

Chapter 3: Policies and Priorities

This chapter outlines the national policy context for Australian schooling in 2024 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 2024, 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 and Workforce Ministerial Council (SWMC).

The Education Ministers Meeting (EMM) is a forum for collaboration and decision-making on early childhood education and care (ECEC), school education, higher education and international education. Australian, State and Territory government ministers responsible for education attend the meeting. The Commonwealth Minister for Education is the chair of the EMM. In December 2022, Education Ministers agreed to focus on the following national priorities:

- 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.

In 2024, Ministers continued to progress work across early education, school education and higher education.

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 should 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 Key Performance Measures (KPMs) for schooling.

National School Reform Agreement

The National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) was in place from 2019 to 2024.¹ This was a joint agreement between the Commonwealth, states and territories that underpins Commonwealth funding for schooling over this period. The NSRA specified 8 national policy initiatives, grouped under 3 reform directions:

- Supporting students, student learning and student achievement:
 - enhancing the Australian Curriculum to support teacher assessment of student attainment and growth against clear descriptors
 - 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
 - reviewing senior secondary pathways into work, further education, and training.
- Supporting teaching, school leadership and school improvement:
 - 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
 - strengthening the initial teacher education (ITE) accreditation system.²
- Enhancing the national evidence base:
 - 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 base³
 - establishing an independent national evidence institute to inform teacher practice, system improvement and policy development
 - 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 2024 is noted below and in the following sections of this chapter.

¹ 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 focused on driving real and measurable improvements for students most at risk of falling behind. Findings from the Review helped to shape the new agreement, to take effect from 2025. To provide time for this work to occur, the NSRA was extended for a further 12 months, to 31 December 2024.

² ITE refers to degrees and/or diplomas required for professional employment in teaching.

³ 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 National School Reform Agreement underpins Commonwealth funding for schooling and seeks to lift student outcomes. In 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.

In 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. In 2024, the Australian Government worked closely with state and territory governments and key education stakeholders to develop the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025–2034* (BFSA) and the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement – Full and Fair Funding 2025–2034* (the Full and Fair Funding Agreement), which replaces the National School Reform Agreement.

National Teacher Workforce Action Plan

On 15 December 2022, Education Ministers agreed to the *National Teacher Workforce Action Plan* (NTWAP) 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:

- improving teacher supply
- strengthening initial teacher education
- keeping the teachers we have
- elevating the profession
- better understanding future teacher workforce needs.

More information is provided in Section 3.4: Supporting Quality Teaching and Leadership.

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 2024, the final phase of the curriculum review was completed, with curricula for languages progressively released for public comment and updated. More information is provided in Section 3.10: Delivering world class curriculum and assessment.

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. In 2024, the Australian Government Department of Education continued to work closely with state and territory governments and non-government education authorities to implement the Review recommendations. The focus was on the development of information products to help children and students with disability and their caregivers understand their rights under the Standards. More information is provided in Section 3.12: Supporting all young Australians at risk of educational disadvantage.

Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council

The Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council (SWMC) consists of portfolio ministers with responsibility for skills and training in their jurisdiction, including the Commonwealth Minister for Skills and Training as the Chair.⁴ It provides a forum for national cooperation and stewardship across the vocational education and training (VET) system and on the intersection of skills and training policy with workforce issues.

The Council collaboratively progresses items of national importance within the portfolio to achieve agreed objectives, outcomes and priorities, including those set out in the National Skills Agreement. The SWMC is focused on supporting skills reform including:

- embedding the stewardship model to deliver national priorities
- delivery of key initiatives and reforms
- placing TAFE at the Heart of the VET sector
- oversight of the national training system and
- First Nations engagement and Closing the Gap.

Skills Reform

The Australian, state and territory governments have committed to working collaboratively on long-term improvements to the VET sector through a new National Skills Agreement. The National Skills Agreement, which commenced on 1 January 2024, is a 5-year agreement between the Australian and state and territory governments, working in partnership to ensure that the national vocational education and training (VET) system provides high-quality, responsive and accessible education and training to boost productivity, support Australians to obtain the skills and capabilities they need to obtain well-paid, secure jobs, and ensure Australia has the skilled workforce it needs now and into the future, with TAFE at the heart of the VET sector.

In September 2024, Federal, state and territory Skills and Training Ministers met to launch a key part of the National Skills Agreement, the inaugural *National Skills Plan* (the Plan), which will guide the work of all governments to deliver a shared vision for strengthening the national vocational education and training (VET) system. It will focus on national training priorities and outcomes by providing a vision for unions, employers and the VET sector. Ministers also discussed how to support workers and communities impacted by the net zero transition, opportunities for new and emerging higher-level apprenticeship models, revised Standards for Registered Training Organisations and approaches to accelerate action to meet Closing the Gap commitments.

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 2024, 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).

⁴ 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.

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; and 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 2024 in addressing the 11 areas for action is reported in the following sections of this chapter.

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

The [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) is an agreement between the Australian Government, state, and territory governments, the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations and the Australian Local Government Association. It includes 4 Priority Reforms that focus on changing the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and 19 national socio-economic targets across areas that have an impact on life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including the following targets related to school 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% (Target 3).
- By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (age 20–24) attaining Year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96% (Target 5).
- 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% (Target 6).
- By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15–24 years) who are in employment, education, or training to 67% (Target 7).⁵

⁵ Details of the Closing the Gap targets and outcomes are available at: <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/targets>

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”.

National Teacher Workforce Action Plan

Through the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (NTWAP) all Australian governments work together to implement 27 interconnecting actions in 5 priority areas. A cross-government and sectoral working group oversees its implementation. In 2024, implementation of NTWAP was a standing item on the agendas of the Schools Policy Group, the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee and the Education Ministers Meeting.

Consent and Respectful Relationships Education

The Australian Government has 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 schools. This included \$77.6 million in funding to be provided to states, territories and non-government school systems and \$5.9 million in departmental funding to support delivery of the measure through:

- The National Respectful Relationships Education Expert Working Group (NRREEWG) to inform and guide the measure (established June 2023).
- Development of a National Respectful Relationships Education Framework (the Framework – expected for release in 2025).
- A rapid review on current RRE delivery (completed in October 2023 as an input to the Framework).

Partnership with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council

The Australian Government will provide \$12.5 million over 4 years from 2024–25 to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council (NATSIEC) to undertake its role as the national peak representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and to facilitate working in partnership with the Australian Government.

In 2024, the Department of Education and NATSIEC undertook discussions to develop a formal Partnership Agreement. This Partnership Agreement will make a significant change in direction for the Department of Education's approach to the education of First Nations' children and young people. It is the doorway for the department to engage in meaningful shared decision making through NATSIEC's independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Network of education experts.⁶

⁶ This work is consistent with the Australian Government's commitment to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, specifically the 4 Priority Reforms, and targets 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 14 and 16.

Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership

In the 2024–25 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO), the Commonwealth Government announced a further \$11.4 million to extend the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (ECCDPP) over 3 years from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2028, to continue to bring together governments and First Nations representatives to develop recommendations to improve early childhood outcomes for First Nations children and families. The measure includes funding for the Commonwealth Department of Education and a grant to SNAICC – National Voice for our Children to continue their roles as co-chair and co-secretariat of the Partnership and a research fund for the Partnership to commission research.⁷

In 2024, ECCDPP made its first set of recommendations to the Joint Council on Closing the Gap and published two pieces of independent research, including funding model options for integrated Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation early years services and an evidence review on optimal hours of ECEC for First Nations children.

State, territory and sector initiatives

Partnerships with the early childhood sector continued 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 Yerrabi Yurwang Child and Family Aboriginal Corporation was engaged to deliver a culturally safe early childhood scholarships program for Indigenous early childhood educators.

The *University of Canberra Affiliated Schools Program*, a key initiative under the ACT’s Future of Education Strategy, 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:
 - Continued to strengthen its partnership with the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales (NSW P&C Federation) under a ten-year [partnership agreement](#).
 - Signed a three-year funding agreement with the NSW P&C Federation to support their work with members and with parents, carers and families of NSW Public Schools. Key initiatives under the agreement include the development of a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to encourage Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to join their local P&C, and enhanced engagement channels with parents, carers and families.
 - Continued to strengthen its work with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Incorporated through its ongoing formal Partnership Agreement *Walking Together, Working Together*.
 - Worked in formal partnership with the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations to implement and deliver on the education Closing the Gap targets.
- In the Northern Territory, a key program for developing stronger partnerships with parents is the *Families as First Teachers* (FaFT) program which targets the development of childrens’ early literacy and numeracy skills through parents. FaFT is established in 55 communities across the NT, with children attending from birth to compulsory school age. A core element of FaFT is engagement with community to ensure a responsive and relevant place-based program delivery. In 2024, 2,636 children participated in FaFT and 41 of the 80 educators who delivered the program were Aboriginal. Aboriginal Family Liaison Officers codesign and deliver FaFT and are critical to engaging families and community. Developing relationships with local families early through the FaFT program builds the foundations for partnership and engagement through schooling.

⁷ ‘SNAICC – National Voice for our Children’ was formerly called the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC).

- The Queensland *Equity and Excellence: realising the potential of every student* education strategy sets the direction for Queensland's state schooling system with the aim of lifting educational outcomes. In 2024, work continued with:
 - establishing dedicated educational precincts to implement targeted responses to local needs
 - supporting schools in the most complex communities by collaborating with partners and across government to deliver locally responsive and integrated strategies
 - delivering integrated school-based hub models that provide a full range of services to support children, students, families and communities
 - piloting a new Parent Liaison Service to help support parents and staff where student behaviour has contributed to conflict in the partnership between home and school.
- The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Shared Decision-Making in Queensland State Schools Framework*, which aims to support communities and schools share decision-making to improve educational outcomes, was piloted across a number of socio-educationally disadvantaged Queensland state schools.
- The South Australian Department for Education:
 - implemented the Aboriginal Voice Framework to ensure Aboriginal expertise, knowledge, experience, perspectives and voices are embedded in all corporate policy and project development
 - partnered with Tauondi Aboriginal College to co-design and co-deliver professional learning to support the implementation of this framework
 - collaborated with over 350 employers to host more than 240 employer immersion events, involving 12,000 students and 640 teachers, to increase career awareness and preparedness
 - partnered with Flinders University to fast-track Findon Technical College students to complete their first year of university while in Year 12.
- In Tasmania, the Department for Children, Education and Young People provided funding and worked in partnership with multiple organisations to support student wellbeing and readiness for learning:
 - Stay ChatTY: \$250,000 (one-year portion of three-year agreement) to deliver the *Stay ChatTY Schools Program* to students in Years 9 to 12 in Tasmanian Government Schools
 - Australian Childhood Foundation: \$449,000 (one-year portion of two-year agreement) to deliver the *Trauma Informed Practice in Schools* professional learning program
 - Working It Out: \$300,000 (one-year portion of three-year agreement) to expand the *Valuing Diversity in Schools* program
 - Sexual Assault Support Service: \$312,000 to deliver its *Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention and Consent is a Conversation* programs to multiple secondary schools
 - Bravehearts: \$230,000 to deliver *Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure* program to primary schools in 2024 to raise awareness about consent and protective behaviours.
- The Victorian Department of Education partnered with 17 African Australian-led organisations to provide tailored and culturally appropriate education support to 1,350 African Australian young people and their families through the Victorian African Communities Action Plan (VACAP) *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.

- In Western Australia:
 - A 5-year partnership with Woodside, the *Karratha and Roebourne Education Initiative*, was formed. The partnership aims to increase educational attainment and achievement; improve educational opportunities and pathways support for students; support pathways to employment and assist the attraction and retention of quality teachers through the delivery of professional learning and development.
 - The BHP Pilbara Education Partnership was extended for schools in Newman, Port Hedland and surrounding areas for the 2024 school year. Worth more than \$3 million, the programs provided through the Partnership have a focus on the early years and pathways to employment or further studies. In addition, the *Rise Up* program continued to provide a whole school framework and targeted support to assist students to meet individual goals around attendance, achievement, leadership and community engagement.
- The *Innovative New Models for Recognition of Holistic Learning Project* connected South Australian Independent schools to a global learning network. Collaborating with international thought leaders, participants explored new ways to recognise holistic learning and use the Learning Impact Tool, designed to assess and enhance student learning through narrative and digital storytelling.
- The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia developed several partnerships to enhance educational outcomes including partnerships with:
 - the Department of Training and Workforce Development to implement Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs
 - University of Western Australia on the research project Teaching Einsteinian Physics
 - FORM (Building a State of Creativity) on a Creative Learning project to engage secondary students at risk.
- Examples of partnerships in the Catholic education sector included:
 - In Western Australia, cross-sector partnerships were established to support First Nations students in boarding, including collaboration with transition support services in WA, NT and Queensland. A joint initiative between education authorities enabled coordinated monitoring of student movement and interstate transfers. Work was undertaken with the School Curriculum and Standards Authority to pilot a Generative Artificial Intelligence tool to reduce teacher workload.
 - In NSW, partnerships between schools, families and communities were strengthened through the *Connected Catholic Communities* project, a successful symposium in August and the launch of an interactive website to support ongoing collaboration and engagement.
 - National and international interest in the *Catalyst* evidence-based teaching and learning program, with 30 visits to Canberra-Goulburn Catholic schools to observe the program in action, reflecting a shared commitment to collaboration and continuous improvement in explicit practice.
 - Brisbane Catholic Education became an ambassador for the *Rome Call for AI Ethics* program and partnered with Microsoft to analyse the impact of AI in education.

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

All Australian governments worked together to implement 27 actions across 5 priority areas under the [National Teacher Workforce Action Plan](#) (NTWAP). Progress and achievements from 2024 included:

- Round 1 of the Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships was delivered, with 985 scholarships awarded to new Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students.
- Ten providers were successful in obtaining \$70.9 million in grants for the *High Achieving Teachers* program to provide an additional 1,497 places in innovative pilots.
- Microcredentials on Explicit Teaching and Classroom management were released, available online at no cost to teachers, with the third on Teaching Phonics to be released in early 2025.
- All jurisdictions participated in a trial that provided students with unlimited attempts at the *Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education* (LANTITE) and improved feedback on results. Following the trial, Education Ministers agreed to continue to permanently remove test limits and continue improved feedback from 2025.
- Several Workload Reduction Fund pilots were agreed, to explore new approaches to reduce teacher and school leader workloads and maximise the value of their time.

Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships

Round 1 of the Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships (CTS) was delivered, with 985 scholarships of up to \$40,000 awarded to ITE students commencing an accredited ITE degree in 2024. Targeted cohorts include First Nations peoples, people from regional, rural, remote areas, mid-career professionals and school leavers with an ATAR over 80. In return for the scholarship, recipients are required to teach in government schools or government-run early learning settings for a time equivalent to the length of their teaching degree. Applications for Round 2 opened in November 2024.

The Teacher Education Expert Panel

In 2023, the Teacher Education Expert Panel (TEEP) delivered a report to the Minister for Education suggesting a series of reforms to strengthen ITE programs and 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 2024, a number of TEEP recommendations were fully implemented, including establishment of a new, independent Initial Teacher Education Quality Assurance Oversight Board (recommendation 3) in June 2024 and the launch of the Australian Professional Experience Guidelines (recommendation 9) in November 2024. The Australian Government also established the Strong Beginnings (Transition) Fund (recommendation 6) to provide funding to support eligible providers to embed the core content in their ITE programs by December 2025. Providers were able to receive \$15,000 per eligible ITE course they deliver. Applications for the Transition Fund opened on 23 April 2024 and closed on 20 May 2024. A total of \$4.275 million in funding was approved and distributed amongst all 46 eligible ITE providers following assessment of applications by the department.

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) is a not-for-profit Commonwealth company established to promote excellence in teaching and school leadership across Australia. AITSL works to ensure that every child and young person in Australia has access to excellent teaching and leadership, and that every teacher and leader has the support, development, and recognition they need to be effective in their roles. For example, AITSL has responsibility for supporting the implementation of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* and the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals*; and implementing the *Australian Teacher Workforce Data* (ATWD) in partnership with the Australian Government Department of Education, state and territory governments, teacher regulatory authorities and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

High Achieving Teachers Program

In 2022, through the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, the Government committed 1,500 more places to the *High Achieving Teachers* (HAT) program as part of expansion pilots. This is being delivered in two phases. The first 105 places, delivered by La Trobe University in two cohorts in Victoria and New South Wales, commenced in primary schools in 2024.

In 2024, 10 providers were selected through a competitive grant process to pilot new and innovative employment-based pathways into teaching across all states and territories, with 1,497 places to be delivered under Phase 2 from 2025.

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. The program provided leadership development and training to teachers with leadership potential working in regional and rural schools. A total of 206 participants completed the program over 4 years between 2021 and 2024. An evaluation of the program found that it had a positive impact on teachers wanting to progress to position of leadership or higher responsibility.⁸ Australian Government support for the pilot ceased in December 2024.

⁸ Further details of the evaluation are available at: <https://www.education.gov.au/teaching-and-school-leadership/resources/evaluation-future-leaders-program-final-report>.

State, territory and sector initiatives

- In the ACT:
 - Implementation of the ACT Government's *Inclusive Education: A Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools 2024–2034* included recruitment of 9 inclusion coaches to promote inclusive practice and develop system resources within schools.
 - 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.
 - A new Inclusion Community of Practice focused on universal design and multi-tiered systems of support.
 - Leadership programs have provided universal and targeted supports to build the capability of instructional leaders and managers to deliver the Student-Centred Improvement Framework.
 - Work has progressed to establish *Strong Foundations*, a new approach to supporting consistent high-quality teaching of literacy and numeracy. This has included system licences to Progressive Assessment Tests and provision of evidence-based resources for schools.
- In NSW, the School Leadership Institute (SLI) provided leadership development programs and support. In 2024, the SLI engaged with more than 6,100 current and future school leaders in nearly 1,780 schools, through leadership induction conferences, leadership development programs, and online resources. The SLI launched the *Regional, Rural and Remote Middle Leaders program* to provide equitable access to professional learning across the state, piloted mentoring programs to nurture school leaders, developed a teacher leader development program and continued offering ongoing leadership development and on-demand resources.
- The NSW Department of Education introduced a range of measures to attract and retain quality teachers and to reduce administrative burden, including management of restrictions on before and after school regular meetings; additional school development days to provide classroom teachers access to additional time for planning, programming and professional learning; increased flexible work arrangements; changes to school-based assessment reporting requirements and additional and varied leave entitlements supporting teachers with family, work and care responsibilities.
- The Northern Territory Learning and Teaching model released in 2024 is an evidence-based approach to pedagogical practice, developed with the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) based on AERO's model. This model provides clear guidance and support to teachers in the NT, and professional development and support for its implementation has coincided with its release. The model provides evidence-based teaching practices aligned with how students learn.
- English Assessment Design and Performance Standards (ADaPS) materials for Transition to Year 10 teachers were released in the Northern Territory in January 2024. These materials provide detailed descriptions of performance at each grade level, with specific references to the year level achievement standards and support parameters for educators. ADaPS is intended to facilitate professional discussions around curriculum standards, assessment design, and student achievement within a Quality Assurance Cycle and collaborative planning in and across school contexts.

- The Queensland Department of Education empowered early years workforce and school teachers to build their professional expertise through the:
 - Early Childhood Workforce Strategy
 - Queensland Teaching Workforce Strategy 2024–2027
 - The department's *We All Belong Equity and Diversity Plan*
 - *More Teachers, Better Education* policy that commits to freeing up teachers to spend more time in the classroom
 - Queensland Virtual Academy that lifted teaching expertise by leveraging digital and virtual learning to support excellence for Queensland state school students
 - Education Futures Institute which delivered new and existing flagship programs to support early career teachers and statewide professional learning
 - Partnership with AITSL to support and build key capabilities of effective middle leaders in schools
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework to build an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, shared history, and how to integrate this knowledge into teaching, learning and service delivery.
- In South Australia:
 - The *Safeguarding Democracy* initiative provided training for Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) teachers in Years 7 and 8, aiming to have a Civics and Citizenship teacher in every secondary school by 2027. Professional learning was also extended to non-HASS teachers in Years 9 and 10 to integrate democratic values across curricula.
 - The Specialist Teacher Workforce Plan supported curriculum specialists through Orbis Curriculum Professional Learning programs. Efforts to increase teacher permanency resulted in over 1,800 temporary contracts being converted, focusing on preschool and younger teachers.
 - The Literacy Guarantee Unit, with 28 coaches, enhanced literacy instruction, while an online Literacy Summit attracted over 3,000 participants. There was also a face-to-face Numeracy Summit that provided professional learning to over 1,300 numeracy leaders.
 - The South Australian Department for Education provided professional learning in reading for all early years of schooling teachers including foundational reading skills, phonemic awareness, phonics and oral reading fluency.
 - The South Australian Teacher Certification Committee streamlined the certification process for teachers at the Highly Accomplished and Lead career stages, used across all South Australian educational sectors to recognize and enhance teacher quality.
- Tasmanian Principals, school leaders, teachers, and school staff received explicit guidance and instruction on using a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework within the context of Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) priorities, school priorities, and student needs. The MTSS framework, as defined in the DECYP position statement, relies on layers of support to ensure all students are known, engaged, and learning every day by providing the right amount and type of support at the right time.
- The Tasmanian DECYP's *Our Approach to School Improvement* publication was revised to provide clarity on 2024 expectations and to provide guidance to schools as they navigate collaborative inquiry and improvement processes.

- In Victoria:
 - the Victorian Government announced that all government schools will implement a refreshed Victorian Teaching and Learning Model (VTLM 2.0) and reading position, setting out contemporary evidence of how students learn and the teaching practices that best support learning.
 - The Victorian Government developed high quality Victorian Lesson Plans and resources to support teacher workload and teachers working out of field. In 2024, the first lesson plans were published in Phonics Plus and mathematics, alongside professional learning webinars to support implementation.
 - The learning component of the Arc Platform was launched, with resources including *Mathscots* – an animation series that supports numeracy at home for early primary school aged children; and *Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships* guides.
 - The Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership provided high-quality, evidence-informed professional learning and pathways to enhance the capability and confidence of aspiring, emerging, new and established school leaders from the government, Catholic and independent school sectors.
- In Western Australia:
 - *Teaching for Impact*, part of the Quality Teaching Strategy, continued to guide schools to focus on the elements that have the greatest impact on student wellbeing, engagement and learning. It provided practical support to drive school improvement and increase student outcomes through 51 partnership schools.
 - *Leading Cultures of Teaching Excellence* equipped school leaders with frameworks and resources to build school cultures that enhance student learning. It provided tiered support to principals and their teams, focusing on school context, collaborative problem-solving, and improving classroom practice.
 - An attraction and retention package of \$15.49 million was provided to 68 schools in 2024. These schools were identified in the Regional Incentive Framework as experiencing significant recruitment pressures.
 - Thirteen aspirant Aboriginal leaders participated in the *Djiraly-ak djinda bidi 'North Star'* program, which supports career and leadership development. The program helped participants identify their professional goals, fostering leadership growth within Aboriginal communities.
- The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia participated in a Generative Artificial Intelligence pilot project with the Department of Education WA and Catholic Education WA to reduce teacher workload.
- Independent Schools Victoria's leadership and professional learning programs, including the *Aspiring Principals Program*, HALT Certification, and the *Teacher Fellowship Program*, helped attract and retain quality educators. These programs build leadership capacity, recognize excellence, and foster innovation.
- Independent Schools Queensland offered a middle leaders program to 50 leaders from 27 schools, providing professional learning and mentorship to develop leadership skills. Additionally, it partnered with YXL Institute for the *Beginning Teachers Support* program, allowing over 50 new teachers to network, discuss classroom practices, and share successes.

- The Catholic sector has continued to invest in high-quality teaching and leadership development:
 - Catholic Education Canberra-Goulburn provided professional learning to over 1,400 teachers in High Impact Teaching Practice, grounded in the Science of Learning, to strengthen evidence-based approaches in reading, writing, and mathematics.
 - Catholic Education Western Australia's *Vision for Learning* program fostered collaboration across secondary and regional networks, sharing effective practices supported by evidence and shared accountability.
 - Catholic Schools NSW offered a comprehensive suite of professional learning options for educators, including the *Avila Leadership Programme*, which graduated its first cohort in 2024.
 - Catholic Education South Australia supported pre-service and early career teachers through scholarships and mentoring. A new *Aspiring Principals' Program* further expanded leadership development pathways.
 - The *Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher Certification Program* for the Queensland Catholic sector continued to gain strength, with 22 teachers certified as Highly Accomplished Teachers and six certified as Lead Teachers in 2024.

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.⁹

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 includes National Law and National Regulations, the National Quality standard (NQS), assessment and quality rating processes and the national learning frameworks. The NQF 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.

There are two national approved learning frameworks (ALFs) in operation under the NQF:

- Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) V2.0 2022: the national approved learning framework for young children from birth to 5 years of age
- My Time Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia V2.0 2022: the national approved learning framework for school age children.

These frameworks outline principles, practices and learning outcomes that guide educational leaders and educators in their curriculum decision-making, and assist them in planning, delivering and evaluating quality programs in early childhood and school age settings.

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 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.

⁹ More information on early childhood education is available on the Australian Government Department of Education (www.education.gov.au/early-childhood).

National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy

The National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy was co-designed by ACECQA, all governments, and sector stakeholders, and released in October 2021. It 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. In July 2023, ACECQA launched an online dashboard to track progress against the 21 nationally agreed actions and complementary initiatives supporting the strategy's 6 focus areas.

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 a preschool outcomes measure from 2025. The focus of activity in 2024 was preparation for the preschool outcomes measure trial in 2025.

Productivity Commission Inquiry into Australia's early childhood education and care system

On 18 September 2024, the Productivity Commission released the final report of its comprehensive inquiry into Australia's early childhood education and care (ECEC) system. The report considers how to build a high-quality early learning system that is affordable, accessible, and inclusive. The report included 56 recommendations across 3 volumes and was informed by a consultation process over 16 months, which included 329 written submissions and 11 days of public hearings. The report made it clear that more needs to be done to ensure children experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage, who would benefit the most from high-quality ECEC, are not missing out.

Building a universal early childhood education and care system

On 11 December 2024, the Australian Government announced the next steps to building a universal ECEC system through:

- a \$1 billion Building Early Education Fund, which will see more ECEC centres built and expanded in areas of need, including in the outer suburbs and regional Australia
- a 3 Day Guarantee to replace the current Child Care Subsidy activity test from January 2026, with a guaranteed entitlement to 3 days per week (72 hours per fortnight) of subsidised ECEC for children who need it
- development of an Early Education Service Delivery Price to provide a data-driven understanding of the cost of quality ECEC service delivery around the country.

These reforms have been informed by the Productivity Commission and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's work on early education.

Review of Child Safety Arrangements under the National Quality Framework

In 2023, the Minister for Education and Minister for Early Childhood Education commissioned ACECQA to undertake a Review of Child Safety Arrangements under the NQF (the Review). The Final Report: *Findings and recommendations for the NQF and inter-related child safety mechanisms* (the Report), which was published on the ACECQA website in December 2023, made 16 recommendations about physical and online safety, child supervision and staffing requirements.

In 2024, Education Ministers accepted in-principle key recommendations from the Review and agreed they would work with other Ministers where recommendations went beyond Education. Implementation advice provided to Ministers was informed by consultation with ECEC sector, with further consultation to come. In consultation with senior Education officials and Education Ministers, the Child Safety Review Group is implementing the recommendations. Recommendations for priority action include reducing notification reporting timeframes for allegations of physical or sexual abuse, making services free from e-cigarettes/vaping and options to restrict the use of personal devices that take images or videos of children. Actions agreed will improve existing safeguards and enhance safety arrangements for children across ECEC services throughout Australia.

Early Childhood Education and Care Worker Retention Payment

Announced on 8 August 2024, the *Early Childhood Education and Care Worker Retention Payment* was introduced to support a meaningful increase to the wages of ECEC professionals. The initiative aims to address workforce shortages in a historically undervalued sector, while ensuring ECEC remains accessible and affordable for families.

The grant will fund a 15% wage increase above award rates over a two-year period from December 2024 for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved Centre-Based Day Care (CBDC) or Outside School Hours Care services, including CCS approved CBDC that deliver preschool, that opt-in. Providers must comply with fee constraints and engage workers under a legally enforceable workplace instrument.

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

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 Priority Reforms across its work in early childhood education and care. This includes the announcement in December 2024 that the Child Care Subsidy would be amended from January 2026, to enable families caring for First Nations children to access up to 100 hours per fortnight of subsidised early childhood education and care. This will support progress towards meeting Target 4 of Closing the Gap.

Formal Partnership Agreement with SNAICC – Voice for our Children

A formal Partnership Agreement was co-developed between the Department of Education and SNAICC to support all priority reforms under the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*. The Partnership Agreement:

- fulfills a key commitment made in the Commonwealth 2024 Implementation Plan to establish formal partnership agreements with First Nations peaks and to develop fundamentally new ways of working with First Nations people
- affirms SNAICC will share decision making with the department on initiatives affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in early childhood education and care
- provides accountability and transparency to how the department engages SNAICC and how its independent policy advice is incorporated into early childhood education and care policy reform.

As announced in the 2024–25 Budget, the Australian Government will provide \$16.6 million to SNAICC as core funding from 2024–25 to 2027–28 (and \$4 million [indexed] per year ongoing thereafter) to partner with Government on matters affecting First Nations children in early childhood education. Core funding will provide stable funding for the operations of SNAICC as the peak body for First Nations children and families and will facilitate their engagement with Government to ensure a coordinated approach to improving outcomes for First Nations children.

The Smith Family's *Let's Count* program

Let's Count is an early mathematics program for children aged 3 to 5 years which is aligned to the Early Years Learning Framework. The program aims to significantly improve the mathematical capabilities of preschool children and thus support successful transition to school. The Australian Government has funded this program since 2016–17.

State, territory and sector initiatives

- In the ACT:
 - The *Quality Engagement Program* provided targeted support to eligible early childhood education and care (ECEC) approved providers and their services to lift quality and improve outcomes for children.
 - Preschool Pathways Partners and Preschool Practice Coaches continued to support educators to build knowledge, confidence and capacity in quality pedagogy and universal practices. Professional learning on play-based learning and intentionality was delivered. This was complemented by a career pathways program providing scholarships and wrap-around supports for women to undertake early childhood education qualifications.
 - Public preschools were provided with access to the *Everyone, Everyday* program which aims to create a cultural shift in community attitudes towards disability and includes free access to quality resources and Teacher Quality Institute accredited professional learning.
 - The Koori Pre implementation of the Cultural Safety Framework and the Koori Pre-Curriculum continued, with the creation of a new website to support induction of staff into Koori Preschool.
- The NSW Department of Education:
 - committed \$430 million in preschool fee relief to support families with 3 to 5-year-olds in community preschool, long day care and mobile preschools,
 - continued the *Building Early Learning Places Program*, a targeted grants program that supports the creation of additional community preschool and long day care places for 0 to 6-year-old children, in identified undersupplied areas and for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, and
 - committed \$769 million, including \$552 million for capital funding to build 100 new public preschools by 2027. Gulyangarri Public Preschool, the first of the 100 new public preschools to be delivered, opened in October 2024.
- In the Northern Territory:
 - The Department of Education and Training continued to build the capacity of the ECEC workforce through the delivery of free professional development programs including the *NT Preschool STEM Games* and the *Little Scientists* training workshops.
 - The *Families as First Teachers* (FaFT) program is an established and culturally competent foundational learning program that operates throughout the Northern Territory. It uses the Abecedarian Approach Australia (3a), an evidence-based set of language rich teaching and learning strategies for early literacy and numeracy that supports intentional adult-child interactions. The program has four core elements: Language Priority (the overarching element), Learning Games, Conversational Reading, and Enriched Caregiving. It is supported by the Education NT Strategy 2021–2025 strategic actions, by building the foundations for learning and placing the child and student at the centre of the NT education system.
 - The Department of Education and Training was the first jurisdiction to trial the national Preschool Outcomes Measure tool. Work was undertaken to develop, trial and evaluate the tool, which is designed to support teachers and educators with making informed pedagogical decisions, and tailor learning experiences to children's development in oral language and literacy, and executive function.

- The Queensland Government delivered free kindergarten to all eligible children. \$2b (including \$382m from the Commonwealth National Partnership Agreement) was allocated to support this over 4 years as part of the 2023–24 State Budget. In 2024, more than 2,200 approved kindy services are participating in *Free Kindy*, and approximately 62,000 children were able to attend kindergarten for free (15 hours per week for 40 weeks).
- The South Australian Department of Education implemented several initiatives to enhance early childhood education:
 - The *Kindy Care* trials were conducted at 10 government-operated sites, offering increased flexibility and support for families by extending care beyond regular preschool hours.
 - The number of autism-qualified staff in preschools was increased.
 - The *Inklings* pilot program for early intervention services was introduced. This included delivery of the service in children's centres.
 - South Australian government schools offered a mid-year intake to over 4,600 reception students, giving families earlier access to high quality educational programs for their child. This strategy alleviates issues of large age gaps in early years classes and schools have embraced this opportunity to be innovative and install practices to support a smooth transition for children from preschool to school to set them up for the best possible start.
- In Tasmania,
 - The *Working Together* program provided 220 fully funded places for three-year-olds to attend up to 20 hours per week over 50 weeks in 43 early-childhood education and care services.
 - The *Early Learning for Three-Year-Olds* (EL3) initiative aims to increase access to early learning for three-year-olds in partnership with the ECEC sector, families and communities. In 2024, trial sites continued to be established in communities across Tasmania to test different models of early learning service delivery to meet local community needs. DECYP has partnered with the ECEC and the Catholic and Independent education sectors since 2023 to co-design and deliver the EL3 initiative.
 - The DECYP engaged a consultancy to undertake stakeholder engagement and economic modelling to better understand issues, barriers to ECEC service expansion and opportunities to overcome them, including in Greater Hobart and Greater Launceston. Findings from this project will help to better understand the supports and action needed for future expansion of EL3 in Tasmania.
- Victoria continued implementation of the *Best Start, Best Life* reforms:
 - In 2024, approximately 97% of services participated in *Free Kinder*, which allows all families to access free or low cost 3- or 4-year-old kindergarten; and 90% of eligible children participated in 3-year-old kindergarten.
 - Work continued to support the transition from 15 hours per week of 4-year-old kindergarten to 30 hours per week of pre-prep, with pre-prep roll-out to begin in six rural local government areas in 2025.
 - Early Learning Victoria (ELV) was established in September 2024 to oversee the operation of 50 government-owned early learning and childcare centres in the areas where they are needed most, with the first 4 centres to open in January 2025.
- *KindiLink* enabled Western Australian preschool Aboriginal children and their families to attend six hours a week at their nearest participating school. Early childhood teachers and Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers designed learning activities using the Early Years Learning Framework to develop social, emotional, language and cognitive abilities of Aboriginal children.

- Twelve Local Government Authorities in Western Australia received funding under the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) Grants Program to enhance early childhood education and outcomes. The initiatives focused on improving the wellbeing and school readiness of children up to 5 years old. Collaborating with local organisations, including families, schools, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, and Early Childhood Education providers, local government authorities delivered tailored programs that addressed community-specific needs.
- The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia actively contributed to the Minister's Early Childhood Advisory Forum cross-sectoral consultation, which informed implementation plans for introducing 3-year-old preschool from 2026. Key sector perspectives were shared in support of the aim that all South Australian children thrive.
- The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia implemented a *Leadership in Early Childhood* program using the Early Years Learning Framework to build educator understanding and skills enabling them to lead ongoing improvement and change.
- Independent Schools Victoria continued to provide early childhood services with professional learning opportunities. A newsletter is sent to the sector each month providing an overview of key events in early childhood and promoting evidence informed professional learning opportunities to educators.
- Catholic systems have continued to strengthen early childhood education through strategic partnerships and targeted professional learning:
 - Catholic Education South Australia partnered with South Australia's Office for Early Childhood Development to support universal, quality preschool for all 3-year-olds, including onsite allied health services and early identification pathways.
 - Catholic Education Northern Territory delivered its *Developing Early Years Leaders* program, building leadership capability and promoting quality practice. It also introduced an Early Years Assessment initiative, helping teachers analyse pre-primary data to inform programming and support individual growth.
 - Catholic Education Western Australia supported early years staff through workshops on the On-entry assessment and data analysis to guide learning decisions. System-wide professional learning also built understanding of the Early Years Learning Framework (v2.0).
 - Catholic Schools NSW expanded its professional learning modules covering transition, assessment, play, and pedagogy. The modules are available online and on demand to strengthen educator capability across diverse settings.

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.

Literacy Hub

The [Literacy Hub](#) was established in 2020 and contains quality-assured, evidence-based resources primarily aimed at teachers and school leaders. In 2024 it was enhanced and the first four phases of a series of 25 Phonics and Morphology Lesson Packs aligned to the Literacy Hub Phonics Progression were published. Work also began on a 7-module Professional Learning program, to be launched in 2025.

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. This includes free, self-paced mathematics Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) for teachers of Foundation to Year 10 students and explicit teaching modules to enhance primary school teachers' understanding and skills in the explicit teaching of mathematics, with supporting webinars and podcasts. In 2024, the Mathematics Hub published an additional 84 lesson plans covering material from Foundation to Year 10 of the Australian Curriculum.

Civics and Citizenship Education Hub

The [Civics and Citizenship Education \(CCE\) Hub](#), published in November 2024, is a new, freely available, online teaching hub created to save teachers time and help them develop interesting and engaging ways of teaching civics and citizenship subjects to their students. The CCE Hub contains more than 200 resources for teachers to help students learn about our system of government, legal system, media literacy and Australian citizenship. The resources are aimed at students from Years 3 to 10 and are aligned with the Australian Curriculum.

State, territory and sector initiatives

- In the ACT, the *Strong Foundations* program was announced to support schools to deliver literacy and numeracy education. This program of work implements the recommendations from the Final Report of the Literacy and Numeracy Education Expert Panel's review of literacy and numeracy education in ACT public schools. *Strong Foundations* is founded on evidence-informed, practical suggestions that will strengthen the education system by working together as one system delivering high quality, consistent teaching practices, reduce workloads for teachers and improve equity across schools. The Education Directorate prioritised the following actions in the first phase of the implementation plan:
 - the development of a Learning and Teaching Policy outlining the requirements for a system-wide approach to learning, including K-6 literacy and numeracy requirements
 - phased implementation of Year 1 Phonics Checks
 - additional funding was provided to schools with P-2 students to support the purchase of evidence-informed literacy and numeracy resources.
- The NSW Department of Education:
 - commenced the development of a number screening check for Year 1 students, engaging 19 schools in a small trial in Term 4 2024, with further phases planned in preparation for release to all schools. The screening check aims to assist teachers to identify and support students requiring intervention to meet stage expectations in numeracy.
 - 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 Northern Territory Department of Education and Training supported all government schools to develop a quality Annual School Improvement Plan (ASIP) in which schools set goals and plan for strengthened instruction with a focus on boosting literacy and numeracy. They focused on curriculum, pedagogy and use of data, with schools identifying actions to support improved outcomes for students. During 2024, the department set school improvement priorities for 2025 which were developed with a particular focus on boosting literacy and numeracy. In addition, schools were required to ensure this was effectively reflected in whole school data planning, whole school curriculum and assessment planning, and development of a whole school pedagogical model.
- In the Northern Territory, \$3 million will be provided to all schools to deliver swimming and water safety lessons to all children in Years 1 to 6 from Term 1 2025. In 2024, planning was underway to establish the delivery and funding models for the program.
- The Queensland Department of Education:
 - Had a strengthened focus on English and Mathematics and continued to prioritise foundational literacy and numeracy skills across the phases of learning. Teachers continued to have access to a range of high-quality, evidence informed literacy and numeracy resources and monitoring tools. In 2024, Reading remained a key departmental priority, supporting implementation of the Australian Curriculum Version 9 (ACv9) with a strengthened focus on phonics and evidence informed practices. The department's approach to the teaching of reading included a comprehensive suite of resources; advice and guidelines informed by research; and system-wide capability development to support Queensland state schools.
 - Provided support to state and non-state schools through the Reading Disorders – Language and Literacy team's *Reading and Writing Disorders Service*. The *Reading and Writing Disorders Service* provides resources and built capability in the identification and support of reading disorders, including dyslexia.
- The South Australian Department for Education:
 - Implemented the Phonics Screening Check for Year 1 students, reaching 11,884 students in government schools.
 - Provided fully funded professional learning for all early years of schooling teachers in reading including foundational reading skills, phonemic awareness, phonics and oral reading fluency. It also published the Monitoring Reading progress guide to support teachers to implement sequenced reading checks and interventions for students.
 - Conducted a trial of the Mathematics Assessment Interview (MAI) in 95 public schools, assessing over 7,000 students to identify those who were 'mathematically vulnerable'. This trial was part of a broader strategy to implement a Numeracy Check for Year 1 students by 2026. These efforts are aimed at early identification and intervention to support students' literacy and numeracy development.
- The Tasmanian Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) undertook research and analysis of evidence-based approaches to foundational literacy instruction to support schools to meet the Minimum Schooling Guarantee within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports. The University of Florida Literacy Institute *UFLI Foundations* program was endorsed as the DECYP selected phonics program for Prep to Year 2. *Word Origins* was endorsed as the preferred spelling and word study program to be used in Tasmanian Government schools. Training, resources and guidance were provided for schools to begin implementation of these two programs in 2024 to ensure Tasmania's teachers are equipped to deliver high quality literacy instruction for primary school students.

- With the Victorian Government’s announcement of Victoria’s reading position in 2024, schools were supported to implement this work through a comprehensive free reading program called *Phonic Plus* on the Arc Platform. *Phonics Plus* provides a scope and sequence of the curriculum in English from Foundation to Year 2 and daily lesson plans for every year level to Year 2.
- In Victoria, the *Primary Mathematics and Science Specialists* (PMSS) initiative 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 full-time equivalent time release to develop their skills and those of their colleagues across their school. In 2024, Cohort 7 (a mathematics-only cohort of 100 teachers from approximately 50 schools) completed the PMSS program.
- As described in Section 3.4, Victorian Lesson Plans in Phonics Plus and mathematics were published in 2024, alongside professional learning webinars for teachers and leaders to support implementation.
- In Western Australia:
 - The *Action Respect Initiative* strengthened Western Australian students' understanding of respectful relationships and consent by supporting schools with primary school students in whole-school approaches to respectful relationships education. The initiative was designed to provide schools with the tools and resources necessary to foster a culture of respect and consent, supporting the broader goal of improving student wellbeing and safety.
 - The Department of Education’s *Phonics Initiative* focused on building staff capacity through professional learning and consultations, emphasising effective phonics instruction and assessment. The *Leading Phonics in Schools* series was launched to help instructional leaders establish a consistent approach to phonics instruction.
- The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia supported primary and secondary teachers to investigate strategies and models for initiating and leading change in Mathematics and English in their schools. School-based change management approaches were supported by expert input from learning area specialists, protocols for reflection, discussion and action planning.
- The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia provided targeted support to improve the performance of students in reading, writing and numeracy as identified in the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).
- Independent Schools Queensland offered a Mathematics program to 10 schools and an English program to 12 schools which included professional learning and support to design and implement school improvement.
- Catholic education authorities established standardised assessments and benchmarks to monitor literacy and numeracy development in the early years. Student data is used to inform targeted next steps in learning, guided by the NCEC Literacy and Numeracy Strategy’s evidence-based approach.
- Catholic Education Canberra-Goulbourn strengthened its Science of Reading-aligned practice by training over 400 K–2 teachers in effective literacy instruction.
- Catholic Education Tasmania (CET) funded part-time Literacy Practice Leaders (LPLs) in each school to lead consistent, evidence-based pedagogy in literacy, supported by structured reading and spelling programs across Foundation to Year 2. In numeracy, CET partnered with Shaping Minds Australia to implement a sequential, spaced, and interleaved scope and sequence for mathematics from Prep to Year 6. Teachers were supported with explicit teaching resources, daily review materials, and clear guidance on embedding the four mathematical proficiencies, all aligned with the Science of Learning and Version 9 of the Australian Curriculum.

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”.

Online Resources for Students, Parents and Educators

In 2024, a range of online resources were available for students in the middle years, as well as their parents and educators. For example:

- The Mathematics Hub, which 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.
- The Civics and Citizenship Education (CCE) Hub, which contains resources for teachers to help students from Years 3 to 10 to learn about our system of government, legal system, media literacy and Australian citizenship.

State, territory and sector initiatives

- In the ACT:
 - the *Strong Foundations* program was developed in response to recommendations related to a range of areas including student transitions, particularly related to student needs in the transition from primary school to high school.
 - young people with disability and diverse learning needs were 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.
 - a new Inclusion Transitions and Careers Coach was recruited to work with high schools and colleges to support students with disability in transitioning into college and preparing for career pathways post college.
- 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. The transition to Year 7 literacy and numeracy assessment was available for individual students who did not complete Year 6 Check-in assessments in semester 2 of the previous year. The assessment provides teachers with a snapshot of literacy and numeracy skills students demonstrate on entry to Year 7.
- The *Review of Secondary Education in the Northern Territory* was released in February 2024. The aim of the review is to inform the design of a secondary education system that is responsive to the diverse delivery contexts in the NT, with a specific focus on government schools in remote and very remote locations. The review set out 15 recommendations to address the findings of the review and the NT Government has accepted all recommendations. The review proposes moving away from the current model of middle schools, towards comprehensive secondary schools over time. Throughout 2024, the Northern Territory Department of Education department worked towards the design of an implementation plan to ensure a smooth transition to the new delivery model.

- As part of the Queensland Department of Education *Equity and Excellence: realising the potential of every student* strategy, the system priority of 'On track for success' recognises the changing needs and support that every student needs to stay on track with positive transitions from upper primary through junior secondary. An ongoing whole of system sustainable response to transforming junior secondary was underway in 2024, to:
 - align to the strategic vision laid out in *Equity and Excellence: realising the potential of every student*, through the design and implementation of evidence-informed approaches to junior secondary engagement that prioritise educational achievement, wellbeing and engagement, and culture and inclusion
 - provide strategies to build the professional capabilities required to support the learning and engagement of all contemporary junior secondary learners
 - create the conditions for innovation and for reimagining how the junior secondary phase of schooling is implemented in Queensland through a bold and responsive approach.
- The South Australian Department of Education:
 - Released the *Safe and Supportive Learning Environments Plan of Action*, which includes 15 targeted actions to improve student safety and belonging. These efforts are designed to create a nurturing and inclusive environment that supports the diverse needs of students during these critical years.
 - Initiated a pilot program to provide access to Autism Inclusion Teachers in public secondary schools, building on the success of the program in public primary schools. This was to support students making the transition between primary and secondary school environments.
 - Launched *CareerChat*, a generative AI chatbot offering personalised career advice for students, and *MyCareerPortal* for students in Years 7 to 10 to build career awareness and planning, connect with industry and develop their career management capabilities.
- In Tasmania:
 - Government schools trialled a consistent approach to screening for foundational reading skills across Prep to Year 8. This screening tool provided timely measures of literacy proficiency as students moved from primary to secondary years. Training was provided to ensure school staff were confident capturing, analysing and interpreting student data to inform the specific literacy support and interventions provided.
 - An explicit word study program, which was endorsed in 2024, provided a structured approach to literacy instruction, and supported students to develop the skills needed as they learn to read.
- In Victoria:
 - the *Middle Years Literacy and Numeracy Support* (MYLNS) initiative supported over 6,700 Year 10 students in government schools at risk of finishing school without the literacy and numeracy skills they need for future work and study. Schools were funded to release experienced teachers as MYLNS Improvement Teachers, who supported students one-on-one, in small groups or within class.
 - Over 20,000 places were provided for Year 5 to 8 students in Victorian government schools to participate in the *Victorian High-Ability Program* (VHAP), a 10-week online extension program in English and Mathematics delivered by [Virtual School Victoria](#). After completing the virtual program, students participated in a face-to-face masterclass with other high-ability students from schools in their local area.
- In Western Australia, resources for students in Years 7 to 12 promoted early engagement in pathway planning and a focus on self-awareness, career exploration and action planning. A *Career Taster* program provided a range of engaging activities for Year 9 students to see, explore and experience career options in a practical way.

- The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia provided early intervention training for secondary leaders and teachers on youth mental ill-health, including depression, anxiety, eating disorders, substance misuse, and psychosis. Foundational skills were explored and advice was provided for developing evidence-based school action plans.
- Independent Schools Victoria's School Improvement Team led targeted middle years initiatives to boost student engagement and learning. Through expert-led workshops, educators were empowered with evidence-informed strategies to drive improvement and build leadership capacity.
- Catholic Education South Australia, Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools and Catholic Education Canberra-Goulburn developed comprehensive Mathematics and English resources for the middle years aligned to the Australian and state content and standards. Created by Catholic school teachers, these high-quality resources are accessible to all Australian schools.
- To address teacher turnover and varying experience in remote areas, Catholic Education Northern Territory has developed contextually appropriate middle years units, ensuring consistent and effective teaching.
- In Tasmania, teachers in Catholic schools received coaching and mentoring in high-impact strategies, supported by system-wide professional learning days focused on the Science of Learning and the Science of Reading.
- Catholic Schools NSW advanced middle years practice through its 2024 Curriculum Reform Conference, highlighting best practice in K–6 English and Mathematics, Science of Reading, and its High Potential and Gifted Education Toolkit. Ongoing collaboration was supported through the CSNSW Curriculum Reform Working Group.

3.8 Supporting senior years of schooling

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 3.1.¹⁰

Table 3.1: Senior secondary certificates of education (SSCEs), Australian states and territories, 2024

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.

National Schools Constitutional Convention

The 29th National Schools Constitutional Convention (NSCC), held from 19–21 March 2024 at the Museum of Australian Democracy, provided 94 senior secondary students with a platform to engage in high-level discussions on Commonwealth-State financial relations. Under the guidance of constitutional experts, delegates explored Section 96 of the Constitution, examining its implications for equity, governance, and fiscal responsibility. Through workshops, debates, and expert presentations, students critically assessed the balance of power between federal and state governments and proposed reforms to ensure greater transparency and efficiency in funding allocation. The culminating referendum-style vote demonstrated their capacity for civic engagement and constitutional inquiry, reinforcing the NSCC's role in enhancing critical thinking and policy awareness among Australia's future leaders.

¹⁰ 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 Australian National University and the University of Canberra to provide university extension courses for senior secondary students in the ACT. These courses provide tertiary pathways for students who may not have previously considered further study and assist students to transition to tertiary education. The ACT also has a range of vocational education pathways and supports the diversity of learner needs and interests. The ACT's unique college system provides senior secondary students with opportunities to explore a range of career pathways and prepare for future life.
- In NSW, the HSC *Common Start* program provided funds to support HSC teachers and students involved in newly created Year 12 extension classes.
- The NSW Department of Education continued *Stay Healthy HSC*, which provided resources to assist students to stay healthy, active and connected during the HSC. It also supported the implementation of Stage 6 Syllabuses through comprehensive packages including professional learning, scope and sequences, units and other support documents. The teachers of Stage 6 courses were also supported through Statewide Staffrooms using Microsoft Teams.
- In the Northern Territory:
 - The *Student Tracking System* (STS) was improved to better identify student pathways, expected year of completion, and students who are registered in the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD). An STS User Guide, STS stakeholder roles and responsibilities and STS data schedule were developed, and professional learning was delivered across the regions.
 - Clontarf and Stars foundations (18 Clontarf and 19 Star Academies in total) continued to provide Aboriginal students with mentoring and wellbeing support to finish Year 12. Services included academic support, personal health, wellbeing and targeted activities for students' transition after Year 12.
 - The *Youth Voice Peak Group* provided students in Years 10 to 12 with an opportunity to contribute to policies and programs that affected them and ensured their voice was represented. In 2024, members were introduced to co-designing and consulting with the department on the Strategic Digital Vision, Student Wellbeing Officers, and the Learner Profile.
- Queensland state schools progressed implementation of a range of strategies and interactive resources to support students to be on track for success and ready for the future, including:
 - The *Career Education: Pathways Program* (CEPP), which establishes a strong foundation for educators to provide students with high-quality, evidence-informed career education and advice. While CEPP is aimed at Years 7 to 10, they also make a significant contribution to pathways planning in the senior secondary years.
 - Queensland's *VET Pathway Program* which provided Queensland young people, particularly Indigenous students, with opportunities to gain foundation skills in literacy and numeracy and increases employment prospects for students in real world contexts, enriching cultural knowledge and connecting to community.
- The South Australian Department for Education:
 - opened Findon Technical College, the first of five planned technical colleges, to provide students with practical skills and pathways to apprenticeships or university, and
 - expanded flexible industry programs by introducing new school pathways for students to develop their skills in school for a career in the defence industries, including ICT, cyber security, engineering and electrotechnology.

- The Tasmanian Department for Education, Children and Young People implemented programs to increase student access to quality learning programs, including:
 - Extension of all secondary schools to include Years 11 and 12, ensuring accessible education pathways.
 - Establishment of regional partnerships to enable students to transition from Year 10 to Years 11 and 12 in the program and location of their choice.
 - Provision of online learning programs for students in Years 11 and 12 to mitigate barriers to access and equity in remote geographical locations.
 - A range of face-to-face and online short qualifications that enhanced learner success and employability skills.
 - The Department's Registered Training Organisation, enabling 42 schools to deliver Vocational Education and Training qualifications.
 - Provision of equitable pathways through partnerships with TasTAFE and the University of Tasmania to facilitate higher education access for young Tasmanians.
- The Victorian Department of Education and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) continued to progress significant reform to senior secondary schooling. In 2024, student enrolments in the VCE Vocational Major were 26% higher than its predecessor, the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). Over 30,000 students participated in VET in 2024, representing 10% more than 2023 and the third year of consecutive growth. The *Head Start* program supported students in school-based apprenticeships and traineeships in 288 government schools, with 78% of students staying in their apprenticeship or traineeship beyond 12 months.
- In Victoria, significant policy and program design was undertaken to enable 2 studies from the VCE Vocational Major to be available to all VCE students in 2025. A pilot will give students access to *Vocational Taster* experiences in 2025 and 2026 to support their decision making about senior secondary pathways.
- In Western Australia:
 - The *Pathways to Post-School Success Review* was led by the Department of Education in partnership with Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) and the Association for Independent Schools Western Australia (AISWA) and in consultation with stakeholders across Western Australia. The final report was published on 11 November 2024. The comprehensive review examined the suitability of secondary school pathways in meeting students' needs for post-school success. The report made 33 recommendations across 3 main reform areas aimed at ensuring all Western Australian students can reach their full potential. The review also proposed new offerings for students with disabilities and expanded methods for demonstrating literacy and numeracy standards for the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE).
 - The *School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship Support Scheme* provided targeted funding to individual students to support successful completion of their qualification. Funding was available for protective personal equipment, appropriate work attire, public transport, equipment or tools and tutoring.
- The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia initiated a professional learning series to educate and empower schools in engaging with AI as a tool for learning. Insights, case studies and evidence of achievements were shared, fostering a collaborative environment for educators to develop cohesive, ethical approaches to AI integration.

- Independent Schools Victoria implemented professional learning programs with additional support to build capacity and ensure leaders have a deep understanding of important policies and processes. These programs aim to enhance the delivery of the curricula's key knowledge and skills and foster excellence and creativity amongst senior secondary teachers.
- Catholic Education South Australia collaborated with the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) Board to pilot, trial, and implement several key initiatives. These included the *Recognition of Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge and Learning*; the integration of *Capabilities and Learner Profile* as an adjunct to the ATAR; the development of *Exploring Identities and Futures* (EIF); and subject renewal groups.
- Catholic Schools NSW hosted the 2024 Curriculum Reform Conference: 'Animating the Curriculum for Human Flourishing', bringing together 400 delegates to explore reformed syllabuses, vocational education, and the Catholic curriculum. Its *Virtual Learning Collaborative* expanded access to 12 senior courses across 10 colleges, supporting over 100 students, with 25 completing their HSC or ACT Senior Certificate through alternative pathways.
- Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) supported VET and career pathways through four state wide network days with Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia, providing professional learning and updates from tertiary and industry representatives. CEWA also expanded its Virtual School Network, increased VET places for Year 10–12 students and contributed to the *Pathways to Post-School Success* review in WA.

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 Vocational Education and Training (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.

First Nations VET leadership roundtable forums

Commencing in 2024, First Nations partner organisations, the Australian Government, and state and territory governments are coming together for a series of leadership roundtables to:

- listen to the experiences of First Nations peoples in Australia’s VET sector
- ensure First Nations culture is at the core of training delivery for First Nations learners
- collaborate on ways skills and training outcomes for First Nations peoples can be improved.

GENERATION Survey

The GENERATION survey of post-school destinations, a 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 3 waves of interviews, in 2022, 2023 and 2024. Survey datasets are publicly released each year on the Australian Data Archive. Participants will be followed up annually until around age 25.

State, territory, and sector initiatives

- In the ACT:
 - an ACT-wide approach to support effective transitions for children from birth to 5 years old was launched, including a range of resources for families, educators, early childhood settings, and schools.
 - Transition sessions were organised for families of children with disabilities moving between all school settings. ACT specialist schools collaborated with the National Disability Insurance Scheme to provide information nights on post-school transitions and options.
 - Early advice was given to schools about enrolling students with disabilities, allowing for early implementation of supports including infrastructure improvements, additional staffing, professional learning, and meetings with families.

- Public schools offered services and programs to support students to effectively transition from school to work and flexible learning pathways, including early exposure to careers, skills development and a Vocational Learning Program. *HeadStart*, an Australian School-based Apprenticeship (ASbA) initiative also supported 50 students from public schools to undertake ASbAs in emerging industries and those experiencing skills shortage.
- The NSW Department of Education:
 - Continued to improve education and career outcomes for young people through the *Educational Pathways Program*, designed to introduce high school students to a range of vocational training and employment pathways. In 2024, the program was delivered across 171 government high schools. The program complements existing careers education activities through the provision of additional resources, including two key roles: Head Teachers Careers and SBAT Engagement Officers, who work closely with schools.
 - Continued the *Regional Industry Education Partnerships* (RIEP) program as an ongoing service for schools. The RIEP program designs and delivers opportunities for employers to connect with secondary schools. Through these connections, students learn about jobs and pathways to employment, develop new skills and create employer networks. Employers educate students about their industry and actively participate in the development of talent pipelines.
- Recommendation 2.1 of the *Review of Secondary Education in the Northern Territory* called for the development and implementation of a system-wide pathways plan across the NT to provide students with meaningful opportunities to employment opportunities. Phase 1 of the implementation of the *Secondary Reform Program* consists of the development of a secondary education delivery framework that puts students at the centre of their learning journey. The development of the framework began in 2024 and is expected to be finalised in 2025.
- The Queensland Department of Education provided a number of programs that supported students to find the right pathway and transition successfully, including supporting young people who were disengaged or at-risk of disengaging from education. This included career education and Senior Education and Training (SET) planning, student wellbeing staff, attendance and engagement programs and flexible and alternative learning environments. For those students most at risk, further support was available including regional case management services and alternative learning options. This included support for Year 12 completers who were not in education, training or employment to find and transition into a post-school pathway. Specific supports were also available for students involved in the youth justice system. This included the *Education Justice Initiative*, which works with students appearing before the Childrens Court to support them to engage with appropriate pathways.
- The South Australian Department of Education:
 - Piloted a transition support service for 49 at-risk Year 12 students in 4 schools. Key outcome measures are South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) completion, entry into further education, and work outcomes including apprenticeships, full-time work and casual work.
 - Opened the first of five technical colleges that provides students a place to train and connect with industry, undertake practical learning and competency-based assessment, and opportunities to undertake both on-job and off-job training with RTOs and employers. These technical colleges support a pathway straight from school to work and to provide apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities with local businesses. They also provide an opportunity to transition to university through alternate pathways.
 - Implemented the *Autism Inclusion Teachers Program*, which had previously been successful in SA primary schools, in secondary schools to help students with autism transition between primary and secondary schooling.

- In Tasmania,
 - Government Schools continued to be supported to strengthen their career education provision and transition planning through the delivery of the Graduate Certificate in Career Development Practice to school and support staff, with 57 qualified career practitioners working across Department schools and portfolios.
 - The DECYP online career education portal, *Careerify*, continued to support students, parents and industry as a place-based information service.
 - Government school teachers were supported to obtain or upgrade their Training and Assessment (TAE) qualifications, achieving an increase in the availability of VET training to Tasmanian Senior Secondary Students, and expanding and retaining the VET school workforce.
 - The school-based *Driving for Jobs* program continued to help students from areas of high socioeconomic disadvantage develop safe driving skills, navigate the licensing system, and gain their driver licence.
 - Promotional videos were released to support schools, students, parents and employers to understand the benefits of School based Apprenticeships and Traineeships.
- In Victoria:
 - Career exploration and work-based learning activities continued, with 87% of Year 9 government school students participating in the My Career Insights diagnostic tool and unpacking interview to support informed decision making about subjects and post-school pathways. The *Enhanced My Career Insights* pilot began, with students experiencing disadvantage provided with 4 individually tailored sessions.
 - The Victorian Department of Education piloted the Work-Based Learning app to streamline work experience and Structured Workplace Learning placements, for roll out in all government schools in 2025.
 - New supports for early school leavers were designed including a Career Advice Service for early school leavers, and appropriate supports for Koorie young people and young people with a disability, to be implemented in 2025.
 - Victoria's 10 Tech Schools continued to enhance STEM learning and pathways through hands-on, immersive experiences.
- In Western Australia, qualified career practitioners were placed in 70 public schools to lead whole-school career development and facilitate engagement with industry. Career conversation events were delivered throughout the state for students and parents, with local industry panels discussing employment opportunities, attributes they are looking for and how to access entry level positions.
- The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia distributed state funding to support the engagement of schools in Year 9 career taster activities.
- Independent Schools Queensland collaborated with various sectors to support lifelong learning and effective transitions from school to further education or work. It provided VET program funding incentives (Department of Trade, Employment and Training VET investment budget) and accredited training support for teachers and career advisors. In 2024, VET enrolments in Queensland Independent schools increased by 33% to 30,676. Initiatives included *VET Reform*, *Gateway to Industry Schools*, and *Trade to Teach* programs.
- In South Australia, a VET workshop series enabled new staff from metropolitan and regional South Australian Independent Schools to build foundational knowledge in VET, Workplace Learning and apprenticeships. Participants heard from experienced VET leaders and explored ways to implement new ideas and processes to effectively support students and school communities.

- Catholic education systems continued work on lifelong learning pathways and supporting effective transitions:
 - South Australia introduced the *BECOME Career Education Program* from Year 5, encouraging early career exploration to build self-efficacy, purpose, and broaden aspirations.
 - In Victoria Catholic Education, Catholic schools use Transition Learning and Development Statements to strengthen partnerships with early childhood providers and support seamless school transitions.
 - Catholic Schools NSW supported VET delivery through 150 teacher training applications and 50 upgrades to meet current industry standards. Over 1,200 students accessed external VET courses via the *Externally Delivered VET (EVET)* program.
 - Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) promoted *Transition to Adult Life* resources and provided targeted support for students with disability and those at risk of disengagement. The CEWA Transition Service Unit guided post-school pathways and boarding transitions for First Nations students. CEWA also piloted *Capabilities for Learning* and implemented the *Student Learning Journey* to ensure accurate progress data is shared at key transition points.

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.

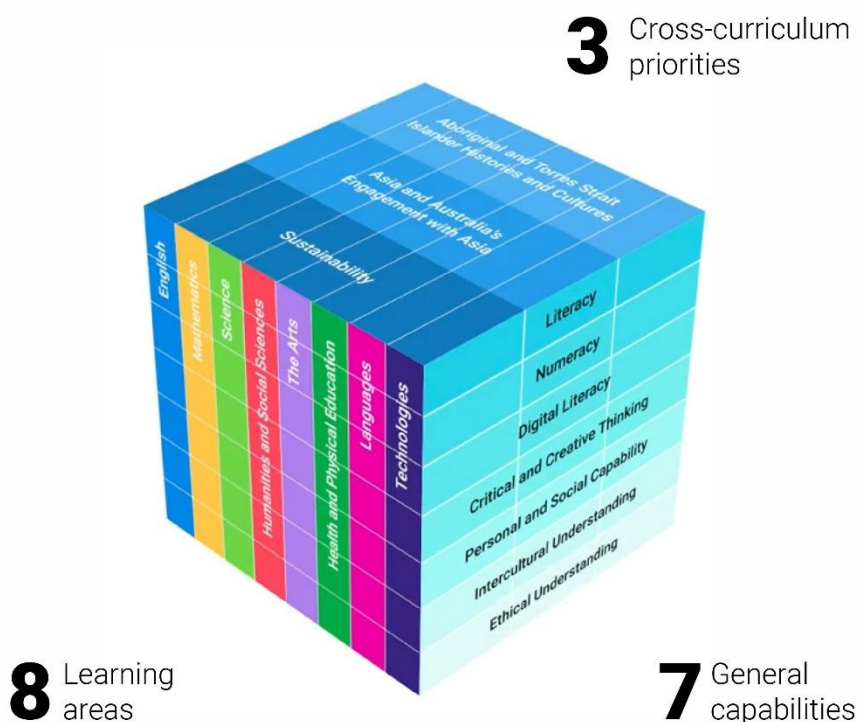
Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority

The functions of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 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. Critical and Creative Thinking
2. Digital Literacy
3. Ethical Understanding
4. Intercultural Understanding
5. Literacy
6. Numeracy
7. Personal and Social Capability

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.

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 occurred in February 2024.

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

FIRST framework

In February 2024, ACARA published the FIRST Framework. This framework was developed in consultation with ACARA's advisory groups and key stakeholders. Developed with teachers and school communities in mind, it acts as a guide to assist teachers and schools to engage with their local First Nations communities to support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

In 2024, work commenced on developing professional learning modules to further support teachers and schools.

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. In 2024, work commenced on the updating and realignment of the 15 Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary subjects.

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

Curriculum projects

In 2024, ACARA undertook a range of activities. These included:

- Enhancing functionality of the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 website, through the National Formative Assessment Resource Bank project to explore solutions to enable the publication of advice and resources to support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0.
- Publishing additional annotated work samples to the Resources section of the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 website. By May 2024, 268 work samples had been published.
- Publishing new modules on ACARA's Professional Learning Hub including Student Diversity – Using the CASE model in October 2024. The PL Hub is a key resource for supporting the implementation of the Australian Curriculum.
- Developing and publishing an enhanced search function on the website to support user engagement with the Australian Curriculum.
- Conducting a national and international review of Work studies and career education and sharing findings and considerations with jurisdictions and the ACARA Board.
- Undertaking preliminary research to support the updating and realignment of the Australian Curriculum: Senior Secondary.

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* and *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia Version 2.0*). The updates strengthen the connection between the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standard 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. They 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 were 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 2024

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. Education Ministers also agreed 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, and 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.

2024 marked the second year the NAPLAN test event was held in March, with all schools across Australia completing the NAPLAN tests online. More than 1.2 million Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students across 9,411 schools and campuses completed their NAPLAN testing online in 2024. Schools and education authorities received preliminary school and student results (excluding writing results) from the assessments early in Term 2, around 4 weeks after the test period ended. This was 8 weeks earlier than in 2023, and a full school term earlier than 2022. This development meant that teachers had more time to consider the results alongside their own assessments and then use them to inform their teaching and learning programs in the current school year.

NAPLAN results data for 2024 is available in interactive form on the ACARA NAP website. The interactive report for 2024 provides 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 2024 NAPLAN National Report and 2024 Test Incident Report are also available on the NAP website.

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.¹¹ Participating schools are sampled from all states and territories and school sectors. In 2022, Australian Education Ministers agreed that the NAP sample main study assessments should take place in May, following the earlier NAPLAN test window.

From 2024, separate opt-in assessments have been made available for all schools, starting with science literacy in 2024, to be followed by civics and citizenship in 2025, and ICT literacy in 2026.

Progress for each of the NAP sample assessments outlined below:

- NAP – Civics and Citizenship (NAP-CC):** The seventh NAP-Civics and Citizenships (NAP-CC) assessment main study was conducted from 6 to 24 May 2024, following a successful field trial in October–November 2023, where items were trialled and analysed for inclusion in the main study. The 2024 NAP-CC assessment instrument comprised 181 new items and 74 trend items distributed across 24 test forms. Assessment items were aligned with the relevant strands and sub-strands of the Australian Curriculum: HASS F-6, the Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship, and the Australian Curriculum: History. In total, 5,294 Year 6 students from 319 schools and 4,550 Year 10 students from 288 schools participated. Response rates were 87% for Year 6 and 78% for Year 10 students. The NAP-CC 2024 Public Report was published in early 2025.

¹¹ 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.

- **NAP – Science Literacy (NAP–SL):** The seventh NAP–Science Literacy sample assessment was conducted in May 2023 and was delivered online to students in Year 6 and Year 10 (6,069 Year 6 students in 368 schools and 3,433 Year 10 students in 221 schools). 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 was published in May 2024.

The NAP Opt-in assessments in science literacy were available for registered schools from 6–31 May 2024. Overall, there were 157 schools and 11,707 students (6,163 Year 6 and 5,544 Year 10 students) that participated in NAP Opt-in science literacy tests.

- **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. IT involved just under 10,000 students from 636 schools across Australia. 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.

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 in December 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 and results were released in December 2024.

- Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS):

PIRLS is a 5-yearly assessment of reading literacy for Year 4 students, administered by the IEA. 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 (ABLES) assessment and reporting suite.
- As part of the implementation of the ACT Education Directorate's updated fit-for-purpose school improvement plan (the Student-Centred Improvement Framework), Education continues to refine its evidence-led approach to leadership professional development, focusing on enabling capabilities for implementing effective strategies to improve student outcomes.
- The NSW Education Standards Authority continued to deliver a new curriculum, working to streamline and strengthen what is taught in NSW schools, with 30 new syllabuses and support materials released across K–12. New syllabuses focus on essential content identifying the core knowledge and skills that students should know and need to progress in each subject. NSW syllabuses continued to have strong community ownership through public consultation and stakeholder engagement, with 23 draft syllabuses released for consultation in 2024. An easy to navigate Digital Curriculum website for all syllabuses and support materials was launched.
- In NSW, the *Inclusive Assessment Program* provided educators in Schools for Specific Purposes and schools with support units with 2 optional assessment tools for students with complex learning needs: the Literacy and Numeracy Precursors, and Passport for Learning. These tools support educators to identify students' learning ability, determine individual learning goals and report on and celebrate learning progress.
- In the Northern Territory, the Department of Education and Training Curriculum, Assessment, Reporting and Certification (CARC) released its updated policy in mid-2024. The policy enables school staff in NT Government schools and approved services to understand and implement the legislated curriculum, assessment reporting and certification requirements, appropriate to each main learning stage from birth to Year 12. It has been strengthened to align to Version 9 of the Australian Curriculum, EYLF v2 and evidence-based practices.
- The Queensland Department of Education provided the Australian Curriculum in Prep to Year 10, as written, to ensure all students, of all identities and abilities, were able to access and participate in the curriculum alongside their similar-aged peers. This included achieving academically and socially with tailored supports including reasonable adjustments that met their learning needs. The Department also provided a suite of high-quality Prep to Year 10 curriculum planning and assessment resources that supported schools in implementing all eight learning areas of the curriculum.
- The South Australian Department for Education introduced the new South Australian Curriculum for Public Education, adapted from the Australian Curriculum version 9. This curriculum supports the Strategy for Public Education by ensuring students develop conceptual knowledge, foundational literacy, and numeracy skills. It also focuses on capabilities and dispositions essential for effective learning and future employment.
- In South Australia:
 - A civics and citizenship cross-curriculum priority was introduced for Reception to Year 10 as part of the *Safeguarding Democracy through Public Education* reforms, promoting active citizenship.
 - The *South Australian Aboriginal Contexts in Science* initiative was launched, contextualising science elaborations in collaboration with First Nations Elders and communities.

- In 2024, all Tasmanian Government schools planned, taught and assessed based on the Australian Curriculum (V9). Teachers were supported to implement the curriculum with resources and professional learning focused on developing their understanding of the knowledge, skills and the progression of learning across the years of schooling. The Tasmanian Department of Education, Children and Young People (DECYP):
 - Produced an Assessment Guide in collaboration with the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO), setting system expectations for assessment from Kindergarten to Year 12.
 - Introduced system-wide standardised screening for foundational reading skills. This initiative identifies students struggling with reading early on, allowing for targeted interventions to develop essential literacy skills.
 - Continued to implement a revised Reporting and Communicating with Families Policy and Procedure, fully in place for Prep to Year 10 and phasing in for Years 11 and 12 in 2025. This policy ensures consistent and transparent updates on student progress for families.
- The Victorian Curriculum F–10 Version 2.0 was launched in June 2024. The revised curriculum ensures the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 to be implemented in Victorian government and Catholic schools while maintaining Victorian priorities and standards and making the curriculum more teachable and manageable. The curriculum has been published on a new website which supports schools to implement the curriculum. The new website centralises all curriculum content, familiarisation and planning resources, and professional learning, making it easier for teachers and school leaders to access what they need. A suite of Lesson Plans to support classroom teaching aligned to Version 2.0 of the Curriculum focused on English, Mathematics, Science, Design Technologies and Digital Technologies are being progressively released. Victoria is also refreshing its suite of online digital classroom assessments to ensure that they align to Version 2.0.
- In Western Australia:
 - The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) Strategic Plan 2024–2027 was released. SCSA also released a series of Early Childhood Education videos and delivered professional learning to support the teaching and learning practices in the Early Years Learning Framework v2.
 - A phased approach to adopting and adapting the Australian Curriculum version 9 to the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline was introduced. In 2024, Pre-primary to Year 10 English and Physical Education were in the familiarisation stage, providing teachers with the opportunity to engage with professional learning prior to implementation in 2025. The Authority consulted on revisions to Pre-primary to Year 10 Humanities and Social Sciences, Mathematics, Science and Technologies, for familiarisation in 2025.
 - New courses for Years 11 and 12 commencing in 2024, including Aboriginal and Intercultural Studies, Agribusiness, Agricultural Science and Technology, Hindi, Korean, Punjabi Science in Practice and Tamil, were introduced.
- South Australian Independent schools were supported with implementing the Australian Curriculum v9 in each of the eight learning areas and for each stage of schooling (F–6 and 7–10). This focused on strategies for enacting the curriculum and protocols for action planning, learning area specialists facilitated rigorous dialogue about implementation, enactment, and pedagogical practices.
- Independent Schools Queensland hosted four Curriculum Leaders Forums, offering professional learning for over 120 leaders at each event. These forums provided essential information to curriculum leaders as well as opportunities to hear from ACARA, Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA), the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and other professional bodies. The forums were repeated in regional locations to ensure statewide opportunities.

- Catholic education systems consistently provide a curriculum that aligns with national expectations:
 - Catholic Education South Australia continued to prioritise deep engagement with the Australian Curriculum through carefully mapped teaching and learning sequences and aligned assessment practices that support both formative and summative learning.
 - Catholic Education Tasmania (CET) developed a knowledge-rich, low-variance curriculum in English, Mathematics, and HASS, grounded in Science of Learning principles. Sequenced and interleaved content includes spaced practice and regular review. CET also refined their formative and summative assessment, with common tasks used to measure system-wide impact.
 - Catholic Education Tasmania implemented the *Toddle Learning Management System*, integrating AI-supported planning and assessment tools aligned to Australian Curriculum v9.
 - Victorian Catholic dioceses developed over 4,000 F–9 mathematics and 2,000 Years 3–6 English resources, aligned with curriculum requirements to support classroom delivery.

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).

First Nations Education Policy

Through the 2024–25 Budget, the Australian Government committed \$5 million to develop a new First Nations Education Policy in partnership with key First Nations and education stakeholders.

The Policy will offer high-level guidance to support both national and state and territory led First Nations education initiatives, aligning with the Mparntwe Education Declaration, the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement and its reform directions, and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Indigenous Advancement Strategy

The Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) is the way the Australian Government funds and delivers a range of programs for First Nations people. In the 2023–24 Budget, the Australian Government allocated \$7.2 billion to the IAS for grant funding processes and administered procurement activities. This allocation is over 4 years, extending to 2026–27. ‘Children and schooling’ is one of the 6 key funding components of the IAS and aims to provide First Nations Australians a good start in life, improve schooling and school attendance and provide better access to developmental and educational opportunities.

On-Country Learning

Through the On-Country Learning measure, every school in Central Australia received funding to develop and roll out activities to increase student engagement and attendance. School Action Plans developed by schools and agreed by community representatives identified community priorities and activities to be funded. This approach reflects the Commonwealth’s Closing the Gap commitment to community partnership and shared decision making.

More than 210 staff were employed through the measure in 2024, with 42.7% being First Nations individuals. Activities implemented in 2024 resulted in increased attendance and enrolments in very remote areas of Central Australia compared to 2023. The average number of students significantly disengaged from government schools in very remote areas was also lower in 2024.

Boarding support

On 22 October 2024, the Australian Government announced an additional \$44.2 million to extend the Indigenous Boarding Provider grants through to the end of 2026. This investment, which will commence in Term 1 2025, will support more than 50 boarding providers to deliver accommodation and wrap-around supports for 2,500 First Nations students.

Scaling Up Proven Primary Reading Programs

The *Scaling Up Proven Primary Reading Programs* supported the scaling-up of 3 targeted literacy programs which support teacher professional practice and improve early literacy outcomes for First Nations students – the *Good to Great Schools Australia Pilot* program, *MultiLit (Making Up Lost Time in Literacy)* program and the *Scaling Up Success in Remote Schools* program.

In the 2024–25 Budget, the Australian Government committed a further \$5.26 million through grants to extend the *Good to Great Schools Australia* program to the end of the 2026 school year, providing a total of \$30.29 million over 2021–22 to 2025–26.

State, territory and sector initiatives

- The ACT continued to strengthen its cultural integrity to meet the educational needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Key initiatives included:
 - provision of an additional 66 Koori preschool places, cultural competency training, On Country walks, Ngunnawal language workshops and Engoori training (a strength-based approach to team culture)
 - awarding secondary and tertiary scholarships to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and the Mura Awards providing bursaries to students demonstrating high engagement and leadership
 - Indigenous Education Officers and Cultural Integrity Coordinators supporting schools to develop and implement resources and programs that embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, knowledge and cultures
 - curriculum development projects focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, languages, histories, and cultures, that ensure students see themselves reflected in their education and are empowered to achieve their full potential.
- The NSW Department of Education:
 - progressed strategic planning and goal setting to improve outcomes for Aboriginal students and staff through implementation of *Our Plan for NSW Public Education*,
 - developed the *Guiding Principles in Leading Aboriginal Education*, to support the complexity and competing priorities within schools and the need for Aboriginal Education consideration in the Schools Excellence Framework,
 - continued the *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2023–2025*,¹²
 - strengthened cross-sector leadership for meeting its National Agreement on Closing the Gap targets.
- In the Northern Territory, the *Plan for a Better, Safer Future for Central Australia: On Country Learning Measure* (OCLM) provided \$40 million of additional funding to schools in Central Australia to support students and their families to engage in education and pathways to employment on-country. The OCLM aims to strengthen education experiences through:
 - intensive literacy and numeracy support
 - increased quality flexible learning for secondary students with a focus on students obtaining qualifications that align to jobs in the industries in their communities and regions and/or provide skills in industries that support community life
 - increased employment of local Aboriginal staff in schools to support cultural wellbeing, music, art, language and identity
 - targeted engagement, re-engagement and attendance initiatives, which are culturally responsive
 - initiatives that support two-way learning opportunities, foster culturally responsive learning environments, and invite Indigenous language and culture into the day-to-day delivery of curriculum, including through bilingual education programs
 - increased allied health services to deliver a selection of universal and targeted services to support inclusion of all students in learning.

¹² The Innovate RAP is founded on building trust and confidence with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees, families and communities to create safe workplaces and to ensure the best possible educational outcomes.

- Queensland Department of Education *First Nations Attendance and Engagement Programs* aim to maximise days of learning by improving attendance, reducing school disciplinary absences and increasing Year 10 to 12 retention. These programs were delivered in 2024 and are ongoing, with the Department expanding these to communities of high needs and to achieve gender equity. The programs provide mentorship, case management and extracurricular activities.
- In 2023–24, the Queensland Government invested approximately \$31.4 million to promote and improve the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in kindergarten through the *Deadly Kindies* program. This investment aims to increase access to early childhood services for these children, including free kindergarten, Child and Family Centre programs, Early Years Services, and support from the Institute of Urban Indigenous Health (UIH). Priority area 1 under the *Kindy Uplift* program is to create ‘Culturally safe, inclusive and responsive kindergarten programs’, including ‘Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives’. The 2024 *Kindy Uplift* funding allocated towards embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives was \$8 million.
- In South Australia:
 - A new 3-year Aboriginal Funding Model was introduced to enhance educational outcomes for Aboriginal children, offering flexible support for local decision-making.
 - 7,000 students participated in Aboriginal languages programs, fostering cultural engagement and language preservation.
 - The preschool entitlement for 3-year-old Aboriginal children and children in care was increased from 12 to 15 hours per week.
 - The SA Department Education strengthened its commitment to culturally responsive and inclusive environments through the release of a renewed Culturally Responsive Framework, the launch of foundational cultural learning resources, and the establishment of the Department’s Aboriginal Workforce Network (DAWN). Development of an Anti-Racism Action Plan also commenced, further supporting these initiatives.
 - The SA Department Education progressed its second Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan, forming partnerships with 48 Aboriginal organisations comprising 21 actions and 96 deliverables to promote relationships, understanding, accountabilities and sustainable opportunities.
- In Tasmania, a specific focus for 2024 was ensuring that all Aboriginal Education Service staff undertook the *Qualiteach* training package to build foundational knowledge in structured literacy and multi-tiered systems of support. The Tasmanian Department of Education, Children and Young People also supported Tasmania’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners by ensuring 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 were 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, and Aboriginal Learning Facilitators brought learning to life for students in museums.
- The Victorian Department of Education progressed work through the Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026 to support improved outcomes for First Nations students, including through the following initiatives:
 - *Strengthening Professional Capacity of Principals in Koorie Education* delivered programs in 70 schools across the state; 108 schools engaged in anti-racism workshops facilitated by the Centre for Multicultural Youth in collaboration with the Victorian Koorie Heritage Trust; and 1,333 school staff from 190 schools completed an anti-racism eLearning course developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission.

- The Koorie Curriculum Clusters project continued, focusing on integrating First Peoples histories, cultures, and perspectives into the Victorian Curriculum F–10 through schools partnering with Registered Aboriginal Parties.
- The *Strengthening Aboriginal Self-determination in Education* report was released, informed by Campfire Conversations with over 3,000 people. It identified 6 reform directions – accountability, truth-telling, partnerships, voice, capacity building, and a culturally safe and responsive school system.
- In Western Australia:
 - The *Culturally Responsive School Leadership* program empowered leaders to deepen their cultural understanding and practice, which is essential for creating supportive environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners. The focus was on organisational culture and system change, cultural safety, and developing the cultural responsiveness of the principal. The program aims to promote reconciliation and strengthen Aboriginal student outcomes.
 - The *Ngaparrtji Ngaparrtji Two-way Science Initiative* supported schools to build partnerships with local Aboriginal communities or Aboriginal organisations. *Learning on Country* was led by Aboriginal experts who taught students Aboriginal cultural knowledge connected to the science curriculum and related science activities.
 - In response to the 2023 Yamatji On-Country Call to Action statement, 22 schools delivered alternative On-Country education programs in the Midwest region.
- The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia facilitated a series on creating culturally safe classrooms and schools featuring local Kaurna Elders who guided staff teams in reflecting on their contexts. Continuous engagement empowered participants to enhance their advocacy and practice for greater impact in their school settings.
- The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia's *Future Footprints* program continued to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students in non-government schools, promoting strength through cultural connection and culturally safe learning environments. The program offered students and schools a range of events and activities, including a Careers Expo, to enhance educational opportunities and community engagement.
- Independent Schools Victoria's Reconciliation Action Plan aligns with the Australian Government's goal to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and close the education gap. The Reflect RAP 2024–25 includes actions supporting cultural safety, competency, and inclusive learning, ensuring Indigenous students and staff feel valued, respected, and supported.
- Catholic education is committed to fostering cultural identity, belonging, safety, and success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners. For example, in 2024:
 - Catholic Education Western Australia supported boarding students and families through its Transition Service Unit.
 - Catholic Education South Australia introduced Cultural Learning Plans, co-developed with students and families, to guide both cultural and academic growth, ensuring tailored support and meaningful enrichment for every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student.

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”.

Needs-based school funding

Under the *Schooling Resource Standard* funding arrangements, Australian Government recurrent funding for schools is calculated using a base per-student amount plus 6 loadings for student disadvantage, school size and school location. For most non-government schools, the base amount is discounted by the estimated capacity of parents to contribute towards the school’s operating costs.

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

- students with disability
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- students at a socio-educational disadvantage
- students with low English proficiency
- location of the school (remoteness)
- the size of the school.

School Funding Agreements

In 2024, the Australian Government worked closely with state and territory governments, in partnership with key education stakeholders, to put all government schools on a pathway to 100% of the *Schooling Resource Standard*. The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025–2034 (BFSA) and the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025–2034 – Full and Fair Funding (the Full and Fair Funding Agreement) will replace the National School Reform Agreement in 2025.

The Agreements aim to improve educational outcomes for all Australian students, with funding tied to reforms focused on 3 priority areas: equity and excellence, wellbeing for learning and engagement, and a strong and sustainable workforce.

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. The pilot commenced in 2024 and is delivering 100 scholarships to students from regional, rural and remote areas to assist with secondary school boarding fees and associated costs. The pilot provides 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.

The Smith Family’s Growing Careers Project

The Australian Government provided funding of \$38.2 million from 2020–21 to 2026–27 to support the Smith Family’s *Growing Careers* Project. The project supports over 76,000 disadvantaged high school students from Years 7 to 12 across Australia to stay at school, complete Year 12 (or equivalent) and successfully transition to further education, training or work. As students move through school, they engage with careers-related programs that focus on enabling students to develop critical thinking about the labour market and their potential roles within it. Students also engage with a diversity of employees in a mediated and supported way.

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

The Australian Government provided funding of \$3 million between 2021–22 and 2025–26 to support 4,500 disadvantaged young people 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.

Disability Standards for Education

During 2024, 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. The focus was on the development of information products to help children and students with disability and their caregivers understand their rights under the Standards. Nine new practical and easy-to-use resources, including two animations, were published in 2024.¹³ These were co-designed with young people with disability and their families with the help of Children and Young People with Disability Australia.

Literacy Support for Tasmanian Students

The Australian Government provided \$2 million in 2024–25 to support specialist literacy and numeracy programs for Tasmania's most vulnerable children. From 2024, all Tasmanian educators have been given access to evidence-based training to implement structured literacy. The funding supports the delivery of Tasmania's *Literacy Framework and Literacy Action Plan* – including the establishment of a Literacy Implementation Team, professional development, and ongoing support for 85 Literacy Coaches and development and dissemination of new literacy resources.

Parliament and Civics Education Rebate

The *Parliament and Civics Education Rebate* (PACER) program is an Australian Government initiative that provides financial assistance to support on-site learning at national democratic, historical, and cultural institutions in Canberra for students in Years 4 to 12.¹⁴ The program aims to enhance students' understanding and participation in Australian democracy through hands-on educational experiences that align directly with the Australian Curriculum. In 2024, over 81,500 students participated in the program, with the government providing more than \$8.1 million in rebates to schools to support their visits. The Australian Government has committed a total of \$40.1 million in approved funding for the PACER program from 2024–25 to 2028–29.

Curious Minds

The *Curious Minds* program, jointly delivered by the Australian Mathematics Trust (AMT) and Australian Science Innovations (ASI), provides a summer camp accompanied by mentoring and a winter camp for high potential female students in Years 8, 9 and 10, over a period of 8 months. The program aims to ignite girls' passion and participation in STEM. *Curious Minds* targets female students who have had limited opportunities because of where they live, including regional and remote locations, their socio-economic background, and/or their Indigenous status. The Australian Government has funded this program since 2014–15.

¹³ These resources are available in English, Easy Read English, Auslan and 8 community languages at <https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005>.

¹⁴ To ensure that funding is equitably and consistently distributed, reflecting the diverse educational settings across different regions, schools located in Outer Regional, Remote, or Very Remote areas automatically received additional loadings. Additional loadings were also provided based on the school Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) scores. Further details are available at: www.pacer.org.au.

National Lending Library

Through the National Lending Library, the University of Adelaide has developed a range of resource kits and curriculum resources to assist with the delivery of digital technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies, content in the Australian Curriculum. This is the only national service that provides free access to digital and emerging technology equipment for schools that may otherwise be unable to afford it, particularly in regional and rural areas, with demand from schools exceeding the amount of equipment available. The National Lending Library has been funded by the Australian Government since 2016–17.

State, territory and sector initiatives

- In the ACT:
 - The *Inclusive Education: A Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools 2024–2034 Strategy* began implementation and aims to deliver greater inclusion for students with disability in public schools by ensuring schools have the support required to meet the needs of all learners.
 - Three-year-old vulnerable children could access 2 days per week, 48 weeks per year of quality early childhood education. 300 hours of universal preschool was also provided for all eligible three-year-olds.
 - The *ACT Future of Education Equity Fund* helped low-income families to cover educational costs.
 - A *Meals in Schools* pilot provided universal meal offerings (breakfast and lunch) 3 days per week at 5 public schools, supporting approximately 1,600 students.
 - there was continued recruitment of social and youth workers to provide early intervention and support to students and their families in public schools.
 - schools continued to receive access to professional learning, facilitated networks and expert advice from the Allied Health Service and School Psychology Service.
- In NSW:
 - The Equity Placement Model ensured that students from all backgrounds had fair access and opportunity to attend selective high schools and opportunity classes, with up to 20% of places held for high potential and gifted students from equity groups.
 - All public schools received funding to implement the *Small Group Tuition* program offering short-term, targeted literacy and numeracy support for students identified as needing additional support. In 2024, 1,950 schools reported that 91,045 students received support.
 - The *Perfect Presence Program* provided targeted, early intervention for students identified at risk of disengaging from school and their learning. In 2024, providers established 213 programs across 69 NSW secondary schools, supporting over 2,477 students.
 - *Get Back in the Game* offered case management services for young people aged 15–19 to enter education, training or employment. Enrolment included assessment to identify those at risk of disengaging, and tailoring transition plans to build job readiness and workforce capability.

- The Northern Territory Department of Education and Training:
 - Reformed the direct funding model for government schools. A key change was to move to enrolment-based funding, such that schools are no longer funded based on attendance. This means that schools are provided with resources to teach students who are attending and re-engage students with low attendance.
 - Commenced implementation of strategies including a media campaign and expanding the student attendance workforce, focussed on raising attendance and holding parents accountable for sending their children to school.
 - Published resources to implement the *Team Around the Learner* case management framework, providing a structured model to support learners at risk of disengaging.
 - Continued implementing the *Quality Standards Framework for Flexible Education* programs to supports schools and program providers to plan and develop culturally responsive, inclusive programs. These programs aim to address inclusion of all students in Northern Territory schools and improving offerings of flexible education programs.
- The Queensland *Equity and Excellence: realising the potential of every student* education strategy sets the direction for Queensland's state schooling system with the aim of lifting educational outcomes, particularly those at risk of educational disadvantage. This starts at an early age with *Kindy Uplift*, which provides targeted funding to support children more likely to experience educational disadvantage. The Queensland Government increased its investment to \$112 million over four years, extending an invitation to all approved kindergarten program providers to participate in *Kindy Uplift*. This expansion increased the participating services from 930 to over 2,000 and the increased investment enables funding and support to be directed where there is the greatest opportunity to improve early learning outcomes for kindergarten aged children in the community.
- In South Australia, the Literacy Guarantee Unit assisted a network of 15 schools using a train-the-trainer model to enhance teacher and leader capacity in supporting students with dyslexia.
- The South Australian Department for Education:
 - Launched initiatives to support students at risk. The *Student Device Program* provided over 14,700 devices, as well as ensuring all school card students in Years 7 and 10 receive a digital device at no cost to them by 2026. The Student Home Internet Program also ensured connectivity for educational purposes.
 - Piloted a Transition Support Service. It provided individualised and place-based transition support to identified government secondary students. The goal of the pilot has been to test and evaluate the effectiveness of the service-provider approach as a model for transitioning 'at risk' students to sustainable employment.
- Tasmania continued to prioritise and invest in wellbeing for learning. Over the 2024–2025 forward estimates, the following funding was provided: \$24 million to support students impacted by trauma, \$29.7 million for School Health Nurses and \$9.8 million to expand the network of professional support staff working with schools. Schools drew on the data and results of DECYP's annual *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Survey* to ensure they met the needs of their students and that their focus/activity was on addressing identified areas.

- In Victoria:
 - The Tutor Learning Initiative continued to provide Victorian government and low-fee non-government schools with funding to employ tutors for students needing additional support in literacy and numeracy.
 - Implementation of the *Disability Inclusion Reform* continued. At the end of 2024, over 1240 Victorian government schools transitioned to the new strengths-based funding and support model.
 - A range of strategies were implemented to support young people at risk of educational disadvantage, including:
 - establishment of the School Saving Bonus providing a one-off \$400 to help families cover the costs of school uniforms, textbooks, excursions and activities,
 - expansion of the *Glasses for Kids* program, which provides free vision screening and glasses if required, for Pre-Year 3 students from disadvantaged schools,
 - provision of educational items in partnership with State Schools' Relief,
 - expansion of the *School Breakfast Clubs* program,
 - free period products in all Victorian government schools,
 - the development of tools, guidance and training for school staff to promote child wellbeing and safety and identify and respond to family violence.
- In Western Australia:
 - A review of the *School Education Act 1999 (WA)*, led by an independent Expert Panel and Disability Advisory Council, was conducted to identify opportunities to strengthen access and inclusion for students with disability. The purpose of the review was to identify any barriers to access and inclusion within the legislation and propose recommendations for reform. The review was guided by comprehensive public consultation and research, highlighting evolving community expectations. The review reflects changes in understanding since the Act's introduction in 1999, with an emphasis on adapting to current needs and improving support for students with disability to thrive.
 - The *WA Student Assistance Payment* program distributed more than \$75 million cost of living support to almost 400,000 school students and their families in 2024. The government also provided \$9.5 million of additional support to low-income families through the *Secondary School Clothing Allowance* in 2024.
- In South Australia, the *Allied Health Specialist Support Services Program* was available to all Independent schools, focusing on rural and low SES regions. This program focused on building staff capacity to cater more effectively for students with diverse needs, particularly those 'at risk' of not developing their educational potential.
- The second cohort of the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia's *Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools Pilot Project* commenced in 2024. Ten schools, including rural and remote, were provided a grant to engage a part-time wellbeing co-ordinator.
- Independent Schools Queensland worked closely with Special Assistance Schools through one-on-one support opportunities to assist schools to meet the needs of their contexts and maintain legislative compliance.
- Independent Schools Victoria continued its commitment to equal educational opportunities for disadvantaged students. Guided by values of collaboration, integrity, innovation, respect, and trust, ISV partnered with schools to create inclusive strategies, ensuring positive outcomes and educational equity while recognising the expertise within schools.

- Catholic education systems continued to prioritise equity through targeted support for students facing disadvantage:
 - In South Australia, universal, targeted, and intensive support was provided via Diversity and Inclusion System Coaches, partnering with NDIS coordinators and the Department for Child Protection to deliver over 500 student scholarships.
 - Queensland dioceses supported educationally disadvantaged students by improving learning outcomes through targeted support and personalised planning.
 - Catholic Education Canberra-Goulbourn trained 350 teachers in literacy intervention to support students needing additional instruction in reading.
 - Catholic Education Northern Territory's Inclusion Team strengthened trauma-informed practice, curriculum access, and family engagement, particularly for neurodiverse students.
 - In Tasmania, Ludo centres offered two years of quality preschool in low SES areas to support vulnerable children with early literacy and school transition.
 - Catholic Education Western Australia supported student re-engagement through bespoke programs, CARE school networks, and culturally responsive practice.

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 National School Reform Agreement (NSRA). Agreed policy initiatives in this area are implementing a National Unique Student Identifier (USI); establishing the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) to inform teacher practice, system improvement and policy development; and improving national data quality, consistency, and collection.

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 2024, 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

The data collection and reporting functions of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) are to:

- collect, manage, and analyse student assessment data and other data relating to schools and comparative school performance
- 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 2024.

National Report on Schooling in Australia

In February 2024, ACARA published the National Report on Schooling in Australia 2022 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.

Since 2023, sections of the National Report on Schooling in Australia have been released progressively, allowing more timely access to data and commentary and closer alignment of the National Report on Schooling in Australia and the National Report on Schooling data portal. Sections of the National Report on Schooling in Australia 2023 were published in April, June and December 2024, with the final report to be released in February 2025.

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 gender and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status. As part of the progressive release of the National Report on Schooling in Australia, data portal pages were updated in February, April, June and December 2024.

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 to align with the beginning of each school term. In 2024, ACARA continued to provide third parties access to ACARA-collected data under the Data Access Protocols 2015.

Australian Teacher Workforce Data

Funded by all Australian governments, the Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) links 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.

AITSL lead the implementation of the ATWD in collaboration with the Australian Government Department of Education, states and territories and teacher regulatory authorities. The [ATWD Portal](#) is updated regularly with annual reporting on ITE data and Teacher Workforce Characteristics. Additional specialty publications have also been developed utilising the ATWD including as well as on [early childhood teachers](#) and [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers](#).

The National Unique Student Identifier

The *National Unique Student Identifier* (USI) for school students is a national enabling initiative in the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement. This initiative will provide every Australian school student with a USI number that will travel with them throughout their school years and into vocational education and training and higher education.

The Australian Government is leading the implementation of the Schools USI, in collaboration with state and territory governments and the non-government schooling sector. In 2024, the project focused on delivering enabling components for implementation of this initiative. These activities included supporting the passage of legislation to extend the USI system to the schools sector, as well as consultation on privacy, data management and technical design.

Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability

The Australian Government is investing \$20 million to continue the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) Continuous Quality Improvement Measure. 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. The program, which extends to 2026–27, is delivering a new course to uplift the capability of educators to understand their obligations under the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Standards) and support professional development within sectors and schools. It will also contribute to the 2025 Review of the Standards.

State and territory initiatives

- In the ACT:
 - Schools continued to develop Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) for all students accessing formal disability programs. ILPs were audited and related data included in the ACT Education Directorate's Annual report.
 - Data collection processes commenced to support development of the evaluation report for Phase Two of *Set up for Success*.
 - Three evidence-based and meaningful strategic indicators (learning gain, equity, and identification with school) continued to be publicly reported. Learning gain and equity measure methodologies were updated to reflect the new NAPLAN proficiency levels.
- The NSW Department of Education continued implementing *Our Plan for NSW Public Education*, which launched in 2023, serving as a guide to improve NSW's 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. New system-wide measures provide clear guidance for school leaders, and are designed to lift outcomes for all students, including at comprehensive primary and high schools, selective schools, regional and rural schools, and Schools for Specific Purposes. 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 provided of progress against strong and meaningful measures.

- In the Northern Territory:
 - Targets for the Department of Education and Training's key performance indicators were published in the NT Budget Paper. In 2024, new measures were introduced to reflect the new NAPLAN proficiency standards measure, with targets set to increase the proportion of students in the Strong and Exceeding proficiency levels and reduce the proportion of students in the Needs Additional Support proficiency level.
 - As part of their Annual School Improvement Plan (ASIP), schools set student improvement targets and identified the implementation outcomes for their students, parents and families, and staff. The department supported schools to develop their ASIP, providing access to data for meaningful measures.
 - Custom school survey reports were produced for all NT Government schools. The department continued its commitment to publishing system-level school survey data and incorporated various school survey results for the first time in the *NT Department of Education Annual Report, 2023–24*.
- The Queensland Department of Education continued to embed 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.
- The South Australian Department for Education fully released the new Education Dashboard to school-based and corporate staff. The dashboard uses Power BI and replicates useful information, reports and functions from legacy systems, while incorporating improvements based on consultation and feedback from department staff. The dashboard is designed to search for and summarise centrally collected data on students and includes enrolments, demographics, attendance, behaviour, and academic achievement. The department continues to undertake the Wellbeing and Engagement Collection and provides department staff with the findings to help understand the needs of students on a yearly basis.
- The Tasmanian Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) remained a lead contributor to the Tasmanian Government's whole-of-community approach to *Lifting Literacy* in Tasmania. In 2024, DECYP delivered on first-year milestones of the *Lifting Literacy Implementation Plan 2024–2026*. Progress was reported to the independent Lifting Literacy Outcomes Monitoring Group, whose role is to ensure the recommendations of the Literacy Advisory Panel's Final Report to Government are on track and being reflected in improved literacy outcomes.
- In Victoria, all government schools were required to set a 12-month target to decrease the number of students achieving in the 'Needs Additional Support' level in reading and numeracy in NAPLAN and to include actions towards implementing the [Victorian Teaching and Learning Model](#) and [Victoria's approach to teaching reading F–2](#) in their Annual Implementation Plan (AIP). Each year every government school is required to prepare an AIP which outlines how the school will implement the goals and key improvement strategies that will be their focus for improvement in the coming year. The Victorian Department of Education introduced and reported new measures reflecting the NAPLAN Writing domain results in the objective indicators section of the *Department of Education 2023–24 Annual Report*.
- The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) held a four-part series of human resources and legal workshops for Principals, Business Managers, and Human Resource professionals, reinforcing AISSA's commitment to equipping schools with the knowledge to make informed and legally sound decisions while fostering a fair and compliant environment.

- Catholic education authorities continued to enhance accountability through evidence-based, transparent practices:
 - Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) engaged a consulting firm to review its Students with Disability (SWD) policies, programs and processes. The review involved input from school staff, parents, and external service providers, with the aim of ensuring that system policies addressed the diverse needs of students with disability, aligned with the legal framework and regulations governing their rights and provisions, and assessed the efficacy of SWD processes.
 - CEWA's *Student Learning Journey* Power BI platform enabled educators to track growth using national and state comparators, integrating assessment data for planning, feedback, and parent communication.
 - Catholic Schools NSW launched its *2024–2029 Funding Distribution Model* and delivered biannual *State of the System* reports on school performance.
 - In South Australia, a standardised assessment schedule was implemented to monitor literacy and numeracy, while strengthening teachers' assessment literacy and leaders' data capability.