

## Terms of reference

### Review of the loading for students with disability

The Australian Government through its *Quality Schools* reforms is committed to Commonwealth schools funding that is needs-based, transparent and equitable so students with the same need in the same sector will attract the same level of support from the Commonwealth.

School funding under the *Australian Education Act 2013* (the Act) is calculated using the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS), which is an estimate of the total public funding required by each school to meet the educational needs of its students. The SRS provides a base amount for every primary and secondary student, along with six loadings that provide extra funding for students and schools with educational disadvantage. This includes a loading to support students with disability.

Under the new arrangements, including transitional arrangements, in place from 2018, the loading for students with disability is based on the categories of educational adjustments under the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD).

Through the loading, additional resourcing is provided for students receiving supplementary, substantial or extensive levels of educational adjustment. The amount of the loading is expressed as a percentage of the base per student amount, as set out in the table below. The Australian Government does not fund the fourth category (i.e. quality differentiated teaching practice) of adjustment under the NCCD.

	Base (2018)	Supplementary	Substantial	Extensive
Primary students	\$10,953	42%	146%	312%
Secondary students	\$13,764	33%	116%	248%

This targeted funding is possible with the introduction of the NCCD, which was a recommendation of the *2011 Review of Funding for Schooling*, led by Mr David Gonski AC. The NCCD is based on a broad definition of disability consistent with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (the Standards), and was initiated by Education Council in 2008.

2017 was the third year in which all schools were required to report under the national collection. To ensure the collection continues to improve, the Australian Government is investing an additional \$20 million over four years to 2020-21 to support quality assurance and moderation of the NCCD across all sectors.

The loadings provided under the Act are, together with state and territory contributions, intended to give schools the resources they need to address the functional impact on student learning due to disability and deliver an inclusive education in accordance with the Standards. Together with base funding, all the loadings are provided as a single payment for the purposes of education. Approved authorities and schools are expected to use their total resources in flexible ways to meet the educational needs of all their students.

The COAG Education Council's Joint Working Group to Provide Advice on Reform for Students with Disability (JWG) is responsible for continual improvement of the NCCD. This includes providing advice to support high quality, reliable and robust collection of data, assisting approved authorities and

school teams to understand and participate in the NCCD by maintaining the NCCD Guidelines and assisting schools and systems to undertake moderation and assurance processes through the development of support resources.

Membership of the JWG comprises the Australian Government, State and Territory governments; non-government representatives (Independent Schools Council of Australia and the National Catholic Education Commission); the Australian Curriculum assessment and Reporting Authority; and Education Council Secretariat.

The Australian Government has commissioned the National School Resourcing Board (the Board) to conduct a review of the settings of the loadings for students with disability.

## **Scope**

The Board will consider, provide findings and make recommendations relating to the current settings for the loadings for the top three NCCD levels of adjustment, taking into consideration:

- previous research on funding for students with disability, including work commissioned for the JWG
- the level of resources used to support students with disability at each level of adjustment under the NCCD
- the level of funding for educational adjustment provided by approved system authorities to member schools for students with disability under each system's needs-based funding arrangements
- any significant variations related to school setting or context.

The focus of the review is primarily on the Commonwealth SRS settings for the student with disability loading. State and territory allocations will only be used to inform the assessment of Commonwealth settings for the purpose of the review.

The Board will also consider, and where appropriate provide recommendations on, Commonwealth assurance processes (having regard to the work of the JWG) undertaken to support the accuracy of information provided to calculate a school's Commonwealth funding entitlement relating to students with disability, including the accountability of approved authorities for accurate reporting.

Any support provided under the National Disability Insurance Scheme or the provision of personal care in schools will not be examined in this review.

In providing recommendations to Government, the Board will consider the financial impact on governments of its collective recommendations and provide at least one budget neutral option for any changes to the settings for the loadings for students with disability. The Board will consider the impact of any change on schools and education authorities.

## **Consultation**

In undertaking its review, the Board will consult with stakeholders from both the government and non-government sector, including the JWG, and invite submissions from relevant parties.

## **Timing**

The Board will provide its final report to the Australian Government Minister for Education by December 2019.

The Minister will invite the Chair of the Board to present the final report to Education Council.