

Chapter 3: Policies and Priorities

This chapter outlines the national policy context for Australian schooling in 2023 and reports against the commitments to action agreed by Australian education ministers in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration.

3.1 National policy context

Within Australia's federal system of government, states and territories hold constitutional responsibility for school education. The federal (Australian) government contributes to education policy through national agreements and its financial relations with the states.

The 6 state and 2 territory governments, the Australian Government and non-government school sector organisations, cooperate to work towards agreed goals and commitments expressed in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration.

In Australia, joint decisions on agreed national policy and shared priorities are made through intergovernmental policy councils and forums. In 2022 the Education Ministers Meeting (EMM) was the forum responsible for school education. Skills and training ministers had responsibility for the ongoing management of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system through the Skills Ministers Meeting.

Education Ministers Meeting

The EMM is the forum for collaboration and decision-making on early childhood education and care (ECEC), school education, higher education and international education.

The EMM consists of portfolio ministers with responsibility for ECEC, school education, higher education and international education from the Australian Government and each state and territory. New Zealand is a non-decision-making member of the EMM.

The Commonwealth Minister for Education is the chair of the EMM. In December 2022, Education Ministers agreed to focus on the following 3 national priorities for 2023:

- Developing a long-term vision for the Early Childhood Education and Care sector, to support parents' workforce participation and early learning and child development.
- Implementing the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, which sets out a clear pathway to addressing the national issue of teacher workforce shortages.
- Developing the next National School Reform Agreement, which is an important vehicle through which governments across Australia work together to deliver quality school education.

Skills Committee and Skills Ministers Meeting

In June 2020, the National Cabinet announced the formation of the Skills National Cabinet Reform Committee (Skills Committee) as one of 6 such committees in priority areas of reform. In addition to the Skills Committee, skills and training ministers have responsibility for the ongoing management of the VET system through the Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council.¹ Both committees consist of ministers from each state and territory and the Australian Government with portfolio responsibility for skills issues and have replaced the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Skills Council as a forum for decision-making about skills development and national training arrangements.

Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration

From 2020, the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration replaced the Melbourne Declaration as the ministerial statement of national educational goals and commitment to action for the coming decade.

Mparntwe (pronounced M-ban-tua) is the Arrernte name for Alice Springs in the NT. The Aboriginal Arrernte (pronounced Arrunda) people are the traditional custodians of Alice Springs and the surrounding region.

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration builds on the goals, actions, themes, and values of the Melbourne Declaration. Ministers agreed that education continue to promote excellence and equity and enable all Australians to become confident and creative individuals, successful learners, and active and informed community members.

Areas of emphasis include the importance of meeting the individual needs of all learners, learning throughout life from early childhood onwards, support for educators, a renewed commitment to learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are supported to reach their potential.

In December 2020, Education Council endorsed the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020, which reflects the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. The 2020 measurement framework replaced the Measurement Framework for Schooling Australia 2019 and specifies the nationally agreed KPMs for schooling.

¹ Following a review of the Ministerial Councils in 2022 by National Cabinet, Skills Ministers Meeting (SMM) was renamed to the Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council (SWMC) in 2023. A direct reporting line to the National Cabinet was established on a key priority within an updated Federal Relations Architecture relating to skills reform and negotiation of a new National Skills Agreement.

National School Reform Agreement

The National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) is in place from 2019 to 2024.² This is a joint agreement between the Commonwealth, states and territories that underpins Commonwealth funding for schooling over this period. The NSRA specifies 8 national policy initiatives, grouped under 3 reform directions:

- Supporting students, student learning and student achievement:
 1. Enhancing the Australian Curriculum to support teacher assessment of student attainment and growth against clear descriptors
 2. Assisting teachers to monitor individual student progress and identify student learning needs through opt-in online and on demand student learning assessment tools with links to student learning resources, prioritising early years foundation skills
 3. Reviewing senior secondary pathways into work, further education, and training
- Supporting teaching, school leadership and school improvement:
 4. Reviewing teacher workforce needs of the future to attract and retain the best and brightest to the teaching profession and attract teachers to areas of need
 5. Strengthening the initial teacher education (ITE) accreditation system³
- Enhancing the national evidence base:
 6. Implementing a unique student identifier (USI) that meets national privacy requirements in order to support better understanding of student progression and improve the national evidence base⁴
 7. Establishing an independent national evidence institute to inform teacher practice, system improvement and policy development
 8. Improving national data quality, consistency, and collection to improve the national evidence base and inform policy development.

Reporting and public transparency arrangements include an annual public report from Education Ministers to demonstrate progress towards implementation. Also, bilateral reform agreements between the Australian Government and the states and territories reflect state-specific initiatives in the context of each jurisdiction. States and territories report annually to the Australian Government on progress against the actions outlined in individual bilateral agreements and on their funding contributions to government and non-government schools.

Progress on the development and implementation of the initiatives in 2023 is noted below and in the following sections of this chapter.

² In March 2023, the Terms of Reference and Expert Panel for *The Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System* (the Review) were announced. The Review will focus on driving real and measurable improvements for students most at risk of falling behind. Findings from the Review will help to shape the next NSRA, which take effect from 2025. To provide time for this work to occur, the current NSRA was extended for a further 12 months, to 31 December 2024.

³ ITE refers to degrees and/or diplomas required for professional employment in teaching.

⁴ A unique and persistent number for every school student in Australia, which will allow for sharing of information between schools, sectors, and jurisdictions, through to the VET and higher education sectors.

Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System (the Review)

The National School Reform Agreement underpins Commonwealth funding for schooling and seeks to lift student outcomes. On 29 March 2023, the Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education announced the Review to advise Education Ministers on what reform priorities should be included in the next agreement.

The Expert Panel (the Panel) conducting the Review travelled extensively across Australia, visiting schools in each state and territory to undertake wide stakeholder consultation with teachers, school leaders and support staff, parents, students and key stakeholder groups.

On 11 December 2023, Education Ministers noted the release of the Independent Panel's Report and the Australian Government Summary Report of the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System.⁵ Education Ministers committed to working together to get every school to a minimum of 100% of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS).⁶

National Teacher Workforce Action Plan

On 15 December 2022, Education Ministers agreed to the *National Teacher Workforce Action Plan* to address national teacher shortages. The plan builds on a range of initiatives in jurisdictions, sectors and individual schools. The plan lists 5 priority areas for action, including improving teacher supply, strengthening initial teacher education, and keeping the teachers we have.

Australian Curriculum review

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is an independent statutory authority responsible to Education Ministers, established in legislation under the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act (2008). In 2022, ACARA completed its review of the Australian Curriculum – Foundation to Year 10, as requested by ministers in 2020. The revised Australian Curriculum, Version 9.0, was endorsed by Education Ministers in early 2022. In 2023, ACARA continued work on completing the final phase of the curriculum review, with curricula for languages being progressively released for public comment and updated. More information is provided in Part 3.10: Delivering world class curriculum and assessment.

Implementing recommendations from the Review of the Disability Standards for Education

In March 2021, the (then) Minister for Education and Youth released the final report of the 2020 Review of the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*. The Department continued to work closely with state and territory governments and non-government education authorities to implement the Review recommendations. The focus in 2023 was on the publication of information products to empower children and students with disability and their families; and strengthen the knowledge and capability of education providers. For example, new videos showing how teachers and school leaders can meet the Standards and support students with disability were made available on the AITSL website.⁷ More information is provided in Part 3.12: Supporting all young Australians at risk of educational disadvantage.

⁵ Education Ministers Meeting Communique, 11 December 2023, <https://www.education.gov.au/education-ministers-meeting/resources/education-ministers-meeting-communique-december-2023>

⁶ EMM Statement – Better and Fairer Education System Review and the next National Education Funding and Reform Agreement, 11 December 2023, <https://jasonclare.com.au/media/portfolio-media-releases/emm-statement-better-and-fairer-education-system-review-and-the-next-national-education-funding-and-reform-agreement/>

⁷ These are available at www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/supportingstudents-with-disability and www.nccd.edu.au/dse.

State and territory policy initiatives

State and territory governments retain the responsibility for implementing agreed national policy in education, and for initiating and carrying out their own programs of innovation and reform. In 2023, all states and territories participated in national policy initiatives under the NSRA. Other state and territory policy initiatives are noted in the following sections of this chapter. Information on state and territory initiatives reported in this chapter is drawn from contributions received from state and territory education authorities, the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) and Independent Schools Australia (ISA).

3.2 Educational goals

Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration has 2 overarching educational goals for young Australians:

- **Goal 1:** The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity
- **Goal 2:** All young Australians become:
 - Confident and creative individuals
 - Successful lifelong learners
 - Active and informed members of the community.

It includes a commitment to action in 11 interrelated areas:

- Developing stronger partnerships
- Supporting quality teaching and leadership
- Strengthening early childhood education
- Building foundational skills in the primary school years
- Enhancing middle years development
- Supporting senior years of schooling
- Embedding pathways for learning throughout life and supporting effective transitions
- Delivering world-class curriculum and assessment
- Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners to reach their full potential
- Supporting all young Australians at risk of educational disadvantage
- Strengthening accountability and transparency with strong, meaningful measures.

Progress in 2023 in addressing the areas for action is reported in the following sections of this chapter.

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

Education is key to increasing pathways to success for First Nations people and is associated with increased wellbeing across all other aspects of life. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap includes more targets aimed at improving First Nations people's education opportunities and outcomes than any other sector within Australia.

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap between the Australian Government, state, and territory governments, the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations and the Australian Local Government Association includes the following targets related to education:

- By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in the year before full-time schooling early childhood education to 95%.
- By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (age 20–24) attaining Year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96%.
- By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) to 70%.
- By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15–24 years) who are in employment, education, or training to 67%.

The Australian Government, through education, is committed to:

- Improving the education outcomes of First Nations children and students.
- Ensuring that all Australians have equitable access to a quality education.
- Working in partnership with First Nations education experts and peak bodies, to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enjoy the full benefits of education.
- Ensuring that school environments are culturally safe and First Nations cultures are valued, respected and visibly present.
- Providing opportunities for First Nations children to attend early childhood education, graduate high school, and find a higher education pathway to set them up for great employment opportunities.
- Working with States and Territories to ensure mainstream school policy and programs contribute to improvements in outcomes of all students.

3.3 Developing stronger partnerships

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration commits Australian governments to “building partnerships that support learners’ progress through the education system, and to provide them with individualised, high-quality learning opportunities and experiences, and personal development” (p 10).

Consent and Respectful Relationships Education

In the October 2022 Budget, the Australian Government committed \$83.5 million over 6 years from 2022–23 to work in partnership with states, territories, non-government school sector, and subject matter experts, to support delivery of evidence based, age-appropriate, expert-developed Consent and Respectful Relationships Education (CRRE) in primary and secondary schools. This included \$77.6 million in funding to be provided to states and territories and non-government school sector to support the delivery of CRRE in their school communities. To inform and guide the implementation of the CRRE measure:

- A National Respectful Relationships Education Expert Working Group was established in May 2023, with state, territory, non-government school sector and subject matter expert representatives.
- A rapid review into current delivery approaches in jurisdictions and schools to identify best-practice, gaps and areas for improvement was completed in September 2023.
- Development of a Respectful Relationships Education (RRE) Framework to support high-quality and evidence-based RRE in all schools is underway and expected to be completed by mid-2024.

Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership

The Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (ECCDPP, Partnership) is one of 5 Policy Partnerships established under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. It is a shared decision-making forum that brings together governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives to develop recommendations to improve early childhood outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The Partnership will drive coordinated efforts to support policy reform in early childhood education and care, maternal and child health and child safety sectors and support reforms across early childhood systems.

The Partnership is co-chaired by the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, SNAICC – National Voice for our Children, and the Commonwealth Department of Education. Membership comprises senior officials from each Australian government, Coalition of Peaks representatives and independent First Nations members. Support is provided by a co-secretariat operated in partnership between SNAICC and the Commonwealth Department of Education.

The Partnership will focus on the Priority Reforms and Outcomes 2, 3, 4, 12 and 13 of Closing the Gap. The Australian Government has committed \$10.2 million over 3 years to establish the Partnership. It will be reviewed after 3 years.

State, territory and sector initiatives

- The ACT marked 5 years of its 10-year Future of Education strategy with a cross-sectoral Ideas Summit. School leaders, students and community partners from across the ACT shared views and experiences of what is currently working and what could be done better. A Listening Report was developed from the summit that will inform planning for the next 5 years.
- Partnerships with the early childhood sector have been established to support the delivery of the Valuing Educators, Values Children Workforce Strategy 2023–25, under the ACT Government’s 10-year Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT.

- The *University of Canberra Affiliated Schools Program* continued to bring together the expertise of university staff, teachers, and school leaders to improve student outcomes in ACT public schools.
- The NSW Department of Education and the NSW Federation of Parents and Citizens Association signed a formal partnership agreement which highlighted their strong, ongoing working relationships. This 10-year agreement will support strong collaboration between schools, P&C associations, and their communities, and help parents and carers engage with and be partners for their child's education.
- In partnership with the Australian Olympic Committee, NSW's 7 public sports high schools were designated 'Australian Olympic Pathway Schools', providing students additional opportunities to pursue their athletic journeys.
- The NSW Department of Education continued to work with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Incorporated through its ongoing formal Partnership Agreement, *Walking Together, Working Together*. The Partnership Agreement is based on the principles of respect, commitment, collaboration and accountability to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal learners.
- The NT Government facilitated new working relationships between Aboriginal communities and government agencies to support self-determination. The NT Department of Education continued to prioritise local decision-making through community-led schools, school councils, school boards and local engagement and decision-making committees. There were 50 Local Engagement and Decision-Making committees, providing remote and very remote Aboriginal communities with a voice to education priorities and mechanisms to communicate these priorities with the school. In 2023, 10 schools were on the Community-led Schools pathway. Community-led schools give families and communities in remote and very remote communities a strong voice in decision making that impacts the way education is delivered for their children.
- The Qld *Equity and Excellence: realising the potential of every student* education strategy, launched in 2023, sets a new direction for schools and Qld's state schooling system with the aim of lifting educational outcomes across the board. Work has commenced to establish 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; and deliver integrated school-based hub models that provide a full range of services to support children, students, families and communities.
- A team of Industry Engagement Consultants within the SA Department for Education partnered with industry and employers across SA to develop opportunities for students to be exposed to the breadth and depth of an industry and help students identify the different types of roles and exciting career opportunities available.
- The South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) Board:
 - Created partnerships with industry groups including the Australian Business and Community Network and South Australian Skills Commission and employers to work together and identify the skills and behaviours that young people need to thrive in the workplace.
 - Had a partnership with students to evaluate the SACE Capabilities and Learner Profile, compulsory subjects Exploring Identities and Futures and Activating Identities and Futures and Recognition of Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge and Learning policy pilots.
 - Had a partnership and involvement with the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal students in pilots to formally recognise cultural knowledge and learning of Aboriginal young people as part of the SACE.

- In Tas, the Department for Children, Education and Young People partnered with the following organisations to support student wellbeing, contributing the following funding:
 - Stay ChatTY: \$750,000 over 3 years (2022/23 – 2024/25) to deliver the Stay ChatTY Schools Program to students in Years 9 to 12 in Tasmanian government schools,
 - Australian Childhood Foundation: \$898,000 over 2 years (2022/23 – 2023/24) to deliver the Trauma Informed Practice in Schools professional learning program,
 - Working It Out: \$450,000 over 2 years (2022/23 – 2023/24) to expand the *Valuing Diversity in Schools* program.
- Catholic Education Tasmania launched *Insight*, a whole system-wide initiative based on the Science of Learning and Reading to support innovative evidence-informed teaching in every classroom. The project aims to elevate student achievement through a focus on a rich curriculum that supports student growth in knowledge and learning, understanding cognitive science, and employing high-impact pedagogy. The initiative involves instructional leadership coaching and mentoring for Principals, School leaders and Instructional Leader Teacher Practice Educators focused on one-on-one coaching of high-impact teaching pedagogies and practices aligned with the Science of Learning, professional learning around the evidence-informed theories behind the Science of Learning and development of explicit teaching resources to support this style of teaching.
- The Victorian Department of Education partnered with 14 African-Australian led organisations to provide tailored and culturally appropriate education support to 1,251 African-Australian young people and their families, through the *Victorian African Communities Action Plan Homework Club* initiative. The strengthened partnerships with the African-Australian community led to improved academic outcomes, student confidence, family engagement, belonging and inclusion across school communities.
- Independent Schools Victoria has an on-going collaboration with Harvard University's Graduate School of Education and the *Project Zero* team to make the latest research on learning available to schools and teachers. In 2023, the *Making Thinking Routine* program was designed to enhance student cognition and to assist teachers to deepen learning and ignite student curiosity and engagement, by integrating flexible thinking into content instruction. The *Idea into Action: Personalising Instructional Change* research project involved a small number of schools trialling a research toolkit to enhance teacher learning and engagement.
- A guide and a resource hub for WA public schools supporting co-design of community action to improve attendance were developed and piloted.
- The WA Departments of Education, Communities and Health participated in the Early Years Partnership with the Minderoo Foundation and Telethon Kids Institute. The partnership aims to improve the wellbeing and school readiness of children from conception to 4 years in 4 Western Australian communities. Community plans were launched and shared.
- Catholic Education Western Australia Limited has developed several key partnerships to enhance support for students, including a collaboration with the Department of Training and Workforce Development and TAFE to develop the *Career Taster Program, Yadhya Muru City Country Partnerships* with 3 metropolitan and 3 regional/remote schools in STEM and VET (Hospitality and Tourism) and a collaboration with Supporting and Linking Tradeswomen to offer taster opportunities to students from schools in remote and regional areas.

3.4 Supporting quality teaching and leadership

In the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, "Australian Governments commit to working with the education community to attract, develop, support and retain high-quality teachers, educators and leaders in Australia's education system."

National Teacher Workforce Action Plan

Through the *National Teacher Workforce Action Plan*, agreed by Education Ministers in December 2022, all Australian governments are working together to implement 27 interconnecting actions in 5 priority areas: improving teacher supply; strengthening initial teacher education; keeping the teachers we have; elevating the profession; and better understanding future teacher workforce needs.⁸

Some highlights to date include the launch of the *Be That Teacher* campaign to raise the status and value the role of teachers, the introduction of the first round of Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships for initial teacher education students to help attract high quality candidates to the teaching profession, and the commencement of a Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education trial to ensure initial teacher education students can receive targeted support if they need it.

Implementation of the Action Plan is a standing item on the agendas of the Schools Policy Group, the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee and the Education Ministers Meeting. A cross-government and sectoral working group oversees implementation of the Action Plan.

The Teacher Education Expert Panel (TEEP)

The TEEP delivered a report to the Minister for Education suggesting a series of reforms to strengthen Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs, which was released on 6 July 2023. Education Ministers provided in-principle support to all 14 recommendations, designed to:

- Strengthen ITE programs to deliver confident, effective beginning teachers (recommendations 1-3)
- Draw a stronger link between performance and funding of initial teacher education (recommendations 4-7)
- Improve practical teaching experience (recommendations 8-11)
- Enhance postgraduate initial teacher education programs for mid-career entrants (recommendations 12-14).

In July 2023, Ministers agreed to progress some immediate actions. Work commenced on implementation of all 14 Panel recommendations following the December 2023 Education Ministers Meeting.

⁸ To read the action plan and keep up to date with its progress, visit www.education.gov.au/national-teacher-workforce-action-plan.

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) is a company owned and funded by the Australian Government. AITSL has responsibility for supporting the implementation of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Australian Professional Standard for Principals. Supporting teaching, school leadership and school improvement is one of 3 reform directions within the NSRA. Reviewing teacher workforce needs of the future and strengthening the ITE accreditation system are national policy initiatives under this direction.

Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD)

AITSL continues to support the ATWD, linking initial teacher education (ITE) data with teacher workforce data across Australia, providing a comprehensive picture of Australia's teaching workforce, from ITE through all stages of the teacher career, across all states, territories, and employer sectors.

The ATWD is jointly funded by all Australian governments. In 2021, all Education Ministers agreed to invest \$7.3 million over 2021-22 to 2024-25 to support the ATWD. AITSL leads the ATWD in collaboration with the Australian Government Department of Education, states and territories and teacher regulatory authorities.

In 2023, the ATWD Key Metrics Dashboard, an interactive digital tool released in 2022, was updated to include the most recent information on the teacher workforce, and 2 publications were released, ATWD National Trends: Initial Teacher Education (ITE) pipeline and ATWD National Trends: Teacher Workforce. These reports are updated annually as new data becomes available.

High Achieving Teachers Program

The Australian Government supports alternative, employment-based pathways into teaching by funding the High Achieving Teachers Program. Currently, 2 employment-based pathways into teaching are funded under this Program – the Teach For Australia Leadership Development Program and the La Trobe University Nexus Program. Both providers engaged participants in 2022.

Future Leaders Program Pilot

The Australian Government committed \$7.54 million from 2019–2022 under the Future Leaders Program for Teach for Australia to pilot a new approach to strengthening school leadership. This program provides leadership development and training to high-achieving teachers with leadership potential working in regional and rural schools. A total of 174 participants completed the program over 3 years between 2021 and 2023, with the program having a positive impact on teachers wanting to progress to position of leadership or higher responsibility.

Disability Standards for Education

During 2023, the Australian Government continued to implement recommendations from the 2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (the Standards) in consultation with state, territory, and non-government education authorities. In March, the Australian Government published case studies to provide 'good practice' examples for teachers and schools leaders on how to meet their obligations under the Standards on the NCCD portal and in September, resources for including 'in the classroom videos' to support teachers better understand and apply the Standards were published on the AITSL website.⁹

Also available are new practical and easy-to-use resources to help students with disability and their families understand their rights and how to exercise those rights. These resources were co-designed with

⁹ The case studies are available at: www.nccd.edu.au/resources-and-tools/case-studies and the in classroom videos at: www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/supporting-students-with-disability/teachers-supporting-students-with-disability.

young people with disability and their families with the help of Children and Young People with Disability Australia.¹⁰

Online Formative Assessment Initiative

The Online Formative Assessment Initiative was one of the 8 National Policy Initiatives committed under the NSRA. The goal is to establish a national bank of assessments that meets the needs of all jurisdictions on an opt-in basis, given the value of formative assessments in helping teachers understand student learning. In December 2022, Education Ministers endorsed a path forward on the initiative and tasked ACARA to lead this work. At its meeting of 16 June 2023, the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee (AESOC) approved a National Formative Assessment Resource Bank steering committee.

State, territory and sector initiatives

- The ACT Education leadership program was developed to support school leaders build capability of instructional leaders and managers to deliver the new *Student-Centred Improvement Framework*. The program supports the delivery of fundamentals for improvement: resourcing, system stewardship, and a culture of ongoing professional development.
- In the ACT:
 - Preschool Pathways Partners supported preschool educators to build knowledge, confidence and capacity in quality pedagogy and universal practices, implement inclusive practices, enhance transitions and provide continuity for preschool children and their families.
 - Extensive professional learning was offered to meet the needs of learners with disability and diverse learning needs. Educators were supported to differentiate their practice and provide reasonable adjustments, with additional resourcing and support from the School Psychology Service and Allied Health Service as required.
 - The ACT Education Directorate and Teacher Quality Institute worked together to establish a pilot of system sponsored teacher identified professional learning communities.
- As part of efforts to address teacher workforce and to attract and retain high quality teachers, the NSW Department of Education converted more than 16,000 temporary teachers and support staff to permanent positions under the Temporary Workforce Transition initiative. The department has also committed to delivering initiatives that address the teacher workforce by improving attraction to teaching, re-training and upskilling more teachers to specialise in high demand subjects and boosting teacher supply in regional and remote communities.
- In NSW, the School Leadership Institute (SLI) engaged with more than 7,000 current and future school leaders in nearly 1,900 schools through leadership induction conferences, leadership development programs, and online resources. The SLI held the first *Future School Leader* conference (for current classroom teachers developing formal leadership readiness), expanded the *Principal Leadership Learning* program, and continued ongoing leadership development programs.

¹⁰ These resources are available in English, Easy Read English, Auslan and 8 community languages at <https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005>.

- The Catholic Schools NSW inaugural *Avila Leadership Programme for New and Aspiring Principals* began in December 2023 with 32 aspiring and new principals in the inaugural cohort. The programme has been explicitly crafted to meet the needs of the next generation of Catholic school principals, equipping them for the demands of contemporary educational leadership, governance and operations.
- The NT Department of Education:
 - Held an Education Leaders' Summit from 15 to 16 August 2023 with approximately 330 attendees from across the NT. The summit is a forum to present and discuss innovative ideas and the latest trends to improve educational outcomes for children and young people.
 - Continued to provide ongoing training and development for teachers and principals, including professional development programs and initiatives aimed at improving instructional abilities and content knowledge.
 - Commenced development of a *Continuity of Learning Framework* with the University of Melbourne to guide delivery of continuous learning experiences for every child in the NT. The framework is expected to be released in 2024 and will inform planning and delivery of enhanced teaching and instructional leadership at the classroom, school, community, region and system levels.
 - Trained 50 NT educators to implement the Keeping Safe Child Protection Curriculum with schools.
- The Qld Department of Education commenced delivery of a range of initiatives under its education strategy, *Equity and Excellence: realising the potential of every student*. This includes 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 educational infrastructure.
- The Qld Department of Education *M in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)* initiative provided targeted resources to build the pedagogical practices aligned to Version 9 of the Australian Curriculum. These resources are co-designed with education researchers and contribute to a F–12 approach to students' mathematics learning journey.
- Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) delivered a middle leaders webinar to support the development of leadership skills for 120 middle leaders across 50 schools. ISQ also delivered numeracy and literacy masterclasses to 350 participants across the year. These sessions supported AERO's research into effective teaching strategies and the changes to the Australian Curriculum.
- Queensland Catholic Education Commission engaged in cross-sector partnerships along with the Teacher Certification Authority Queensland College of Teachers to develop a new certification process in Qld, thus optimising recognition for teacher excellence, enhancing quality learning and teaching and improving student learning outcomes.
- The SA Department for Education continued to implement the state government's *Seven Point Plan for Teaching Quality* policy, to streamline and improve performance management and recruitment processes to empower principals; and expanded the country incentive scheme. It invested in supporting the career pathways and capabilities of teachers and leaders, through access to a range of scholarships for pre-service teachers, an Early Career Teacher Development program for graduates, and a range of professional learning options through the department's training academy Orbis.
- In SA, an artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot, EdChat, was developed and trialled with the aim of supporting schools to access and safely use generative AI.

- The South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) Board supported the development of over 650 teachers through the SACE Capabilities and Learner Profile, as well as the accreditation of compulsory subjects *Exploring Identities and Futures* and *Activating Identities and Futures*.
- In Tas, the Principal Capability Framework (PCF) was launched as an evidence-based framework to drive growth in principal capability. The PCF provides principals with structure for ongoing self-reflection that supports capability growth over time and is not compliance driven. The framework guides professional growth of principals, with a view to maximising impact on student and staff outcomes.
- In Tas, several initiatives were delivered to enhance career pathways and support quality teaching and a leadership pipeline. This included programs for early career teacher development, quality mentoring and middle leaders and a leadership qualification pathway to a Graduate Certificate in Education. Principals were supported with induction programs and preparation for principalship.
- In Vic:
 - The Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership was established to provide high-quality, evidence-informed professional learning that enhances the capability and confidence of Victorian school teachers and leaders. This includes leadership excellence programs for government school leaders and the cross-sectoral *Teaching Excellence* Program.
 - The *Professional Learning Communities* initiative is an evidence-based, whole-school approach to lifting student learning outcomes that is being rolled-out across all Victorian government schools.
 - The Arc Platform was established to assist teachers to find, access, and use the digital products and services provided by the Victorian Department of Education. Arc was extended in 2023 to include Arc Learning, providing teachers with access to a curated collection of high-quality learning and teaching and pedagogical resources.
 - Victorian Independent schools focused on leadership development across all levels of school leadership, including support for middle-level leaders. Independent Schools Victoria also collaborated with the Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia to support aspiring principals with the aim of developing the next generation of school principals.
- The WA Department of Education commenced the *Reducing Teacher Workload Using Digital Forms* pilot. The pilot provides school staff with a consistent, accessible and efficient way to share information, request services and complete reporting responsibilities.
- The WA Department of Education selected 25 lead public schools to support the implementation of the *Quality Teaching Strategy* and *Teaching for Impact*. The *Leading Cultures of Teaching Excellence* professional learning program supported principals from 40 schools to create and sustain school cultures, strengthening teaching excellence.
- In WA, an attraction and retention package of \$12.4 million was provided to 48 schools identified in the *Regional Incentive Framework* as experiencing significant recruitment pressures. Payments were made to eligible teachers and school administrators in Western Australian public schools in 2 instalments during 2023.
- The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA) delivered a year-long professional learning program of teaching for impact, focussing on the development of teachers' instructional practice and driving improvements in teacher and student outcomes. As part of this program, AISWA partnered with AERO who conducted research to understand how to sustain improvements in practices resulting from professional learning.

3.5 Strengthening early childhood education

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration commits Australian governments to continuing to build quality and access to early years learning and development that meet the needs of all Australian families.

Early childhood education takes place in the years before full-time schooling and is generally accessed by for children up to 5 years. It is a separate education sector to primary and secondary education with separate regulatory and funding frameworks.

As such, it is formally outside the scope of the NSSC and the National Report on Schooling. Statistical data on early childhood education is not included in this report.

However, early childhood centres are often attached to, or accommodated in, primary schools and, in some jurisdictions, part-time early childhood education programs in the year before full-time schooling are considered to be a part of schooling. Preschool early childhood education is increasingly important as a preparation for schooling and is a key commitment of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. For these reasons, limited information on early childhood education is provided in this section.

Productivity Commission Inquiry into Australia's ECEC system

In March 2023, the Productivity Commission commenced a comprehensive inquiry into Australia's early childhood education and care (ECEC) system. The inquiry supports the Government's commitment to identifying solutions to chart the course for universal ECEC. The final report is due to Government by 30 June 2024.

Preschool Reform Agreement

The Preschool Reform Agreement (PRA) commenced in 2022 following the end of the Universal Access National Partnership Agreement in 2021. The PRA is a 4-year national reform agreement that aims to lift preschool enrolments and attendance and maximise the benefits of preschool. The funding supports the delivery of 15 hours a week (or 600 hours a year) of quality preschool programs by early childhood teachers, regardless of the setting in which programs are delivered, for all children in the year before they start school. It also supports an important, collaborative reform agenda that aims to see preschool attendance improved, as well as the development and trial of an outcome measure from 2025. The focus of activity in 2023 was measurement of preschool attendance in 2025 and planning for development of a preschool outcomes measure.

National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy

Facilitated by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority all Governments and sector stakeholders collaborated to co-design a 10-year National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy, released in October 2021. The Strategy aims to support the attraction, development, and retention of a sustainable, high-quality early childhood workforce. In August 2022, Education Ministers endorsed the *Shaping Our Future: Implementation and Evaluation Plan* detailing how the 21 national workforce actions will be progressed, monitored, and reviewed, including 13 priority actions to be progressed by the end of 2024.

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

High quality early childhood education and care is critical to supporting children’s development and future success. The Australian Government is continuing to work in partnership with the Coalition of Peaks, other First Nations partners, and all levels of government to ensure sustained progress over the life of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Closing the Gap). The Government is working to achieve the Closing the Gap Outcomes and embed the Priority Reforms across its work in early childhood education and care.

Update of Early Years Learning Framework

As the 2 National Approved Learning Frameworks (ALFs); *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework* and the *My Time, Our Place: The Framework for School Age Care* had been in use for close to a decade, Education Ministers commissioned an update in 2021. This was to ensure they continued to reflect contemporary developments in practice and knowledge, while supporting all educators to best meet the learning and development needs of each child. After an extensive consultation process, Education Ministers endorsed the updated ALFs in December 2022. The updated ALFs came into operation on 1 February 2024 and strengthen their connection with the National Quality Standard (NQS) in areas such as transitions, sustainability, theoretical approaches, critical reflection, the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of being, knowing and doing, and inclusion.

National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework (NQF) drives continuous improvement in the nationally consistent quality, regulation and assessment of early childhood education and care services. It applies to most long day care, family day care, kindergarten or preschool and outside school-hours care services in Australia. The Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) is the independent national body that supports regulatory authorities in states and territories in administering the NQF.

In 2022, Australian, state and territory Education Ministers agreed to changes to the NQF based on findings from the 2019 NQF Review. Key changes for providers and their services included new measures to strengthen the safety, health and wellbeing of children, specified new workforce and qualification requirements, improved oversight by regulatory authorities, and additional guidance to support providers and their services in educating and caring for children. Implementation of most changes commenced from 1 October 2023, including updates to the Guide to the NQF to reflect amendments to the Education and Care Services National Law, National Regulations and the Approved Learning Frameworks.

Review of Child Safety Arrangements under the National Quality Framework

In 2023 the Minister for Education and Minister for Early Childhood Education commissioned the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) to undertake a Review of Child Safety Arrangements under the National Quality Framework (NQF) (the Review).

The Final Report – Findings and recommendations for the NQF and inter-related child safety mechanisms (the Report) was published on the ACECQA website on 21 December 2023. The Report makes 16 recommendations about physical and online safety, child supervision and staffing requirements. The Review found the NQF is an internationally recognised framework that provides a robust regulatory scheme for ensuring the safety, health and wellbeing of children. It also found Australia has a very good system of ECEC and more can be done to ensure the NQF remains contemporary and fit-for-purpose in the context of child safety.

In December 2023, Education Ministers were briefed on the Report by the ACECQA CEO. Ministers requested Senior Officials commence consultation on the Report’s recommendations, and report back to Ministers with implementation advice.

State, territory and sector initiatives

- In the ACT:
 - The ACT Government's 10-year plan *Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT* includes a range of initiatives to strengthen early childhood education including *Valuing Educators, Values Children Workforce Strategy 2023-25*. Partnerships with the early childhood sector have been established to support delivery of the strategy through the Valuing Educators Reference Group. Priority access for 500 children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage to 2 days per week, 48 weeks per year of quality early childhood education in the year before preschool was implemented.
 - Targeted professional learning was provided through "communities of practice" and pre-school network sessions with a focus on documentation to develop preschool teacher capabilities.
 - The *Everyone, Everyday* program aims to create a cultural shift in community attitudes towards disability. This was expanded to include Preschool resources in 2023. The adjustment matrix was utilised by preschool educators to record the modifications and additional resourcing of children.
- The NSW Department of Education launched the redesigned *Start Strong* program for community and mobile preschools and long day care services. The program meets the objectives of the *Affordable Preschool* initiative and the Preschool Reform Agreement to provide quality, affordable preschool to children and their families. Approximately 175 services were funded under the *Start Strong Pathways* program. Under the *Start Strong Capital Works* program, the department awarded over \$24 million to not-for-profit services to create 300 new preschool places across metropolitan and regional NSW, and maintain over 100 places with crisis works, including flood-affected services. From 2023, early childhood services receiving Start Strong funding completed a Transition to School Statement for each child transitioning to school the year after. The statement summarises a child's strengths, interests and approaches to learning and helps link the Early Years Learning Framework to the Early Stage 1 content in the NSW syllabuses to support teaching and planning for Kindergarten teachers.
- The NT Department of Education partnered with Nous Group and the Centre for International Research on Education Systems from Victoria University to undertake a review of preschool. The review will focus on identifying optimal models for preschool funding and delivery in the NT to best achieve outcomes for children and families. The review team consulted broadly across early childhood settings in the NT, including site visits to preschools in all regions of the NT. A discussion paper was released in May 2023, with 128 responses received.
- The Qld Government introduced funding reforms in 2023 and will invest \$2 billion over 4 years to reform kindergarten funding including provision of free kindergarten for 15 hours per week, 40 weeks per year from 2024. The reforms also include funding to address educational disadvantage, improve inclusion and address early childhood workforce challenges through the Queensland Early Childhood Workforce Strategy.
- Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) supported the Queensland Government Free Kindy announcement, jointly planning implementation in 2024 for eligible children to receive 15 hours a week for 40 weeks, or 600 hours a year in early learning services. QCEC also supported announcements that would strengthen Early Childhood Education through the Queensland Early Childhood Workforce Strategy. This strategy will assist in meeting the chronic shortage of qualified educators in the sector.

- In SA, the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care final report was released in August 2023. The state government has committed to action on all recommendations. Key recommendations for the SA Department for Education include the delivery of universal 3-year-old preschool from 2026, OSHC reform, greater supports for Aboriginal children and Children in Care and growing our workforce. The first mid-year intake for public preschools was introduced in July 2023 giving families earlier access to high-quality educational programs for their children.
- The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia supported early childhood teachers through collaborative forums that explored and shared exemplary curriculum practices across a range of learning areas. Early childhood teachers identified ways to strengthen practice through connecting the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 and the Early Years Learning Framework v2. Teachers explored practical ways these documents could be used to provide continuity of learning for children in preschool and during their transition to formal schooling.
- In Tas, 5 new trial sites for *Early Learning for Three-Year Olds* (EL3) were established. The EL3 initiative is a step towards giving every child access to early learning in the year before kindergarten. The communities are located across Tas and will meet local community needs. A Co-Design Planning Group guided the selection of the communities. Selection was based on criteria for assessment of suitability and broad community engagement conducted across the state.
- The Victorian Department of Education:
 - Continued to roll out Three-Year-Old Kindergarten across the state, with available hours increasing to 15 per week for all children by 2029. In 2023, the average offering of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten was over 12 hours per week.
 - Commenced implementation of the Best Start, Best Life reforms. Approximately 97% of services participated in Free Kinder, a roll-out schedule for the phased implementation of 'Pre-Prep' has been released and all locations for the 50 new government-owned Early Learning and Childcare Centres in areas of greatest need, have been announced, with the first 4 to open in 2025.
 - Continues to provide additional supports to engage vulnerable and disadvantaged children in kindergarten, including Aboriginal children, refugee and asylum seeker children and children known to Child Protection.
- The WA Government released a *Workforce Action Plan* to build a skilled early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce in regional WA.
- In WA during 2023, all new ECEC worker traineeships, including trainees undertaking relevant ECEC qualifications, were eligible for fee-free training through the *FREE IN '23* initiative.

More information on early childhood education is available on the Australian Government Department of Education (www.education.gov.au/early-childhood).

3.6 Building foundational skills in the primary school years

This commitment to action in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration is to ensure school sectors are responsive to students' developmental and learning needs in primary school and provide a strong foundation for continued learning success throughout school and beyond.

Mathematics Hub

The Mathematics Hub was established in 2022 and provides a freely available, curated collection of evidence-based resources aligned to the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum to support teachers, school leaders, students, parents and carers across Australia, including a voluntary, teacher administered Year 1 Number Check for students.

In 2023, the Australian Government launched an array of new professional learning and curriculum resources to support teachers on the Mathematics Hub, including: free, self-paced, open access mathematics Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) for teachers of Foundation to Year 10 students; a series of self-paced online modules, webinars and podcasts to enhance primary school teachers' understanding and skills in the explicit teaching of mathematics; and a comprehensive Curriculum Planning Tool.

Literacy Hub

New resources were added to the Australian Government's Literacy Hub, including shared reading texts, webinars, and a 7-unit professional learning program to support schools building a Systematic Synthetic Phonics approach for reading and spelling.

State, territory and sector initiatives

- The ACT Education Directorate's mathematics and numeracy strategy '*Finding the Balance*' offered targeted professional learning for schools, and conferences for leaders and teachers, to meet the numeracy needs of students.
- The *Literacy Champions Network*, offering professional learning each term, supports ACT lead teachers to promote the literacy skills of students in F-6. Workshops for new educators were offered each term along with PL offerings for new ACT teachers, returning teacher and relief staff upskilling in the 10 Essential Practices in Literacy. Teachers continued to have access to professional learning and expert supports to meet the needs of all students.
- In 2023, all ACT public primary schools had disability education programs as well as inclusion support in general education classrooms.
- As part of the NSW Mathematics Strategy, the NSW Department of Education appointed 25 new graduate primary teachers with a mathematics specialisation in NSW public schools. A total of 102 teachers have been appointed since the initiative began, exceeding the target of 100 new graduate primary teachers.
- There were changes to some literacy and numeracy items in the NSW Department of Education Best Start Kindergarten Assessment to align to Version 3 of the National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions and new English and Mathematics K-2 syllabuses.
- The NSW Department of Education launched the NSW Student Learning Library with K-2 English and Mathematics learning resources. The library provides learning resources for students which are accessible at home or at school. Learning resources are NSW syllabus-aligned and have been created and reviewed by accredited Australian teachers.

- The NT department of Education worked with the NT Department of Health to develop a framework for engagement between schools and health services. The framework highlights how sharing child development and specialist health services data can inform a more systematic approach to supporting early intervention in the early years. Early intervention will support and strengthen the transition of students into the early years of learning and improve the achievement of foundational skills and engagement through later years of schooling.
- NT schools continued to implement literacy and numeracy strategies to build foundational skills in the primary years. In 2023, 140 students from 14 primary schools across the Darwin region participated in the annual Meaningful Maths Enrichment Day. The event focussed on making maths fun through a range of activities including robotics, engineering, riddles, and investigative programs.
- Launched in 2023, Queensland Department of Education's Reading Commitment will see a consistent evidence-informed approach used to teach reading in all Qld state schools. Included in the commitment is the development of a comprehensive suite of reading materials, including guidelines, resources and advice for schools, and professional learning programs.
- The Department for Education South Australia provided updated online professional learning for all early years teachers in reading. This covered building foundation reading skills, extending foundation reading skills, introduction to phonics and the phonics screening check, and oral reading fluency.
- The Department for Education South Australia commenced planning for the trial of a Maths Assessment Interview (MAI) at Years 3 and 4, developed by Monash University, to be delivered in 2024 with 95 schools. The MAI is conducted as a one-to-one interview between the teacher and student and is being complemented by evidence-based professional learning for teachers.
- The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia launched a Wellbeing Toolkit and supported school implementation with 2-day workshops. The toolkit assisted SA independent schools to strengthen whole school wellbeing and practice. Support provided included evidence-based resources that developed student and staff wellbeing through a whole school lens. The building of leadership capacity to drive implementation and sustainability at the school level was a key priority.
- All Tasmanian Government Schools must prioritise and provide additional focus on the teaching of reading. In line with advice from AERO, Tasmanian schools, principals, and teachers will have more specific professional learning and more detailed practical resources. All schools have access to support and advice from an in-school Quality Teaching Coach (Literacy). These coaches work with leaders and teachers in their school to implement the Department's evidence-based teaching methods for reading. The Department of Premier and Cabinet's Literacy Advisory Panel recommendations will directly inform the actions of the DECYP 2023 – 2026 Implementation Plan for Reading.
- In Vic, cohort 7 of the *Primary Mathematics and Science Specialists* (PMSS) initiative began. PMSS is a 2-year teacher and whole school capability building program to improve student learning outcomes in mathematics and science. Participating teachers receive 20 days of professional learning over 2 years and 0.5 FTE time release to develop their skills and those of their colleagues across their school. Cohort 7 is being delivered as a mathematics only cohort for 100 teachers from approximately 50 schools.

- In Vic, Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools published a suite of practical, high-quality teaching and learning programs in Mathematics for students in Foundation to Year 2. These evidence-based support resources utilised an explicit pedagogical model and were designed to provide foundational mathematics skills and drive excellence in academic performance. In addition to curriculum and lesson materials, teacher professional learning and a coaching-feedback model for teachers were also available. The Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) developed a structured literacy project based on a collaboration between 2 Sunraysia schools. DOBCEL has partnered with Latrobe University SoLAR Lab to evidence the change in approach and outcomes.
- From 2023, WA public school principals are required to confirm by mid-year that Year 1 students at their school have undergone a phonics assessment, which identifies their progress against the Department's expected proficiency. A phonics self-reflection tool has been developed to guide reflection on current phonics practices, highlighting areas of focus.
- The Commonwealth and Western Australian Governments entered into a 4-year agreement to deliver the *Scaling Up Success in Remote Schools* program at 14 remote schools in the Goldfields and Midwest regions. The program aims to close the gap in reading and writing and will scale up the successful elements of the *Kimberley Schools Project* with a focus on targeted teaching practices in Kindergarten to Year 2 and working in partnership with parents and the community.

3.7 Enhancing middle years development

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration commits governments to work with all school sectors “to ensure that schools are responsive to students’ developmental and learning needs in the middle years, in ways which are challenging, engaging and rewarding”.

Student Wellbeing Hub

The Australian Government’s Student Wellbeing Hub provides a range of freely available information and resources for educators, students and parents to assist them to create and maintain a safe and supportive school environment. This includes the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework, a foundational document that focuses on a whole school systemic approach to wellbeing with tiers of support, emphasising appropriate early intervention to enable schools to respond to emerging challenges. Other resources include online professional learning modules, a school survey tool and evidence-based classroom mental health and wellbeing resources.

State, territory and sector initiatives

- The *Finding the Balance* Mathematics and Numeracy Strategy supported ACT school leaders and teachers with targeted professional learning to better meet the numeracy needs of all students, particularly in the pivotal middle years when students are developing their identity as mathematical learners.
- In the ACT, young people with disability and diverse learning needs were supported through evidence-based teaching practices and interventions. All ACT public high schools now have disability education programs as well as inclusion support in general education classrooms. Teachers continued to have access to professional learning and expert supports to meet the needs of all students.
- As part of the NSW Mathematics Strategy, the NSW Department of Education permanently appointed 16 additional mathematics teachers after they completed the *MathsNOW* scholarship program, with a total of 43 appointments in 2023. 67 scholarships commenced in 2023.
- The NSW Department of Education continued the use of Check-in assessments with all cohorts from Year 3 to 9. These online diagnostic assessments in reading and numeracy assist schools to identify how students are performing and help teachers tailor learning to meet student needs and support planning.
- In NSW, the *Transition to Year 7* assessment replaced *Best Start Year 7*. The assessment provides teachers with a snapshot of literacy and numeracy skills students demonstrate on entry to Year 7.
- Catholic Schools NSW supported middle years development through professional learning modules and a virtual symposium focusing on the 3–6 Mathematics syllabus and 3–6 English syllabus, building awareness and capacity in the primary and secondary contexts around what is required in each phase of learning.
- The NT Department of Education negotiated an agreement with the South Australian Department of Education to allow NT teachers to have full access to SA’s high-quality curriculum resource materials, including units of work, lesson plans and support materials that are aligned to the Australian Curriculum.
- The NT established the Youth Voice Peak Group in Term 1, 2023, with 16 middle and senior school student members from across 11 government and non-government schools. The group aims to ensure student voice and agency guides the way the department delivers education pathways and services to all young Territorians. Members represent all regions and education settings across the NT, including homeland communities, distance education systems, and specialist education settings.

- The Qld Department of Education established the *Junior Secondary: On track for success* project to realise the potential of every student through the design and implementation of an evidence-informed approach to junior secondary engagement. The project delivered strategies to build the professional expertise required to support learning and engagement of all learners into and through junior secondary.
- The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia convened the *Responding to Early Adolescent Learners* reference group, supporting middle years school leaders to examine ways to optimise early adolescent education. Key authorities offered expertise on curriculum, success traits, and transitioning. The group explored excellence in inclusive practice tailored to middle years contexts.
- In Tas, representatives from the Department for Education, Children and Young People contributed to work undertaken by the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) that focused on supporting learners in the middle years of school. Resulting guidance resources for secondary school leaders and teachers to better support learners in Years 7 to 9 with foundational literacy and numeracy skills will be published by AERO.
- In Vic, the *Middle Years Literacy and Numeracy Support* (MYLNS) initiative provides intensive teaching support to students in Year 10 in government secondary schools who are at risk of finishing school without the literacy and numeracy skills they need for future work and study. Schools are funded to release experienced teachers as MYLNS Improvement Teachers, who support students one-on-one, in small groups or within class. In 2023, the MYLNS initiative supported over 5,000 students.
- The Department of Education WA introduced new teaching and learning resources to deliver prevention education in addition to the WA Schools Anti-vaping Toolkit for Years 8 to 10.
- In WA, the *Innovation Challenge* was expanded with up to 30 teams of Year 8 public school students who honed their leadership, design and critical thinking skills in 2023.

3.8 Supporting senior secondary education

Through the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, Australian governments commit to working with the education community to provide a senior secondary education that equips young people with the skills, knowledge, values, and capabilities to succeed in employment, personal and civic life.

Senior Secondary Certificates of Education

State and territory governments are responsible for providing senior secondary education for students participating in Years 11 and 12, the last 2 years of schooling.

The curriculum, assessment, and certification authority in each jurisdiction is responsible for determining course content and how the agreed Australian Curriculum content and achievement standards are integrated into its courses. These authorities, which also determine assessment and certification specifications for successful course completion, are member organisations of Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities (ACACA).

Senior secondary certificates of education (SSCEs) are Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications issued by the curriculum, assessment and certification authority in each state and territory to students meeting the requirements for successful completion of secondary schooling. Each state and territory has its own SSCE(s), as listed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Senior secondary certificates of education (SSCEs), Australian states and territories, 2023

State/territory	Senior secondary certificates of education
NSW	Higher School Certificate (HSC)
Vic	Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Victorian Certificate of Education Vocational Major (VCE VM)
Qld	Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE)
SA	South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE)
WA	Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE)
Tas	Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE)
NT	Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET)
ACT	Australian Capital Territory Senior Secondary Certificate (ACTSSC)

Source: The Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities (ACACA) (www.acaca.edu.au), states and territories.

Data on the completion of Year 12 or equivalent (AQF Certificate II or III) is reported in Chapter 8: Student attainment, and in the Participation and Attainment data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

State, territory and sector initiatives

- The ACT Education Directorate continued the working partnership with tertiary institutions including ANU and the University of Canberra to provide university extension courses for senior secondary students in the ACT. These courses provided tertiary pathways to students who may not have previously considered further study and assist students to transition to tertiary education.
- In the ACT, young people with disability and diverse learning needs are supported through evidence-based teaching practices and interventions. Teachers continued to have access to professional learning and expert supports to meet the needs of all students. All ACT public colleges (11-12) now have disability education programs as well as inclusion support in general education classrooms.

- In NSW:
 - Stay Healthy HSC provided resources to assist students to stay healthy, active and connected during the HSC. The HSC Hub continued to provide on-demand resources that teachers can provide to their students to help with exam preparation. The hub includes curriculum resources and support materials, lectures, online demonstrations, assessment resources, and video lessons aligned to the syllabuses, bolstering existing course work.
 - The HSC Common Start Program provided funds for newly created Year 12 extension classes. Funds were used to support HSC teachers and students.
 - From 2023, course categorisation in calculating the ATAR was removed for the Year 10 cohort. This will support student choice in senior secondary school and broaden opportunities for post school study, training and work.
- The NT Department of Education, in partnership with Deloitte Access Economics and the Northern Institute of Charles Darwin University, commenced a review of secondary education (Years 7 to 12). The review will inform the design of a secondary education system that is responsive to the unique and diverse delivery contexts in the NT. The team met with school leaders, educators, community members and sector stakeholders. A public discussion paper was released in June 2023, receiving 60 questionnaire responses and 26 written submissions.
- In the NT, the Clontarf and Stars foundations worked with Aboriginal senior school students and their families, providing school-based mentoring and wellbeing support for students to finish Year 12. During 2023, 452 young Aboriginal men were enrolled in Clontarf senior years programs (Years 10 – 12) and 327 young Aboriginal women were enrolled in Stars senior years programs (Years 10 – 12).
- As part of the Qld Department of Education’s commitment to the Queensland Workforce Strategy, Queensland Treasury provided funding of \$5.04 million for the Regional School Industry Partnership (RSIP) program to strengthen local school-industry partnerships and support school to work transitions. Located in each education region, the program connects schools with industry to support a variety of opportunities for students, including work experience, school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, industry placement for teachers, and resources to support curriculum delivery.
- Independent Schools Qld provided support for its member schools through the distribution of VET Activity funding, professional development, school reviews and one-to-one guidance. This included the commencement of 1,257 school-based apprenticeships and traineeships across Years 10, 11 and 12 through its Seed Funding program, a number of bespoke RTO reviews across its 43 school RTOs and the accredited training of 27 schoolteachers and 18 career guidance officers through its scholarship programs, increasing the number of practitioners able to deliver VET courses and provide relevant pathways guidance.
- The SA Department for Education launched the *MyCareerPortal* website, providing government secondary schools with free access to a nationally recognised online career education platform. The website provides opportunities for government school students to explore their interests, values and aspirations, explore careers and the world of work through virtual work experience, and plan their future career journey.
- New SACE subjects (Stage 1 Exploring Identities and Futures and Stage 2 Activating Identities and Futures) were accredited as compulsory requirements of the senior secondary qualification. The subjects aim to develop students’ transferable capabilities for life from Stage 1 to Stage 2 and to pathways beyond school.

- In SA, the second pilot of the Capabilities and Learner Profile involved 42 schools and 1,202 students and focussed on formally recognising students' capabilities developed through curriculum and activities outside of the classroom and matching their capabilities profiles to tertiary pathways and inform tertiary entry applications.
- In Tas, the Department for Education, Children and Young People implemented programs to increase student access to quality learning programs:
 - All secondary schools have now extended to include Years 11 and 12, ensuring accessible education pathways.
 - Virtual Learning Tasmania provides online learning programs for students in Years 11 and 12 to mitigate barriers to access and equity in remote geographical locations.
 - Forty-two schools delivered Vocational Education and Training qualifications. They offered a range of face-to-face and online short qualifications that enhanced learner success and employability skills.
- Equitable pathways through partnerships with TasTAFE and the University of Tasmania were provided, including University Connections, High Achiever Programs and Schools Recommendation Program to facilitate higher education access for young Tasmanians.
- Catholic Education Tasmania launched a system wide learning management system (LMS) called Connect. The platform will enable multiple colleges to exist as separate schools within one platform. The benefit for senior years is that teachers can easily share courses and curriculum materials between colleges which reduces planning time for staff and facilitates the sharing of best practice in curriculum design. It also makes learning seamless for students taking senior courses at an alternative college to their home school. A major feature of the LMS is that student assessment, reporting, pastoral and attendance data flows between colleges.
- The VCE Vocational Major (VCE VM) and the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) were introduced in Victorian secondary schools. All local government secondary schools now offer the VCE VM to their students, with 25 schools delivering a vocational senior secondary certificate for the first time. Across all sectors, 84% of senior secondary providers have authorisation to deliver the VCE VM.
- In Vic, the core offering of VET Delivered to School Students (VDSS) was updated to include Victoria's growing Clean Energy sector. The core offering now includes 41 VET certificates grouped into 12 pathways aligned with student interests and industry needs. The removal of cost barriers, new funding, and planning efforts have partly contributed to a 25% increase in the number of Victorian government schools who had students enrolled in all 6 of the Priority Pathways for VDSS. Additionally, the *Head Start* program now supports over 3,000 students in participating in apprenticeships or traineeships during Years 10, 11, and/or 12.
- In WA, a review of senior secondary school pathways was launched in June 2023. The *Pathways to Post-School Success* review explores whether current pathways are effectively preparing students for further study, training or work options. The review is being led by the Department of Education WA in partnership with Catholic Education Western Australia and the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia.

3.9 Embedding pathways for learning throughout life and supporting effective transitions

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration notes “at key developmental periods in each young person’s life they transition between early childhood to primary school, from primary to secondary school and from secondary school to further education, training and employment ... Australian Governments commit to helping young Australians navigate the choices they will need to make for their education, training and employment by providing guidance and streamlining transitions”.

VET delivered to secondary students

Programs for the delivery of VET to secondary students, including school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, operate in all states and territories. Under these programs, school students can combine school study with training towards an accredited AQF VET qualification. The achievement of a VET qualification signifies that a student has demonstrated competency against the skills and knowledge required to perform effectively in the workplace. All VET qualifications must be issued by registered training organisations (RTOs). Participation rates of school-aged students including secondary students in VET are reported in the National Report on Schooling data portal. VET course enrolments and VET qualifications completed by senior secondary students are reported at the school level on the *My School* website.

Skills Reform

The Australian, state and territory governments have committed to work collaboratively on long-term improvements to the VET sector through a new National Skills Agreement. The principles of this agreement were endorsed by National Cabinet in August 2022. The objective is to strengthen the VET system to produce high quality, responsive and accessible education. This includes greater national consistency where beneficial, stronger links to skills needs and supporting providers to deliver high quality education and training.

GENERATION Survey

The GENERATION survey of post-school destinations, a new national longitudinal survey of young people, was implemented in 2022. GENERATION is a joint Australian, state and territory government initiative that aims to gain insights into young people’s pathways from school into post-school education, training and the workforce, particularly for young people from key equity groups. The survey commenced in 2022 with over 15,000 Year 10 student participants across almost 300 schools. The survey has completed 2 waves of interviews, in 2022 and 2023, with data from the 2022 interviews publicly released on the Australian Data Archive in 2023. Participants will be followed up annually until around age 25.

State, territory, and sector initiatives

- As part of *Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT* the Preschool Pathways program was launched to assist parents and carers, early childhood services and community groups to support children’s transition to preschool with a suite of modules that build their knowledge and confidence, a range of resources including the Preschool Pathways Map.
- In the ACT, transition sessions were organised for families of children with disabilities moving between various school settings, including primary to high school, high school to college, and post-college. The National Disability Insurance Scheme collaborated with specialist schools to provide information nights regarding post-school transitions and options. Early advice was given to schools about enrolling students with disabilities, allowing for early implementation of supports such as infrastructure improvements, additional staffing, professional learning, and meetings with families.

- Careers NSW School Trials were delivered in Terms 2-4, 2023. The purpose was to support high schools by engaging students from Year 7 to think about their careers, discover who they are and explore who they can become. There were 61 high schools actively engaged in the program, with over 7,100 students engaging in the Trial. The services complemented the schools existing career advice programs and schools were given the opportunity to select from the bespoke services available.
- The *Careers NSW Post School Program* supported people at any stage of their working life to gain the support and skills to empower their participation in further education, training, or employment. Customers booked one-on-one appointments with qualified Career Practitioners for career exploration, skill identification, goal setting, resume, interview skills, job search, training and further education. Bookings could also be made with an Industry Expert to gain advice and understanding on an industry of interest.
- The NT Department of Education continued to work with industry, training providers and schools to ensure the VET programs delivered to secondary students result in appropriate and relevant employment pathways which are aimed at increasing the apprenticeship and traineeship uptake and students completing an NT Certificate of Education and Training.
- The Qld Government invested \$40.7 million in Early Years Funding grants in 2023–24 to organisations to support universal and targeted supports for children and families. This included support for families, early childhood education and care services and schools to positively transition children from home to quality early learning services, kindergarten and schools.
- Qld Department of Education expanded the *Link and Launch* program which now operates from a total of 36 schools across the state to work with young people who have completed Year 12 and who are not in study or work to make a successful transition to a post-school destination. At December 2023, *Link and Launch* has worked with more than 3,400 young people since the program was established in 2019.
- Independent Schools Qld committed to collaborations and engagements to ensure that pathways for learning were made available and accessible to learners and that effective transitioning from school-based programs to further and higher education opportunities or work were well supported. This included collaborations across schools sectors along with Queensland’s Department of Employment, Small Business and Training to unpack VET Reform components, working alongside the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority to ensure support for structured planning, the inclusion of vocational education pathways and awarding of credit to Senior Secondary Certificates of Education and being part of the Gateway to Industry Schools Steering Committee which oversees 12 programs connecting schools with industry engagement opportunities.
- In SA, construction of the Findon Technical College was completed. The college is the first of 5 technical colleges to be built across SA and will be opened in 2024. It provides students in Years 10 to 12 with the opportunity to learn skills in the areas of advanced manufacturing and engineering, early childhood and education, health and social support. The industry training programs at each technical college have been designed with input from employers, universities, and training organisations, offering specialised industry pathways and real-world work experience. Graduates will be well-equipped for immediate employment or further education opportunities.
- South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) Board worked with the South Australian Tertiary Admissions Centre and tertiary education providers to develop effective models to match students to tertiary pathways. SACE continued to engage with industry stakeholders to identify the capabilities that employers and the industry value.

- In Tas:
 - Government schools were supported to strengthen their career education provision and transition planning through the delivery of the Graduate Certificate in Career Development to school staff. There were 53 qualified career practitioners working across Department schools and portfolios.
 - Government School teachers were supported to obtain or upgrade their TAE qualifications, achieving an increase in the availability of VET training to Tasmanian Senior Secondary Students, and expanding and retaining the VET school workforce.
 - *Driving for Jobs* is a school-based program, supporting students from areas of high socioeconomic disadvantage to obtain their driver licence.
 - Videos showcasing School-based Traineeships and Apprenticeships as an exceptional VET pathway were developed, highlighting how they give real world experience and enhanced career prospects.
 - The Department for Education, Children and Young People prompted the development and implementation of a quality assurance process for the review of 2023 transitions plans.
- In Vic, the Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms have delivered deeper student engagement with careers and pathways and support for effective transitions for early school leavers. This included high-quality careers exploration and planning to support students to locate and consider career opportunities to support decision making during, and following, secondary schooling and participation in work experience to inform student career aspirations and development, develop soft skills, and provide industry and workplace insights. It also involved scoping and design work on the enhanced supports for early school leavers which will support the most vulnerable students to reengage in learning.
- Victoria's 10 Tech Schools continued to help local partner secondary schools enhance STEM learning and embed pathways into further STEM study and careers. Tech Schools are located on tertiary education campuses and provide access to hands-on and immersive STEM learning experiences for 150,000 secondary school students.
- Catholic Education Commission of Victoria provided funding to assist secondary schools to develop a whole school approach to career development and build the capability of school teams to assist students with pathways transition. 32 teachers received part-sponsorship to undertake the Graduate Certificate in Career Development Practice through the Career Education Association of Victoria (CEAV) Institute. In addition, 4 schools were funded to undertake Career benchmarking services through CEAV to assist them to deliver quality career education and development programs for students.
- The WA Department of Education launched the Career Learning Toolkit. The toolkit is an online hub housing resources to assist teachers and career practitioners with planning for career development learning. This equips students with the tools and knowledge required to successfully transition to post-school pathways.

3.10 Delivering world-class curriculum and assessment

As part of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, Australian governments have committed to ensuring that all education sectors deliver world-class curriculum and assessment in Australian schools.

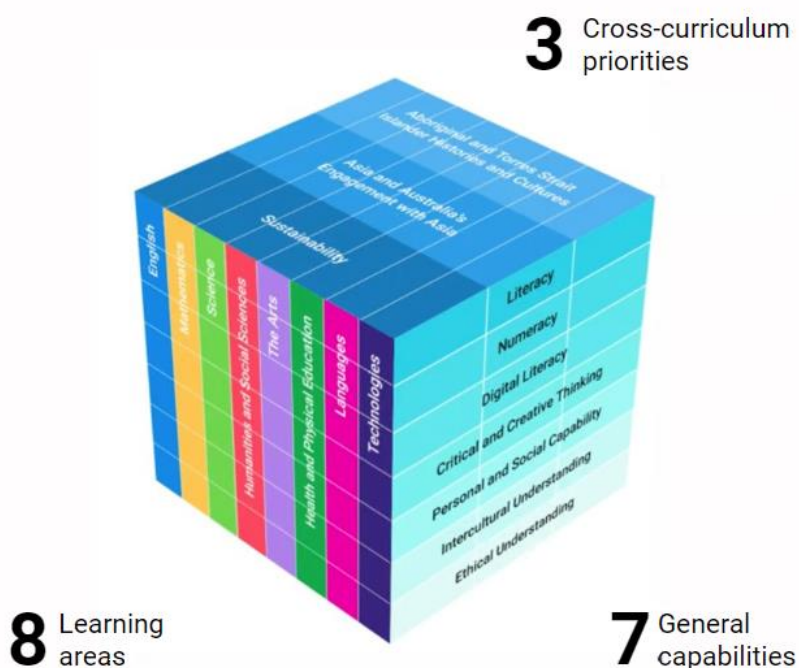
Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)

ACARA's functions in curriculum and assessment are to:

- Provide authoritative advice to stakeholders and facilitate information sharing, collaboration and support for the Australian Curriculum
- Monitor the effectiveness of implementation of the Australian Curriculum and
- Undertake research to inform national policy and practice.

The 3-dimensional design of the Foundation – Year 10 Australian Curriculum recognises the importance of disciplinary knowledge, understanding and skills within the 8 learning areas, alongside general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.

The three dimensions of the Australian Curriculum



There are 8 learning areas in the Australian Curriculum, corresponding to those listed by education ministers in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration:

- English
- Mathematics
- Science
- Humanities and Social Sciences
- Health and Physical Education
- Languages
- Technologies
- The Arts.

The Australian Curriculum incorporates 7 general capabilities:

1. Literacy
2. Numeracy
3. Digital Literacy
4. Critical and Creative Thinking
5. Personal and Social Capability
6. Intercultural Understanding
7. Ethical Understanding.

There are also 3 cross-curriculum priorities:

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures
2. Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia
3. Sustainability.

The general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities are addressed within the content of the 8 learning areas.

In June 2020, Education Ministers asked ACARA to review the Foundation – Year 10 Australian Curriculum. The review was required to: refine and reduce the amount of content in all 8 key learning areas and reflect the goals of The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. The revised Australian Curriculum, Version 9.0, was endorsed by education ministers in April 2022 and published on the new [Australian Curriculum](#) website in May 2022.

In 2023, ACARA continued work on completing the final phase of the curriculum review with languages being progressively released for public comment and updated. Five Languages (German, Indonesian, Korean, Modern Greek and Spanish) were endorsed and published on the Australian Curriculum website in February 2023. Four Languages (Arabic, Hindi, Turkish and Vietnamese) were endorsed in August 2023 and published on the Australian Curriculum website in October 2023.

The final stages of review and consultation for Chinese background and first language learner pathway, Classical Greek, Latin, and the Classical Languages framework was undertaken in 2023. Publication is occurred in February 2024.

The final stages of review and consultation for Auslan and the Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages Framework was undertaken in 2023 and will be concluded in early 2024. Publication occurred in May 2024.

In response to an increase in mental health concerns, education ministers requested a review of the Australian Curriculum content related to mental health and wellbeing. Through consultation at the 2022 Mental Health Forum, hosted by ACARA, the following recommendations were made:

1. Add more text to unpack the mental health and wellbeing focus area description
2. Add specific reference to loss and grief to some existing elaborations
3. Develop a Mental health and wellbeing Curriculum connection.

Recommendations 1 and 2 were considered, actioned and published on the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 website. Recommendation 3 was considered and actioned. The Curriculum connection: Mental health and wellbeing was published on the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 website in August 2023.

Senior secondary curriculum

Fifteen Australian Curriculum senior secondary subjects across English, Mathematics, Science, History and Geography have been endorsed by education ministers as the agreed and common base for the development of state and territory senior secondary courses.

State and territory curriculum, assessment and certification authorities are responsible for determining how the Australian Curriculum content and achievement standards are to be integrated into their courses.

Information on senior secondary qualifications in states and territories is included in Part 3.8: Supporting senior secondary education.

Curriculum projects

In 2023, ACARA undertook a range of curriculum project activities. These included:

- Enhancing functionality of the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 website, with the National Formative Assessment Resource Bank and 19A projects both exploring solutions to enable the publication of optional resources to support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0.
- The addition of work samples to the Resources section of the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 website. By May 2023, 82 work samples had been published.
- The launch of ACARA's Professional learning hub in May 2023, with an initial release of 2 modules focused on key changes. The hub is a new Australian Curriculum support resource for teachers and educators. Module 3 was released in June 2023
- The re-launch of the website curriculum selector tool with enhancements to the user experience
- Publication of the Machine-Readable Australian Curriculum (MRAC) files and student diversity content in May 2023
- Preliminary research into the review of the Australian Curriculum: Work Studies
- Preliminary research into the review of the Australian Curriculum: Senior Secondary.

Refresh of the Approved Learning Frameworks

In December 2022, the Education Ministers Meeting approved the updated versions of Australia's 2 nationally approved learning frameworks:

- Belonging, Being and Becoming: Early Years Learning Framework for Australia Version 2.0 (EYLF V2.0), and
- My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia Version 2.0 (MTOF V2.0).

The updates strengthen the connection between the EYLF and the NQS in areas such as transitions, sustainability, theoretical approaches, critical reflection, the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of being, knowing and doing, and inclusion,

The updates also provide continuity for children in terms of their development and wellbeing, as they transition from ECEC to school and outside hours school care. After a 12-month period of familiarisation in 2023, all approved providers and their services will be required to be operating in accordance with the updated frameworks from 2024.

National Assessment Program

The National Assessment Program (NAP) consists of:

- Annual national literacy and numeracy tests (NAPLAN).
- Sample assessments in Civics and Citizenship, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Literacy and Science Literacy for Years 6 and 10 conducted on a 3-year cycle (NAP Sample).
- Australia's participation in international assessments.

ACARA is responsible for overseeing the NAPLAN and NAP Sample assessments. The Australian Government Department of Education (AGDE) oversees participation in international assessments.

For national reporting purposes KPMs for participation and achievement in assessments within the NAP have been approved by education ministers and are specified in the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020.

NAPLAN 2023

NAPLAN is an annual national assessment for all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Students in these year levels are assessed on their literacy and numeracy skills through tests in reading, writing, conventions of language (spelling, grammar, and punctuation) and numeracy. The tests are aligned with the Australian Curriculum: English F–10 and the Australian Curriculum: Mathematics F–10.

ACARA is responsible for the development and oversight of the delivery of the NAPLAN tests. States and territories are responsible for the administration of the tests in each jurisdiction. The national platform for administering NAPLAN online is managed by Education Services Australia and funded by the Australian Government.

In 2022, Australian Education Ministers agreed to critical improvements to NAPLAN, giving teachers additional information about student performance earlier in the year. In 2023, NAPLAN, which traditionally has been held in Term 2 of the school year, was held in Term 1 (March). A record 4.4 million online tests were taken by almost 1.3 million students in 9,390 campuses and schools across Australia.

Education ministers also agreed in February 2023 to introduce new proficiency standards for the reporting of NAPLAN results on a reset measurement scale that takes full advantage of the more precise online tests. A new NAPLAN time series began in 2023, with reporting against 4 proficiency levels: Exceeding, Strong, Developing, Needs additional support. This change provides parents and carers with more meaningful information on their child's performance and will identify more struggling students who need additional support. On 22 June 2023, ACARA released the NAPLAN results to TAAs to provide to schools.

NAPLAN results data for 2023 is available in interactive form on the ACARA NAP website. The interactive report and the NAPLAN National Report for 2023 provide comparisons of performance by state and territory; by student characteristics such as gender, Indigeneity, and parental education; and by school characteristics such as location. The 2023 NAPLAN National Report and 2023 Test Incident Report were published in August 2023.

NAP–sample assessments

The national sample assessments test the skills and understanding of Year 6 and Year 10 students in the areas of science literacy, civics and citizenship, and ICT literacy. The assessments began in 2003 and are usually held on a rolling 3-yearly basis. Participating schools are sampled from all states and territories and school sectors.

In June 2020 Education Council decided to postpone the NAP–ICT Literacy sample assessment scheduled for 2020 by 12 months to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In September 2021, Education Ministers decided to further postpone the NAP–ICT Literacy assessment to 2022 due to the continued COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, NAP–Science Literacy and NAP–Civics and Citizenship were also delayed by a further 12 months. This postponement has resulted in a one-off 5-year gap (as opposed to the normal 3-year gap) in the time series for each of the sample assessments.

In 2022, Australian Education Ministers agreed that the existing NAP sample assessments in Science, Civics and Citizenship, and ICT Literacy (to be renamed and re-designed as Digital Literacy), which involve some students in Years 6 and 10 every 3 years, should take place in Term 2 from 2023.

Separate opt-in assessments in these same domains and year levels will also be available in Term 2 each year for any school or system. Science will be available in 2024, with Civics and Citizenship added in 2025 and Digital Literacy in 2026. The results of these opt-in assessments will be available to participating schools and systems to support their teaching and learning programs and will not be reported publicly by ACARA.

Progress for each of the NAP sample assessments outlined below:

1. **NAP – Science Literacy (NAP–SL):** The seventh NAP–Science Literacy sample assessment was conducted in May 2023. NAP–SL measures science literacy as defined in the Australian Curriculum: Science: ‘An ability to use scientific knowledge, understanding, and inquiry skills to identify questions, acquire new knowledge, explain science phenomena, solve problems and draw evidence-based conclusions in making sense of the world, and to recognise how understandings of the nature, development, use and influence of science help us make responsible decisions and shape our interpretations of information’. The public report providing the findings of the assessment will be published in May 2024.
2. **NAP – Information and Communication Technology Literacy (NAP–ICTL):** The 2020 cycle of NAP – Information and Communication Technology Literacy (NAP–ICTL), which is the sixth in the NAP–ICTL program, was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and administered in 2022, resulting in an unusually extended 5-year period. Assessment modules were reviewed to ensure assessment items were positioned and aligned to the assessment framework in relation to both the Version 8.4 Australian Curriculum: Digital Technologies learning area subject and the Information and Communication Technology general capability. The public report providing the findings of the assessment was published in late 2023.
3. **NAP – Civics and Citizenship (NAP–CC):** The sixth NAP–Civics and Citizenship (NAP–CC) assessment of a sample of Years 6 and 10 students was delivered online in October and November 2019 (incorporating aspects of the Australian Curriculum: History). The final report was published on the NAP website in January 2021. From March to May 2023, ACARA undertook an extended review of the assessment framework for NAP–CC to ensure the assessment items are aligned to the assessment framework in relation to the Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences learning area subject.

NAP – international assessments

Three international sample assessments included in the NAP are used as a basis for KPMs for school achievement. These are:

- Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA):

The PISA assessments take place every 3 years and assesses 15-year-olds in reading, mathematical literacy, and scientific literacy. PISA is developed and administered internationally by the Organization for Economic Co-operation Development (OECD).

In 2020, OECD member countries and associates decided to postpone PISA 2021 to 2022 and PISA 2024 to 2025 to reflect post-COVID difficulties. Results for PISA 2022 were released at the end of 2023.

- Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS):

The TIMSS assessments take place every 4 years and assesses Year 4 and Year 8 students' achievement in mathematics and science. The assessment is administered by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). Data collection for the most recent cycle of TIMSS took place in Australia in late 2023. Results will be released in December 2024.

- Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS):

PIRLS is a 5-yearly assessment of reading literacy for Year 4 students. The IEA is responsible for PIRLS. Almost 5,500 Year 4 students from 281 schools around Australia participated in the PIRLS 2021 assessment. The results were released in May 2023.

State, territory and sector initiatives

- The ACT Education Directorate:
 - Worked with all schools to implement the Australian Curriculum Version 9. Schools were supported to make reasonable adjustments to curriculum and assessment as required for students with disability and diverse learning needs, including access to the Abilities Based Learning and Education Support assessment and reporting suite.
 - Released the Student-Centred Improvement Framework which includes pedagogy, curriculum and assessment as elements of the learning school improvement dimension. Schools will be required to self-evaluate curriculum and assessment related student outcomes against the improvement tool, aiming to sustain positive impact with culturally relevant and responsive approaches across the whole school.
- NSW continued to deliver a new curriculum by working to streamline and strengthen what is taught in NSW schools. New syllabuses focus on essential content which identifies the core knowledge and skills that students have a right to know and which they need to progress in each subject. The delivery timeline was extended to allow teachers additional time to plan and prepare before implementation in classrooms.
- NSW syllabuses continued to have strong community ownership through public consultation and stakeholder engagement, with 27 draft syllabuses released for consultation in 2023. In addition, 6 new syllabuses were released during the year.
- NSW released the first Auslan (Australian Sign Language) Syllabus for K-10 students in NSW schools. This new syllabus was developed in consultation with the Deaf community, teachers, students and parents. Schools can plan and prepare to teach the new syllabus from 2023, with full implementation from 2026.

- Catholic Schools NSW (CSNSW) pioneered an assessment project known as 'Gradeo.' By leveraging an extensive bank of Trial HSC exams developed by CSSA (a division of CSNSW), Gradeo will be a high-quality, online assessment hub for teachers and students. Gradeo could be utilised for HSC revision, including to access full past papers or individual items or clusters of items as mini 'check-in' assessments. Phase One of Gradeo included a research and consultation report on attitudes and approaches to new models of online assessment. The report leverages desktop research, a technology scan and findings from consultations with students, teachers, parents and assessment experts.
- Following the release of Version 9.0 of the Australian Curriculum, the NT is developing EsseNTial Curriculum, a package of resources for Territory teachers, which removes duplication and aligns to year-level standards. The EsseNTial Curriculum package adapts the Australian Curriculum to the NT context and will support schools with their whole-school curriculum maps and help reduce teacher workload. T-10 EsseNTial Curriculum English and T-10 EsseNTial Curriculum Maths are scheduled for release in Semester 1, 2024.
- The Qld Department of Education provided the Australian Curriculum in Prep to Year 10, as written, to ensure all students, of all identities and abilities can access and participate in the curriculum alongside their similar-aged peers and achieve academically and socially with tailored supports including reasonable adjustments that meet their learning needs.
- The Qld Department of Education provided a suite of high-quality Prep to Year 10 curriculum planning and assessment resources that supported schools in implementing all 8 learning areas of the curriculum.
- To support quality curriculum, Independent Schools Queensland delivered First Nations Education professional learning events. These included an intensive workshop on embedding First Nations perspectives and knowledge in classroom curriculum planning, and online modules on partnering with local First Nations peoples and embedding First Nations perspectives in numeracy.
- The SA Department for Education worked with the Center for Curriculum Redesign (Boston, USA) and 11 schools (25 teachers) to begin a trial of the CCR PRIMO modern mathematics curriculum for Year 10 students. This is a 4-year commitment helping participants develop deeper understanding of mathematics, enhance pedagogical practices and further develop use of technology as a tool in mathematics.
- The SA Department for Education commenced work to develop new financial literacy resources that will be rolled out to schools in 2024 to help students develop the necessary knowledge and capabilities to make sound financial decisions.
- In SA authentic curriculum and assessment SACE subjects were developed, that focus on student agency and metacognition, as well as cultivating conditions to deliberately develop student capabilities. These subjects are Stage 1 Exploring Identities and Futures and Stage 2 Activating Identities and Futures.
- All Tasmanian Government schools commenced planning, teaching and assessing using Version 9.0 of the Australian Curriculum. Resources and professional learning, including sessions facilitated by ACARA representatives, were available from 2022 to deepen understanding of the key changes across Learning Areas and year levels and to support the implementation process. The alignment between curriculum and assessment was further reinforced through the phased implementation of the revised *Reporting and Communicating with Families policy and procedures*.

- Victorian Curriculum F–10 Version 2.0 is scheduled to be published mid-2024. The revision builds on the success of the current Victorian Curriculum F–10 by ensuring the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 is implemented in Victoria while maintaining Victorian priorities and standards and making the curriculum more teachable and manageable. Victorian Curriculum F–10 Version 2.0 curriculum is informed by findings and recommendations of our education system’s leading specialists. The revision to the curriculum conducted during the past 16 months is the culmination of the participation and advice provided by 250+ teachers in the CARPs, focus groups with school curriculum leaders, and sector feedback.
- In WA, revised Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines were released. The Guidelines support teachers and educators to develop curriculum and facilitate the optimal learning and development of Kindergarten children. The changes strengthen the teaching of digital literacy, cultural responsiveness, environmental and sustainable education, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, social competence and mental health and wellbeing. The updated guidelines reflect the changes in V2.0 of the Early Years Learning Framework.

3.11 Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners to reach their full potential

In the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, “Australian Governments commit to empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to reach their potential and to ensuring the education community works to ‘close the gap’ for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples” (p 16).

On-Country Learning

The On-Country Learning Measure (the measure) was announced through the 2023-24 Federal Budget as part of the [Better, safer future for Central Australia](#) plan and is a commitment of \$40.4 million over 2023-24 and 2024-25. The measure is designed to support improved attendance and education outcomes at all operating government and non-government schools in the Central Australia region and will 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. The majority of funding under this Agreement will go directly to public schools in Central Australia. Every operating school in Central Australia will receive additional funding in 2024 through the On-Country Learning measure.

Boarding support

The Australian Government provided \$15.758 million through grants to assist boarding providers to better support the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students and to continue to keep students engaged in school and ensure improved education outcomes. To continue this support, Commonwealth funding of \$17.25 million was announced for the 2023 school year.

Indigenous Advancement Strategy

The Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) is the way the Australian Government funds and delivers a range of programs for Indigenous Australians. In the 2021-22 Budget, the Australian Government allocated \$5.7 billion to the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) over 4 years, extending until 2024-25, for grant funding processes and administered procurement activities that address the objectives of the IAS. “Children and schooling” is one of 6 focus areas of the IAS.

State, territory and sector initiatives

- The ACT Education Directorate delivered the Koori Pre-Cultural Safety Framework, Koori Pre-Curriculum and resources to support the evolution of Koori Preschool in the ACT the *Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT*. The resources have been designed to meet the needs of community now and in the future, particularly around cultural safety and integrity and are used to enhance engagement and decision-making in Koori Preschools. These documents underpin programs at the 5 Koori Pre sites. Identified staff members created a website to support the induction of new staff into the Koori Preschool. Before beginning formal schooling, vulnerable or disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children can participate in up to 30 hours a week of high-quality early childhood education by enrolling in in Koori Preschool and Early Entry to preschool.
- The NSW Department of Education held its first ever state-wide School Development Day with a focus on Aboriginal education on 24 April 2023. All schools were required to participate in 6 hours of accredited professional learning. A suite of online options was developed to support schools in the successful planning and implementation of the day.
- In NSW, Aboriginal Learning and Engagement Centres provided support to more than 3,100 Aboriginal students across 37 schools. All schools prepared a Strategic Improvement Plan, which outlined the steps they will take to improve learning outcomes, and work towards more Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students completing school.

- The NSW Department of Education released the Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2023-2025, founded on building trust and confidence with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees, families and communities to create safe workplaces and to ensure Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children get the best possible educational outcomes.
- The Association of Independent Schools of NSW's Waratah Project continued into its eighth year, with participation increasing to 40 schools. The project supports improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through literacy, numeracy, and wellbeing initiatives, using a 'hub and spoke' model to develop and implement strategies in partnership with families and communities.
- Catholic Schools NSW (CSNSW) published its second report on Aboriginal Education Outcomes in NSW Catholic schools. The report is based on the CSNSW Aboriginal Education Strategy, which is a commitment to an annual reporting framework to monitor Aboriginal student outcomes against state and national KPIs, as well as collecting and sharing best practice case studies.
- The *Leaders of Tomorrow* program supported 48 Aboriginal students from across 9 schools in the NT to connect with business and local industries to gain skills, qualifications and future employment opportunities. The program provides personal development opportunities and promotes student voice. Students participated in a range of opportunities throughout the year such as workshops, work placements, interstate trips, forums and collaborations.
- Indigenous Languages and Cultures (ILC), including bilingual education, provides students with the opportunity to learn about Indigenous cultures, through the Australian Curriculum and through Indigenous languages. Forty-three schools across the NT offered an ILC curriculum to over 4,000 students.
- The Qld Department of Education:
 - Established an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisation and stakeholder group to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families to participate in early childhood services.
 - Funded a range of excellence programs for high-achieving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Qld state schools. This includes *Solid Pathways-STEM* - an online program for students in Years 4 to 6 and the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aspirations Program* - a challenge-based competition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 7 to 12.
 - Continued to promote culturally safe and inclusive workplaces to improve the attraction and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, through implementation of its ATSI workforce strategy.
 - Progressed implementation of the Department's cultural capability framework, providing a common understanding of what cultural capability looks like and how to visibly demonstrate this through actions and values.
- The SA Department for Education launched its 2023-2026 Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan. It continued to work with the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee (PYEC), an Anangu-run organisation that leads the strategy for the education of Anangu in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, Maralinga Tjarutja Lands and Yalata Lands; and continued to partner with external agencies such as the Clontarf Foundation and Glass Jar Australia to support the mentoring and engagement of Aboriginal students, families and community.
- To support equity, well-being and recognition of Aboriginal ways of knowing and being the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) Board completed 2 pilots in allyship with Aboriginal communities.

- In SA, 28 students received credits towards SACE completion for their cultural knowledge and learning as part of the second pilot of the *Recognition of Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge and Learning* project.
- The Tas Department for Education, Children and Young People supported Tasmania's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners by ensuring that:
 - Learning plans were in place for all Aboriginal students.
 - Aboriginal Educators worked in schools with the highest learning and wellbeing gaps.
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures curriculum and pedagogy professional learning was provided to teachers.
 - Culturally responsive resources were created for teachers and students.
 - Scholarships were provided for Tasmanian Aboriginal students from remote or rural areas to pursue tertiary education.
 - Aboriginal learning facilitators brought learning to life for students in museums.
- The Victorian Department of Education's Koorie Outcomes Division undertook multiple initiatives to enhance the educational landscape for Koorie students:
 - The *Strengthening Professional Capability of Principals in Koorie Education* program delivered 22 workshops focusing on leadership in First Peoples education to 259 participants, including school leaders and school-based staff from over 136 total schools.
 - 181 participants from 107 schools engaged in 55 anti-racism workshops, facilitated by the Centre for Multicultural Youth in collaboration with the Koorie Heritage Trust.
 - The *Koorie Clusters* project made progress by focusing on integrating First Peoples histories, cultures, and perspectives into the Victorian Curriculum F-10, thereby enriching the educational content and fostering a deeper understanding and respect for First Peoples' knowledge among Victorian students.
 - 1,011 school staff from 125 schools completed an anti-racism eLearning course, developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission. This highlights the ongoing commitment to anti-racism education within the Victorian education sector.
- Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) fostered a deeper understanding and integration of Indigenous perspectives and reconciliation within the educational landscape. Schools and early learning services accessed tailored support and resources, aiming to embed Indigenous cultures, histories, and contributions meaningfully into their curricula and communities. Through its partnership with Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali program, ISV offered workshops, webinars, and tools and resources to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These programs delved into policy development, curriculum design that integrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, and strategies for supporting Indigenous students' well-being and academic pathways.
- The Department of Education WA established a system-level Aboriginal Advisory Body, with 10 Aboriginal members appointed, to advise on the Department's progress towards reconciliation and creating a culturally responsive education system.

3.12 Supporting all young Australians at risk of educational disadvantage

In the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, Australian governments “commit to ensuring the education community works to provide equality of opportunity and educational outcomes for all students at risk of educational disadvantage” (p 17).

Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program

The Australian Government is investing \$10.9 million over 7 years (2023-24 to 2029-30) in the *Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program* pilot. In 2023 the Government announced that the pilot will deliver 100 scholarships commencing in 2024 to students from regional, rural and remote areas in Australia, to assist with secondary school boarding fees and associated costs. The pilot will provide additional financial support to low-income families and families experiencing financial hardship, who are unable to afford the full cost of boarding school fees and associated costs even with existing government support, with the intention to reduce families’ financial contribution towards boarding school fees.

Needs-based school funding

Under the *Australian Education Act 2013*, Australian Government recurrent funding for schools is calculated using a base per-student amount plus 6 loadings for school size, school location and student disadvantage.

For most non-government schools, the base amount is discounted by the estimated capacity of parents to contribute towards the school’s operating costs.¹¹

The areas of student and school disadvantage addressed through the loadings are:

- students with disability
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- students from low socio-economic backgrounds
- students with low English proficiency
- location of the school (remoteness)
- size of the school.

Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability

The Australian Government will invest \$20 million over 4 years to continue the NCCD Continuous Quality Improvement Measure. Ongoing support for the program will ensure that appropriate funding continues to build the capacity of schools to implement the NCCD and deliver better educational outcomes for students with disability. This will also contribute to the Australian Government’s response to the National School Resourcing Board’s review of the loading for students with disability and the Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005.¹²

¹¹ The capacity to contribute does not apply to government schools, non-government special schools or special assistance schools, non-government majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools, or non-government sole provider schools.

¹² For more information about Students with Disability in 2023, refer to Chapter 2, Section 2.4: School Students with Disability.

The Smith Family's Growing Careers Project

The Australian Government is providing \$38.2 million over 4 years (2020/21 to 2023/24) to support the Smith Family's Growing Careers Project. The project supports over 76,000 disadvantaged high school students across Australia to participate in a suite of careers education activities that aim to support successful transitions from school to work or to further education and training.

Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Australia – Disadvantaged Youth Program

The Australian Government provided \$3 million to support 4,500 disadvantaged young people over 2021/22 to 2023/24 to access the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award. The Disadvantaged Youth Program provides young people with disability, aged 14 to 24 years, and young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, refugee, and regional and remote communities, aged 14 to 18 years, with opportunities to develop non-academic and academic competencies.

State, territory and sector initiatives

- In the ACT:
 - The ACT Government released *Inclusive Education: A Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools 2024-2034* which was developed after an extensive consultation process with schools, families, teachers and other stakeholders. The Strategy and its First Action Plan will strengthen inclusive education for students with disability and diverse learning needs by making sure schools have the support to meet the needs of all learners.
 - ACT schools continued to receive access to professional learning and facilitated networks and expert advice from the Allied Health Service and School Psychology Service. Infrastructure modifications were made to schools and all schools now offer disability education programs (which feature a smaller class size and a dedicated space for regulation) and inclusion support in general education classrooms.
 - The ACT Education Directorate recruited additional social and youth workers as part of a 4-year commitment to provide early intervention and support to students and their families in public schools.
- In NSW:
 - The Equity Placement Model was introduced to ensure that students from all backgrounds have fair access and opportunity to attend selective high schools and opportunity classes. Under the Model, up to 20% of places are held for high potential and gifted students from low socio-educational advantage areas, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students, students from rural and remote areas, and students with disability.
 - The *COVID Intensive Learning Support Program* (COVID ISLP) was extended to the end of 2023. In 2023, 1,670 NSW public schools employed 4,021 educators to support 50,539 students.
 - *Get Back in the Game* (GBIG) offered a wraparound case management service for young people aged 15- 19 supporting them into education, training or employment. Enrolment into the GBIG program included a thorough assessment phase to identify young people at risk of disengaging and tailoring individual transition plans to build their job readiness and subsequent workforce capability.

- The Framework for Inclusion 2019-29 sets out the department's 10-year plan for inclusive education in the NT. A multi-disciplinary team of 83 wellbeing and inclusion professionals was established in January 2023. The team is made up of specialist teachers, occupational therapists, psychologists and social workers, school counsellors and behaviour advisors. These professionals will help schools build best practice wellbeing and inclusion supports to meet the needs of students across the NT. Projects under the Framework include development of a needs-based resourcing model for students with disability; development of professional learning for educators to improve capabilities in de-escalation and positive behaviour; and continued support of a student advocacy service, in which 89 families were supported to resolve complaints, with 24 families receiving information to self-advocate and 65 families receiving more intensive support.
- The Qld Department of Education:
 - Introduced the *Kindy Uplift* program, supporting kindergarten services across Qld to better respond to the educational and developmental needs of kindergarten children, particularly children more likely to experience educational disadvantage.
 - Introduced a new *Students with disability – Reasonable adjustment* resourcing model, providing resources to Qld state schools, informed by the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability.
 - Continued to administer Regional Youth Engagement Service (RYES) supporting young people who have become disengaged to reconnect with education, training or employment. In 2023, the RYES connected with and supported 4,186 disengaged school aged young people with 1,500 supported to make a transition back to education, training and/or employment.
- The number of mental health and learning support specialists in SA public schools increased in 2023. The South Australian Government funded access to an Autism Inclusion Teacher (AIT) in every public primary school from the 2023 school year.
- The SA Department for Education's Digital Strategy includes the Student Device Program ensuring all school card students in Years 7 and 10 receive a digital device at no cost to them by 2026. This also includes the Student Home Internet Program which provides any student in the public education system with access to free, reliable internet at home for educational and learning purposes. This can be requested at any point throughout the year.
- The South Australian Certificate of Education Board strategic plan has a targeted focus on broadening the definition of success through intentional curriculum and assessment recognition policy changes that recognise the diversity of students' backgrounds and matching to diverse pathways.
- The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia developed a series of e-modules that drew together best practice in inclusive education provision, the Australian Curriculum and supporting student diversity. Approximately one third of the SA Independent sector completed the e-modules, developing capacity to create universally designed units of study and assessment tasks, inclusive of curriculum adjustments.
- In Tas, funding of \$4.4 million over 2023-24 forward estimates was allocated to provide free access to speech pathologists, psychologists and social workers in every Child and Family Learning Centre. This included \$1.1 million in 2023-24.

- Tasmania’s approach in supporting student wellbeing is well advanced, underpinned by the Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy ‘*Wellbeing for Learning*’. Almost 30,000 student voices were heard through the annual Student Wellbeing and Engagement Survey and the whole-of government Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy ‘*It Takes a Tasmanian Village*’.¹³
- In Vic:
 - The Victorian Department of Education continued and expanded support for disadvantaged families to access uniforms, educational items, and free vision screening and glasses to enable students to fully participate in their education.
 - Funding was expanded for refugee education support initiatives that aim to build school workforce capacity to support the educational engagement, participation, achievement and wellbeing of children and young people from refugee backgrounds and their families.
 - The Victorian Department of Education continued to implement the *Disability Inclusion Reform* which saw over 850 government schools transition to a strengths-based funding and support model, ahead of state-wide implementation in 2025. School workforce capability-building initiatives also continued to operate state-wide. These initiatives include the *Diverse Learners Hub* and *Inclusion Outreach Coaching Initiative*.
 - The Tutor Learning Initiative provides government and low-fee non-government schools with funding to employ tutors to deliver targeted small group learning to students needing additional support in literacy and numeracy.
 - Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) developed a resource to support gender diverse students. This is a practical tool for schools and their leadership teams to support students within their school community who wish to affirm their gender.
- In WA:
 - All public schools with secondary students were provided access to free period products and dispensers. More than 220 schools benefited from the program, and it has helped to normalise and de-stigmatise the issue, provide dignified access to students who need it and address one of the barriers to school attendance.
 - An updated action plan, *Standing Together Against Violence*, with additional support and resources for WA public schools to prevent and respond to violent, aggressive or threatening behaviour, was released.
 - The Student-Centred Funding Model was strengthened to provide an additional \$8.5 million for increased resources to promote early interventions for students with literacy and numeracy difficulties and to improve explicit teaching in classrooms.
 - Under the Association for Independent Schools Western Australia (AISWA)’s *Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools Pilot Project*, 20 schools were supported to engage in wellbeing and mental health strategy development. Schools were provided with a small grant to engage a designated wellbeing and mental health school coordinator. Further support is provided via the AISWA psychology team.

¹³ In Tas, the Student Wellbeing and Engagement Survey is completed annually by students in Years 4 – 12. It provides measures of student wellbeing through the voice of our learners. Schools use this data to inform School Improvement Planning, and students use this data to plan action with teachers. At a system level, data informs aspects of performance reporting and the delivery of support to schools.

3.13 Strengthening accountability and transparency with strong meaningful measures

In the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (p 19) Australian governments commit to continuing to provide public reporting that:

- Focuses on improving performance and student growth and outcomes for all students
- Provides parents with information on their child's performance, progress, and outcomes
- Is locally, nationally, and internationally relevant
- Is accessible, timely, consistent, and comparable.

This includes access to national reporting on the performance of all schools, contextual information about a school and information about a school's enrolment profile.

Improving the national evidence base is one of 3 policy reform directions specified in the NSRA. Agreed policy initiatives in this area are implementing a national unique student identifier (USI); establishing AERO to inform teacher practice, system improvement and policy development; and improving national data quality, consistency, and collection.

The National Unique Student Identifier (USI)

The USI for school students is one of the 8 national policy initiatives in the National School Reform Agreement. This initiative will provide every Australian school student with a USI number that will travel with them throughout school and into VET and higher education.

The Australian Government is leading the implementation of the Schools USI project, in collaboration with state and territory governments and the non-government schooling sector.

In 2023, the Schools USI project focussed on developing and delivering enabling components for implementation of this national initiative. These activities included consultation on proposed legislative amendments, privacy and data management, technical design and stakeholder engagement.

Australian Education Research Organisation

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) is a joint ministerial company responsible for generating new evidence on effective teaching and learning practices and making this evidence accessible for teachers and school leaders across Australia. It is governed by a Board of up to 8 members appointed by the Education Ministers Meeting. Launched in December 2020, AERO's scope covers both the schooling and early childhood sectors. The establishment of AERO is a national policy initiative to improve the national evidence base under the NSRA. In September 2021, Education Ministers Meeting approved AERO's 3-yearly strategic plan and research agenda for 2021–22. In 2023, AERO published resources to inform teacher practice, system improvement and policy development using evidence-based approaches in the schooling and early childhood education sectors.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)

The data collection and reporting functions of ACARA are to

- Collect, manage, and analyse student assessment data and other data relating to schools and comparative school performance
- Facilitate information-sharing arrangements between Australian government bodies in relation to the collection, management, and analysis of school data
- Publish information relating to school education, including information relating to comparative school performance.

The ACARA Charter specifies the following priorities for data and reporting:

- Assess data needs to review, and if necessary, introduce new performance indicators in the measurement framework
- Manage the collection and quality assurance of data for policy development in the school education sector and provide accessible and comprehensive national school and schooling information (including the *My School* website and NAP reporting)
- Produce a revitalised, timely and accessible national report on schooling, which meets the goals for national performance reporting.

Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia

In 2020 ACARA revised the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia to reflect the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. The schedule of KPMs was also revised to reflect the postponement of NAP sample and international assessments due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020, endorsed by Education Council in December 2020, is the basis for reporting of KPMs for 2023.

National Report on Schooling in Australia

In February 2023, ACARA published the National Report on Schooling in Australia 2021 following endorsement by the National Assessment, Data, Analysis and Reporting Reference Group. The report was prepared in consultation with representatives of state and territory education authorities, other government agencies and non-government school sectors.

For the first time in 2023, sections of the National Report on Schooling in Australia were released progressively, allowing more timely access to data and commentary and more closely aligning the National Report on Schooling in Australia and the National Report on Schooling data portal. Sections of the National Report on Schooling in Australia 2022 were published in June, August and December 2023, with the final report released in February 2024.

National Report on Schooling data portal

The online data portal provides public access, on a single website, to a wider range of national and state and territory data on schooling in Australia than available elsewhere. It includes current statistics and time series data on school numbers, enrolments, staffing and funding, and data on the agreed KPMs for schooling, including attendance, retention, assessment and Year 12 or equivalent attainment. The portal allows users to view and download data at the national level, and to disaggregate data by state and territory, by school sector, by calendar year and by available breakdowns of equity groups such as sex and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status. In 2023, as part of the progressive release of the National Report on Schooling in Australia, PDFs containing commentary were progressively added to each data portal page.

My School

ACARA is responsible for the national data collection on individual schools reported on the *My School* website. *My School* includes information on school type and sector; data on enrolments, staffing, student attendance, senior secondary outcomes and VET activity, school funding, and the performance of the school's students in NAPLAN assessments; and a school comment submitted by principals.

Australian Schools List website

ACARA maintained the Australian Schools List website for online education services that rely on a current and accurate list of registered schools in Australia.

The list of schools is compiled from school registration authorities in each state and territory, providing details of all schools and campuses in Australia. It also includes school location, school type and school sector attributes. The list is refreshed quarterly.

ACARA continued to provide third parties access to ACARA-collected data under the Data Access Protocols 2015.

State and territory initiatives

- In the ACT:
 - The evaluation framework for the ACT Government's 10-year plan *Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT* outlines the approach to evaluating the outcomes of the strategy. The Phase One (January 2020 to December 2022) evaluation report was released in 2023. The report outlined the key actions and initiatives delivered throughout Phase One and the impact of their implementation.
 - Schools develop individual learning plans for all students accessing formal disability programs. This is audited annually and reported in the annual report. Individual learning plans must also be developed for students in out of home care.
 - The Student-Centred Improvement Framework increases the use of system and school real-time data and contextual evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of its structures, processes and practices that impact the inclusive and equitable education for every child and young person.
- In October 2023, the NSW Department of Education launched *Our Plan for NSW Public Education*, which serves as a guide to improve the education system over the next 4 years. The plan outlines the department's commitment to enhancing accountability and transparency in public education through robust, data-driven success measures within 6 focus areas and enablers. The measures will provide the most comprehensive set of metrics to date to measure the department's work to improve outcomes for all public-school students. This commitment to evidence-driven actions, coupled with systematic progress reports, ensures that the goals of the plan are achieved efficiently and effectively, with clear visibility of progress against strong and meaningful measures.
- The *Education NT Strategy 2021-25* is supported by 6 headline improvement measures (relating to improvements in teacher student relationships as assessed through the school survey, foundational early literacy skills, attended days, NAPLAN growth, A-E grades, and Year 12 achievement).

- The Department of Education in Qld used priority measures identified within the *Equity and Excellence* strategy to provide clarity to schools, and the broader system, about the measures used to monitor educational achievement, wellbeing and engagement, and culture and inclusion. The priorities focus on knowing the needs of children and students, achievement in English and Mathematics, maximising learning days and post school transitions. In SA new subject pilots and Capabilities and Learner Profile pilots involved testing new approaches to quality assurance. This provided better feedback (earlier in the school year) that strengthened the expertise of teachers to make professional assessment decisions and build capability in the system.
- In SA, capabilities assessments were made for over 1,200 students by utilising the SACE capabilities as an assessment instrument alongside subject assessment. This supported a more meaningful measure of student success.
- The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia supported SA Independent schools for the earlier 2024 NAPLAN in March, ensuring successful compliance with national participation requirements for students in years 3, 5, 7, and 9. Training opportunities, including those focusing on student disability and accessibility, were delivered, in addition to help-desk service.
- Tasmania’s public release of key data on the Department for Education, Children and Young People website has been made more accessible and includes more frequent updates for some measures.
- The Victorian Department of Education implemented a comprehensive review of education performance measures in the Victorian State Budget papers. This review strengthened the range of performance measures through better alignment to service delivery outputs.
- The Department of Education WA successfully introduced a range of new financial compliance services and refinements to existing practice. This included 40 desktop-based school compliance reviews in addition to the normal on-site reviews and piloting of a new report format designed to make recommendations and available resources easier to understand for principals and other non-finance professionals.
- In WA, improvements to the Public School Review model were informed by the findings and recommendations of the 2023 Office of the Auditor General performance audit ‘*Effectiveness of Public School Reviews*’.
- The Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) Student Learning Journey (SLJ) was launched in 2023. This is a digital platform that provides access to a range of academic data and allows educators to measure the learning growth of each child. The data in the SLJ should be triangulated against other student-centred information to provide meaningful planning, assessment, feedback and measurement of student growth. It is designed to complement the CEWA *Learning Insights Application*. It can be used in a variety of ways, e.g. data informed discussion, student insights, personalising learning and communicating with parents. The CEWA Common Assessment Framework and collection of consistent data across schools through the SLJ provides system-wide growth data and enables greater tracking of students moving between schools, supporting teachers to cater to individual student needs.