

Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System

# Queensland Government Submission

# Queensland context: enrolment and growth projections

## ICSEA



**967** Queensland state school average

**988** Queensland all school average

**1000** National average

## Australian Early Development Census

**24.7%**

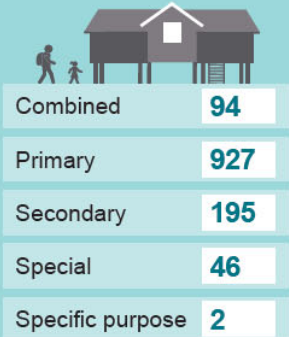
Queensland children assessed as developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains

## Schooling

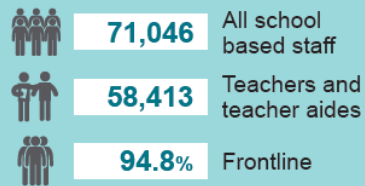
### School profile



### State school type



### State school staff (FTE)



### State school enrolment

Total student enrolment  
(Feb 2023)

**574,489**



5 year growth

**3.7%**

First Nations students

**11.4%** or **65,747**

NCCD disability students  
(2022)

**20.3%** or **116,238**

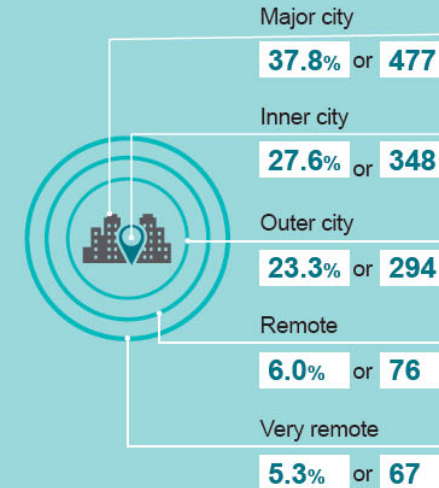
### Queensland population



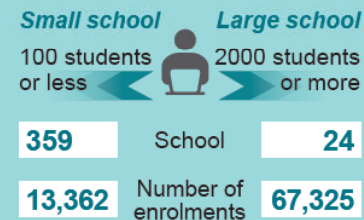
**59,000**

new state school students by 2031

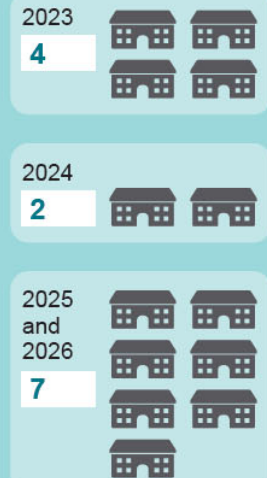
### State school location



### State school size



### New state schools



### Abbreviations

FTE  
Full-time equivalent  
State  
State school  
Non-state  
Non-state school  
ICSEA  
Index of Community Socio-Economic Advantage

## Introduction

The Queensland Government welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System (the Review). The submission outlines the Queensland Government's ambitious reform agenda for state schools and its alignment with the focus areas of the Review. It responds to the Review Terms of Reference and issues raised in the Consultation Paper, with a view to informing the next federal funding agreement. Queensland demographics and the characteristics of the state schooling system are outlined above, as context for Queensland's remarks.

### Queensland has an evidence-based reform agenda

On 13 February 2023, the Queensland Government launched its strategic direction for Queensland state schools - *Equity and Excellence: realising the potential of every student* (see **Attachment 1**). *Equity and Excellence* sets out Queensland's strategy for a progressive, high performing education system building on a strong national and international evidence base about what makes the most difference in improving learning outcomes. It responds to the national commitment to equity and excellence in education outlined in the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*, and sets a new direction for Queensland state schools, focused on educational achievement, wellbeing and engagement, and culture and inclusion.

*Equity and Excellence* provides clarity for schools about system priorities and expectations, and delivers a roadmap of key system initiatives to ensure sustainable improvement within Queensland's unique context. A crucial focus on First Nations outcomes is embedded across all elements, which include building educational leadership and teaching expertise, leveraging digital innovation in teaching and learning, strengthening educational performance and support models, delivering integrated service responses and educational precincts, and revitalising education infrastructure. Queensland is investing \$1.4 billion in education capital projects in 2023-24 which does not count towards our bilateral agreement funding share despite the importance of fit for purpose learning environments.

*Equity and Excellence* addresses the national education issues identified in the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System (Review) Consultation Paper, which is clearly focused on lifting student learning outcomes for all students and also recognises the importance of school leadership and teaching expertise, and student wellbeing and engagement.

In considering the next NSRA, a focus on evidence-informed approaches that respond to the unique circumstances of each community in seeking to lift student outcomes will be essential. A top-down approach focussed on national conformity is not a feasible solution. Recognition

of existing evidence-based reform agendas at the state level is particularly critical, and any additional national effort needs to be appropriately targeted to support these. This will enable schools and their communities to maintain their focus on a manageable set of indicators, supported by systemic intervention in areas identified as having the most impact on learning outcomes.

### **Queensland has a clear focus on improving student outcomes that recognises diversity and the benefits of a multi-disciplinary approach**

Lifting outcomes for all students is the primary focus of Queensland's *Equity and Excellence* strategy, reflected in its priority support measures. This recognises that school communities across Queensland are diverse and require differentiated responses that draw on partnerships between schools, and with government agencies, non-government organisations, industry and local communities.

*Equity and Excellence* sets a specific imperative for schools to ensure every First Nations student can reach their potential, which will contribute to addressing National Agreement on Closing the Gap education targets. This is particularly significant for Queensland given the state has the second largest population of First Nations people of any state or territory.

*Equity and Excellence* also includes a Partnership Initiative, trialling an approach to supporting 42 state schools identified as requiring more intensive, specialised and long-term responses due to the complexity of need in their communities (see **Attachment 2**). Trial schools will receive targeted support including staff attraction and retention incentives, additional staffing including dedicated First Nations community facilitation officers and revitalised school infrastructure.

This initiative recognises that factors outside the school have a significant impact on student learning outcomes. Common challenges in these vulnerable communities include: effectively integrating service delivery for families with multiple risk factors; attraction and retention of staff skilled in supporting complex students; and managing the impact on staff wellbeing and community engagement with services and supports.

Central to the Partnership Initiative is an integrated cross-government response to addressing the multiple vulnerabilities affecting wellbeing, engagement and learning outcomes. Engagement with community-led groups will also be a fundamental element in implementation of the initiative in each community. Though still in its early stages, the Partnership Initiative has the potential to contribute significantly to the national body of evidence on schooling.

### **Queensland is committed to improving student mental health and wellbeing**

As the Consultation Paper acknowledges, the last three years have been particularly

challenging and disruptive for our communities and schools. Evidence tells us the more engaged students are in learning, the better they perform academically and the greater their life opportunities and outcomes. This is particularly important for children and young people from vulnerable families and communities with complex needs.

Wellbeing and engagement are at the heart of Queensland's *Equity and Excellence* strategy, and we know that being healthy, confident and resilient creates a foundation for every child and young person to engage in learning. Queensland is already delivering significant, contextually appropriate initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of state school students, with supports that allow flexibility for school leaders and communities to identify how best to meet the wellbeing needs of their students. Queensland's Engagement and Wellbeing survey is a key tool supporting schools to collect information on students' wellbeing, engagement and experiences, with results used to identify evidence-based approaches to positively and proactively supporting students' mental health, engagement and wellbeing at the school level. Queensland's wellbeing workforce is being bolstered through a Student Wellbeing Package which is increasing the health and wellbeing support available to school students through employing additional psychologists and wellbeing professionals and piloting free access to a general practitioner at up to 50 schools. This package is valued at \$106.7 million over 3 years, from July 2021 to June 2024.

Given its strong connection to learning, a national focus on improving student wellbeing could have a positive impact for education. However, any national efforts must recognise that: (a) while student wellbeing is, and will remain, a priority for schools, its measurement is not an appropriate metric of the success of Australia's schooling system, given it is affected by a range of factors outside the influence of schools; and (b) measures of wellbeing are best collected and used at the local level where interventions are applied, relationships are brokered and duty of care sits. The value of creating national measures and data collections for wellbeing has not been demonstrated.

### **Queensland is investing in its teaching and school leadership workforce**

Teachers and school leaders are critical to delivering on the Mparntwe Declaration, and Queensland's *Equity and Excellence* strategy. All jurisdictions and sectors are investing in a range of actions to recruit and maintain their teaching workforce. This includes collaborative work under the 27 actions of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (NTWAP), and state-based reforms.

In Queensland this includes initiatives such as Turn to Teaching which aims to attract aspiring teachers with financial support and real-world experience to complete their teaching qualification, and a Trade to Teach Program Pilot which supports tradespeople to transition to

a career in teaching, building the capacity of Queensland state schools to meet demand for Technologies (Industrial Technologies and Design) teachers and further contribute to Queensland's supply of tradespeople in the future. There are currently 38 Trade to Teach pilot applicants, and 104 Turn to Teaching applicants studying at Queensland universities. From the pilot cohort, there are 39 Turn to Teaching interns currently undertaking half-load teaching duties in schools while they complete their second year of post-graduate initial teacher education.

Education Ministers have also recently agreed in principle to recommendations of the Teacher Education Expert Panel, which similarly outlines a comprehensive reform agenda for initial teacher education to bolster existing efforts to grow our teaching workforce. Together these activities provide a clear roadmap for national action on workforce and need time to take effect.

*Equity and Excellence* recognises the impact of high-quality teaching, with a significant investment in school leadership and teaching expertise. This includes a new Education Futures Institute, which will provide targeted capability and wellbeing initiatives across the state. A suite of flagship and priority programs is currently being piloted, co-designed and delivered with educational and academic partners to support innovative practice and specialised professional development and learning opportunities. In 2023, new educational leadership flagship programs have been offered for aspiring, beginning and experienced principals.

Queensland is also partnering with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership to develop professional standards for Middle Leaders in schools. This work is responding to a need for well-defined standards and development pathways for middle leaders in Queensland schools, leveraging AITSL's expertise as owner of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

While workforce is a key priority across the nation, there is a comprehensive plan of action already agreed and underway, and this needs to be the focus of national effort. However, support of the Australian Government in ensuring the teaching workforce of the future is essential, and there remains a critical opportunity in this regard. Specifically, Queensland seeks the Australian Government to exercise any federal tax levers, including waiving of HELP debts for teachers in regional and remote areas, to facilitate attraction of high-quality candidates to the profession, consistent with Action 22 of the NTWAP.

### **Data collection needs to support action at the local level**

Understanding the performance of students and education systems is critical to identifying areas for improvement and supporting differentiated responses to students and schools. Queensland state schools have access to a wide range of real-time data to support their

planning and strategies at the local level to lift learning outcomes. Under *Equity and Excellence*, Queensland is making further investments to improve the tools available to schools and the system to monitor performance and outcomes.

Equity and Excellence focuses on priority measures - A-E results in English and mathematics and attendance across Prep to Year 9 - with improvement and progress also monitored through Year 10-12 retention, attainment of a Queensland Certificate of Education or Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement, and post-school destinations. With implementation of Equity and Excellence, Queensland has seen state-wide improvements in student outcomes. Results include: improvements in A to E reporting in English and Mathematics across all year levels, including for First Nations students; an increase in the proportion of students getting a C or higher; and an increase in the proportion of students getting an A or B in English and Mathematics. The proportion of First Nations students in Queensland attaining Year 12 or equivalent increased more than five percentage points to 75 per cent in 2021, above the national average of 68 per cent.

Queensland's focus on a small set of key measures is supported through investment in development of integrated data sets for schools with real-time delivery of performance data. These will allow effective monitoring, inform planning and support delivery of tailored responses to students and schools. It is at the local level that access to student and school performance information is used most effectively.

There is already extensive national reporting through school systems about student enrolment, attendance, achievement, engagement and retention, as well as student characteristics, such as disability status, socio-economic status, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background, and language background. Queensland, like other states and territories, participates in the annual Census in August each year to support Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD), which records students with disability who receive adjustments.

The consultation paper does not present strong evidence that additional national reporting or targets will lift school performance. Future developments in national reporting need to properly respond to workload impacts for schools and avoid creating a high-stakes league table culture, while supporting the important local analytics work that is required to better understand teaching and learning. Simplistic analysis would be a disservice to schools, teachers, parents and students, and fail to recognise the multiple factors relating to a school's context and community that impact on performance. With this in mind, Queensland urges the panel to avoid recommending establishment of new data collections or reporting arrangements, including through an independent national body. Data collection needs to be purposeful and

not merely create a burden for schools and systems.

### **States and territories are accountable for funding arrangements through existing mechanisms**

Having appropriate mechanisms to account for policy and funding effort is critical to maintain confidence in school systems and demonstrate proper administration.

The Queensland Government is accountable to the people of Queensland for the use of school funding. Its accountability, reporting and transparency arrangements are sophisticated and substantial, with multiple state and Commonwealth mechanisms in place to ensure state and federal funding benefits schools and students. At a state level, these include Annual Reporting, Budget Estimates, and Parliamentary processes. Queensland also reports how it spends state and Commonwealth funding at a school level on the My School website, with reporting audited annually by an external, independent entity.

Reporting about education outcomes and progress in reform areas should focus on the impacts of individual national policy initiatives and state-specific actions, using evaluation measures tailored to these. This will ensure outcomes are effectively measured, and provide an ability for parties to share learnings and successes under the next NSRA.

Like all jurisdictions, Queensland has published a [guide to how it distributes resources](#) to Queensland state schools, and already publishes all [grants to schools](#) on its website. In June 2022, Queensland commenced transition to the new 'Students with Disability – Reasonable Adjustments Resourcing Model', which will be completed over two years in 2023 and 2024 and provides resources based on the reasonable adjustments being made by schools for all disabilities, based on the NCCD.

*Equity and Excellence* also includes a commitment to review resourcing arrangements for state schools. Queensland's current Schools Resourcing Review aims to ensure resourcing arrangements for state schools continue to provide needs-based funding, support the state's key education priorities in a contemporary school environment and further enhance the transparency of Queensland's state school resourcing model.

Together, these mechanisms provide substantial assurance that public funds for schooling in Queensland are used appropriately. Noting the Australian Government is a minority funder of state schools, and states and territories have exclusive jurisdiction over schooling, further national reporting is not justified.

### **Conclusion**

Development of the next National School Reform Agreement provides an opportunity to recast how all jurisdictions work together to lift student outcomes, ensure public accountability for



resourcing and build the national education evidence base. The next agreement must balance national collaboration in necessary areas with state and territory responsibility to deliver schooling and implement reforms tailored to local contexts. An increase in funding for government schools under the next NSRA would support Queensland to take its existing reform efforts under *Equity and Excellence* to the next level, and deliver a more successful agreement that results in better outcomes for all Australian children and young people.

# Equity and Excellence

*A progressive, high performing education system realising the potential of every student.*



## Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Education acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands, seas, skies and waterways from across Queensland.

We pay our respect to the Elders, past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories, traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the state.

For more information, see our [commitment statement](#).

## Our focus

### Educational achievement



Knowing each student's learning progress is essential to making sure they are on track for positive educational outcomes. Setting clear expectations for every student and every school supports them to achieve. This means we:

- have a common goal that every student achieves at least one year of learning growth each year
- have clear expectations for schools and help them to differentiate support so every student realises their potential.

### Wellbeing and engagement



Being healthy, confident and resilient is a foundation for engaging in learning. With a focus on wellbeing of all staff and students, we create a sense of belonging and a positive environment for teaching and working. Designing and delivering meaningful pathways for every student is key to lifting learning outcomes. This means we:

- know each student and understand what works best for them
- support staff and student wellbeing and engagement to establish a strong foundation for learning outcomes.

### Culture and inclusion



The diversity of our staff, students and school communities is our greatest strength. By valuing culture and creating inclusive teaching and learning environments, we are driving equity and excellence across every state school. This means we:

- embrace diversity by creating welcoming, inclusive and accessible educational settings
- value student, parent/carer, community and stakeholder voice in our approach to teaching and learning.

## Our system initiatives

### Educational leadership and teaching expertise

Empowering educators and leaders to build professional expertise across their career through high quality, targeted development opportunities.

Actions include:

- bring together and align resourcing to deliver a world-class educational leadership and teaching institute
- partner to deliver educational leadership flagship programs across key career junctures
- partner to deliver teacher flagship programs with a focus on expertise in curriculum, teaching and learning
- implement strategies to support the health, safety and wellbeing of teachers, educational leaders and staff.

### Digital innovation in teaching and learning

Embedding future-focused learning practices that connect students and teachers across Queensland.

Actions include:

- enhance the capability and confidence of teachers in digital teaching and learning
- improve connectivity through bandwidth upgrades
- connect all students to digital learning opportunities through access to devices and technology
- establish a virtual academy to enhance access across the state to teaching expertise
- streamline access to data insights and evidence to inform system, regional and school planning and responses.

### Educational performance and support

Setting system priorities and clear expectations for schools with differentiated support targeted to each school's context and needs.

Actions include:

- implement a renewed educational performance and support model
- provide differentiated support leveraging expertise across the system to assist all schools to lift outcomes
- align and streamline school planning processes
- revitalise the school review process to support systemic improvement
- review state schooling resourcing arrangements.

### Integrated responses and educational precincts

Integrating planning, design and delivery of education across schools, early years services and community partners to respond to the changing needs of communities.

Actions include:

- trial dedicated educational precincts to implement targeted responses to local needs
- support schools in the most complex communities by collaborating with partners and across government to deliver locally responsive and integrated strategies
- deliver integrated school-based hub models that provide a full range of services to support children, students, families and communities.

### Revitalised educational infrastructure

Driving sustainable investment to optimise and renew educational infrastructure across the school network.

Actions include:

- implement a future-focused and long-term infrastructure plan to ensure schools can meet the learning demands of the future
- deliver a clear investment prioritisation approach that effectively balances need for new schools and renewal of existing schools to meet contemporary learning needs
- enhance transparency and accountability in management of school enrolments to ensure the system can provide for growing student enrolments and changing communities.

# Equity and Excellence in action:

## School priorities



**Educational achievement**



**Wellbeing and engagement**



**Culture and inclusion**

### Realising the potential of every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student

Valuing First Nations cultures and voice in our approach to engagement and learning is essential.

Connections to culture enrich the learning of every student and strengthens all of our work.

#### Our school priorities

### Starting strong



Strengthening protective factors in the early years to improve outcomes and make a positive impact on young people's lives.

Students who attend school regularly, are engaged in the classroom and progress in their learning are more likely to have better outcomes across their schooling journey.

Our school priorities from kindy to Year 2 are:

- knowing each child and student's needs to support positive and confident transitions into and through school
- achievement in English and mathematics
- maximising learning days.

### Building on foundations



Consolidating strong foundations for lifelong learning and nurturing confidence of students to thrive in their future schooling years.

Early learning experiences shape young minds and inspire them to become lifelong learners. Building, through upper primary, on the foundational literacy and numeracy skills established in early primary is critical for learning success.

Our school priorities in primary Years 3 to 6 are:

- knowing each student's needs through upper primary as they prepare to transition to junior secondary
- achievement in English and mathematics
- maximising learning days.

### On track for success



Recognising changing needs and supporting every student to stay on track with positive transitions from upper primary through junior secondary.

Evidence tells us that maintaining engagement in learning in junior secondary is crucial to keeping students at school and moving onto their senior schooling years.

Our school priorities as students transition through junior secondary are:

- knowing each student's needs to support positive transitions into and through secondary school
- achievement in English and mathematics
- maximising learning days.

### Ready for the future



Preparing every student for their future and supporting positive transitions from school onto their next steps into further education and employment.

Effectively planning and monitoring every student's learning pathway through their senior schooling and post-school destination keeps students on track to achieve successful outcomes.

Our school priorities in senior secondary are:

- supporting every student with a plan to stay on track to attainment and meaningful post-school pathways
- positive transitions and knowing the post-school destination of every student.

#### Underpinned by curriculum, teaching and learning

#### Our priority support measures

For **every** student in Prep to Year 2, we will monitor:

- proportion of students achieving C and above in English and mathematics
- proportion of students achieving A or B in English and mathematics
- attendance
- School Disciplinary Absences.

For **every** student in middle and upper primary (Years 3 to 6), we will monitor:

- proportion of students achieving C and above in English and mathematics
- proportion of students achieving A or B in English and mathematics
- attendance
- School Disciplinary Absences.

For **every** student in junior secondary (Years 7 to 9), we will monitor:

- proportion of students achieving C and above in English and mathematics
- proportion of students achieving A or B in English and mathematics
- attendance
- School Disciplinary Absences.

For **every** student in senior secondary (Years 10 to 12), we will monitor:

- Year 10-12 retention
- QCE/QCIA attainment
- post-school destinations.

#### Embedding First Nations outcomes across every priority



# Partnership Initiative

A system response to improving learning and life outcomes for children and students living in our most socio-educationally disadvantaged communities drawing on strengthened whole-of-government partnerships.

## What is the Partnership Initiative?

A small number of Queensland schools are in communities that have a high degree of complexity and vulnerability. These schools require higher levels of co-ordinated intra- and inter-agency support to deliver effective local responses to community challenges and opportunities.

Under the Partnership Initiative, schools will receive prioritised support and resourcing and act as champions for the communities they serve. Through holistic whole-of-government partnerships and collaborative community approaches, these schools will be supported to make sure that children and students in these communities have strong foundations and clear pathways for future success.

The Partnership Initiative will strengthen relationships between the school, early childhood education and care, the community, different parts of the government, local businesses and any not-for-profit organisations delivering services to the local area.

This approach will provide locally responsive, flexible, integrated and tailored strategies co-designed with the community. Co-designing local actions means that community benefits are understood, owned and, where possible, implemented by the community.

## Identifying schools

Schools are identified through:

- criteria using the Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA); and
- inclusion of all schools serving discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

## Whole-of-Government alignment

The Partnership Initiative will leverage a range of existing and future local collaborative inter-agency work, and may include:

- Local Thriving Communities (DTATSIPCA)
- Ministerial and Government Champions (DTATSIPCA)
- Making Tracks Together (QH)
- Integrated school-based hubs (DoE)
- Connect 4 Children (DoE)
- Local community engagement through co-design (DoE)
- Family Wellbeing Services (DCSSDS)
- Community Hubs and Partnerships (DSDILGP)

## Governance through shared accountability

- Formal partnerships between the community, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders, the school, the department, government agencies (including local government), and service providers, to respond to community needs and expectations aligned to whole-of-government priorities will provide the authorising environment to design, implement and monitor local response plans, sharing accountability for their success.

### Partnership review

- Develop a school review process that acknowledges and respects these schools' unique, and sometimes complex, contexts
- Increase the role of community members and key stakeholders in shaping how reviews are implemented
- Tailor the communication of review findings and recommendations to maximise outcomes in the local context
- Widen intra-agency representation on school review teams

### Collaborative responses

- Adopt a consistent and system-aligned approach across Partnership Initiative locations
- Commit to respectful community engagement through co-design
- Develop a fit-for-purpose method for monitoring improvement in key outcomes and processes related to the Partnership Initiative
- Gather cross-government and DoE service provision and monitoring methods to understand the system producing the current outcomes
- Design DoE and cross-agency referral processes and escalation pathways

### Empowering educators and leaders

- Recruit and support specialist school supervisors
- Provide tailored coaching and wellbeing support for principals, teachers and support staff working in Partnership Initiative schools, including priority access to credentialled programs
- Provide clear development pathways for principals and teachers, including support and resourcing to become mentors for other principals and staff

### Attraction and retention

- Increase principal remuneration incentive and provide schools with minimum leadership structure
- Increase employment opportunities for First Nations staff in the schools, including First Nations identified partnership facilitation roles
- Increase incentives for principals and staff to remain connected to the school for longer
- Investigate opportunities to improve staff accommodation

### Prioritised DoE support

- Prioritise support across DoE for the Partnership Initiative and communities
- Design escalation pathways to remove barriers for accessing support to effective complex case management
- Centrally coordinate planning and reporting functions, including resourcing and supporting school and community champions within DoE and across government

### Cultural capability

- Co-develop and co-deliver cultural capability programs for staff working in and with the schools in partnership with each local community
- Provide comprehensive and continuing cultural induction for all new school staff

### Infrastructure renewal

- Prioritise renewal infrastructure programs and projects to improve the learning and working environment
- Utilise existing capital works programs specifically to address learning environments and contemporary standards for school facilities, including prioritising asbestos removal
- Identify and address staff accommodation challenges in each community
- Ensure infrastructure planning supports delivery of integrated school-based hub models that provide a full range of services to communities



## Monitoring and evaluation

- Dedicated monitoring and evaluative approach that recognises unique contexts
- Evaluated for impact over the longer term with learnings informing how we work with other schools
- Specialised Partnership Initiative reviews



Educational achievement



Wellbeing and engagement



Culture and inclusion

## Principles

- Student and community centred
- Collaborative and co-designed
- Cross government responses
- Culturally respectful
- Evidence informed