the particulars of an investigation, findings or decisions reached and any outcomes, remedies or action proposed. In some instances, the department may have limitations on the extent of the information that can be provided to complainants for example, to protect personal privacy.

If, following investigation, the department does not accept a claim in a complaint, the complainant will be provided an opportunity to comment on the proposed adverse finding before it is finalised. If a claim continues not to be accepted, this should be noted and explained.

5.   Review

If a complainant would like further information or explanation about the complaint outcome, the staff member responsible for management of the complaint may be able to provide further explanatory material.

In some cases, it may be appropriate for the department to offer internal review of how the complaint was handled and resolved, taking into account any additional information provided by the complainant. External review options may also be available depending upon the nature of the complaint.

The complainant has the right to make a complaint to the Commonwealth Ombudsman's Office. The department will provide as much information as possible on request by the Commonwealth Ombudsman's Office.

Where the department has followed an appropriate complaints process and further correspondence continues to be received about the matters already investigated that does not raise new issues or provide new information, it may be appropriate to advise a complainant that no further correspondence will be entered into on those matters unless new evidence or information is provided.

Attachment B

Schools referenced recently in public on compliance matters

School / Approved Authority	Description
St Paul's School (Bald Hills) Anglican Schools Commission Queensland	• On 14 September 2023, The Courier Mail published an article that the Principal of St Paul's School in Bald Hills and the School Council have been sacked. • In March 2023, the Anglican Schools Commission Queensland as the Approved Authority for the school contacted the Department raising concerns regarding the Principal of St Paul's School's proposed commercialising the "Realms of Thinking" pedagogical framework. The approved authority provided information to the Department for review and sought advice on compliance. **Action(s) taken** s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a) s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a) • On 16 September 2023, the approved authority advised the Department that an interim Principal had been engaged for the school. • The Department does not provide advice to schools about the employment of individuals.

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Attachment B

School / Approved Authority	Description
Cranbrook School Approved Authority: Cranbrook School	• On 20 June 2023, The Australian published an article about the Cranbrook Principal's trip to Paris. **Action(s) taken** • On 29 June 2023, the Department wrote to Cranbrook School seeking further information on the published article. • On 26 July 2023, Cranbrook School requested the Department for an extension until 4 August 2023 to respond. • On 3 August 2023, a response was received. • The Department has assessed the information and records provided and has not identified any compliance concerns under the *Australian Education Act 2013* or the *Australian Education Regulations 2023* in relation to the Cranbrook School. • The Department wrote to the school on 25 September 2023 advising that no compliance action is being considered.
St Bridget's School **St John's School** **St Joseph's School** **St Mary Magdalen's School.** Approved Authority: Catholic Education Commission of Victoria	• On 19 June 2023, The Herald Sun reported St Joseph's Primary School, Black Rock, could be closed after a review along with three other schools: St Bridget's School, Balwyn North; St John's Primary, Clifton Hill; and St Mary Magdalen's, Chadstone. **Action(s) taken** • On 29 June 2023, the Department wrote to the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) seeking information on developments at the schools, including next steps about the reported closures. • On 25 August 2023, the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria notified the Department that the above four schools are to close at the end of 2023, as well as another school in regional Victoria (St Brendan's School, Dunnstown). The advice also noted that a full range of support is being provided to assist families with enrolments at other school including one-on-one support for families. • On 1 September 2023, the VRQA responded to the Department's letter. The VRQA noted that the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria has advised that a dedicated team has been established to offer tailored assistance to the families.

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Attachment B

School / Approved Authority	Description
Approved Authority: Tasmanian Catholic Education Office	• On 17 June 2023, the Daily Telegraph reported concerns about inappropriate behaviour by the Executive Director of the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office (TCEO). **Action(s) taken** • On 4 July 2023, the Department wrote to the TCEO as the Approved Authority, seeking relevant information and explanation in relation to the article, including the outcomes of any internal investigations. • On 25 August 2023, TCEO responded to the Department's letter. • The Department is currently assessing the response. s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a) s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a)
Brindabella Christian College, ACT Approved Authority: Brindabella Christian Education Limited	• On 28 March 2023, The Canberra Times reported that the Administrative Appeals Tribunal has been told the proprietors of the College have accumulated up a $4.8 million debt to the Australian Tax Office. • On 31 March 2023, The Canberra Times reported that the College and the Department of Education reached an agreement at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The article noted Brindabella Christian College will improve its financial management and governance structure as part of an agreement with the federal Education Minister. • On 23 April 2023, The Canberra Times reported that Brindabella Christian College must expand its board, and review it finances. • On 27 April 2023, The Canberra Times reported that Brindabella Christian College will refer officials to the Commonwealth's national anti-corruption commission. • On 8 August 2023, The Canberra Times reported on new buildings works at Brindabella Christian College amid $2.8 million loss in 2021. • On 12 September 2023, The Riot Act reported that Brindabella Christian College is using uncertified structures as classrooms. **Action(s) taken** • On 17 May 2021, a delegate for the Minister of Education made the decision that BCEL was not a fit and proper person under the requirements of the Act, and a number of conditions were imposed in relation to school's governance and financial viability. • On 11 June 2021, the Department received an application made by BCEL to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) for review of the Department's Notice of Decision imposing the above conditions.

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Attachment B

School / Approved Authority	Description
	• The hearing commenced on 27 March 2023. On 30 March 2023, as part of the AAT hearing, the Department and BCEL reached an agreement on a varied set of Conditions on Approval and Timeline of Conditions to those imposed on 17 May 2021. • On 12 April 2023, the AAT agreed to the varied set of conditions and provided its final decision for this matter, which is publicly available on request through the AAT. The AAT did not alter the delegate's finding of May 2021 that BCEL did not comply with the fit and proper person requirements of the Act. • Based on the AAT conditions, BCEL is required to meet a number of conditions in relation to governance, financial management, and financial reporting. Quarterly reporting by BCEL to the Department is also required under the AAT conditions. The Department is monitoring BCEL's progress with the implementation of the AAT conditions to ensure they are meeting their obligations as outlined in the AAT order. • The Department has written to BCEL on a number of occasions since the AAT orders were issued as part of its monitoring process on the implementation of the AAT orders. This includes in relation to the frequency of Commonwealth recurrent payments.
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr Catholic College Approved Authority: Catholic Church of the Diocese of Darwin Property Trust Inc	During the 2022-23 Supplementary Budget Estimates hearing held on 16 February 2023 (Education and Employment Legislation Committee), Senator Nampijinpa Price raised matters with the Department about a school in the community of Wadeye. Specifically, that a school in the community of Wadeye "receives $18 million of funding a year" and that its reported "enrolment average has been about 24 per cent, and only about 1 per cent of students attend 90 per cent of the time in that particular school". The Senator also stated that $18 million "is a lot of money when literally one student is attending 90 per cent of the time and the average is 24 per cent." **Action(s) taken** • The Department wrote to the Catholic Church of the Diocese of Darwin Property Trust Inc on 17 March 2023 (the approved authority of the school in Wadeye), seeking relevant background information and explanation in relation to the student attendance and funding matters raised by Senator Nampijinpa Price. • A response was provided to the Department on 12 April 2023. • The Department is assessing the information provided by the approved authority, the Catholic Church of the Diocese of Darwin Property Trust. s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a) s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a)

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Attachment B

School / Approved Authority	Description
Sydney Catholic Schools Approved Authority: Catholic Schools NSW Limited	• On 19 April 2023, ABC News published an article entitled "Sydney Catholic Schools paid almost 400k to a firm linked to a mysterious Arthur Thorogood. Did he even exist?" **Action(s) taken** • On 21 April 2023, the Department wrote to the Catholic Schools NSW Limited as the diocese of Sydney Catholic Schools is part of the Catholic Schools NSW Limited. The letter seeks information on the matters raised in the ABC News article. • On 26 May 2023, a detailed response was provided to the Department. s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a)
The Lakes Christian College Approved Authority: Christian Community Ministries Ltd	• On 5 April 2023, The Daily Telegraph reported that a Christian private school in Sydney's west, The Lakes Christian College, had been ordered to repay the NSW government $3.8 million after it was found to have been operating "for profit". The repayment amount was upheld by the NSW Supreme Court on 27 March 2023. A 2020 investigation by the NSW authorities into the finances of the college ruled that transfers of school property to a trust, as well as loan payments made to the school's operation, made it ineligible to receive government funding. • The investigation by the NSW Non-government Schools Not-For-Profit Advisory Committee resulted in the then-education Minister Sarah Mitchell declaring the school "non-compliant" with regulations and ordered the school pay back $3.8 million in government funding. **Action(s) taken** • The Department has examined the issues raised in the NSW Supreme Court decision. On 16 May 2023 the department wrote to the approved authority Christian Community Ministries Ltd representing The Lakes Christian College seeking further information in relation to the for-profit issues and related party transactions. • On 29 June 2023, a response was received. • The Department is currently assessing the response, which is complex in nature. On 25 September 2023 the Department wrote to the approved authority with an update on the progress of the assessment. s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a) s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a)

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Attachment B

School / Approved Authority	Description
Minarah College (formerly Green Valley Islamic College) Green Valley Islamic College Ltd (GVICL)	• On 8 March 2023, Minarah College reported on their facebook page that the College Board believes it is critical for the community is made aware that the State and Federal governments are seeking full independence of the College without any control or influence over its management by the Muslim League of NSW or the Shuraa Council to continue receiving funding and that there are several negative consequences that the College may lose its registration. **Action(s) taken** • On 22 December 2022, the Department wrote to GVICL requesting further information relating to GVICL's compliance with the Act and the Regulation, and GVICL's financial administration. s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a)
King's School Approved Authority: The Council of the King's School	• On 14 February 2023, The Daily Telegraph reported that King's School has been ordered to ditch plans to build a plunge pool at the headmaster's residence because the project was an illegitimate use of the school's money. The private two-by-three metre pool to be built at headmaster Tony George's house on campus was approved by the school's council in June 2022 but has been stopped after concerns were raised with the Non-Government Schools Not-For-Profit Advisory Committee. The committee monitors how private schools use their finances – including their allocated government funding. • On 24 June 2022, the Sydney Morning Herald published an article "Plan for plunge pool at headmaster's residence at King's fuels tension." • The article stated that "Plans for a plunge pool to be built for the headmaster's residence at The King's School have fuelled tension among parents over the school's spending priorities and reignited debate about taxpayer funding for private education". It also reported on an overseas trip by its headmaster to attend the Henley Royal Regatta in Britain. **Action(s) taken** • The Department wrote to the school's approved authority in July 2022 seeking an explanation on the issues raised in the media. • The Department wrote to the school's approved authority in January 2023 noting that the **Department will further review the matter once a final decision is made by the NSW authorities.** s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a)

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Attachment B

School / Approved Authority	Description
	s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a)
East Preston Islamic College Approved Authority: East Preston Islamic College Limited	• On 9 February 2023, The Age reported that the principal of an inner-north Melbourne private school that began the school year by withholding its teachers' pay has been stood down due to alleged misconduct, prompting outpouring of support from staff, who are calling for his reinstatement. Neil Hasankolli, principal of East Preston Islamic College, has been stood down by the school's new board, days after the board withheld wages from its teachers and support staff. • The new board, which has been locked in a legal dispute with the former board, claimed it could not pay staff until the former board authorised the release of funds. All members of the former board were purged in a vote late last year. • On 1 May 2023, The Age reported that "dozens of staff at a troubled independent school in Preston refused to go to work last week following the firing of two principals". The article also noted that "Victoria's schools regulator is reviewing governance at the low-fee school, and its authorised officers were on-site last week". **Action(s) taken** • The Department is liaising with Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) on this school. s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a) s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a) s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a)

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Attachment B

School / Approved Authority	Description
	s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a)
Redfield College **Tangara School for Girls** **Montgrove College** **Wollemi College** Approved Authority: PARED Ltd	• On 28 January 2023, The Sydney Morning Herald published an article (War of words erupts between Opus Dei schools and ABC) that reported on serious allegations at PARED Ltd operated schools in relation to student education, health of students, sex discrimination matters and teaching of the school curriculum. • The article was based on ABC Four Corners investigation into claims made by former students and their families at schools operated by PARED Ltd related to opposing consent education, encouraging students to make decisions contrary to medical advice, harm to students as a result of their education, homophobia, and religious recruitment practices. **Action(s) taken** • The Department wrote to the approved authority on 31 January 2023 seeking clarification on the media reports and whether the approved authority is compliant under section 28 of the Regulation (fit and proper person), and section 42 of the Regulations (implementation of the Australian Curriculum). • Separately, the Department wrote to the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) on 31 January 2023, requesting that it keeps the Department informed of the progress and outcomes of its investigation into PARED Ltd. • On 17 February 2023, PARED Ltd provided a response to the Department (with further information provided on 22 and 23 February 2023). s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a) • The Department is undertaking its own assessment of information it has available to it. s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a) s 37(1)(a), 47G(1)(a)

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Standing Committees on Education and Employment

QUESTION ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2022 - 2023

Outcome: Schools

Department of Education Question No. SQ23-000077

Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price on 16 February 2023, Proof Hansard page 62

Also, refer to previous hearing Question No. SQ22-000214.

School attendance in Wadeye

Question
Senator NAMPIJINPA PRICE: Thank you. In the community of Wadeye, there is a school that receives $18 million of funding a year. The reported enrolment average has been about 24 per cent, and only about 1 per cent of students attend 90 per cent of the time in that particular school. Eighteen million dollars is a lot of money when literally one student is attending 90 per cent of the time and the average is 24 per cent. How is the department keeping the Northern Territory education department accountable for ensuring children are attending school regularly?
Dr Bruniges: It's a very good question, Senator. If you're not at school, you're not learning. I'm very clear in my view about the importance of school attendance. How do we hold governments to account? For the receipt of money, we have a block grant authority sheet that comes in that is school by school, saying how much money on each of the variables comes in, and that's signed off by the chief executive. We then also do some audits that Mr Hardy has spoken to if there's something that comes to our attention that we should look at. We do rely on those block grant authorities. And in the non-government sector there are also financial statistical returns that are signed off by a CPA that come in from the non-government sector. If there is an issue with a particular school in that block grant authority, I think Mr Hardy has just been through a risk assessment if there is something untoward— and that clearly sounds untoward to me. We would lift the bonnet and have a look, and have a close look at whether that $18 million has gone on salary components—where has it gone? Has it reached the school site? Is it still sitting in a department? How much is overheads and so forth? So if there's some concern there, we're more than happy to have a look at it.
Senator NAMPIJINPA PRICE: If you could look at that and provide the outcome on notice, that would be really beneficial.

Answer
There is only one school in the Wadeye community. This school is 'Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr Catholic College' (the school). The Catholic Church of the Diocese of Darwin Property Trust Inc (CCDDPT) is the approved authority responsible for operation of the school.

The *My School* website provides information that supports national transparency and accountability of Australia's school education system through publication of nationally consistent school-level data. It complements other reporting measures aimed at ensuring schools and school systems are accountable to parents and to the broader community.

The school profile publicly available on the *My School* website reports:
- total Australian Government recurrent funding in 2021 of $17.7 million
- Semester 1, 2022 student attendance rate of 26 per cent
- Semester 1, 2022 student attendance level (proportion of students attending 90 per cent or more of the time) was 2 per cent
- 40 full-time equivalent teaching staff in 2022
- 67.5 full-time equivalent non-teaching staff in 2022.

The school's audited Special Purpose Financial Report – 31 December 2021 is publicly available on the Australian Charities and Not-for profits Commission website at www.acnc.gov.au/charity/charities/0cb1ccfd-38af-e811-a960-000d3ad24282/documents/.

The schools' reported expenditure for 2021 is as follows:

Description	$m
Salaries	9.3
Staff costs	1.8
Tuition expenses	0.3
Building and grounds	1.3
Depreciation	1.6
Other expenses	2.9
Total Expenses	**17.2**

The Australian Government provides financial assistance to all approved authorities for schools under the *Australian Education Act 2013* (the Act) for the purpose of providing school education. Section 29 of the Australian Education Regulation 2013 (the Regulation) outlines the requirements for spending provided under the Act. The Act and the Regulation require approved authorities to spend, or commit to spend, recurrent funding for the purpose of providing school education at a school for which the approved authority is approved.

The department has not identified any issues with the CCDDPT's 2021 financial acquittal certificate and is not aware of any funding assurance or compliance issues with the school in the community of Wadeye.

States and territories have constitutional responsibility for the administration of schools, including attendance. The department does not have a direct oversighting role. The *Education Act 2015* (NT) covers mandatory enrolment and attendance requirements for the Northern Territory. Under the current National School Reform Agreement, all governments have committed to increasing the proportion of students attending school ninety per cent or more of the time, including students from priority groups.

The department has written to the approved authority seeking further detailed information on the school's student attendance and expenditure incurred in 2021 and 2022, and a copy of the letter has been provided to the Northern Territory's Department of Education.

Issue: **Schools Upgrade Fund (SUF)**
PBS Pg No. 44
Contact: **Meg Brighton**
Ph: s 22
Deputy Secretary - Schools

Budget – Schools Upgrade Fund

Financial year	2022–23 ($m)	2023–24 ($m)	2024–25 ($m)	2025–26 ($m)	Total ($m)
Education - Administered	$50	$3.6	-	-	$53.6
Education - Departmental	$5.8	-	-	-	$5.8
Treasury	-	$215.8	-	-	$215.8
Total	**$55.8**	**$219.4**	**-**	**-**	**$275.2**

Notes: The $215.8m Government School Capital Funding appropriation sits with Treasury as it is subject to national partnership arrangements.
An additional $5.8 million in Departmental funding was allocated to implement and administer the Schools Upgrade Fund, ensuring it is efficient, effective, and accountable.

Key Points

- The **$275.2 million** Schools Upgrade Fund (the Fund) promotes equitable access to resources and facilities to support quality education, and to keep students safe and well following disruptions due to COVID-19.

- The Fund has **3 components** and will operate **over 2 years** to support schools improve their school infrastructure.

Key Figures

- Targeted Round – **$21.6 million** over 2022–23 to 2023–24.

- Open Round – **$32 million** in 2022–23.

- Government School Capital Funding – **$215.8 million** in 2023–24.

- Departmental funding – **$5.8 million** in 2022–23 (less than 2% of total funding).

Targeted Round

- Funding towards priority projects in schools that were announced as part of the Australian Government's election commitments.

- **In December 2022, $18 million** was provided for 215 projects in 211 schools.

- o Projects are due for completion by 31 December 2023 (unless approved for an extension). Funding amounts range from $3,000 to $3.5 million.

- The department understands that all 211 schools have now had funding made available to them for the 215 projects.

- As at 9 October 2023 there are:

  - o 136 projects in progress (123 government, 13 non-government)
  - o 22 projects in government schools that have not yet commenced
  - o 57 projects completed (51 government and 6 non-government).

- **In April 2023**, the Minister accepted the transfer of additional election commitments for 5 schools and **$3.6 million** from the Infrastructure portfolio.

- On 22 June 2023 the Government made amendments to the *Australian Education Regulation 2013* to increase the existing funding cap for the Targeted Round from $18 million to **$21.6 million** to account for the additional commitments.

- The department is conducting due diligence on these projects and working with relevant jurisdictions, and the Minister's Office to confirm final project details.

- This additional funding is anticipated to be provided before the end of 2023, with project completion approximately 12 months later.

- Schools are required to submit progress reports and closure reports. Projects over $100,000 are subject to additional assurance and active monitoring requirements as outlined at **Attachment A.**

Open Round

- **$32 million** for capital projects up to $25,000 per school.

- Applications opened on 28 November 2022 and closed on 24 February 2023. The department received over 4,800 applications. A breakdown of applications and successful schools by jurisdiction and sector is at **Attachment B**.

- The online application form required schools to answer a series of targeted questions to determine their project need relative to other schools (**Attachment C**). Each school received a total score in line with the scoring matrix published in the Schools Upgrade Fund Guidelines. The total score is a combination of project need and school need (i.e., ICSEA).

- A shortlist of applications were then moderated by a panel of Senior Executive Officers within the department to quality assure the

assessment process and reach a final list of recommended schools for approval by the Minister.

- The moderation panel retained 50% of notionally allocated funding for each sector and jurisdiction (24 in total; allocations based on number of schools) and reallocated the remaining 50% of the funding to the schools with the highest assessed scores. This approach balanced equitable distribution across jurisdictions and sectors with a needs-based approach.

- The department provided a recommended list of 1,337 schools to the Minister on 21 March 2023.

- The Minister supported the recommendations from the department and no changes were made to the recommended list of schools. The Minister approved 1,337 schools for funding on 28 March 2023.

- Applicants were notified in early May 2023 with funding paid on 5 June 2023.

- The list of successful schools under the Open Round is available on the department's website.

- The department understands that all 1,337 schools have now had funding made available to them for their projects.

- Schools were required to submit progress reports across late September and early October.

- As at 9 October 2023 there are:

  o 671 projects in progress (429 government, 242 non-government)
  o 55 projects in government schools, and 13 projects in non-government schools that have not yet commenced
  o 183 projects completed (97 government, 86 non-government).

- Projects are due for completion by 31 December 2023.

Government School Capital Funding (Round 2)

- Under the Government School Capital Funding or 'Round 2' component, **$215.769 million** will support larger-scale capital works in **government** schools (i.e. projects with a minimum Commonwealth contribution of $250,000).

- Round 2 funding will prioritise capital investment in schools with students experiencing the greatest educational disadvantage, particularly those schools that have not benefited from significant capital investment in the last 2 years.

- State and territory funding allocations for Round 2 have been apportioned based on need (as set out in the table below). Distribution of funding, at the jurisdictional level, is based on:
  - each jurisdiction's proportional share of government schools
  - relative student need in each jurisdiction – as reflected in the *average per-student funding* that students in the government schools of that jurisdiction receive under the Schooling Resource Standard.

TOTAL	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT
215.769	68.025	48.191	40.408	24.994	17.121	6.487	2.456	8.087

- All public schools will have an opportunity to submit expressions of interest for projects under Round 2.

- The department is currently working with states and territories on arrangements for implementing Round 2, including when the call for expressions of interest will open.

- Funding for this round of the Fund will be progressed with the states and territories through a new schedule to the national partnership agreement – the *Federation Funding Agreement – Education and Skills*.
  - Letters and copies of the schedule signed by the Minister were sent to Education Ministers on 13 October 2023.

Media

- Nil

Attachments

- **Attachment A** – Assurance Processes (Targeted and Open Rounds)

- **Attachment B** – Summary of Applications and Successful Schools (Open Round)

- **Attachment C** – Scoring Matrix (Open Round)

Date Last Cleared	24 October 2023

Attachment A

Schools Upgrade Fund - Assurance Processes

Active Monitoring – High-Value Projects (funding of $100,000 and over)

There are 22 high-value projects, in 21 government schools and one non-government school.

The Department is regularly engaged with schools, and state and territory project officers regarding the progress of these projects. This includes through phone calls, emails, progress reports and project plan summaries that schools were required to submit in July 2023.

Relevant jurisdictions are managing these projects as follows:

- Projects in Queensland government schools have been assigned a planning officer from Queensland Department of Education Infrastructure Services, to work directly with the schools (8 schools)

- Projects in NSW government schools are monitored and overseen by each school's local Asset Management Unit, from Schools Infrastructure NSW – NSW Department of Education (5 schools)

- Projects in NT government schools are managed by the NT Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (3 schools)

- Projects in Victorian government schools are managed by the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) – Victorian Department of Education (4 schools)

- The Tasmanian government school project is being managed by its Department of Education (1 school)

Closure Report

All schools that receive funding through either the Targeted or Open Round will have to complete and submit a closure report mid-2024.

A template will be provided to schools in early 2024. The closure report will focus on providing the department with information on the completeness of the project, including photos and the benefits of the project for the school community.

Acquittal

All funding (including interest) is to be acquitted as part of the standard acquittal processes for Australian Government schools funding. Acquittal certificates are required to be submitted to the Department by 30 June each year for funding provided the previous year. The schools' approved authorities are responsible for managing this acquittal.

Further, once all schools in a system (e.g. government system) have completed their projects an additional confirmation and verification check will be required to ensure that all project funds have been fully spent on the projects.

Additional assurance checks

A sample of up to 10 per cent of the total number of funded projects will be subject to additional assurance checks. This sample will include schools that:

- have been provided funding of or above $100,000

- have been flagged for financial viability or compliance issues

Attachment A

- have sought variations to their approved project
- have submitted poor quality closure reports

Through this assurance process, schools will be asked to demonstrate that the projects undertaken are consistent with their application and will be advised that the veracity of any information provided in relation to their project could be checked by the department.

This check may include:

- seeking information from the school either by survey, telephone, email, or other avenue
- contacting the school's approved authority
- reviewing key project documentation such as project plans, necessary approvals, invoices, work orders etc.

The department will prepare a brief report on outcomes of the Fund using information collected through the closure reports and the assurance process to demonstrate that the overarching objectives of the Fund have been met.

Attachment B

Summary of applications and successful schools

Open Round by Jurisdiction and Sector

	Total Schools	Notional Allocation	Total Applications	Total Funding Applied	% Schools Applied	Recommended Schools	% Schools Recommended	Final Allocated
NSW	**3121**	**$10,395,754**	**1532**	**$36,498,791**	**49%**	**505**	**16%**	$12,056,953
Government	2151	$7,164,776	1043	$24,858,283	48%	357	17%	$8,564,869
Catholic	548	$1,825,336	232	$5,497,650	42%	86	15%	$2,076,886
Independent	422	$1,405,642	257	$6,142,858	61%	62	15%	$1,415,198
VIC	**2275**	**$7,577,807**	**1166**	**$27,749,613**	**51%**	**250**	**11%**	$5,963,194
Government	1549	$5,159,571	737	$17,370,712	48%	180	12%	$4,280,928
Catholic	498	$1,658,790	307	$7,487,396	62%	52	10%	$1,265,153
Independent	228	$759,446	122	$2,891,505	54%	18	8%	$417,113
QLD	**1792**	**$5,968,981**	**625**	**$14,797,759**	**35%**	**180**	**10%**	$4,265,839
Government	1248	$4,156,969	419	$9,929,927	34%	124	10%	$2,978,926
Catholic	313	$1,042,573	112	$2,610,555	36%	30	10%	$694,129
Independent	231	$769,439	94	$2,257,277	41%	26	11%	$592,784
SA	**716**	**$2,384,927**	**472**	**$11,277,161**	**66%**	**125**	**17%**	$3,028,238
Government	509	$1,695,430	334	$7,941,329	66%	101	20%	$2,444,228
Catholic	102	$339,752	52	$1,207,565	51%	10	9%	$234,010
Independent	105	$349,745	86	$2,128,267	82%	14	13%	$350,000
WA	**1109**	**$3,693,973**	**661**	**$15,797,621**	**60%**	**152**	**14%**	$3,662,485
Government	800	$2,664,724	474	$11,370,047	59%	119	15%	$2,904,136
Catholic	155	$516,290	89	$2,134,751	57%	17	11%	$393,500
Independent	154	$512,959	98	$2,292,823	64%	16	10%	$364,849
TAS	**263**	**$876,028**	**137**	**$3,253,852**	**52%**	**51**	**20%**	$1,208,961
Government	191	$636,203	104	$2,447,690	54%	41	22%	$966,111
Catholic	38	$126,574	13	$313,482	34%	3	8%	$75,000
Independent	34	$113,251	20	$492,680	59%	7	21%	$167,850
ACT	**136**	**$453,003**	**92**	**$2,180,848**	**68%**	**15**	**11%**	$355,054
Government	89	$296,451	53	$1,234,294	60%	7	8%	$165,000
Catholic	29	$96,596	26	$639,054	90%	6	21%	$140,054
Independent	18	$59,956	13	$307,500	72%	2	11%	$50,000
NT	**195**	**$649,526**	**121**	**$2,961,769**	**62%**	**59**	**30%**	$1,459,276
Government	152	$506,297	92	$2,247,269	61%	47	31%	$1,164,276
Catholic	18	$59,956	12	$292,500	67%	5	28%	$120,000
Independent	25	$83,273	17	$422,000	68%	7	28%	$175,000

Attachment B

Open Round by Sector Summary

Sector	Total Schools	Total Applications	% Schools Applied	Recommended Schools	% Schools Recommended	Final Allocated ($)
Government	6,689	3,256	49%	976	15%	$23,468,474
Catholic	1,701	843	50%	209	12%	$4,998,732
Independent	1,217	707	58%	152	13%	$3,532,794
Total	**9,607**	**4,806**		**1,337**		

Attachment C

Schools Upgrade Fund – Application Scoring Matrix

Project Category	Project Sub-category	Scored Questions *(out of 25)*
1. Improving air quality to support healthier learning environments	a) Purchasing and installing air purifiers	Does the school already have air purifiers? • No – (25) • Yes – Less than 50% of school facilities (15) • Yes – Between 50% and 80% of school facilities (10) • Yes – More than 80% of school facilities (5)
	b) Purchasing and installing air-conditioning	Does the school already have functioning air-conditioning? • No – (25) • Yes – Less than 50% of school facilities (15) • Yes – Between 50% and 80% of school facilities (10) • Yes – More than 80% of school facilities (5)
	c) Upgrading ventilation in school facilities	What proportion of students will benefit from the upgraded ventilation? • More than 80% of students (25) • Between 50% and 80% of students (15) • More than 10% and less than 50% of students (10) • 10% or less of students (5)
2. Improving student outcomes through outdoor learning	a) Building new outdoor learning spaces	What proportion of students will benefit from the new outdoor learning space? • More than 80% of students (25) • Between 50% and 80% of students (15) • More than 10% and less than 50% of students (10) • 10% or less of students (5)
	b) Upgrading existing outdoor learning spaces	What proportion of students will benefit from the upgraded outdoor learning space? • More than 80% of students (25) • Between 50% and 80% of students (15) • More than 10% and less than 50% of students (10) • 10% or less of students (5)
	c) Installing and/or upgrading shade structures	What proportion of students will benefit from the shade structure? • More than 80% of students (25) • Between 50% and 80% of students (15) • More than 10% and less than 50% of students (10) • 10% or less of students (5)

Attachment C

Project Category	Project Sub-category	Scored Questions *(out of 25)*
3. Supporting equitable access to flexible learning for students	a) Purchasing and/or upgrading ICT equipment	What proportion of students already have access to appropriate ICT equipment? • 10% or less of students (25) • More than 10% and less than 50% of students (15) • Between 50% and 80% of students (10) • More than 80% of students (5)
	b) Provision of remote-learning arrangements for students	What proportion of students can access remote-learning if required? • 10% or less of students (25) • More than 10% and less than 50% of students (15) • Between 50% and 80% of students (10) • More than 80% of students (5)
4. Providing a safe learning environment	a) Fixing doors or windows where this aids in airflow	What proportion of students will benefit from the repairs to doors or windows? • More than 80% of students (25) • Between 50% and 80% of students (15) • More than 10% and less than 50% of students (10) • 10% or less of students (5)
5. Providing a safe learning environment	b) Repairs to school facilities	What proportion of students will benefit from the repairs or maintenance to school facilities? • More than 80% of students (25) • Between 50% and 80% of students (15) • More than 10% and less than 50% of students (10) • 10% or less of students (5)
	c) Refurbishing school facilities	What proportion of students will benefit from the refurbishment to classrooms? • More than 80% of students (25) • Between 50% and 80% of students (15) • More than 10% and less than 50% of students (10) • 10% or less of students (5)

Attachment C

Does the school have access to other opportunities for funding for the project/s in 2023? *Are there other government (Commonwealth or state and territory) grants or funds available to undertake similar types of projects?*	No (7.5) ☐ *None of the cost can be covered through alternative sources*	Yes - partial cost (3.5) ☐ *Some of the cost for the project/s can be covered through alternative sources*	Yes – full cost (1) ☐ *All of the cost can be covered through alternative sources*
Did the school receive funding for a similar project/s in 2021 or 2022? *Has the school received any government (Commonwealth or state and territory) grants or funds to undertake similar types of projects?*	No (7.5) ☐ *No previous funding has covered the project costs*	Yes - partial cost (3.5) ☐ *Previous funding has covered some of the project/s costs but not all costs*	Yes – full cost (1) ☐ *Previous funding has covered all costs*
Does the project/s assist to improve learning outcomes for students? *Can you directly link this project/s to changes in the school environment that will support student learning*	Yes - directly (8) ☐	Yes - indirectly (4) ☐	No (0) ☐
What is the critical timing need for the project/s? *How time critical are improvements that will be made to the school through this project/s*	Immediate (7) ☐ *Work should be undertaken within 3 months*	Short-term (4) ☐ *Work should be undertaken 3-6 months*	Medium – long-term (1) ☐ *Work should be undertaken 6-12 months*
Will the project/s assist to improve the safety and health of students? *Can you directly link this project/s to changes in the school environment that will reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission*	Yes – directly (8) ☐	Yes - indirectly (4) ☐	No (0) ☐
Does your approved authority agree the project/s is a priority need for the school? *Projects must be endorsed by Approved Authorities to be eligible for funding*	Yes (7) ☐	N/A	No (0) ☐

Issue:	**South Australian 18-month Foundation Program**
Contact:	**Meg Brighton**
	Ph: s 22
	Deputy Secretary, Schools Group

Key Points

- Australian Government funding for schools is paid under the *Australian Education Act 2013* (the Act), on a calendar year basis, for all year levels of school education, including foundation.

- Foundation is defined in the *Australian Education Regulations 2023* as the year of schooling immediately before year one.

- Students who participate in a foundation program that extends for more than 12 months can only attract recurrent funding for a single year.

Awareness of issue

- In August 2022, the department became aware that some non-government schools in South Australia have been reporting students enrolled in an 18-month foundation program incorrectly for recurrent funding purposes.

  o The department received an enquiry from a school about including foundation students in an 18-month program, for recurrent funding.

- Students enrolled in the first 6 months of an 18-month foundation program are not eligible for Commonwealth recurrent funding under the Act.

- In December 2022, the department consulted with national non-government school peak bodies (and through them, state/territory bodies) on guidance material for reporting 18-month foundation students in the non-government schools census.

  o No other state/territory (apart from the South Australian sector) raised concerns.

Transition Assistance

- The Australian Government is providing one-off transitional funding of $24 million to affected schools, which recognises that non-government schools in South Australia have accepted enrolments and planned budgets for 2023, expecting to receive recurrent funding.

- The transitional funding will help avoid disruption to students and their families who have made schooling, employment and caring decisions based on the 18-month program being delivered.

Strengthened assurance processes

- The department's quality assurance processes are being strengthened internally to better detect irregular data provided by non-government schools in the census process.

- The department also recognises the importance of the sector understanding their obligations under the Act, with the department implementing the 2023–24 Budget measure on strengthening safeguards for non-government schools.

  o The work program is designed to prevent, detect, and respond to non-compliance.

  o The prevention work includes educating the sector of their legislative obligations to make it easier for the sector to comply with the requirements of the Act and Regulations.

- See **Attachment A** for information on actions taken.

South Australian government schools

- The South Australian Government has committed to introduce mid-year intake foundation in government schools from 2024.

- As funding for more than one year of foundation education is not provided for under the Act, this is a matter for the South Australian Government.

Stakeholder Response

s 47G(1)(b)

Associations	• South Australian Department for Education • National Catholic Education Commission • Independent Schools Australia • Catholic Education South Australia • Association of Independent Schools of South Australia
Rep Bodies	As above
Opposition	Not known
Greens	Not known
Independents	Not known

Media

- ***Parents have greater flexibility on when they send their children to preschool, Channel 9 News, South Australia, 24 July 2023***

    The story aired on the first day of preschool mid-year intake indicating '…*a funding row with the Commonwealth has left questions about who will be left holding the bill'* as well as identifying an *'$8 million black hole, with the Federal Government considering withdrawing support'.*

Date Last Cleared	24 October 2023

Attachment A

Action taken since identifying the 18-month foundation year issue

Lessons Learned

The department has undertaken an internal review to identify the lessons learned from this issue and identified immediate and medium term actions. All immediate term actions have been implemented for the 2023 non-government schools census.

Immediate actions implemented for the 2023 non-government school census:

- reviewing a sample of census assessments by senior staff to ensure assessments are completed properly.
- running moderation sessions to ensure assessing officers have the same understanding of what is an unacceptable response from schools for a census return.

Medium term actions:

- review the 30 warnings which, if triggered, require the school to provide an explanation for unexpected changes in student numbers or characteristics.

  The review will be completed by April 2024 and consider the following:

  o assess the accuracy of current warnings – ensure the system is accurately triggering the current warnings
  o assess the effectiveness of current warnings, including the thresholds
  o identify any improvement to warning text, based on the responses provided
  o consider new warnings to further increase the effectiveness of baseline checking.
- Post-census data analysis will be completed each year looking for data anomalies, data changes and emerging trends. This will include:
  o analysis of student numbers and age in each year level by state and by sector
  o analysis to identify data anomalies or trends by state and by sector
  o analysis of the responses provided by schools to warnings to identify any common theme

Issue:	**SRS Funding**
PBS Pg No.	Pg 33-36 – 1.3 Government Schools National Support
	Pg 37-40 – 1.4 Non-government Schools National Support
Contact:	**Meg Brighton**
	Ph: s 22

Key Points

Pathway to full and fair funding

- The Australian Government has committed to work with state and territory governments to get every school on a pathway to 100% of its full and fair funding level through the next National School Reform Agreement (NSRA).

- Funding for schools is based on the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) and the *Australian Education Act 2013* requires states and territories to contribute between 75–80% of the SRS for government schools, unless otherwise agreed. Taken with the Commonwealth's legislated share of 20%, the minimum required funding for government schools is 95%.

- Bilateral agreements under the NSRA allow all states and the Northern Territory to include 4% of the SRS of broader education expenditure such as capital depreciation; as well as reform and education regulatory costs (see Table 4 at **Attachment A** for details).

- The Australian Government is providing $118.6 billion over 2019–2023 in recurrent funding.

  o This includes $46.6 billion for government schools and $72.1 billion for non-government schools.

- The Australian Government will provide a further $28.6 billion during the one-year extension of the NSRA in 2024 (a total of $147.2 billion over 2019–2024).

Commonwealth and states and territories shares of the SRS

- In 2023, the Australian Government will fund government schools at a minimum of 20% of the SRS and non-government schools at a minimum of 80%.

  o **1,150 non-government schools** (40% of 2,909 total non-government schools) have a Commonwealth share of **greater than 80%** in 2023 and will transition down to 80% by 2029. The funding being provided above the 80% target has an **estimated value of $2.5 billion** out of the total $130 billion for non-government schools over 2023–2029.

- States and territories are on track to fund between 59% (NT) and 80% (ACT) of the SRS for government schools in 2023 (this year).

This means government schools in the ACT will be the only schools receiving 100% of the SRS in 2023 (approximately 1.3% of the government sector nationally).

- Under the bilateral agreements:

  o Only ACT (80%), SA (75%) and WA (75%) will be at or above 75% of the SRS for government schools by 2023.

  o NSW and Tasmania have committed to reach 75% of the SRS for government schools by 2027. Note: the new NSW Government election commitment to reach 75% by 2025 has not yet been incorporated into its bilateral agreement.

  o Victoria has committed to reach 75% by 2028.

  o Queensland's has committed to reach 75% in 2032.

  o NT has no current commitment to reach 75% (expected to fund just 59% in 2023).

- Using the government sector SRS average, government schools are funded at **92% of the SRS** in 2023.

- See **Attachment A** for additional information on combined Commonwealth and state and territory shares (Table 1); Commonwealth only shares (Table 2); and state and territory agreed shares under the current NSRA (Table 3).

Cost of Fully Funding Public Schools

- In July 2023, the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) estimated it would cost the Australian Government $4.7 billion over the forward estimates (2023–24 to 2026–27) to increase the Commonwealth share of the SRS from 20% in 2023 to 25% in 2028 for the Government sector (see **Attachment C**). The 10-year cost (2023–24 to 2033–34) of this policy change was estimated at $29.0 billion.

- The department was able to replicate the PBO costings, noting the PBO applies specific funding growth and rounding rule parameters. It is worth noting that the PBO estimates also treat all jurisdictions in a uniform way, despite differences in their current SRS share levels.

- Consistent with this PBO modelling, the value of a **5% increase** in the Commonwealth's SRS share for public schools in **2023** would cost an estimated **$2.7 billion**.

Recurrent Schools Funding

- In the 2023 calendar year, the Australian Government is providing $27.3 billion in recurrent funding to schools, a $1.8 billion (6.9%) increase compared to the 2022 calendar year including:

SRS funding component	2023 estimated funding	Funded full-time equivalent students
Base funding	$20.1 billion	4,049,178
Socio-economic disadvantage loading	$2.6 billion	2,011,712
Student with disability loading	$3.1 billion	623,604
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student loading	$500.6 million	255,617
Low English proficiency loading	$65.5 million	130,390
School location loading	$575.6 million	N/A
School size loading	$412.7 million	N/A
Total recurrent funding	$27.3 billion	4,049,178

- Refer to for more information on funding for regional and priority cohorts.

- Funding for government schools increased by 7.0% per student over the last year. This includes the impact of indexation, enrolment changes and an overall increase of the Commonwealth share. Average per student funding rose from $3,829 in 2022 to $4,096 in 2023.

  o Funding for regional government schools rose by 6.6% per student – from $4,828 to $5,144 per student.

- Funding for non-government schools increased by 5.0% per student over the last year. This includes indexation, enrolment changes and an overall increase of the Commonwealth share. Average per student funding rose from $10,905 in 2022 to $11,451 in 2023.

  o Funding for regional non-government students rose by 5.5% ($14,317 to $15,106 per student).

- See **Attachment B** for further details on recurrent funding:

  o Table 1 Total funding by state and sector
  o Table 2 Change in total funding by sector
  o Table 3 Change in per student funding by sector
  o Table 4 Number of funded approved authorities, schools, and full-time equivalent students.

- The Commonwealth Budget 2023–24 reported an estimated $118.0 billion over 2023–24 to 2026–27 in recurrent funding across all school sectors.

  o On average, total funding for the government sector is forecast to grow at 3.8% per year due to indexation and enrolment growth:

    - 3.2% notionally driven by projected SRS indexation

    - 0.6% notionally driven by projected changes to school and student characteristics, net of the impact of the Commonwealth share decreasing on average from 20.03% in 2023 to 20.00% in 2027.

  o For non-government schools the forecast is for 3.4% average annual growth in total funding over the same period:

    - 3.2% notionally driven by projected SRS indexation

    - 0.2% notionally driven by projected changes to school and student characteristics, net of the impact of the Commonwealth share decreasing on average from 82.23% in 2023 to 81.08% in 2027.

- It is important to note that the school funding allocations are based on actual enrolments and characteristics in each year, not projections.

- The estimates over 2022–23 to 2025–26 based on 2022 actual enrolments with projected growth from 2023, while still growing, reduced relative to the October budget 2022–23.

  o Funding for the government sector is **projected** to be **$912.0 million lower** and funding for the non-government sector is projected to be **$703.0 million higher** in Budget 2023–24.

  o This overall change is primarily driven by updated information on recent enrolment trends, which shows lower-than-expected growth in government sector enrolments in 2022.

- School funding estimates fluctuate over time and are responsive to broader changes in our community, including the social and economic changes. Refer to **SB23-000496** for more information on budget estimates and enrolment projections.

- For information regarding past funding trends and changes to funding proportions between the Australian Government and states and territories refer to **SB23-000499 Report on Government Services (RoGS)**.

Stakeholder Response

Stakeholder	Response summary
The Greens	On 14 September 2023, Senator Allman-Payne introduced the Australian Education Amendment (Save Our Public Schools) Bill 2023 to increase the Commonwealth's share of the SRS for government schools from 20% to 25%. • The estimated cost of the increase in Commonwealth share from 20% to 25% in 2023 is $2.6 billion**.** The Greens have also criticised the extension of the NSRA. Arguing that the decision delays additional funding to schools and that the work had already been completed previously by David Gonski.
Australian Education Union (AEU)	The AEU has launched its 'For Every Child' campaign calling for significant and ongoing investment into Australia's public schools. The AEU criticised the extension of the current NSRA. It stated that the extension delays and denies public students the funding they need. The AEU have stated that 98% of private schools are overfunded while 98% of government schools are underfunded. • Using sector level averages, 1.5% of non-government schools are in the NT and these are the only ones on average not above 100% in 2023. • Similarly, 1.3% of governments schools are in the ACT and these are the only ones on average above 100% in 2023.
Save our Schools (SOS)	SOS advocates for a high-quality public education system. It claims public schools are underfunded. SOS criticised the decision to delay the introduction of the next NSRA. It stated that the delay is an act of betrayal of underfunded public schools and disadvantaged students.
NSW and Victoria	NSW and Victoria Education ministers stated they will 'seek a commitment' and 'prosecute' an increase in the Commonwealth funding contribution to their government schools to close the 5% difference to 100% of the SRS.

Media

Australian Education Union launches campaign to address 'shocking' funding inequality in NT schools, ABC News, 17 August 2023

- Reports that one in five NT public schools' students are underfunded at 80% of the SRS. It calls for the federal government to increase its SRS contribution for government schools from 20% to 40%.

- To reach 100% SRS within the next 12 months there would need to be a total increase in public funding of $227 million per year.

- Reports the level of inequality in NT's rural and regional areas is particularly prevalent.

- The Commonwealth is committed to working with jurisdictions to get every school to 100% of its fair funding level.

- The Commonwealth is working on providing additional funding to schools in the Central Australia region – refer to **SB23-000345**.

- Additional funding and support are given to regional and remote students to assist in the financial burden. Please refer to SB23-000497 for funding on regional and priority cohorts.

Public school funding gap a fraction of government spending on private sector, the Greens, 28 August 2023

- Reports claim public school funding shortfall could be met by reducing government spending on the overfunded private system by only a third.

- The Centre for Future Work found it would cost an additional $6.6 billion a year to get all public schools to 100% SRS. In 2021, private schools received $18.6 billion in combined funding from Commonwealth and state and territory governments.

  o The $6.6 billion figure appears to be based on the value of the agreed state and Commonwealth shares in 2023, minus the value of the 4% cap.

- Senator Penny Allman-Payne stated public schools don't have enough money while private schools have too much. It's suggested cutting funding by a third to fee-charging private schools could help fund the gap to 100% SRS for public schools.

- The Commonwealth made a commitment to work with state and territory Governments to get every school on a path to 100% of its fair funding level.

- The Commonwealth is also working with state and territory Education Ministers on key targets and specific reforms that should be tied to funding in the next NSRA.

Fully funded public schools more than pay for themselves, Australian Education Union, 28 August 2023

- Reports funding public schools to 100% of the SRS requires an additional $6.6 billion per year, but this would return economic and fiscal benefits of between $17.8 billion and $24.7 billion a year.
  - The economic and fiscal benefits claimed have not been verified by the department.
- This return is expected to come from higher year 12 completion rates and the associated higher employment and income that brings to the economy.
- Currently, only 1.3% of public schools are funded to the SRS.
  - 1.3% reflects that only ACT government schools **on average** are funded at 100% of the SRS in 2023.
- The push for change is through the new school funding agreement negotiations.
- The Commonwealth made a commitment to work with state and territory governments to get every school on a path to 100% of its fair funding level.
- The Commonwealth is also working with state and territory Education Ministers on key targets and specific reforms that should be tied to funding in the next NSRA.

Attachments

Attachment A –Commonwealth and state and territory shares

Attachment B – Commonwealth recurrent funding

Attachment C – PBO costing of fully funding public schools

Date Last Cleared	17 October 2023

Attachment A

Additional information on Commonwealth and state and territory shares

Table 1. Combined Commonwealth and state and territory shares, 2018 to 2023 (% of SRS)

State	Sector	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
NSW	G	88.6%	89.2%	89.8%	90.5%	91.4%	**92.2%**
VIC	G	85.0%	85.8%	86.8%	87.9%	89.2%	**90.4%**
QLD	G	87.3%	87.7%	88.1%	88.5%	88.9%	**89.3%**
SA	G	91.6%	92.3%	93.0%	93.7%	94.3%	**95.0%**
WA	G	99.7%	96.8%	94.8%	93.6%	94.1%	**95.0%**
TAS	G	92.2%	92.6%	93.0%	93.3%	93.7%	**94.1%**
ACT	G	96.7%	97.4%	98.0%	98.7%	99.4%	**100.0%**
NT	G	78.7%	79.1%	79.7%	80.3%	80.4%	**80.5%**
NSW	NG	102.6%	102.6%	99.5%	101.5%	105.3%	**106.2%**
VIC	NG	96.8%	97.4%	95.3%	97.0%	101.3%	**102.5%**
QLD	NG	100.1%	100.2%	98.4%	99.4%	103.9%	**104.2%**
SA	NG	94.9%	95.9%	95.3%	97.2%	100.8%	**102.1%**
WA	NG	101.1%	101.4%	95.4%	97.4%	102.6%	**103.6%**
TAS	NG	95.9%	96.7%	96.0%	97.4%	100.6%	**101.6%**
ACT	NG	134.6%	131.0%	105.1%	105.3%	106.3%	**106.3%**
NT	NG	83.6%	85.9%	87.8%	90.5%	96.0%	**98.0%**

Source: Department of Education schools funding model as at Budget 2023-24.

Table 2: Commonwealth shares, 2018 to 2023 (% of SRS)

State	Sector	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
NSW	G	17.9%	18.3%	18.8%	19.2%	19.6%	20.0%
Vic.	G	17.2%	17.8%	18.4%	18.9%	19.5%	20.0%
Qld	G	18.1%	18.5%	18.9%	19.2%	19.6%	20.0%
SA	G	16.6%	17.3%	18.0%	18.7%	19.3%	20.0%
WA	G	15.3%	16.3%	17.2%	18.2%	19.1%	20.0%
Tas.	G	19.3%	19.4%	19.6%	19.7%	19.9%	20.0%
ACT	G	16.7%	17.4%	18.0%	18.7%	19.4%	20.0%
NT	G	23.5%	23.1%	22.7%	22.3%	21.9%	21.5%
NSW	NG	77.3%	77.9%	76.3%	78.7%	82.2%	83.6%
Vic.	NG	77.1%	77.7%	76.3%	77.8%	81.3%	82.5%
Qld	NG	76.9%	77.6%	76.7%	78.3%	82.7%	83.6%
SA	NG	75.2%	76.2%	75.6%	77.5%	81.1%	82.4%
WA	NG	74.8%	75.7%	75.4%	77.4%	82.6%	83.6%
Tas.	NG	74.4%	75.5%	75.1%	76.8%	80.3%	81.6%
ACT	NG	114.6%	111.0%	85.1%	85.3%	86.3%	86.3%
NT	NG	68.5%	70.8%	72.7%	75.4%	80.9%	82.9%

Source: Department of Education schools funding model as at Budget 2023-24.

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Attachment A

Table 3: Agreed minimum state and territory contribution shares (% of SRS)

State	Sector	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
NSW	G	70.73%	70.84%	71.05%	71.37%	71.80%	72.22%
Vic.	G	67.80%	68.02%	68.42%	68.99%	69.68%	70.43%
Qld	G	69.26%	69.26%	69.26%	69.26%	69.26%	69.26%
SA	G	75.00%	75.00%	75.00%	75.00%	75.00%	75.00%
WA	G	84.43%	80.56%	77.56%	75.46%	75.00%	75.00%
Tas.	G	72.93%	73.16%	73.39%	73.62%	73.85%	74.08%
ACT	G	80.00%	80.00%	80.00%	80.00%	80.00%	80.00%
NT	G	55.20%	56.00%	57.00%	58.00%	58.50%	59.00%
NSW	NG	25.29%	24.70%	23.16%	22.74%	23.04%	22.57%
Vic.	NG	19.70%	19.76%	19.08%	19.17%	19.94%	20.00%
Qld	NG	23.18%	22.67%	21.69%	21.10%	21.20%	20.58%
SA	NG	19.72%	19.72%	19.72%	19.72%	19.72%	19.72%
WA	NG	26.30%	25.72%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%
Tas.	NG	21.50%	21.20%	20.90%	20.60%	20.30%	20.00%
ACT	NG	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%
NT	NG	15.09%	15.09%	15.09%	15.09%	15.09%	15.09%

Source: Bilateral agreements on department website as at 5 July 2022.

Note: states and territories are able to count additional education expenditure as set out in their individual bilateral agreements (see Table 4 next page)

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Attachment A

Table 4: Agreed inclusions counted in individual bilateral agreements

	Costs up to 4% cap for government sector				Regulatory costs for government sector	Reform costs (excl. capital)
	Capital Depreciation	Direct school transport	Preschool	Other		
NSW	Yes			- NSW Education Standards Authority	(included in 4% cap)	
VIC	Yes	Yes			Curriculum and regulation activity, including: - Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority; and - Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority	Yes
QLD	Yes	Yes			- Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority	Yes
SA	Yes	Yes			- SACE Board of SA - Education Standards Board	Yes
WA	Yes	Yes	Yes - kindergarten		- School Curriculum and Standards Authority - (former) Department of Education Services' regulatory services	Yes
TAS	Yes	Yes	acknowledged as broader contribution*		- Office of the Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification - Teachers Registration Board	Yes
ACT	acknowledged as broader contribution*		acknowledged as broader contribution*		acknowledged as broader contribution*	acknowledged as broader contribution*
NT	Yes	Yes	Yes - early childhood			Yes

*This funding is acknowledged as part of the state or territory's broader funding contribution. While not formally included in the funding under the bilateral agreement, the parties agree to acknowledge these items are education investments borne by the jurisdiction which are in addition to funding under the SRS and to the other agreed contributions.

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Attachment A

Table 5. Estimated value of the 4% cap for additional included expenditure – government sectors ($ million)

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
NSW	523.7	552.2	579.9	600.0	613.4	637.8
Vic.	391.9	418.4	438.3	463.8	486.4	513.9
Qld	369.5	389.9	417.0	435.0	451.6	470.4
SA	118.5	125.6	130.4	133.5	139.7	145.1
WA	182.1	192.8	203.9	214.0	223.0	233.8
Tas.	40.0	41.6	43.7	44.9	46.2	47.6
NT	32.0	33.7	36.0	37.6	38.1	39.9
Total	1,657.7	1,754.4	1,849.2	1,928.8	1,998.4	2,088.5

Source: Department of Education's school funding models as at Budget 2023-24.

Notes:

1. Each bilateral agreement except for the ACT allows for the inclusion of additional schooling expenditure up to a four per cent of the SRS cap.

2. The estimates may be different to the actual expenses as the states and territories can choose to spend less than 4 per cent. In additional, the Funding Estimation Tools provided to all states and territories for annual reporting may not incorporate all the data updates as at 16 February 2023.

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Attachment B

Table 1: Estimated Commonwealth recurrent funding 2018-2024 ($ million) – Total

State	Sector	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total 2018-24
NSW	G	2,351.7	2,531.6	2,719.0	2,876.2	3,004.1	3,189.1	3,306.8	19,978.4
VIC	G	1,689.0	1,862.6	2,013.7	2,194.9	2,367.9	2,569.4	2,702.3	15,399.8
QLD	G	1,671.0	1,800.7	1,966.0	2,092.7	2,215.5	2,352.1	2,436.6	14,534.6
SA	G	493.3	544.0	586.7	622.9	675.5	725.7	749.2	4,397.3
WA	G	698.5	783.6	877.7	971.8	1,064.6	1,169.1	1,220.1	6,785.3
TAS	G	192.6	202.0	213.8	221.4	229.2	237.9	247.0	1,543.9
ACT	G	101.4	112.2	124.9	137.3	148.5	161.6	169.3	955.2
NT	G	188.2	194.8	204.6	210.0	208.9	214.7	219.3	1,440.4
Aust.	G	7,385.5	8,031.7	8,706.4	9,327.1	9,914.2	**10,619.6**	11,050.6	65,035.0
NSW	NG	3,483.0	3,683.4	4,003.3	4,402.4	4,734.0	5,052.8	5,299.7	30,658.6
VIC	NG	2,965.4	3,155.4	3,428.5	3,689.1	3,967.1	4,234.3	4,447.4	25,887.3
QLD	NG	2,358.4	2,532.1	2,824.8	3,104.5	3,363.9	3,578.1	3,754.9	21,516.8
SA	NG	811.5	875.4	948.7	1,059.7	1,172.5	1,272.1	1,345.6	7,485.5
WA	NG	1,146.2	1,229.9	1,331.3	1,459.0	1,589.2	1,703.4	1,785.4	10,244.5
TAS	NG	242.0	261.6	286.1	316.2	341.4	366.1	383.2	2,196.5
ACT	NG	200.1	202.6	216.1	230.3	244.1	252.2	260.5	1,605.9
NT	NG	153.0	160.8	170.7	184.6	203.6	219.0	227.4	1,319.0
Aust.	NG	11,359.5	12,101.2	13,209.5	14,445.9	15,615.7	**16,678.0**	17,504.2	100,914.1
Aust.	ALL	18,745.1	20,132.9	21,915.9	23,773.0	25,529.9	**27,297.6**	28,554.7	165,949.2

Source: Department of Education, as at Budget 2023-24.

Table 2: Estimated Commonwealth recurrent funding – Total

	Government sector	Catholic sector	Independent sector	All non-government sector	All sectors
2018	$7.4 b	$6.6 b	$4.8 b	$11.4 b	$18.7 b
2022	$9.9 b	$8.7 b	$6.9 b	$15.6	$25.5 b
2023	**$10.6 b**	**$9.3 b**	**$7.4 b**	**$16.7 b**	**$27.3 b**
2024	$11.1 b	$9.7 b	$7.8 b	$17.5 b	$28.6 b
2029	$13.3 b	$11.1 b	$9.3 b	$20.3 b	$33.6 b
Total funding increase in 2023 (from 2022)	7.1% ($705.4 m)	6.3% ($551.8 m)	7.4% ($510.5 m)	6.8% ($1.1 b)	6.9% ($1.8 b)
Total funding increase in 2024 (from 2023)	4.1% ($431.0 m)	4.3% ($398.7 m)	5.8% ($427.5 m)	5.0% ($826.1 m)	4.6% ($1.3 b)
Total funding increase over 2018 to 2029 (from 2017)	**95.0%** **($6.5 b)**	**74.9%** **($4.7 b)**	**110.6%** **($4.9 b)**	**89.6%** **($9.6 b)**	**91.7%** **($16.1 b)**

Table 3: Estimated Commonwealth recurrent funding – Per student

	Government sector	Catholic sector	Independent sector	All non-government sector	All sectors
2018	$2,914	$9,274	$7,743	$8,566	$4,855
2022	$3,829	$11,823	$9,928	$10,905	$6,348
2023	$4,096	$12,466	$10,389	$11,451	$6,742
2024	$4,256	$12,876	$10,704	$11,805	$7,000
2029	$4,938	$14,543	$11,951	$13,233	$7,958
Annual per student increase in 2023 (from 2022)	7.0% ($267)	5.4% ($644)	4.6% ($460)	5.0% ($546)	6.2% ($393)
Annual per student increase in 2024 (from 2023)	3.9% ($160)	3.3% ($410)	3.0% ($315)	3.1% ($355)	3.8% ($258)
Average annual per student increase over 2018 to 2029 (from 2017)	5.1%	4.2%	4.2%	4.1%	4.7%

number may not add due to rounding
Source: Department of Education, as at Budget 2023-24.

Table 4: Number of all funded approved authorities, schools and full-time equivalent students by sector, 2023

Sector	Approved Authorities		Funded Schools		Total Students	
	#	% total	#	% of total	#	% of total
Total	**911**	**100%**	**9,593**	**100%**	**4,049,178**	**100%**
Government	8	1%	6,684	69.7%	2,592,664	64.0%
Non-Government	903	99%	2,909	30.3%	1,456,515	36.0%
Catholic	*8*	*1%*	*1,694*	*17.7%*	*744,412*	*18.4%*
Independent	*895*	*98%*	*1,215*	*12.7%*	*712,102*	*17.6%*

Source: Estimated funded full-time equivalent enrolments as at 2023-24 Budget.

Note: These estimated enrolments inform 2023 Commonwealth funding figures in tables 3-6 and 9. 2023 school, enrolment and funding figures will be updated after the annual school census collection processes in August 2023.

Parliamentary
Budget Office

Policy costing

Fully funding Public Schools	
Person/party requesting the costing:	Mr Andrew Wilkie MP, Member for Clark
Date costing completed:	12 July 2023
Expiry date of the costing:	Release of the next economic and fiscal outlook report.
Status at time of request:	Submitted outside the caretaker period
	☐ Confidential ⊠ Not confidential
Summary of proposal:	

Summary of proposal:

The proposal would increase the Australian government's share of funding for public schools from approximately 20% (some schools are funded at a slightly higher rate) of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) in 2023 to 25% in 2028.

The Australian government's share of the SRS amount for each school would increase in equal proportions between 2024 and 2028.

The policy would commence on 1 January 2024 and would be ongoing.

Costing overview

The proposal would decrease the fiscal and underlying cash balances by around $4.7 billion over the 2023-24 forward estimates (Table 1). This impact entirely reflects an increase in administered expenses associated with an increased share of the SRS for public schools provided by the Australian government.

The proposal would have an impact beyond the 2023-24 Budget forward estimates period. A breakdown of the financial implications (including separate public debt interest (PDI) tables) over the period to 2033-34 is provided at Attachment A.

The results of this analysis are sensitive to future enrolment growth (both its level and composition across schools), proportions of student priority cohorts and disadvantaged schools[1], and indexation rates.

This costing only estimates impacts on the Australian government's funding commitments. While the Australian government's funding for public schools is set as a percentage of the SRS, state and territory governments are not obligated to fund the full remaining amount to ensure public schools

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[1] Student priority cohorts and disadvantaged schools are provided with additional funding. Types of loadings are outlined on the Department of Education's Schooling Resource Standard website.

PBO reference PR-2023-314   **Page 1 of 4**

are funded at 100% of their SRS. Therefore, under this policy there is no guarantee that state and territory governments would continue to provide the same levels of public school funding.

Table 1: Fully funding Public Schools – Financial implications ($m)[a][b]

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	**Total to 2026-27**
Fiscal balance	-277.0	-847.0	-1,466.8	-2,123.9	**-4,714.7**
Underlying cash balance	-277.0	-847.0	-1,466.8	-2,123.9	**-4,714.7**

(a) A positive number represents an increase in the relevant budget balance; a negative number represents a decrease.
(b) PDI impacts are not included in the totals.

Key assumptions

The Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) has made the following assumptions in costing this proposal.

- In each calendar year, half of the funding provided to each state or territory would be provided in the first half of the year, with the remaining funding provided in the second half of the year.

- Any additional departmental costs associated with changing the level of funding for public schools would be funded from within the Department of Education's existing resources.

Methodology

The Schools Recurrent Schools Funding Model, provided by the Department of Education, was used to calculate the additional Australian government funding that would be required through to the 2032 calendar year. The PBO then projected funding for each public school in 2033 and 2034 based on funding estimates from 2028 to 2032.

The increase in the Australian Government funding share of the SRS between the current level and 25% was evenly distributed from 1 January 2024 to 1 January 2028 for each school. From 2028 onwards, the Australian Government funding was fixed at 25% of the SRS.

Financial implications were rounded consistent with the PBO's rounding rules as outlined on the PBO Costings and budget information webpage.[2]

Data sources

The Department of Education provided the School Recurrent Funding Model as at the *2023-24 Budget*.

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[2] https://www.pbo.gov.au/for-parliamentarians/how-we-analyse/pbo-rounding-rules

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Attachment A – Fully funding Public schools – financial implications

Table A1: Fully funding Public Schools – Fiscal and underlying cash balances ($m)[a]

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	Total to 2026-27	Total to 2033-34
Expenses													
Additional funding by state and territory													
New South Wales	-80.0	-250.0	-440.0	-630.0	-850.0	-970.0	-1,010.0	-1,040.0	-1,080.0	-1,120.0	-1,160.0	**-1,400.0**	**-8,630.0**
Victoria	-70.0	-210.0	-360.0	-530.0	-710.0	-820.0	-860.0	-890.0	-930.0	-970.0	-1,000.0	**-1,170.0**	**-7,350.0**
Queensland	-61.0	-187.0	-323.0	-467.0	-621.0	-713.0	-738.0	-764.0	-793.0	-820.0	-847.0	**-1,038.0**	**-6,334.0**
Western Australia	-31.0	-94.0	-162.0	-235.0	-314.0	-361.0	-374.0	-387.0	-401.0	-415.0	-428.0	**-522.0**	**-3,202.0**
South Australia	-19.0	-57.0	-98.0	-141.0	-186.0	-212.0	-218.0	-225.0	-232.0	-239.0	-245.0	**-315.0**	**-1,872.0**
Tasmania	-6.2	-18.9	-32.1	-46.1	-60.7	-69.1	-70.9	-72.7	-74.6	-76.4	-78.2	**-103.3**	**-605.9**
Northern Territory	-5.6	-17.1	-29.4	-42.5	-54.2	-60.1	-62.2	-64.4	-66.7	-69.0	-71.1	**-94.6**	**-542.3**
Australian Capital Territory	-4.2	-13.0	-22.3	-32.3	-42.9	-49.2	-50.8	-52.4	-54.1	-55.7	-57.4	**-71.8**	**-434.3**
Total – expenses	**-277.0**	**-847.0**	**-1,466.8**	**-2,123.9**	**-2,838.8**	**-3,254.4**	**-3,383.9**	**-3,495.5**	**-3,631.4**	**-3,765.1**	**-3,886.7**	**-4,714.7**	**-28,970.5**
Total (excluding PDI)	**-277.0**	**-847.0**	**-1,466.8**	**-2,123.9**	**-2,838.8**	**-3,254.4**	**-3,383.9**	**-3,495.5**	**-3,631.4**	**-3,765.1**	**-3,886.7**	**-4,714.7**	**-28,970.5**

(a) A positive number for the fiscal balance indicates an increase in revenue or a decrease in expenses or net capital investment in accrual terms. A negative number for the fiscal balance indicates a decrease in revenue or an increase in expenses or net capital investment in accrual terms. A positive number for the underlying cash balance indicates an increase in receipts or a decrease in payments or net capital investment in cash terms. A negative number for the underlying cash balance indicates a decrease in receipts or an increase in payments or net capital investment in cash terms.

Table A2: Fully funding Public Schools – Memorandum item: Public Debt Interest (PDI) impacts – Fiscal and underlying cash balances ($m)[a][b]

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	Total to 2026-27	Total to 2033-34
Fiscal balance	..	-20.0	-60.0	-120.0	-210.0	-330.0	-460.0	-600.0	-750.0	-930.0	-1,110.0	*-200.0*	*-4,590.0*
Underlying cash balance	..	-20.0	-60.0	-110.0	-200.0	-310.0	-430.0	-570.0	-730.0	-890.0	-1,080.0	*-190.0*	*-4,400.0*

(a) As this table is presented as a memorandum item, these figures are not reflected in the totals in the table above. This is consistent with the approach taken in the budget where the budget impact of most measures is presented excluding the impact on PDI. If the reader would like a complete picture of the total aggregate, then these figures would need to be added to the figures above. For further information on government borrowing and financing please refer to the PBO's online budget glossary[3].

(b) A positive number for the fiscal balance indicates an increase in revenue or a decrease in expenses or net capital investment in accrual terms. A negative number for the fiscal balance indicates a decrease in revenue or an increase in expenses or net capital investment in accrual terms. A positive number for the underlying cash balance indicates an increase in receipts or a decrease in payments or net capital investment in cash terms. A negative number for the underlying cash balance indicates a decrease in receipts or an increase in payments or net capital investment in cash terms.

.. Not zero but rounded to zero.

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[3] Online budget glossary – Parliament of Australia (aph.gov.au)

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2023 - 2024 Supplementary Budget Estimates
SB23-000354

Issue:	**Teacher Workforce**
Contact:	Meg Brighton
	Ph: s 22
	Deputy Secretary

Key Points

- All Australian governments are working together through the **National Teacher Workforce Action Plan** (NTWAP) to address teacher workforce issues. EMM agreed the Plan in December 2022.

- The Australian Government is investing $337 million to implement the Plan. This includes an initial commitment of $328 million[1] and the 2023–24 Federal Budget provided an additional $9.3 million over 4 years[2].

- Detail on all 27 actions is provided at **Attachment A**.

Updates on selected NTWAP Action items

- Action 2 – **5,000 scholarships worth up to $40,000 each** to help attract high-quality candidates to the teaching profession. The Australian Government is settling implementation arrangements for the Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships. Work is on track to open applications soon. The first round of offers will be made to successful applicants commencing ITE programs in 2024.

- Action 3 – **1,500 more places in the High Achieving Teachers (HAT) Program** to encourage more professionals to switch careers to teaching and trial new ways of attracting and keeping teachers in the schools that need them most. In the first phase of implementing Action 3, the Australian Government varied its contract with La Trobe University in June 2023 to deliver a pilot of a primary-focused employment-based pathway into teaching[3], leveraging off the existing Nexus Program (Secondary only). This is the first pilot funded under the commitment in Action 3 and will deliver 105 of the 1,500 places. The approach to delivering the remaining 1,395 places is under consideration.

- Action 8 - **Teacher Education Expert Panel (TEEP)** to recommend ways to boost graduation rates, and ensure graduating teachers are prepared for the classroom. TEEP reported to the Minister for Education on 30 June 2023. The report was considered by EMM on 6 July. Ministers supported in principle all 14 recommendations and have commissioned work towards recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 9:

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[1] *The Hon Jason Clare MP, Media Release, National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, 16 December 2022*
[2] *Department of Education Portfolio Budget Statements 2023-24, page 15*
[3] *The Hon Jason Clare MP, Media Release, Getting more of our best and brightest to become primary school teachers, 24 July 2023*

1: Establish core content and mandate in national accreditation

2: Embed core content in initial teacher education programs

3: Strengthen national quality and consistency of ITE programs

9: Develop national guidelines for high-quality practical experience.

- The TEEP recommendations and their status are at **Attachment B**. Education Ministers will consider further advice on recommendations later in 2023.

- Action 11 – **LANTITE Trial** – All jurisdictions are participating. This national trial aims to assess the benefits of increasing the number of permitted attempts at the LANTITE and providing better feedback to participants on areas they need to improve when they have failed to meet the standard. The trial commenced in September 2023 and runs for a year. After the trial, findings will be provided to Education Ministers who will consider any further policy changes to the LANTITE, or whether to extend the trial.

- Action 12 – **Workload Reduction Fund (WRF)** to trial new ways to maximise the value of a teacher's time. Phase 2 has commenced development with all jurisdictions. Pilots will be progressively agreed between now and December 2023 for subsequent implementation.

- Action 23 – **Elevating Teacher Campaign** to raise the status and value the role of teachers. The campaign is expected to be launched soon.

Teacher workforce

- **Teacher workforce shortages** are particularly acute in some regions and subject areas. Under the NTWAP, AITSL is working with the Australia Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) to improve our ability to predict demand and supply.

- 307,041 (FTE) teachers in Australia – an average of one teacher for every 13.1 students. The ratio is higher in primary (14.4) compared to secondary (11.9); and lower in independent (11.7) and government schools (13.4) compared to Catholic schools (13.6)[4].

- For more data on the Teacher Workforce see **Attachment C**.

Career intentions

- Recent media on teacher resignations in Western Australia is a reminder that across the country, teachers are leaving the profession.

- While data on those exiting the workforce is held by teacher employers (government and non-government education authorities),

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[4] Schools Australia 2022, ABS

national survey data shows that in 2022[5], 34% of classroom teachers indicated that they intended to leave the profession before retirement.

- The top 3 reasons for wanting to leave the profession have remained constant since 2018:
  - workload and coping (92%) (includes the management of stress work/life balance and mental health)
  - recognition and reward (72%)
  - classroom factors (65%).[6]

Initial teacher education

- Between 2012 and 2021 (the latest data) **the number of school leavers entering teaching degrees has declined** by 12%.[7]

- **Completion rates of ITE students have been declining**.

  - **16,245 students** completed an ITE qualification in 2021, **down by 2,152** compared to 2017. However, this is an increase on the 2020 figure of **15,346**.

  - **The 6-year completion rate for ITE students commencing in 2010 was 62.7%, compared to 55.8% for students** (undergraduate and postgraduate) who commenced in 2016.[8]

- For more data on ITE see **Attachment D**.

Teacher salaries

- Teacher salaries are a matter for states and territories. For the latest details see **Attachment E**.

- The **average actual salaries** of Australia's school teachers (from pre-primary to upper secondary levels) **were competitive internationally in 2022**. For example, Australia's upper secondary school teachers (USD PPP 63,215) had higher than OECD average salaries (USD PPP 53,119), with an increase of 7% in real terms between 2015 and 2022.[9]

- However, the OECD reports that while **Australia's top upper secondary school teacher salary in 2022 was 58% higher than the starting salary for the same cohort**, it was below the OECD average of 67%.[10]

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[5] Data for 2022 are preliminary, it provides a timely snapshot of the workforce but should be considered indicative only.
[6] Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) Key Metrics Dashboard, Teacher Survey
[7] Higher Education Statistics Collection, Student Statistics, Australian Government Department of Education
[8] Higher Education Statistics Collection, Student Statistics, Australian Government Department of Education
[9] OECD – Education at a Glance 2023.
[10] OECD – Education at a Glance 2023.

Stakeholder Response

Stakeholder	Response summary
Opposition	• Shadow Minister for Education, Senator the Hon Sarah Henderson, spoke in the Senate in September 2023 and made claims the Minister for Education has done nothing to address the teacher shortage crisis, particularly in regional Australia. Senator Henderson stated teachers were drowning in work and principals cannot find teachers. She called for "urgent action from the government to fix the teacher shortage crisis in Australian schools, particularly across regional Australia." • In an Australian Financial Review article on 27 August 2023: *Dud teaching degrees to blame for failing schools, Henderson*, Senator Henderson was quoted, "the blame for declining school standards should be laid squarely at the feet of universities because their "deficient" teacher education courses are leading classrooms into "mediocrity". • In a media release dated 14 August 2023, Senator Henderson discussed the Centre for Independent Studies (CIS) report and stated it confirmed the lack of quality ITE is contributing to high drop out rates at university as well as teacher workforce shortages and burnout. She quoted statistics reported by the AEU of a 90% increase in teacher vacancies this year. She again called for action from the Minister and questioned where are the incentives and supports required? • In a media release dated 7 July 2023,Senator Henderson suggested the EMM on 6 July was a missed opportunity to mandate explicit instruction, including the teaching of phonics. She said it was pleasing to see evidence-based teaching endorsed by the Teacher Education Expert Panel and also welcomed the proposal to establish a ITE quality assurance board. She stated Strong Beginnings reflected the recommendations made in the 2022 Quality Initial Teacher Education Review.
Greens	• Senator Allman-Payne's Facebook Page, 19 September 2023: Allman-Payne posted about student mental health, teachers and school funding in a post sharing an ABC article and references her 30 years as a school teacher. "While new educational resources may be helpful, the answer to every problem in our schools can't always be to place additional burden on teachers already at breaking point. What our under resourced public system really needs is proper funding, so that schools can afford the teachers and support staff our kids need to have an enriching, and inclusive, education." • In an article in The Educator on 18 September 2023: Senator Allman-Payne said in relation to the Australian Education Amendment Bill, which would abolish 20% cap on federal school funding and replace it with a 25% minimum. "Australia's public school system is on the brink. Teachers are abandoning the profession, results are falling, and millions of kids are being left behind." • Senator Allman-Payne's Facebook and Instagram video, 15 September 2023. Allman-Payne speaks on public school funding and declares the Greens will fight for students and teachers. She writes in the caption "I understand the impacts of workload intensification and the frustration of not being able to provide our young people with the educational resources they need to succeed."

	• Senator Faruqi's Facebook page, 7 September: Posted a video of her speaking in the Senate on unpaid mandatory university placements and says it exploits labour. She mentions its gendered with placements common in feminised areas of study including Teachers. She states teaching courses require 500 hours of unpaid work. She states students are being burnt out before even beginning their careers. She claims unpaid placements is forcing people to drop out of university and means we have less teachers and other professions. She said paying students for the placements is the solution. • Senator Allman-Payne's Facebook page, 4 September: Allman-Payne posted a video where she claims plugging the gap in public school funding would allow for teachers to be paid properly and teachers would have the time to attend to the needs of their students. • Senator Allman-Payne's Facebook page, 1 September: Senator Allman-Payne posted a picture, tagging the AEU, in solidarity with SA teachers who were striking for a better deal, saying 'teachers deserve better'. • In a media release dated 07 July 2023, Greens Spokesperson on schools Senator Allman-Payne said the Greens welcomed the Teacher Education Expert Panel report but warned that investing in skills can only do so much while public schools remained underfunded. She states the announcement of the report will do little to prevent the drain of teachers from the profession and do nothing to lure back teachers who have left for good. Senator Allman-Payne states teachers aren't leaving because they don't have skills, they're leaving because they're overworked and under resourced.
Independents	• Independent MP, Dr Helen Haines spoke of teacher shortages in regional Australia on 6 March 2023 and offered ways the government could address the issues. She suggested teacher be added to the list of approved agricultural industries and work areas for visas, expanding Nexus to VET programs, and adding teachers to the list of professions eligible to have their HELP debts partially or completely forgiven if they work in regional, rural or remote areas.
National Catholic Education Commission	• NCEC executive director Jacinta Collins moderated a panel discussion about the role and governance of Catholic systems and schools in securing the teacher workforce of the future in early July 2023. • Ms Collins said Australian education ministers were prioritising some of the critical issues in the teacher workforce area, noting that the Catholic education sector had been heavily involved particularly at the national level, in contributing to the Australian Government's National Teacher Workforce Action Plan. View online
Independent Schools Australia	• ISA issued a media release on strengthening initial teacher education (ITE) programs on 7 July 2023. • It claims that the ITE programs are essential for all schools to attract future teachers and improve teacher retention rates. • It agrees that the ITE programs should focus on developing teachers' knowledge and understanding of evidence-based pedagogical approaches, as well as equipping teachers with practical, classroom management practices and skills. • It supports the recommendation for employment-based and accelerated pathways to attract more ITE students and provide them with more high-quality in-school experience. View online

Centre for Independent Studies	• CIS released [Starting off on the wrong foot: How to improve Initial Teacher Education in Australia](#) on 14 August 2023. • The report analyses and compares the current Australian ITE sector and policies against comparable international school systems, such as the United Kingdom and United States. It details the Australian and international policy approaches to ITE reform; the performance and structure of the ITE sector; ITE entry and graduates; ITE provider content and accountability; and ITE policy implications. The report concludes by commending Australian policymakers' progress over recent years but recommends more ambitious approaches to reverse decades of underperformance of ITE providers and programs. • Following its release, the report attracted some media attention and calls from the opposition to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Education to improve ITE.

Media

- ***Australian students shun education degrees as fears grow over 'unprecedented' teacher shortage, The Guardian, 23 September 2023***
  Graduating high school students are continuing to turn away from teaching degrees in huge numbers, early application data shows, as concern grows over "unprecedented" workforce shortages. The data from the Universities Admissions Centre showed education degrees received just 1,935 first preferences this year, a 19.24% decline compared with 2023 and the lowest rate since at least 2016, when public records became available.

- ***Teachers in stampede for the exit, The Australian, 22 September 2023***
  WA school teachers have reported surging levels of stress and anxiety about their jobs, a survey provided to The Australian by the State School Teachers Union of WA shows, with the nation's largest class sizes and increasing workload pressure pushing increasing numbers of teachers out of the profession. Data tabled in the WA parliament shows the number of teachers resigning has increased from just over 600 in 2020 to more than 1,200 last year. WA is on track to lose another 1,500 teachers to resignation this year.

- ***Teacher burnout becomes 'untenable' after Nicole Naeslund Suicide, The West Australian, 19 September 2023***

  WA teachers are picking up gardening and cleaning shifts in a desperate attempt to keep their schools open as the union warns the education system is stretched so badly the situation has now become "untenable". The warning from the State's shadow education minister comes after the family of a Perth teacher told The West Australian the stress of her job had contributed to her decision to take her own life.

- ***Teachers in dunce's corner, Herald Sun, 14 August 2023***
Australian teacher education is a decade behind other countries, pumping out graduates unprepared for teaching and who cannot control students, a new report says….It comes as the Australian Education Union reports there are vacancies for 1,224 teachers, 394 support staff and 237 leadership positions – an increase of 90% since the start of the school year.

- ***Test teachers before jobs report, The Sydney Morning Herald, 14 August 2023***
Teaching graduates should be tested on their ability to educate students effectively when they complete their degrees and not only on literacy and numeracy skills, a new report argues.
Education ministers last month backed a radical overhaul of teaching degrees.

- ***Teachers demand more funding for smaller classes and mental health support, The Australian, 2 August 2023***
Teachers demanded smaller class sizes and $4.5 billion in extra taxpayer funding for public schools each year, as their union launched a battle for more funding on Wednesday. The Australian Education Union (AEU) wants more money spent on school counsellors, social workers, psychologists and nurses in schools to help students suffering from mental health problems that worsened during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- ***Teachers fast-tracked to overcome staffing crisis: Newcastle Herald, 11 August 2023***

  The University of Newcastle has launched a new course allowing students to teach in high schools in one year as a strategy to fill widespread shortages in the industry. The Graduate Diploma in Teaching (Secondary) has been "front-loaded", by condensing 2 practical experiences into the 12-month period, which provides conditional accreditation to teach in schools.

- ***Helping teachers learn together, Newcastle Herald, 28 July 2023***
Schools will benefit from a $5 million federal grant to expand a University of Newcastle program that research has shown improves teaching and student achievement. More than 1,000 beginner teachers will benefit from the expanded Quality Teaching Rounds (QTR) program... the government would fund a four-year expansion of the program under the national teacher workforce plan.

- ***Funding to encourage talented professionals become primary school educators, The Mandarin, 25 July 2023***
  The federal government will spend nearly $8 million into the High Achieving Teachers (HAT) pilot, covering the costs of their practical teaching experience, and providing mentoring and support during their career transition…The program will initially deliver 105 primary school teacher placements and is a component of the national teacher workforce action plan, designed to boost teacher numbers by at least 1,500 educators.

- ***Overhaul for teacher training, The Canberra Times, 8 July 2023***
  Australia's education ministers are backing a proposed overhaul of teacher training to stem an exodus of educators from the profession. The recommendations made by the Teacher Education Expert Panel include strengthening teacher education programs, improving practical teaching experiences and boosting.

Date Last Cleared	20 October 2023

Attachment A

National Teacher Workforce Action Plan – Funding and expenditure status as at 18 October 2023

Action	Description	Lead	Progress	Funding allocation to end of financial year 2025-26	Status of expenditure
1a	More teaching places at universities	Aus Gov	Completed	$159 million in Commonwealth funding	Fully allocated
1b	Improved data collection to inform prioritisation of ITE places	Vic and NSW	Underway	Victoria and NSW have commenced work on their activities.	N/A
2	5,000 teaching scholarships	Aus Gov	Underway	$56.2 million in Commonwealth funding	Nil. Scholarships begin in 2024
3	1,500 more High Achieving Teaching Program places	Aus Gov	Underway	$68.3 million in Commonwealth funding	$7.9 million committed
4a	Prioritise visa processing for qualified teachers	Aus Gov	Completed	In-kind: The department is working with Home Affairs to set priority timeframes for processing visas for teachers and to amplify promotional activities to attract more overseas teachers	N/A
4b	Streamline overseas skills recognition	States and territories	Completed	In-kind: All States and Territories are contributing resources in efforts to streamline regulatory processes	N/A
5	**Prioritise conditional or provisional registration to increase the supply of teachers.**	AITSL	Underway	$212,000 in Commonwealth funding to determine the range of changes required to the Framework for Teacher Registration in Australia	Fully allocated
6	Increasing the number of permanent teachers	States and territories, and national peaks	Completed	In-kind: States and territories and non-government peaks are working on strategies and actions to boost the number of permanent teachers and reduce casualisation	N/A
7	Better use of teachers who are registered but not employed	States and territories	Completed	In-kind: States and territories are working on strategies to attract former teachers back into the profession	N/A
8	Teacher Education Expert Panel (TEEP)	Aus Gov	Completed	The department supported the work of the Expert Panel, which delivered its final report to Government on 30 June 2023.	$907,988 expended
9	Framework to recognise previous study, work experience and skills that may be transferable to teaching	Aus Gov	Delayed	The department is working with the Australian Council of Deans of Education via a variation to an existing contract to develop the framework to better recognise prior learning and experience. No new funding allocated to the project.	N/A

Action	Description	Lead	Progress	Funding allocation to end of financial year 2025-26	Status of expenditure
10	First Nations teacher strategy	Aus Gov	Delayed	$500,000 in Commonwealth funding has been allocated to support an initial phase of design work	$354,335 expended
11	LANTITE trial of additional test attempts and improved feedback Review of Accreditation Standard 3.5 to specify where in a course an ITE student should sit the LANTITE.	Aus Gov	Underway	The Australian Government has worked with all states and territories on the development and implementation of the trial, supported by ACER who were provided $640,000 (GST excl) in additional Commonwealth funding to undertake the trial. *No funding was allocated for this action under the NTWAP.* AITSL has been tasked with reviewing the Accreditation Standard 3.5 to specify where in a course an ITE student should sit the LANTITE.	Australian Government funding for ACER and AITSL is fully allocated.
12	Teacher Workload Reduction Fund (WRF)	Aus Gov	Underway	$25 million in Commonwealth funding allocated through the Budget (the amount will be increased to $30 million with jurisdictions having committed to contribute funding for Action 23 – see below)	$4 million expended
13	Reduce teacher workloads	States and territories, and national peaks	Completed	In-kind: States and territories and non-government peaks are developing a range of measures such as reducing administrative burden, undertaking audits of what can be simplified and removed from teacher workloads, and employing additional support staff	N/A
14	AITSL to develop guidelines on mentoring and induction for early career teachers and new school leaders	AITSL	Underway	$1.05 million in Commonwealth funding to develop draft guidelines	Fully allocated
15a	Improved teacher career pathways	States and territories, and national peaks	Underway	In-kind: States and territories and non-government peaks are developing a range of measures including professional development opportunities, developing fast track programs, bringing in new education support programs, participation in the HALT program.	N/A
15b	AITSL to provide advice to Ministers on the development of a principal accreditation system	AITSL	Underway	$200,000 in Commonwealth funding to consult with stakeholders and provide advice on the development of an accreditation system aligned with the Principal Standard.	Fully allocated
16	Improve First Nations cultural responsiveness resources for teachers	States and territories, national peaks and ITE providers	Completed	In-kind: States and territories, non-government peaks and ITE providers are reviewing their cultural responsiveness resources and toolkits, ensuring alignment with the curriculum and enhancing promotion of these resources.	N/A

Action	Description	Lead	Progress	Funding allocation to end of financial year 2025-26	Status of expenditure
17	Streamline HALT process	Aus Gov	Underway	AITSL has developed a framework to streamline HALT certification processes and will provide advice to Ministers on achieving the target of 10,000 HALTs or equivalent in the current financial year.	$740,000 committed Commonwealth share is $370,000
18	Develop microcredentials and Expand the Quality Teaching Rounds (QTR)	Aus Gov	Underway	$10 million in Commonwealth funding	$4.430 million expended
19	Examine how to support implementation of the national curriculum.	ACARA	Underway	$3 million in Commonwealth funding	$3 million fully committed to ACARA
20	Teacher Workload Impact Assessment tool	Aus Gov	Underway	In-kind: The Department is developing a draft tool for consultation ahead of implementation	N/A
21	Effective use of ITE students, teaching assistants and non-teaching staff	Queensland	Underway	Queensland Department of Education is taking policy development in relation to the effective use of non-teaching staff in schools, supported by AITSL who will be provided $300,000 from all jurisdictions	Soon to be allocated
22	Teacher retention strategies	Aus Gov	Delayed	$100,000 in Commonwealth funding	$99,813 expended
23	Targeted national campaign to raise the status and value the role of teachers	Aus Gov	Underway	$10 million ($5 million from the Commonwealth, remainder from jurisdictions)	$1,987,438 committed
24	Encourage members of the public to nominate teachers for Medals of the Order of Australia	Aus Gov	Underway	In-kind: The Department is working with the Office of the Governor-General to develop strategies and resources to promote nomination of more teachers	N/A
25	Better teacher demand data	AITSL	Underway	$4.942 million for Actions 25, 26, 27 in total ($2.721m from the Commonwealth, remainder from jurisdictions)	Australian Government funding for AITSL is fully allocated.
26	Better teacher supply data		Underway		
27	Better data on teacher wellbeing and career intentions		Underway		

1

Strong Beginnings: Report of Teacher Education Expert Panel – implementation summary

Recommendation	Proposed actions/milestones	EMM to consider	Authority and funding committed	Additional comments
1: Establish core content and mandate in national accreditation	• Commission AITSL to commence work on adding the core content to the accreditation standards and procedures, including consultation with AERO. • AITSL to submit revised standards and supporting material for Ministers' approval	Jul 2023 Dec 2023	• **At the 6 July 2023 EMM** Education Ministers agreed in-principle to all 14 recommendations from the Panel's Final Report, with four recommendations agreed for immediate action. This included amending accreditation standards and procedures by the end of 2023 and ensuring core content is embedded in all (initial teacher education) ITE programs before the end of 2025.	The Panel has identified the core content for ITE programs which covers what every teacher should learn in ITE to be prepared for the classroom and best support students. The core content reflects the knowledge and evidence-based practices that support ITE students in meeting the Graduate Teacher Standards and have the greatest impact on student learning. The Panel has defined four types of core content:
2: Embed core content in initial teacher education programs	• Commission AITSL to provide advice on fast-tracking implementation of the revised standards. • AITSL to provide its advice to Ministers.	Jul 2023 Oct 2023		1. The brain and learning 2. Effective pedagogical practices 3. Classroom management 4. Responsive teaching
3: Strengthen national quality and consistency of	• Ministers agreed in-principle to the establishment of a new ITE quality assurance board.	Jul 2023	• **At the 6 July 2023 EMM** Education Ministers provided in-principle support to all 14 recommendations from the Panel's Final	

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initial teacher education programs	• AG to work with jurisdictions in developing a proposal for establishing the board, including scope of activity, membership and funding arrangements, for EMM consideration in December. • Board to be established as agreed by Ministers. • Board to commence operations in 2024 (tbc)	Dec 2023	Report and some initial actions were agreed including working through the AESOC to develop a proposal to establish a new ITE quality assurance board. • ITE Quality Assurance Working Group, including representatives from each state and territory, established in October 2023 to assist in development of proposal for Ministers' consideration.	
4: Establish nationally consistent, transparent indicators	• Direct the new quality assurance board, once established, to consult with stakeholders and develop an approach to reporting on nationally consistent transparent indicators in line with the Panel's advice, including timing and funding arrangements for implementation in 2024. • Ministers to consider the proposed approach by the end of 2023.	Dec 2023	**Ministers to consider preferred approach to responding to this measure at EMM later in 2023.**	
5: Streamline reporting requirements in the Accreditation Standards and Procedures	• Commission AITSL to develop advice on streamlining accreditation standards and procedures in line with Panel's advice. • AITSL to provide its advice for Ministers consideration in 2024.	Dec 2023	**Ministers to consider preferred approach to responding to this measure at EMM later in 2023.**	The nationally consistent transparent indicators (Recommendation 4) will be used to streamline accreditation requirements.

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6: Establish a Transition Fund to support embedding of core content. **7:** Establish an Excellence Fund to improve the quality of initial teacher education programs		Dec 2023	**Ministers to consider preferred approach to responding to this measure at EMM later in 2023.**	
8: Establish system-wide coordination of practical experience delivery	• It is proposed that this be a matter for each jurisdiction to consider. Jurisdiction level approaches could be supported through the proposed response to recommendation 10.	Dec 2023	**Ministers to consider preferred approach to responding to this measure at EMM later in 2023**	
9: Develop national guidelines for high-quality practical experience	• Commission AITSL to commence immediately on developing draft guidelines. • AITSL to bring the guidelines for Ministers approval in late 2023	July 2023 Dec 2023	• **At the 6 July 2023 EMM** Education Ministers agreed in-principle to all 14 recommendations from the Panel's Final Report, with four recommendations agreed for immediate action. This included developing guidelines to improve the quality of practical experience. • $2.085 million over two years has been committed to support AITSL's implementation of TEEP recommendations, including the development of national	National guidelines should be developed to provide clear expectations and advice for consistent high-quality practical experience. The guidelines would build on existing practical experience resources already being used in some jurisdictions.

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			guidelines to improve the quality of practical experience in teaching.	
10: Increase systemic investment in practical experience	• It is proposed that this be a matter for each jurisdiction to consider. Jurisdiction level approaches could be supported by further scoping work that the Australian Government is undertaking to mitigate financial hardships placed on ITE students undertaking mandatory placements.	Dec 2023	**Ministers to consider preferred approach to responding to this measure at EMM later in 2023.**	
11: Ensure professional recognition for mentor teachers	• State and territory ministers to progress improvements within their jurisdictions and report back. • Seek AITSL advice whether updating Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher certification could whether updates to the HALT Certification would encourage HALT applicants to use experience mentoring ITE students as evidence for HALT or equivalent certification.	Dec 2023	**Ministers to consider preferred approach to responding to this measure at EMM later in 2023.**	States and territories have responsibility for progressing professional recognition in their teacher registration requirements.
12: Develop and expand mid-career pathway programs	• It is currently proposed that the AG conduct a competitive procurement process for new, innovative mid-career pathway pilots to fund under the program.	Dec 2023	**Ministers to consider preferred approach to responding to this measure at EMM later in 2023.** As allocated in the Federal October 2022-23 Budget, funding of $70.9 million from 2023-24 to 2026-27 will be used for the expansion of the HAT Program.	

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13: Promote mid-career pathways	• The call to action through the 'Be that teacher' campaign could include a stream targeted to mid-career professionals. • Successful providers of the HAT Program competitive procurement process will promote the HAT Program to mid-career professionals.	Dec 2023	**Ministers to consider preferred approach to responding to this measure at EMM later in 2023.**	
14: Build the evidence base for mid-career pathways	• AITSL could provide advice on how it can use the Australian Teacher Workforce Data collection (including survey of teachers) to build the evidence base. • Successful providers of the HAT Program competitive procurement process will be required to conduct an evaluation of their pilots.	Dec 2023	**Ministers to consider preferred approach to responding to this measure at EMM later in 2023.**	

Australian Government

Department of Education

Fact Sheet: The teaching workforce in Australia FS09 – 2023

Full-time equivalent staff in schools by function and sector, 2022

67% of staff in Australian schools are teaching staff.
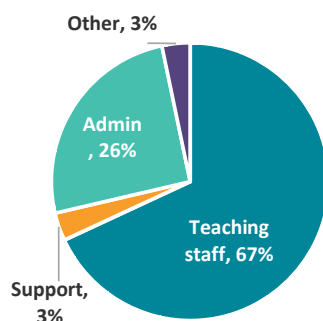
Function	Government	Catholic	Independent	Total
Teaching staff	193,744	58,666	54,631	307,041
Specialist support staff	6,961	2,865	6,051	15,877
Administrative/clerical staff (includes teacher aides and assistants)	77,901	20,285	20,579	118,764
Building operations, general maintenance and other staff	4,985	3,674	6,306	14,964
Total	**283,590**	**85,489**	**87,567**	**456,646**

Source: ABS (2023) Schools Australia 2022, Table 51a

Full-time equivalent teaching staff by jurisdiction and sector, 2022

63% of full-time equivalent teaching staff are in government schools.
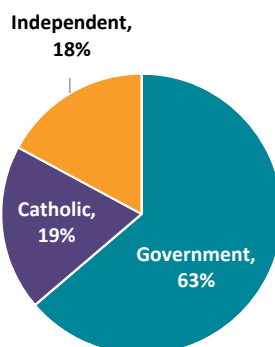
	Government*		Catholic	Independent	Total	State and Territory share % **
	FTE	**%**				
NSW	55,877	61	19,206	16,291	91,373	30
Vic	50,773	62	16,587	14,810	82,170	27
Qld	43,135	66	11,170	10,741	65,045	21
WA	20,700	65	5,190	6,107	31,997	10
SA	12,844	62	3,599	4,288	20,732	7
Tas	4,337	66	1,183	1,018	6,538	2
ACT	3,502	62	1,314	866	5,682	2
NT	2,576	74	418	511	3,505	1
Total	**193,744**	**63**	**58,666**	**54,631**	**307,041**	**100**

Source: ABS (2023) Schools Australia 2022, Table 51a
*Note: *Percentage of teachers in government schools out of total teachers in the jurisdiction.*
*   **State percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.*

Full-time equivalent teaching staff by school level, gender and sector, 2022

72% of full-time equivalent teaching staff are female. While the proportion of male teachers is higher in secondary and independent schools, female teachers outnumber male teachers in these schools.

	Government	Catholic	Independent	Total
Primary schools				
Total teaching staff	**108,748**	**26,875**	**20,397**	**156,019**
Female	89,073	22,711	16,191	**127,974**
Male	19,675	4,164	4,206	**28,045**
Female %	82	85	79	**82**
Secondary schools				
Total teaching staff	**84,996**	**31,791**	**34,234**	**151,021**
Female	53,176	19,457	20,138	**92,771**
Male	31,820	12,334	14,096	**58,250**
Female %	63	61	59	**61**
All schools				
Total teaching staff	**193,744**	**58,666**	**54,631**	**307,041**
Female	142,249	42,168	36,329	**220,745**
Male	51,495	16,498	18,302	**86,295**
Female %	73	72	66	**72**

Source: ABS (2023) Schools Australia 2022, Table 51a

Full-time equivalent student-teacher ratio by school level and sector, 2022

Across all schools there are 13.1 students to every teacher.

The 0.7 decrease in the student-teacher ratio across all schools from 2012 to 2022 has been driven by the decrease in primary schools, whilst the ratio in secondary schools has remained consistent.

Year	Government	Catholic	Independent	Total
Primary schools				
2012	15.2	17.4	14.6	15.5
2021	14.4	15.4	14.0	14.5
2022	14.3	15.2	14.0	14.4
Secondary schools				
2012	12.3	12.7	10.3	12.0
2021	12.4	12.2	10.5	11.9
2022	12.3	12.2	10.4	11.9
All schools				
2012	13.9	14.9	12.0	13.8
2021	13.6	13.6	11.8	13.3
2022	13.4	13.6	11.7	13.1

Source: ABS (2023) Schools Australia 2022, Table 53a

Selected characteristics of teachers and school leaders in Australia, 2018

In 2018, more teachers were working on a full-time basis in secondary schools compared with primary schools.

	Teachers		Principals	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
Average Age	42.0 years	42.1 years	51.6 years	51.3 years
Average teacher experience*	15.2 years	15.2 years	20.4 years	23.2 years
Average experience in current school**	7.7 years	8.3 years	4.1 years	4.7 years
Full time %	73.5	83.9	97.2	99.8

Satisfied with job %	91.4	90.0	94.6	98.1

Source: *OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018 Results*

Notes: ** Years of experience as a teacher, does not include years of experience in other education and non-education roles.*

** Refers to years working as a teacher or principal in current school, respectively.

Teacher shortages in Australian schools in 2018

In 2018, less than 20% of principals reported a shortage of teachers affecting student learning.

Principals reporting that shortages of the following staff hindered the school's capacity to provide quality instruction 'quite a bit' or 'a lot'	Primary %	Secondary %
Qualified teachers	11.7	15.5
Special needs teachers	18.8	17.8
Vocational teachers	3.2	16.9
Support staff	13.2	6.6

Source: *OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018 Results, Volume 1*

Fact Sheet: Initial Teacher Education (ITE)   FS10 – 2023

ITE enrolments, commencements and completions by citizenship category, 2012-2021

In 2021, there were 94,111 students enrolled in ITE courses in Australia.

Between 2012 and 2021, total annual enrolments increased by 20% and total annual commencements increased by 3%.

Completions fell by more than 2% between 2012 and 2021.

	2012	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change 2012-21	
						Number	%
Enrolments							
Domestic Students	76,052	84,426	82,388	84,163	89,383	13,331	17.5
Overseas Students	2,160	3,730	4,659	4,875	4,728	2,568	118.9
Total	78,212	88,156	87,047	89,038	94,111	15,899	20.3
Commencements							
Domestic Students	29,393	25,799	25,269	27,246	29,797	404	1.4
Overseas Students	1,064	1,732	2,097	1,775	1,541	477	44.8
Total	30,457	27,531	27,366	29,021	31,338	881	2.9
Completions							
Domestic Students	15,827	16,472	15,225	14,314	15,076	-751	-4.7
Overseas Students	823	953	1,011	1,032	1,169	346	42.0
Total	16,650	17,425	16,236	15,346	16,245	-405	-2.4

Source: Higher Education Statistics Collection (Department of Education)

ITE student enrolments and commencements by course type, 2021

In 2021, primary teacher education had the highest share of enrolments (35%), followed by secondary teacher education (30%).

Most commencements were in primary education (33%).

ITE course type	Enrolments		Commencements	
	Students	%	Students	%
Teacher Education: Early Childhood	13,899	14.7	4,683	14.9
Teacher Education: Primary	33,285	35.3	10,502	33.4
Teacher Education: Secondary	28,038	29.7	9,941	31.6
Teacher Education*	7,155	7.6	1,984	6.3
Other Teacher Education#	12,043	12.8	4,372	13.9
Total**	94,420	100.0	31,482	100.0

Source: Higher Education Statistics Collection (Department of Education)
Notes   *Includes teacher education programmes not specifically categorised. Students may be enrolled in one or more different specialisations.
#Includes students studying ITE in the fields of VET, Higher Education, Special Education, English as a Second Language Teaching and Teacher Education not elsewhere classified.
**Where a student is doing a combined course, they are counted twice, once in each ITE field. As a result, the total counts are higher than the actual number of students.

FS10 Initial Teacher Education (ITE), 2023

Domestic^ undergraduate ITE student commencements by equity group, 2012-2021

Between 2012 and 2021, the number of Indigenous ITE commencements grew by 19%. However, Indigenous students represent only 3% of commencements.

Equity group	2012	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change 2012-21	
						Number	%
Indigenous	525	511	518	598	625	100	19.0
Low SES#	4,638	3,857	3,861	3,953	4,271	-367	-7.9
Regional**	6,239	4,751	4,590	4,625	5,212	-1,027	-16.5
Remote**	314	241	274	243	223	-91	-29.0
Total	21,377	18,303	17,877	18,814	20,734	-643	-3.0

Source: Higher Education Statistics Collection (Department of Education)
Notes: ^Data excludes students where permanent home address is overseas.
#Students are classified as being from a low socio-economic status (SES) background if their home address is in an area in the bottom 25 per cent of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) SEIFA Education and Occupation Index for 15-64 year olds. For 2012, the low SES measure is based on the Statistical Area 1 of a student's home address in 2012 and for all other years, the measure is based on a student's home address at the commencement of study.
**Regional and remote data are based on a student's home address postcode, with regional and remote categories derived from the ABS's Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) classification.

Domestic ITE student commencements by course level, 2012-2021

Between 2012 and 2021, postgraduate students increased their share of commencements from 27% to 30%.

Course level	2012	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change 2012-21	
						Number	%
Undergraduate	21,434	18,325	17,898	18,837	20,752	-682	-3.2
Postgraduate	7,959	7,474	7,371	8,409	9,045	1,086	13.6
% Postgraduate commencements	27.1	29.0	29.2	30.9	30.4	-	-
Total	29,393	25,799	25,269	27,246	29,797	404	1.4

Source: Higher Education Statistics Collection (Department of Education)

Domestic undergraduate ITE student commencements by basis of admission, 2021

There are different pathways into ITE programs. The most common basis of admission for undergraduate ITE students is through secondary education - or Year 12 (36%) followed by a higher education course (complete or incomplete) (28%).

Source: Higher Education Statistics Collection (Department of Education)

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Contact person – s 22   *Teacher Workforce Data and Analysis*   **Phone:** s 22

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FS10 Initial Teacher Education (ITE), 2023

Domestic undergraduate ITE student commencements admitted on the basis of secondary education by ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) band^, 2012 and 2021

From 2012 to 2021, the proportion of undergraduate students admitted on the basis of secondary education with an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) of 70 or more has increased from 64% to 69%.
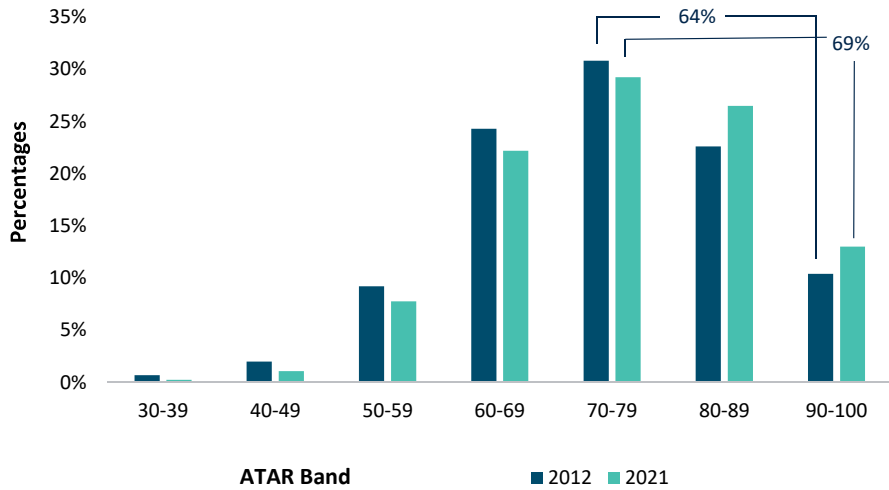
Source: Higher Education Statistics Collection (Department of Education)

Notes: ^ATARs are not a category of admission on their own but are one selection criterion used by higher education providers. The majority of ITE students do not have an ATAR recorded with their admission. Around a third of all commencing undergraduate ITE students had an ATAR.

Content of Initial Teacher Education course and preparedness for teaching, 2018

Even though a wide variety of content and practice is covered in ITE, not all teachers feel well prepared to teach these elements when they start their career as a teacher.

They felt least prepared for teaching in multicultural or multilingual settings.

	Primary		Secondary	
	Included in ITE	Felt well prepared	Included in ITE	Felt well prepared
	%	%	%	%
Content of some or all subjects taught	91.0	54.6	91.2	68.4
Pedagogy of some or all subjects taught	91.2	56.0	91.8	62.9
General pedagogy	95.2	62.3	95.6	65.4
Classroom practice in some or all subjects taught	92.5	60.8	93.0	65.2
Teaching in a mixed-ability setting	74.9	35.7	74.3	38.3
Teaching in a multicultural or multilingual setting	59.0	26.3	58.7	27.1
Teaching cross-curricular skills	63.2	33.9	66.3	37.2
Use of ICT for teaching	58.7	30.2	64.7	39.3
Student behaviour and classroom management	81.2	42.8	83.6	45.2
Monitoring students' development and learning	79.2	40.4	76.8	41.9

Source: OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018 Results, Volume One

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Contact person – s 22   *Teacher Workforce Data and Analysis*   **Phone:** s 22

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Attachment E

Teacher Salaries in Australia (current as at September 2023)

State/ territory	Lowest salary (and level)	Highest salary (and level)	Date salary based on	EBA start date	EBA end date	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 (proposed)
NSW[1]*	$85,000 (Band 1 (Graduate))	$122,100 (Band 3 (Highly Accomplished/Lead))	09/10/2023	09/10/2023	31/12/2027	2.50%	2.28%	2.29%	2.53%	8.00% - 12.00%
Vic[2]	$76,484 (Classroom Teacher Range 1-1)	$124,490 (Leading Teacher Range 3-2)	01/07/2023	17/08/2022	31/12/2025	3.25%	Np	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%
Qld[3]	$81,628 (Band 2, Step 1)	$138,607 (Lead Teacher)	01/07/2023	15/12/2022	30/06/2025	2.50%	2.50%	4.00%	4.00%	3.00%
WA[4]	$78,397 (Teacher)	$125,850 (Level 3 Teacher)	6/12/2022	07/12/2022	05/12/2023	$1,000	3.00%	3.00%	N/a	N/a
SA[5]	$74,769 (Band 1, Step 1)	$124,393 (Lead Teacher)	01/05/2022	07/04/2020	07/04/2023	2.35%	2.35%	2.35%	N/a	N/a
Tas[6]	$68,516 (Teacher Band 1 Level 1)	$118,262 (Advanced Skills Teacher Band 2)	01/03/2023	20/05/2022	19/06/2025	-	2.10%	2.35%	3.50% (plus one-off payment of $1,000)	3.00%
ACT[7]	$79,108 (Classroom Teacher 2)	$117,538 (Experienced Teacher 2 - Classroom Teacher 10))	08/06/2023	07/07/2022	26/03/2026	3.00%	3.00%	1.50%	1.00% (plus $3,000)	2.50% (plus $1,500)
NT[8]	$81,739 (Classroom Teacher 1)	$175,734 (Senior Teacher 8)	11/10/2022	18/01/2023	11/10/2024	-	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	N/a

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Np – Not published

N/a – Not available

[1] Source: 95,000 teachers on track for historic pay rise after Minns Labor Government offer | NSW Government

* In-principal Heads on Agreement, source Potential pay rise for NSW teachers amid new negotiations to address shortages (cityhub.com.au)

[2] Source: Teacher Class Salaries in Victorian Government Schools

[3] Source: Department of Education State School Teachers' Certified Agreement 2022, Queensland Industrial Relations Commission.

[4] Source: School Education Act Employees' (Teachers and Administrators) General Agreement 2021

[5] Source: Enterprise Agreements and Awards (aeusa.asn.au)

[6] Source: Teachers Agreement 2023

[7] Source: Education-Directorate-Teaching-Staff-Enterprise-Agreement-2023-2026.pdf (act.gov.au)

[8] Source: NTPS Non-contract Principals, Teachers and Assistant Teachers 2021 – 2024 Enterprise Agreement.

2023 - 2024 Supplementary Budget Estimates
SB23-000355

Issue: **Voice Referendum**
Contact: **Meg Brighton**
Ph: s 22
Deputy Secretary

Key Points

The Referendum

- On Saturday, 14 October 2023, Australians voted in a referendum about whether to change the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing a body called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. The referendum did not pass.

- The outcome of the vote does not affect work already underway across the government to create better outcomes for First Nations People.

- It does not affect the Government's commitment to reconciliation.

- The National Agreement on Closing the Gap and other initiatives will continue to ensure practical progress in Indigenous health, education, employment and housing.

- It is understood that further announcements from the Government will be made about its renewed commitment to Closing the Gap in the months ahead.

Moving forward

- In education, three major education reviews will guide us in building the roadmap for how we close the education gap:
  - the Productivity Commission inquiry into early childhood education and care,
  - the Expert panel to inform a better and fairer education system, and
  - the review to support the Australian Universities Accord.

- The next National Schools Reform Agreement is an opportunity to drive real improvements in student outcomes, with a particular focus on students who are most at risk of falling behind and in need of more assistance – for students from low socio-economic backgrounds, regional, rural and remote Australia, students with disability, First Nations students and students from a language background other than English.

- The Department of Education remains committed to listening and working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities to support education outcomes.

- o For example, the establishment of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Corporation (NATSIEC) will provide whole of life education policy advice for matters relating to First Nations people.
- o The department will work in partnership with First Nations stakeholders, such as NATSIEC and SNAICC (early childhood development partner), to ensure that education policy is designed to close the gap.
- o *For more information on what is being done to address the education gap* **SB23-000478** *refers.*

The Curriculum

- States and territories maintain lead responsibility for implementing the Australian Curriculum.

- Teaching relating to the Referendum should fall under Civics and Citizenship.

- Teachers use their professional judgement in supporting discussions on civics and citizenship and do so within the scope of jurisdictional processes such as codes of conduct.

Additional Resources

- The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) released an impartial online information repository to support public engagement of the Voice (www.voice.gov.au). Resources include a community toolkit, factsheets and newsletters. Any questions regarding this should be referred to the NIAA.

- The Department of Health and the Australian National University (ANU) conducted *Voice to Parliament Referendum Mental Health monitoring.* The research examined the mental health impact of the referendum on First Nations people. Following this, the Department of Health developed resources for First Nations people and non-Indigenous people to support mental health of First Nations people during this period. A resource for the education sector is at Attachment A.

Department of Education Secretary at February 2023 Senate Estimates:

- Former Secretary of the Department of Education, Dr Michele Bruniges AM, contacted heads of state and territory education departments on Wednesday, 1 March 2023 by email (Attachment B refers) regarding concerns raised at Senate Estimates on 16 February 2023 (Attachment C refers) relating to the impartial teaching of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice Referendum in Australian classrooms.

- Responses as of 20 April 2023 are recorded below:

Stakeholder	Response summary
Tasmanian Government, Department for Education, Children and Young People	Confirms that the advice to teachers in Tasmanian Government schools will focus on 'exploring various perspectives of this important issue, including the diverse views held by members of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community'.

Department of Education - internal

- On Wednesday 19 April 2023, the department circulated internal resources to support department engagement with external stakeholders, to provide support for effected staff and to inform staff engagement with the referendum.

  o Corporate and Enabling Services is responsible for developing these materials.

- The Department of Education is committed to following the advice of the NIAA and the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) in regard to maintaining impartiality towards the outcome of the Voice Referendum, and consistency with the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct.

- The Department of Education is also committed to maintaining a culturally safe and inclusive workplace, especially for First Nations colleagues. A range of supports have been made available during and following the referendum including:

  o Virtual and in-personal Yarning Circles
  o Culturally safe conversations with qualified counsellor and CEO of Burbirra, Dr Karen Demmery
  o Dedicated support spaces
  o Employee Assistance Program and a First Nations specific line.
    - The Health and Wellbeing Team and Inclusion and Diversity Teams were responsible for coordinating these services.

Attachments:

Attachment A	Department of Health – Education Sector mental health factsheet
Attachment B	Email from Dr Bruniges
Attachment C	Transcript - Senate Estimates 16 February 2023

Date Last Cleared	17 October 2023

Mental health and wellbeing in the lead up to the Voice to Parliament Referendum: Factsheet for the education sector

Our research team from the National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing Research (The Australian National University) want to understand any concerns Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have about their mental health and wellbeing in the lead up to the Voice to Parliament Referendum. We also want to understand what mental health and wellbeing supports and resources would help. In April 2023, we talked to 84 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across six locations. This is a brief summary of what we heard, and we've included some links to existing support services.

This project is not about the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on the Referendum, and did not collect or analyse any data about voting intentions, and did not draw any conclusions about the Referendum outcome.

What we heard

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people told us they are experiencing extra sources of stress in the lead up to the Voice to Parliament Referendum, adding to the load that mob are already carrying. The proposed alteration to the Constitution is about recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This means that conversations about the Referendum are tied to identity and can have deep and ongoing impacts.

> "I go onto social media and I see people debating … It's like who I am inside is the debate. It almost feels like entertainment for other people … It's a direct attack on who I am as a person and how I relate to my world and family which, I think, is the part that people don't really understand."

Participants told us they are experiencing increased racism. This includes unfair and harmful interactions in day-to-day life, overhearing racist comments, and negative messages in the media.

National Centre for
Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander
Wellbeing Research

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Participants also told us that they are facing pressure to educate and inform non-Indigenous people about the Referendum. This can cause a heavy mental load. Repeatedly walking people through history can also be triggering or re-traumatising.

"It's like they're constantly putting that Blackfella hat back on us in the sense of having to educate constantly, which then is traumatising … it takes a toll. Massive toll. Burnout."

We heard that discussions about the Referendum are causing division and conflict between some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the non-Indigenous community, and within some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities. This can have negative impacts on wellbeing for individuals, families, and communities, now and into the future.

These impacts are already occurring in community, and the impacts could be long-lasting. It is important to recognise these additional burdens and take action to reduce the negative impacts.

This factsheet outlines ways schools, universities, training organisations, and tertiary institutions can support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students.

For information you can share with your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students about available support services and information, see this link.

For information you can share with your non-Indigenous staff and students about ways non-Indigenous people can help, see this link.

What can we do?

Be equipped to refer students and staff to *a holistic range of supports* in order to meet their needs. See *this link* for a list of mental health, counselling, social and emotional wellbeing, relationships, and other holistic support services.

Provide opportunities and mechanisms for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff to engage in activities that support connection to family, community, and culture, in order to protect wellbeing.

Provide education for students and staff about the Referendum, including what the Referendum is about, and the process of voting. Ensure that this information is provided in the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history. You can find factual information about the Referendum on this page.

Explain that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are experiencing added stress, mental load, and racism and share tools to counter these negative impacts. Convey the importance of not adding to mental load for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff. Non-Indigenous people should educate themselves about the Referendum, to reduce the burden on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to provide this education. Teach students and staff how to have safe conversations around the Referendum, and model this behaviour. Empower students and staff to support each other; this could include providing cultural safety training.

Instil a sense of responsibility for reporting racism. Make sure your students and staff are aware of the importance of reporting racism, and of pathways for reporting racism. If you don't have internal pathways within your organisation, in the first instance, see this link for information on where to report racism: https://itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au/take-action/responding-to-racism.

Empower your non-Indigenous students and staff to be allies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. For more ideas, see the Ending Racism video and Check Up resources at https://mk-engaged.anu.edu.au/ending-racism/.

Provide training in social media literacy to support students and staff to create supportive social media environments. The eSafety Commissioner provides resources about staying safe online: https://www.esafety.gov.au/first-nations.

SB23-000150
<u>Attachment A: Email from Dr Bruniges</u>

From: BRUNIGES,Michele <<u>Michele.Bruniges@education.gov.au</u>>
Sent: Wednesday, 1 March 2023 10:29 AM
To: <u>georgina.harrisson@det.nsw.edu.au</u>; <u>jenny.atta@education.vic.gov.au</u>; Westwell, Martin (SACE) <<u>martin.westwell@sa.gov.au</u>>; Karen Weston (Education) <<u>k.weston@education.nt.gov.au</u>>; Lisa Rodgers (<u>lisa.rodgers@education.wa.edu.au</u>) <<u>lisa.rodgers@education.wa.edu.au</u>>; <u>katy.haire@act.gov.au</u>; <u>tim.bullard@education.tas.gov.au</u>; Michael.DE'ATH@qed.qld.gov.au
Cc: BIRMINGHAM,Julie <<u>Julie.Birmingham@education.gov.au</u>>
Subject: Concerns raised at Senate Estimates [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Dear Colleagues,

As you may be aware, the Department recently appeared at Senate Estimates and received questions relating to teaching of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice (Voice) in Australian classrooms. The Department affirmed states and territories' lead responsibility in implementing the Australian Curriculum and noted that while the Voice is not explicitly included in the Curriculum, teaching relating to Voice and the Referendum would fall under Civics and Citizenship.

Senators raised concerns that only one perspective on the Voice Referendum debate is being taught in schools. I affirmed that teachers use their professional judgement in supporting discussions on civics and citizenship, and that they do so within jurisdictional processes such as codes of conduct, but offered to raise their concern with you.

Senators referenced a recent article in The Australian *'Indoctrination' claim as schools take voice to classrooms* (copy attached for ease of reference).

I appreciate your consideration of these concerns within your jurisdiction. I know you will continue to support teachers to exercise their professional judgement in the balanced teaching of civics and citizenship.

Kind regards,
Michele

who turns six before or on 30 June in any year must attend school or an alternative education program from the beginning of that school year. Students must complete year 10 of secondary education. After year 10 your child must stay at school or continue to participate in approved education and training or employment or a combination of these until they're 17 years of age. Then they have a series of exemptions. I'm happy to give you this if that's of assistance. There's a series of exemptions and then you've got suspension, expulsion, exclusion from programs and so forth that are always part of that act as well. But we're happy to give you that on notice, Senator.

Senator NAMPIJINPA PRICE: If you could, that would be great.

Dr Bruniges: We can just give you what we've been able to find about it.

Senator NAMPIJINPA PRICE: Thank you. In the community of Wadeye, there is a school that receives $18 million of funding a year. The reported enrolment average has been about 24 per cent, and only about 1 per cent of students attend 90 per cent of the time in that particular school. Eighteen million dollars is a lot of money when literally one student is attending 90 per cent of the time and the average is 24 per cent. How is the department keeping the Northern Territory education department accountable for ensuring children are attending school regularly?

Dr Bruniges: It's a very good question, Senator. If you're not at school, you're not learning. I'm very clear in my view about the importance of school attendance. How do we hold governments to account? For the receipt of money, we have a block grant authority sheet that comes in that is school by school, saying how much money on each of the variables comes in, and that's signed off by the chief executive. We then also do some audits that Mr Hardy has spoken to if there's something that comes to our attention that we should look at. We do rely on those block grant authorities. And in the non-government sector there are also financial statistical returns that are signed off by a CPA that come in from the non-government sector. If there is an issue with a particular school in that block grant authority, I think Mr Hardy has just been through a risk assessment if there is something untoward— and that clearly sounds untoward to me. We would lift the bonnet and have a look, and have a close look at whether that $18 million has gone on salary components—where has it gone? Has it reached the school site? Is it still sitting in a department? How much is overheads and so forth? So if there's some concern there, we're more than happy to have a look at it.

Senator NAMPIJINPA PRICE: If you could look at that and provide the outcome on notice, that would be really beneficial.

Dr Bruniges: We are happy to look at Wadeye.

Senator NAMPIJINPA PRICE: Thank you. Is the department aware of the media article last week regarding the teaching in schools to children to support the government's Voice campaign?

Dr Bruniges: Yes, I've seen those articles.

Senator NAMPIJINPA PRICE: Have you discussed this with the Minister for Education?

Dr Bruniges: No, I haven't personally. I saw the media last week.

Senator NAMPIJINPA PRICE: Have you provided any advice to the minister around this particular issue?

Dr Bruniges: No, not at this point. I know that the minister has a ministerial council coming up where we're looking at school attendance and school refusal and so forth. This is a very current issue. It's normally a jurisdictional issue. The employers of teachers are based in the jurisdiction. So if there are issues around what teachers are or are not doing, it normally comes under a code of conduct in the jurisdiction in which teachers are employed. So we wouldn't normally take a responsibility for things that state and territory governments and education departments would regarding the employment and conduct of teachers.

Senator NAMPIJINPA PRICE: Is the department concerned at all with the political nature of that sort of teaching?

Dr Bruniges: Of course, Senator. We would hope that our classrooms are free of any political persuasion in that amount. We kind of walk that fine line. Our national curriculum sets out civics and citizenship and the importance of conversations. I think there are numerous examples where individuals have gone across that line, and that's normally picked up by the jurisdiction. But our classrooms should be free of any political interference.

Senator NAMPIJINPA PRICE: The media has gone so far as to say that this is indoctrination of children, obviously to suit the government's current political agenda. Would you agree with that?

Dr Bruniges: Senator, you're asking me for a matter of opinion. I really can't express that in Senate estimates.

Senator NAMPIJINPA PRICE: Okay. So how will the department ensure that children are taught, then, both sides of the coin, so to speak, and not politically influenced?

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Dr Bruniges: Again, the lion's share of the work falls to the state body, the accreditation authority for schools. Every school in every state would go under an accreditation process. They're registered, they're accredited and they're regulated by the state. If we see something coming to our attention, one of the things I can do is raise it with my counterparts or relevant counterparts in the jurisdiction that it's come to our attention and it's more than an isolated incident—more widespread. But in the main, that regulation, accreditation and registration belongs within the state's jurisdiction. But of course we would be concerned, and I'm more than happy to raise it at my next officials meeting.

Senator NAMPIJINPA PRICE: The priority—it's a grave concern to families that, despite children struggling to learn expected skill sets and that sort of thing in terms of literacy and numeracy, and with Australia's learning standards declining amongst the OECD countries, time is being spent in classrooms to basically teach the government's agenda around the Voice. This is of deep concern. Many families around the country have reached out to me personally. Will the government department take absolute measures to ensure that the focus is more of an education focus as opposed to an ideological focus?

Dr Bruniges: I think you'll find that in most jurisdictions they're very clear on that. And teachers do exercise their professional judgement in a way that hopefully gives a balanced discussion and debate around any issue of civics and citizenship, which is where you would find it in the Australian curriculum. From a federal department's point of view, as I said, we can raise the issues with our counterparts. But in the driving seat sits the jurisdictions around how they actually deal with their workforce and their teaching workforce. There are often guidelines on codes of conduct for teachers in many jurisdictions and systems that are quite explicit about the non-political way in which the classroom is to be set up. And that will vary, I think, from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. But I hear what you're saying and I will raise it with my counterparts.

Senator NAMPIJINPA PRICE: Thank you.

Senator HENDERSON: Secretary, I just wanted to pick up on the profound concerns raised in relation to the reports of the teaching of the 'yes' case for the Voice. I might ask if someone could please table an article in the *Australian* dated 8 February 2023—I think the deputy chair has this article—called 'Indoctrination claim as schools take voice to classrooms'. Secretary, can I confirm that teaching the yes position only in relation to the Voice campaign is not in accordance with the national curriculum?

Dr Bruniges: Senator, ACARA are probably best to answer that. They have detailed knowledge of the civics and citizenship curriculum. I would hope that any discussion and debate in a classroom remain apolitical. But ACARA will have a broader scope of what sits within the civics and citizenship curriculum.

Senator HENDERSON: But, from your knowledge, isn't it the case that teaching the 'yes' position on the Voice does not accord with the national curriculum?

Dr Bruniges: I don't think the Voice is mentioned in the national curriculum at all. There are more general characteristics there about civics and citizenship. The national curriculum was signed off—in fact I think it was Minister Robert who was in the chair when we did consent education and respectful relationships. The Voice debate is certainly not an integral part, but it refers to balanced discussion and debate. But again, ACARA is probably best to do that. And I would hope, Senator, that the balanced discussion occurs within classrooms.

Senator HENDERSON: And isn't that exactly the heart of the problem, Secretary: that this is not a proposal to have a balanced discussion about the Voice? The apparent instruction is that teachers are only to teach the yes case. Doesn't that fly in the face of a balanced discussion? And isn't it also of deep concern that parents have not been consulted in relation to these matters?

Dr Bruniges: I would say two things, Senator. You're asking me to respond to a media article and I really don't know the basis of the arguments that are there, other than that I can see that the minister's flagged that it was 'normal and important' for students to talk about current affairs in class. That would be consistent with the national curriculum in that area. I think that the national curriculum appears online, that all parents that have visibility as to the national curriculum and access to what's on the national curriculum. If there's a particular issue, and there often is in different local communities where an issue comes up, and parents are not satisfied with the way—they raise their concerns with the school that it is happening. Beyond that, I don't think I've got anything more to add.

Senator HENDERSON: This is not about an individual school decision. This appears to be a decision by the states that the curriculum must only include the teaching of the yes case. Surely this is indoctrination, not education.

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Dr Bruniges: Senator, I can speak to the Australian curriculum and the importance of a balanced discussion and debate. I've raised that before, and I would hope that's occurring in classrooms. If there are particular cases where it's not, that would be a jurisdictional issue, not a federal department issue.

Senator HENDERSON: So what action can be taken in relation to this imbalanced and biased approach to education in our classrooms?

Dr Bruniges: Often, speaking on my past experience of being director-general in New South Wales and the ACT, if there was an issue of concern, what we would do is put out a memorandum to teachers drawing the issue to their attention and reinforcing the intention of the curriculum or position to ensure that direction was coming from a jurisdictional area on the expectations of teachers. If there were gross things that breached a code of conduct, it becomes then a part of the teacher performance and conduct area of the relevant jurisdiction if a teacher has stepped over the line in terms of that. There have been cases on many issues before where that has been the case, and it's normally followed up by employer performance and conduct areas.

Senator HENDERSON: Have you been asked to raise concerns with the states and territories in relation to this proposal? And if not, will you take the appropriate action on behalf of the Commonwealth?

Dr Bruniges: Senator, previously I undertook to raise the issue with my counterparts in state and territory jurisdictions—about the issue that we've discussed today. I have undertaken to do that, to raise that issue.

Senator HENDERSON: Minister, can I ask if you support that approach by the department and whether you too share concerns that one side of the debate only appears to be going to be taught in Australian schools? Do you share the secretary's concerns?

Senator Chisholm: I'm not aware of what the different states have done with their curriculum. I'm always a bit hesitant to rely on one article in the *Australian*, Senator Henderson. But the minister, I can see, provided some comment in the story, where he is clear that the states are responsible for the curriculum and the implementation of the curriculum. Separate to this, the minister highlighted that the government's priority on this is providing public information by way of a civics campaign. So that is the federal government's intention with the voice referendum. It really is up to states to decide what they do with the curriculum in their jurisdictions.

Senator HENDERSON: Not if it's contrary to the national curriculum, I would put you, Minister. And if there's been a direction to only teach the yes case, then that is not in accordance with the national curriculum. Are you suggesting that the Albanese government has no role in this?

Senator Chisholm: I don't accept your assertions about what's being taught based on one article in the *Australian*, Senator Henderson. I think you're adding two and two and getting to 30 pretty quickly, which is pretty typical for you.

Dr Bruniges: Senator, I can't see a direction at all in the article—

Senator HENDERSON: Sorry, Secretary—just before you make your comment. Minister, that's most inappropriate of you to reflect on me in that way. But to help you, I will refer to the state education minister Natalie Hutchins in Victoria, who said in this article:

'Victoria supports the Uluru Statement and we've committed to supporting the voice to parliament, along with all other states and territories in Australia'…

She then goes on to make further comments in relation to the referendum. So I would put to you, Minister, that it's incumbent on the Albanese government to ensure that any teaching of this issue complies with the national curriculum, and that an attempt to teach one side of the debate only is not in accordance with the national curriculum. So therefore I ask: what is the Albanese government going to do about that?

Senator Chisholm: As I said, the minister has been on the public record saying that each jurisdiction is responsible for implementing the curriculum. That's been a longstanding process. The minister isn't really interested in fake fights, Senator Henderson. He knows that we have a substantial job as part of the government to improve education standards across the country, and particularly for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Australians. That is absolutely what he is focused on, not on the fake fights that you want to run regarding this.

Senator HENDERSON: Minister, do you support the no case being taught in Australian schools as well as the yes case?

Senator Chisholm: I support states implementing the curriculum as they see fit. I would point out, Senator Henderson, that I think all premiers across the country support the voice as well, including the Liberal Premier of New South Wales and the Liberal Premier of Tasmania.

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Senator HENDERSON: But, Minister, that's actually not relevant. What's relevant is that the national curriculum presents an unbiased and impartial view of civics and this issue. So again, can I please ask you: does the Albanese government support the no case being taught in Australian schools as well as the yes case?

Senator Chisholm: We support state jurisdictions being able to implement the curriculum as they see fit, which was the position of the previous government, to the best of my recollection, Senator Henderson.

Senator HENDERSON: So you're not willing to comment on that issue?

Senator Chisholm: I think I just answered your question, so I did comment on it.

Senator HENDERSON: I'm not sure that you answered the question, Minister. Turning to the national schools reform agreements, Assistant Minister, did you attend the latest Education Ministers Meeting in December 2022?

Senator Chisholm: I did briefly, Senator Henderson. The meeting was when the parliament was sitting to pass the energy bill, so I was only there momentarily because of other duties.

Senator HENDERSON: And was Minister Aly in attendance?

Dr Bruniges: Yes, she was for a component: the early childhood items.

Senator HENDERSON: Are you able to provide a list of all invitees to the meeting and a list of all of the attendees?

Dr Bruniges: Senator, it would be the normal Education Council, so all the education ministers from around the country, or their delegates, would have been there. Their senior bureaucrats would have been there as well, their directors-general or chief executive officers. That would be normal protocol.

Senator HENDERSON: Has there been a work schedule developed or a priority listing to be focused on in terms of listing your priorities for the next 12 months by this group?

Dr Bruniges: Senator, there have been priorities for 2023 set. In the last communique, which is on the website of the Education Ministers Meeting, those priorities—they've been:

…tasked by National Cabinet to Strengthen Early Childhood Education and Care, implementation of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, and work towards the next National School Reform Agreement.

And they:

…committed to delivering those priorities with a focus on students from equity cohorts, particularly students with a disability, regional students, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, and Indigenous students.

Senator HENDERSON: Secretary, at the meeting in December, according to the statement issued shortly after the meeting, a decision was made to delay the next round of national school reform agreements. This has been referred to earlier in the afternoon. Why was this decision taken, and were all states and territories in agreement on this matter?

Dr Bruniges: Senator, you're asking me to reveal a deliberation of the ministerial council. I don't think I'm able to do that. The communique indicates the ministers' decisions and is quite transparent. But I don't think I'm at liberty to speak about the deliberations within the council meeting. However, I should say all ministers signed off on the communique.

Senator HENDERSON: To the extent that you can provide any further information on notice, I would be grateful, because of course the delay is of concern, as has already been raised, because of the government's commitment to implement the 100 per cent SRS funding—and now that's been put on hold. Did any minister raise any concern in relation to this delay?

Dr Bruniges: Again, Senator, you're asking me to speak to deliberations of the ministerial council.

Senator HENDERSON: All right. I'll ask you to take that on notice to the extent that you're able to furnish any further information. On that statement, there was a note which specified 'subject to agreement from First Ministers'. So there was a condition, if you like. Can I ask about that condition? Why was that included? It just seems to suggest that not all ministers were in agreement in relation to the delay of the national schools reform agreements process.

Dr Bruniges: It is paragraph 2 in the communique:

Ministers discussed an extension of the current NSRA and Bilateral Agreements for 12 months to allow for a review to inform them, subject to agreement from First Ministers.

That's the clause you're referring to?

Senator HENDERSON: Yes.

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Dr Bruniges: Education ministers, wherever funding is involved, normally work with their treasurers and first ministers. And indeed, one of the items in the priorities was around national cabinet to strengthen early childhood education and care. That would be subject to national cabinet. And normally states and territories, as we would—we would go through a process with our central agencies before agreement is reached on the next NSRA.

Senator HENDERSON: Thank you, Secretary. Minister, the government promised at the election nearly a year ago now to increase school funding. You were elected on that promise. So I'm keen to understand why the government is delaying this action and not delivering on a promise that you took to the Australian people—concerns that have even been raised by the Australian Education Union.

Senator Chisholm: We are delivering on our election promise, Senator Henderson, to increase school funding. I think the relevant factor, which I don't know if you've become aware of, because I know you did only become shadow minister recently, was the Productivity Commission report into the school funding agreement. Minister Clare has been pretty honest in his assessment of that, in that it contains some blistering criticism of the current school funding agreement. Obviously he wants to take his time to ensure that he can work with other jurisdictions to ensure we heed the lessons from that and implement those necessary changes to improve standards across the country. We also provided $200 million for student wellbeing, which was in the October budget, and $215 million for public schools for capital works as well. So we're doing other additional funding whilst we take our time to get the next school funding agreement correct, because it is such an important one.

CHAIR: Senator Henderson, Senator Allman-Payne has a supplementary—just a clarification on that answer.

Senator ALLMAN-PAYNE: Yes, it's just a clarification. I'm hearing the term 'national school funding agreement'. It's the National School Reform Agreement. I just want us to be clear. The Productivity Commission did not look at funding, did it?

Senator Chisholm: I should have said reform.

Senator HENDERSON: Secretary or Minister, have you met with the Australian Education Union in relation to their concerns? Certainly they, amongst many others, have expressed concerns about the government delaying, and substantially delaying, the delivery of additional schools funding.

Dr Bruniges: Senator, I have routine link-ups with the AEU, as I do with many other stakeholders in the sector. We were meeting every second week around the action plan around teacher workforce. And certainly you're correct: the AEU has raised its concerns about lack of 100 per cent of funding of the SRS for public schools.

Senator HENDERSON: Can I ask you to provide the committee on notice any correspondence or emails or messages—

CHAIR: You just cut out, Senator Henderson, at the tail end there, the last 15 seconds. No, she can't hear me either. It was on notice and I understood it was the last question, so we'll just make contact through the secretariat to follow it up. On the question of the article from the *Australian,* I think it is important that we put this in *Hansard* and I'm also mindful that some people will be listening to this hearing. In that article, in the first column—and I'll go to a number of columns—it says:

State Education Minister Natalie Hutchins—

that is, the Victorian state education minister—

said it was 'normal and important' for students to talk about current affairs in class.

She went on to say:

'The voice referendum will be a defining moment in our nation's history and classroom conversations around major current affairs are a normal and important part of students' understanding and education.'

The South Australian education department said that:

…while they were supportive of the voice being taught in schools, teachers must 'ensure students are provided with unbiased and objective information to form their own critical analysis'.

The New South Wales education department under the Liberal government said that teachers are:

…permitted 'the flexibility to teach about current events within their teaching and learning programs'.

'Critical thinking is embedded across the curriculum and students develop the skills to analyse arguments relating to current events,' a NSW Education Standards Authority spokesperson said.

Of the St Andrews Cathedral School students in Sydney, Michael Neate, the SACS head of humanities, said:

'In all of our subjects, the issue was addressed through multiple perspectives, though the students in general came to our discussion in favour of the voice'…

A leader of Catholic Schools NSW:

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…said teachers should aim to support students to develop their worldviews, not prescribe personal opinions.

'One of our goals in Catholic education is to support students to grow in wisdom and the development of a worldview informed by their faith,' CEO Dallas McInerney—

who I'm sure many of us know very well. All those state authorities which fit within the guidelines are saying that talking about current affairs but having an unbiased perspective—is that within the format of the national curriculum that states have signed up to?

Dr Bruniges: That's correct, Chair, and my point going to balanced discussion and debate was the important one at the heart of that. And I could not see anywhere in the article where there was a directive to teachers to teach just one side of the coin.

CHAIR: And I note that in the article there's one person I respect but he probably holds a different view on a number of subjects, and this is one of them—on the voice. He holds a different view: he is a no campaigner. I would argue that you could be considered as potentially inherently biased one way or the other if you're actually the head of a no campaign. It doesn't mean you're wrong; it doesn't mean you're right. I have a different view—I think he's not right—but he has a right to have his view. But that's the only particular opinion that's said in this case, whilst all the authorities said quite the opposite. I'll let the facts in the article stand as they stand and let everyone else make their own judgement, rightly, on where they stand on this issue.

Senator DAVEY: I want to come back to something that we asked at last estimates and you provided an answer for: the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program that the coalition government introduced and thankfully—I commend them—the Labor government have agreed to retain. You provided an answer to question on notice SQ 22-00305. In the answer provided by you, you noted that you were looking for the 'optimal timing' for implementing the program. Can you provide an update on the work and what optimal timing looks like and how we're going with providing scholarships for families, particularly given that the cost of living keeps on going up and these scholarships provide an important benefit.

Mr Carpay: I'm just pulling up that particular item, Senator. But what I can tell you is we've been having some very productive engagement with the Regional Education Commissioner and also with some of the peak bodies and interested individuals who would represent—for example, the Isolated Children's Parents' Association, some discussions with them. I think the reality is that many scholarship programs that run for a full year would have actually launched in the middle of the previous year. So we're probably in reality going to be doing something where it's actually going to be 2024 when these become live, because with the original decision, the processes to announce in an October budget meant that we couldn't get out of the gates in terms of rounds for people to apply for. So in reality it's probably going to be a 2024 program.

Senator DAVEY: So the program may open for applications—

Mr Carpay: During this year.

Senator DAVEY: but for students to commence school year 2024, which does make sense because I don't think schools do half-year scholarships. The work in designing and preparing the program is well underway—that is what I believe you're saying—and it's just the anomaly of having a budget in October rather than May that we missed the boat for January 2023?

Mr Carpay: Yes, Senator. Essentially gives us a window where we will use this year to implement and plan, to set the guidelines for the program, set the guidelines for how that will be delivered, and a round will open. People can apply and decisions will be made in advance of them being able to plan and commence for the 2024 year. So that's the process we're working through.

Senator DAVEY: So given that it was originally budgeted in our budget of May 2022 but nothing would have been expended in 2022-23, what will happen to the funds? Will they roll forward?

Mr Carpay: There's a process for movement of funds, which is actually exercised through the Department of Finance through our minister, and that can be executed to ensure the funds are still available. So it doesn't affect the overall envelope.

Senator DAVEY: That's good. How many students do we think this will benefit?

Mr Carpay: Some of those details are still being settled, because it relates to the program design and the parameters for it.

Senator DAVEY: I look forward to seeing the program. I also want to ask about the City-Country Partnerships Program. Again, it was one of our commitments but thankfully retained by the Labor government. I understand that an announcement has been made on the delivery of the agency for this program. I think that was made by you, Minister. You made an announcement on the City to Country Partnerships Program about a