

## Chapter 3: Policies and Priorities

This chapter outlines the national policy context for Australian schooling in 2025 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 Australian Government contributes to education policy through national agreements and its financial relations with the states.

The six state and two 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 2025, 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 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 2025, Ministers continued to progress work across early childhood 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 Northern Territory. 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.

The [Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia](#) provides the basis for national reporting on the performance of schooling, as agreed by education ministers. The framework reflects the commitments outlined in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, defines the national Key Performance Measures (KPMs), specifies the data sources for these KPMs and outlines the reporting cycle for the period 2023–2027.

## The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement

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).<sup>1</sup>

The Agreements commenced in 2025 and aim to improve educational outcomes for all Australian students, with funding tied to reforms focused on three national priority areas – equity and excellence, wellbeing for learning and engagement, and a strong and sustainable workforce. The Agreements contain 10 National Reform Directions which support the achievement of the national priority areas:

### Equity and Excellence:

- Evidence-based teaching and learning approaches and providing tiered and targeted support.
- A Year 1 Phonics Check and an Early Years of Schooling Numeracy Check to support early identification of student learning needs.
- Initiatives to encourage students to take up high-quality science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education opportunities.

### Wellbeing for learning and engagement:

- Strengthening links between schools and non-school services, such as health services.
- Improving student access to in-school wellbeing coordinators, school counsellors, psychologists, mental health workers and/or youth health nurses.
- Initiatives to support student engagement in learning, for example through greater student participation, attendance, inclusion and/or enhanced school-family engagement.

### A strong and sustainable workforce:

- Initiatives to develop, recognise, reward and/or deploy highly expert teachers.
- Improving access to high-quality, evidence-based professional learning and quality-assured curriculum resources for teachers and schools.
- Initiatives to strengthen teacher and school leader wellbeing, such as strengthening cultural safety, and reducing teacher and school leader workload.
- Initiatives to attract more people into a teaching career, retain more teachers and increase workforce diversity.

States and territories are also required to have a bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth. These set out state and territory-specific actions to improve student outcomes including activities that support priority equity cohorts: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from regional and remote locations, students with disability and students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.

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<sup>1</sup> The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement and the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement – Full and Fair Funding 2025–2034 are available at: <https://www.education.gov.au/recurrent-funding-schools/national-school-reform-agreement/better-and-fairer-schools-agreement-20252034>.

The BFSA includes several reporting and accountability measures to provide transparency and accountability for delivering on reforms and build understanding of outcomes for students, including:

- annual reports from state and territory governments and the non-government school sector on the implementation of reforms
- increased transparency of school systems' need-based funding models
- the development of an education reporting dashboard to highlight progress
- an annual funding report from state and territory governments for government and non-government schools
- two independent reviews of the BFSA, a mid-term review in 2028, and a final report to Education Ministers in 2033 to inform the next 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 five 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.

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. In 2025, work continued on the updating and realignment of these subjects.

More information is provided in Section 3.10: Delivering world-class curriculum and assessment.

## **Disability Standards for Education**

The Disability Standards for Education (the Standards) aim to ensure students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability. They clarify the responsibilities education and training providers have under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* and cover enrolment; reasonable adjustments; participation; curriculum development, accreditation and delivery; support services; harassment and victimisation; and where exceptions may be applied.

All education providers (including public and private schools; preschools and kindergartens; curriculum and assessment accreditation authorities; public and private education and training providers; and tertiary providers such as VET providers and higher education providers) must comply with 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.<sup>2</sup> 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 Technical and Further Education (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 (NSA). The NSA, 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 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*, which guides the work of all governments to deliver a shared vision for strengthening the national VET system. It focuses on national training priorities and outcomes by providing a vision for unions, employers and the VET sector. The *National Skills Plan 2025–2026*, developed under the NSA, was endorsed by Skills Ministers in 2025. This second edition of the Plan provides an update on the progress made since the inaugural publication as well as actions to implement policy initiatives under the NSA, address shared national priorities, and strengthen the national VET system.

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

In 2025, Skills Ministers committed to prioritising increased commencements and completions of VET in priority areas. At their June and August meetings, ministers:

- Noted progress towards establishing a National TAFE Network, with five jurisdictions signing on to the policy initiative. A National TAFE Network Committee commenced operating in the second half of 2025 to guide the development of projects to be funded under the National TAFE Network.
- Endorsed an updated *National Code of Good Practice for Australian Apprenticeships and Traineeships*, which provides guidance for employers. The updated Code, which will take effect from 1 January 2026, emphasises the importance of workplace wellbeing and workplace health and safety obligations, and also provides key information regarding mental health, inclusion and diversity in the workplace.
- Agreed to the *National TAFE Network Strategic Plan 2025–2028*, which establishes a roadmap for driving collaboration, innovation and excellence across Australia’s TAFEs.

At their December 2025 meeting, Skills Ministers noted the following milestones, which set the course for 2026 and beyond:

- Free TAFE had become permanent, enabling hundreds of thousands of enrolments.
- The *National Foundation Skills Strategy* expanded access to literacy, numeracy and digital skills.
- 14 TAFE Centres of Excellence continued to drive innovation in priority sectors—clean energy, housing, care services and digital technology—supported by the National TAFE Network.
- The *VET Workforce Blueprint* and new *2025 RTO Standards* strengthened teaching quality and regulatory integrity.
- The *Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System* had shaped improvements to apprenticeship support.
- Under the NSA’s joint stewardship model, work on a *Balanced Scorecard* to track progress and drive continuous improvement to the skills and training system across jurisdictions had progressed.
- Around \$760 million had been agreed upon for policy initiatives under the NSA, such as supporting foundation skills, improving completions, strengthening the VET workforce and partnering with and strengthening the Aboriginal Community Controlled RTO sector.
- Progress on Closing the Gap continued, with an Interim First Nations Partnership Committee in place and the work underway on the approach to a nationally-networked First Nations VET Policy Partnership.

### 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 2025, all states and territories participated in National Enabling Initiatives under the BFSA. Other state and territory policy initiatives are noted in the following sections of this chapter. Information on state and territory initiatives reported in this chapter is drawn from contributions received from state and territory education authorities, the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) and Independent Schools Australia (ISA).

## 3.2 Educational goals

### Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration has two 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 2025 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 four 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).<sup>3</sup>
- 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).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The [Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report \(July 2025\)](#) notes that nationally, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the Year Before Full-time Schooling (YBFS) age cohort enrolled in early childhood education is increasing and on track to meet the target of 95% by 2025. In 2024, 94.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the YBFS age cohort were enrolled in early childhood education, an increase of 32.9 percentage points since the baseline year (2016).

<sup>4</sup> 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

In 2025, the Australian Government continued to work with states, territories and the non-government education sector to continue the implementation and delivery of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (NTWAP). Agreed by all education ministers in 2022, NTWAP was a standing item for the Schools Policy Group (SPG), the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee (AESOC) and the Education Ministers’ Meeting (EMM). Implementation was supported through an established cross-jurisdictional working group. By mid-2025 the majority of actions under NTWAP had been implemented. In September 2025, AESOC convened a National Teacher Workforce Roundtable to hear directly from education leaders and experts about challenges and opportunities to support the teacher workforce across the country.

#### Consent and Respectful Relationships Education

The Australian Government committed \$83.5 million from 2022–23 to 2027–28 to work in partnership with states, territories, the non-government school sector, and subject matter experts, to support delivery of age appropriate, evidence-based and expert-developed Consent and Respectful Relationships Education. 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 to inform and guide the measure (established June 2023);
- a rapid review on current Respectful Relationships Education delivery (completed in October 2023 as an input to the Framework); and
- development of a National Respectful Relationships Education Framework, available from March 2026.

#### Partnership with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Corporation

The Australian Government has committed to providing \$12.5 million over four years from 2024–25 to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Corporation (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 March 2025, the Australian Government Department of Education and NATSIEC signed a Partnership Agreement, strengthening relationships and ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, aspirations and solutions, as represented through NATSIEC, are considered in Australian Government education policy decisions.

In May 2025, Education Ministers signed an agreement formalising their partnership with NATSIEC. The partnership sees NATSIEC bring perspectives and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to the Education Ministers Meeting architecture for consideration in policy decisions.

#### Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership

The Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (ECCDPP) continued to progress its priorities and made a second set of recommendations to Joint Council on Closing the Gap. In response to the independent research finalised by ECCDPP in 2024 and a Joint Council recommendation, education officials across all governments and the ECCDPP co-developed implementation advice about funding model options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations delivering integrated early years services which was provided to Education Ministers.

## State, territory and sector initiatives

In the Australian Capital Territory:

- The Government continued to provide access to quality early childhood education for eligible three-year-olds through universal and targeted preschool initiatives, delivered in partnership with over 85 early childhood education and care providers. Collaboration with the Valuing Educators Reference Group continued, supporting implementation of the early childhood workforce strategy and strengthening workforce capability.
- The *Affiliated Schools* Program, an award-winning partnership between public schools and the University of Canberra under the Future of Education Strategy, brought together university staff, teachers and school leaders to improve pre-service and in-service teacher capability and student outcomes in public schools.
- The ACT Education Directorate progressed the first Action Plan under the Inclusive Education Strategy, establishing a Community of Practice to translate Universal Design for Learning principles into classrooms. Aligned with the Student Voice Forum, these initiatives empowered students as co-designers of learning and continued to build system-wide capacity for inclusive education.

The NSW Department of Education:

- Strengthened its partnership with the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW, supporting development of a diversity and inclusion strategy to increase participation from culturally and linguistically diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and deepening engagement with families and carers.
- Strengthened its partnership with the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group through its ongoing formal partnership agreement. In collaboration with the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations, the Department progressed Stage 1 of the National Skills Agreement Closing the Gap Implementation Plan. This resulted in the establishment of the NSW Community of Practice and agreement to Stage 2. The Commonwealth committed a combined \$100 million to support Aboriginal Registered Training Organisations and a First Nations-owned VET sector to deliver culturally responsive training pathways.
- Partnered with TAFE NSW to deliver a \$10 million fee-free early childhood education and care professional learning program, benefiting 1,751 professionals since late 2024.

Under the City–Country Partnership Program, the Northern Territory Government, the Australian Government and the Yadha Muru Foundation continued to work with nine schools in the Northern Territory and partner schools interstate to strengthen student engagement, learning outcomes and attendance. As part of this initiative, the partnership between Trinity Grammar School, Murray Downs School and Alekarenge School connected students and staff through classroom activities, on-country learning and joint projects and provided students with shared learning experiences, cultural exchange and targeted curriculum support. Trinity Grammar students were supported through mentoring, classroom assistance and cultural immersion, while Murray Downs and Alekarenge students participated in activities that build literacy, numeracy and social skills. Key outcomes included improved student confidence, motivation and engagement; deeper cultural understanding for city-based students; and expanded learning opportunities for remote students. Teachers reported stronger professional relationships, better resource sharing and more consistent curriculum support. The partnership also strengthened community pride and cross-community relationships through cultural activities.

The Queensland Department of Education:

- Continued to actively engage through the National Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership to address early childhood care and development outcomes of First Nations children.
- Partnered with Early Childhood Australia to deliver Educator Wellbeing Workshops, supporting wellbeing strategies in early childhood settings.
- Collaborated with Queensland Health to deliver the Healthy Kindy Kids Commitment to provide free vision, hearing, speech and language screening for all children participating in approved kindergarten programs.
- Continued to support the Torres Strait Islanders' Regional Education Council to provide representation and advocacy on behalf of the Torres Strait peoples, in all matters to do with education.
- Delivered an Integrated Response system initiative, establishing dedicated educational precincts to implement targeted responses to local needs; supporting schools in the most complex communities; and delivering integrated school-based hub models that provide a full range of services to support children, students, families and communities.

In South Australia:

- The Aboriginal Workforce Network grew by 99 members, providing opportunities for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, community and local businesses to come together and foster connection, belonging and professional growth.
- Partnerships with local Aboriginal businesses Jamie Goldsmith and Kimberley Wanganeen Consultancy enabled the development and implementation of professional learning in cultural responsiveness across the Department for Education.
- The South Australian Department for Education enacted the Agreement with the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee for the governance of Anangu Education. Together they developed the *Anangu Bilingual Education Policy*, grounded in the principles of Anangu voice, shared decision making, 'working alongside' and collective responsibility.

In Tasmania, the Department for Education, Children and Young People provided funding and worked in partnership with multiple organisations to support student wellbeing and readiness for learning, including:

- 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 government schools
- Australian Childhood Foundation: to deliver a suite of trauma-informed practice in schools professional learning
- Working It Out: \$300,000 (one-year portion of three-year agreement) to expand the Valuing Diversity in Schools program, with a particular focus on LGBTIQ+ young people
- Sexual Assault Support Service: increased funding to expand delivery of the Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention and Consent is a Conversation programs to a further 12 schools
- Bravehearts: \$230,000 (one-year portion of two-year grant) to deliver Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure Show to primary schools to raise awareness about consent and protective behaviours.

In Victoria, the Department of Education partnered with 18 African Australian led organisations to provide tailored and culturally appropriate education support to African Australian young people and their families, through the Victorian African Communities Action Plan Homework Club Initiative. The strengthened partnerships with the African Australian community led to improved academic outcomes, student confidence, family engagement, belonging and inclusion across school communities.

In Western Australia:

- The BHP Pilbara Education Partnership focused on the early years, pathways beyond school, and supporting students to achieve their full potential.
- The Woodside-funded Karratha and Roebourne Education Initiative supported educational attainment, improved student pathways, and assisted attraction and retention of *Quality Teaching* program teachers.
- Partnerships with Rio Tinto provided a culturally safe space for Aboriginal staff, children and families to engage in an early learning program, additional opportunities for secondary school students to participate in leadership programs, and increased access to STEM related programs, equipping students with nationally accredited qualifications.
- Several other initiatives supported positive pathways for all students, including the Chevron Australia Sponsorship Agreement with Onslow School, Fortescue Metals Group Agreement with Hedland Senior High School, and Hedland Attendance Strategy, supporting Port Hedland primary schools.

Independent Schools NSW strengthened partnerships through the *Teaching Schools Hubs* project, collaborating with independent schools and affiliate universities to support initial teacher education. The program provided year-long, school-based placements, employing students at least one day per week, strengthening teaching capability and learning environments for students.

The Association of Independent Schools South Australia partnered with the Association of Independent Schools Northern Territory to pilot Phase 1 of the Consent and Respectful Relationships Education program across ten diverse schools, including very remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools. This supported whole-school, evidence-based practice through cycles of learning, action and reflection via visits, online communities and professional learning.

Independent Schools Queensland supported its member schools by establishing partnerships with organisations such as Down Syndrome and Intellectual Disability Queensland, Be You, and the Black Dog Institute. These collaborations enhanced the delivery of our Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) messaging and reinforced commitment to providing high-quality learning experiences for all students.

Catholic education maintained a strong national focus on collaboration, capability building and partnership across the country. The Australian Catholic Education Conference, hosted by the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) with the Catholic Education Diocese of Cairns, brought together more than 1,400 educators, leaders, parents and partners in a program aligned with NCEC's strategic pillars of Educational Excellence, Access and Faith. As a national example, NCEC's Educational Excellence Standing Committee also hosted a forum in November 2025 that advanced work on defining and measuring excellence, senior secondary pathways and MTSS, while enabling jurisdictions to showcase quality practice. In South Australia, Catholic Education South Australia strengthened system-school partnerships through regional clusters, system coaches, and collaboration with Leaders of Learning and Inclusive Education Leaders, supporting more coordinated and responsive approaches to teaching, learning and student support.

### 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 under the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (NTWAP) to address challenges impacting the teacher workforce. As of the end of 2025, 21 out of 27 actions were marked complete with the remaining 6 expected to be delivered in 2026. Australian Government initiatives, including the Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships and the High Achieving Teachers Program, continue to be delivered. States and territories also contributed to several actions through increased permanent teacher employment, re-engaging qualified teachers, and improving access to high-quality First Nations cultural responsiveness resources.

#### Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships

Rounds 1 and 2 of the Commonwealth Teacher Scholarships Program supported 1,976 initial teacher education students to undertake undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Round 2 delivered 991 scholarships of up to \$40,000 awarded to ITE students commencing an accredited ITE degree in 2025. 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. The first Round 1 postgraduate recipients have completed their ITE degrees and entered the Commitment to Teach phase of the program. Applications for Round 3 opened in November 2025.

#### High Achieving Teachers Program

The Australian Government's High Achieving Teachers (HAT) Program supports innovative employment based pathways into teaching. Under the NTWAP, additional HAT places were funded through two expansion phases. In Phase 1, La Trobe University received funding in 2023 to pilot a primary teaching pathway delivering 105 places, with participants commencing in 2024. In 2024, ten providers were selected through a competitive grant process to deliver a further 1,497 places across all states and territories under Phase 2. During 2025, participating providers commenced recruitment, orientation and delivery of the new pilot cohorts, with participants beginning employment-based teaching pathways in schools experiencing workforce shortages.

#### 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.

## 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), and
- enhance postgraduate initial teacher education programs for mid-career entrants (recommendations 12–14).

By the end of 2025, significant progress had been made in the implementation of the recommendations. This included:

- ITE providers successfully embedding TEEP-recommended core content in their programs (recommendations 1–2),
- AITSL updating the ITE Accreditation Standards and Procedures to streamline reporting requirements for ITE providers (recommendation 5), and
- establishing the Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund (recommendation 7).

In December 2025, the Strong Beginnings (Excellence) Fund was initiated as an annual grant program to foster improved performance across the ITE sector.

## Workload Reduction Fund

Workload Reduction Fund pilots were delivered in a range of school types, sizes and locations across Australia, including schools from both the government and non-government sectors. These pilots provide practical support in schools by trialling new approaches to reduce teacher and school leader workloads. By the end of 2025, all 8 Phase 1 pilots that commenced in 2023–24 had concluded. A further 18 Phase 2 pilots were underway in 2025.

## Microcredentials

Australian teachers, school leaders, other school-based educators and pre-service teachers across early childhood, primary and secondary settings were provided with free access to three online microcredentials. The Classroom Management microcredential was launched in July 2024, followed by Explicit Teaching in November 2024 and Teaching Phonics in January 2025. During 2025, the full suite of microcredentials was available nationally, supporting educators to strengthen evidence-based teaching practice and classroom capability. By December 2025, 5,889 Australian educators had enrolled in one or more microcredential. The courses will remain free to access until December 2026.

## First Nations Teacher and School Leader Strategy

In 2024, the Australian Government announced funding of \$2.4 million over three years to work in close partnership with First Nations stakeholders to develop and implement a Strategy to strengthen the attraction, development, retention, and success of First Nations educators. The Strategy aims to address systemic barriers and to promote culturally safe, inclusive education environments, strengthening a diverse teaching and school leader workforce that values First Nations expertise.

Between February and May 2025, 49 stakeholders were consulted, including First Nations peak bodies, education stakeholders and jurisdictions. The Australian Government Department of Education continued drafting the Strategy throughout 2025 in close consultation with First Nations peak bodies and it is due to be considered by Education Ministers in mid-2026.

### **Good to Great Schools Australia – Expanding Access to Evidence-Based Teaching**

In 2025, the Australian Government committed \$5 million to partner with Good to Great Schools Australia to strengthen the teacher workforce in rural, regional and remote areas. This commitment will develop an undergraduate credential in evidence-based teaching practices, helping build the capacity of teaching assistants and teachers in rural, regional and remote Australia and providing a pathway into teaching.

### **Anti-Bullying Rapid Review**

In 2025, Education Ministers accepted the recommendations of the Anti-Bullying Rapid Review Report which included a requirement that schools make reasonable effort to initiate safety and support planning and communication within 2 school days of becoming aware of bullying or other harmful behaviours. The Australian Government also announced a \$10 million investment for a national awareness campaign and the development of resources to help prevent and address bullying.

### **State, territory and sector initiatives**

In the Australian Capital Territory:

- The ACT Education Directorate continued delivering free online professional learning programs focused on inclusive practices across early childhood education and schools. Quality pedagogy in early childhood education was supported through Preschool Pathways Partners and Preschool Practice Coaches, supporting educators to deliver high-quality universal practices.
- The Academy of Future Skills supported STEM teaching in public schools through co-planning, lesson delivery and resource development aligned to the Australian Curriculum. Teaching and leadership in schools were supported through practice guides, evidence-based professional learning and literacy and numeracy networks. Inclusive Education strengthened system capacity through Communities of Practice and Inclusion Coaches providing mentoring and support.
- Workforce capability was strengthened through programs such as the Early Childhood Degree Scholarships, Early Learning Connection Program and Aunty Agnes Shea Early Childhood Scholarships. The Early Childhood Education and Care Network and the Strong Beginnings Aboriginal Educator Network were established, enabling educators to connect and strengthen professional practice.

In New South Wales:

- The School Leadership Institute engaged over 6,000 current and future leaders across 1,770 schools. It launched the Teacher Leader Development Program and began work on a 2026 Leadership Excellence Action Plan.
- The focus on workload reduction opportunities continued, through streamlining student and lesson planning, expanding the School Administration Reduction Program to over 700 schools, and the roll out of NSWeduChat to automate administrative tasks. Implementation of Teachers Award reforms such as flexible work, new leave types, reduced meetings, and more planning time continued, contributing to lower vacancy rates.
- The NSW Government committed \$49.9 million for a new scholarships program, the Early Learning Diploma to Degree program, Business Capability Development program and a TAFE partnership. It also announced an Early Career Academy to attract and support teachers. Additional reforms strengthened support for high potential and gifted education and extended support of Education Leaders supporting students learning English as a second language.

## In the Northern Territory:

- System-level professional learning and teaching resources supported schools to strengthen literacy and numeracy through structured, whole-school curriculum planning responsive to local community contexts. Professional learning focused on strengthening instructional leadership and aligning teaching practice with the NT Learning and Teaching Model and evidence-based explicit instruction, including through the On Country Learning Measures project in Central Australia and regional leadership networks.
- The Department of Education and Training supported the retention and development of high-quality teachers and leaders through professional learning, including orientation for new teachers, early-career pathways, leadership masterclasses, aspirant and early-career principal programs, principal wellbeing initiatives and a Leaders' Summit.
- The Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education program continued to build the capability of Aboriginal educators in remote schools and support pathways into teaching and leadership. By December 2025, 220 participants were studying VET courses and 39 studying tertiary courses across 74 sites.

## The Queensland Department of Education:

- Launched the Queensland Early Childhood Workforce Strategy 2025–28, committing \$20 million annually to strengthen and support the early childhood workforce.
- Delivered Education Futures Institute Flagship Programs, enabling teachers and aspiring and experienced leaders to translate teaching theory into practice suited to their context.
- Enhanced Respectful Relationships Education through the Respect Program, equipping teachers with tools to tailor content for their students and communities.
- Supported Indigenous English as an Additional Language or Dialect learners through explicit teaching of Standard Australian English while valuing diverse languages and cultures.
- Enabled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers to complete the 12-month Master of Indigenous Languages Education program at the University of Sydney, fostering Indigenous language preservation.
- Provided culturally responsive resources through the *Dandiiri* School and Community Library to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into the curriculum.

## In South Australia:

- A phased rollout of EdChat, a secure generative AI chatbot purpose built for South Australian classrooms, commenced for secondary students in public schools and providing curriculum-aligned responses that support teachers to deliver richer, safer learning experiences.
- The Workforce Strategy was refreshed across four focus areas: supply, attraction and retention; diversity and inclusion; workforce capability; and organisational effectiveness.
- The Teaching Futures Pathway 'Earn while you learn' pilot program for pre-service teachers was progressed with the University of South Australia.
- The Leadership Capability Framework was released to support site leaders to reflect, set goals and drive impact.
- The Literacy Guarantee Unit, with 28 coaches, provided targeted coaching in foundational reading skills, phonemic awareness, phonics and oral reading fluency for early years teachers.
- The Curriculum Leaders' Network was established to strengthen pedagogical leadership across the state.
- Professional learning for the Safeguarding Democracy through Public Education reforms was completed by 112 Year 7–10 teachers.

In Tasmania, the Department for Education, Children and Young People:

- Launched its Education Workforce Action Plan, the first step toward strategic workforce planning across all departmental, education-sector roles.
- Delivered a new Training and Development Hub to enhance access to high quality professional learning, career pathway progression information and supports.
- Began a Making School Time Count initiative to free up time for principals to lead and teachers to teach. This was achieved by reducing the administrative burden on principals and teachers, the coordination and streamlining of requests and activities directed to schools, supporting corporate business units to take a more school-centric approach to their work and measuring the impact of these changes on school workloads.
- Revised *Our Approach to School Improvement* (the framework to drive school improvement) to provide clarity on 2026 expectations and to provide guidance to schools as they navigate collaborative inquiry and improvement processes.

In Victoria:

- Since 2022, the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership (the Academy) has provided high-quality, evidence-informed professional learning and pathways to enhance the capability and confidence of Victorian teachers and leaders in line with strategic priorities, local contexts, and reform agendas. With 9 centres across metro and regional Victoria, the Academy has delivered impactful professional learning for teachers and aspiring, emerging, new and established school leaders from the government, Catholic and independent school sectors, with over 60,000 program places filled.
- Government schools have worked towards implementing the refreshed Victorian Teaching and Learning Model (VTLM 2.0) and (for primary schools) Victorian Reading Position, including 25 minutes of daily systematic synthetic phonics.
- The Department of Education published over 3,000 lesson plans and classroom resources across English, Maths, Science, and Digital and Design Technologies; and also established *Evidence to Action*, a teacher-facing communications hub on the Arc Platform, providing a collection of high-quality resources.

In Western Australia:

- The Midwest Targeted Teaching Program was the winner of the 2025 Institute of Public Administration Australia Award for Best Practice in Innovation. The program strengthens teacher practice through quality teaching and high impact teaching strategies. It provides professional learning, coaching, and data analysis to enhance student achievement, teacher development, and parent understanding of learning. The program supports whole-school planning and improvement across all 46 schools and 7,817 students in the Midwest.
- The Quality Teaching Strategy and Teaching for Impact framework promoted effective classroom practice. The Public School Principals' Fellowship Program recommenced, delivering an 18-month leadership program with system learning, executive mentoring, and Harvard courses.

Independent Schools NSW strengthened leadership capability through the National Flagship Program, a rigorous 11-month program for experienced senior leaders and aspiring principals. The program integrates academic study, mentoring, school-based leadership challenges and structured reflection to build executive leadership capacity across independent schools.

The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia supported around 190 early career educators through targeted mentoring and professional learning to build classroom confidence, effectiveness and resilience. This included launching a new two-year ConnectEd Early Career program across eight schools, creating strong professional networks to address early-career isolation and improve teacher retention across the sector.

The Association of Independent Schools of the Australian Capital Territory promoted quality teaching and leadership through the annual Celebrating Excellence in Education event, where schools showcase whole-school initiatives that have improved student outcomes, recognised teacher and school achievement and the retention of high-quality teachers.

Nationally, Catholic education supported quality teaching through coordinated initiatives focused on teacher capability, curriculum implementation and workforce development. The National Catholic Education Commission developed and promoted evidence-based teaching resources, including curriculum maps, adaptable classroom materials and professional learning in secondary mathematics. It also advanced the Mastery in Mathematics project, engaging Ochre Education and expert Catholic secondary mathematics teachers to develop a full year of evidence-based, adaptable resources for Years 7 and 8, aligned to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0, the NSW Syllabus and the Victorian Curriculum Version 2.0. These resources included curriculum mapping, lesson plans, assessments and intervention materials for students with gaps in foundational numeracy skills, and the program was later extended into Years 9 and 10. Catholic education also partnered with Australian Catholic University and the University of Notre Dame Australia on a national paraprofessional placement program for teacher education students.

### 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. Australian Governments also commit to providing support and advice through a range of channels on how to support children to develop and flourish, including partnering with families, the broader community and other services for children.

Early childhood education takes place in the years before full-time schooling and is generally accessed by children up to 5 years of age. 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 National Schools Statistics Collection (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 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.<sup>5</sup>

#### National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework (NQF) drives continuous improvement in 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 five years of age; and
- *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.

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<sup>5</sup> More information on early childhood education is available on the Australian Government Department of Education ([www.education.gov.au/early-childhood](http://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood)).

## Review of Child Safety Arrangements under the National Quality Framework

In 2023, ACECQA was commissioned to undertake a Review of Child Safety Arrangements under the NQF. The final report published in December 2023, made 16 recommendations. In 2024, Education Ministers accepted in-principle key recommendations from the Review. The Child Safety Reform Group began implementing the recommendations in 2025.

On 22 August 2025, Education Ministers noted that the Australian Government, in coordinated action with state and territories, will invest up to \$189 million to strengthen safety and quality in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings; with an additional \$37 million to implement the National Continuous Checking Capability for Working with Children Checks. These included:

- a National Early Childhood Worker Register mandatory child safety training
- exploring the use of CCTV in up to 300 ECEC services
- a ban on mobile phones and personal digital devices from September 2025
- more unannounced spot checks, joint regulation expansion, and more frequent assessments
- increased transparency for families
- tripling penalties under the National Law and National Regulations
- a rapid assessment of safeguarding practices.

Ministers also agreed a range of legislative reforms including:

- mandating the national child safety training for all staff, volunteers and students;
- enabling Regulatory Authorities to share the identity of prohibited individuals with Approved Providers;
- removing the ability to apply for service waivers related to building design requiring approved Working with Children Checks prior to commencing any work in ECEC services and mandate notification of any changes to status; and
- extending the limitation period for offences to enable prosecution to be undertaken.

Concurrently, the Attorney-General's Department worked to deliver urgent reform to improve national consistency and strengthen the quality of working with children checks.

### National Early Childhood Worker Register (National Register)

In August 2025, all Education Ministers agreed on a suite of measures to strengthen safety and quality in ECEC, including establishing a register of all ECEC workers to provide greater oversight of the workforce. ACECQA is establishing the National Register within the National Quality Agenda IT system.

During 2025, work commenced on enhancements to the National Register. These enhancements will be rolled out progressively to better support approved providers with worker screening and to lay the foundation for a future national worker registration system.

### 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 education and care workforce. In August 2022, Education Ministers endorsed the *Shaping Our Future: Implementation and Evaluation Plan*, which outlines how the 21 national workforce actions will be progressed, monitored, and reviewed. In July 2023, an online dashboard was launched to track progress against the nationally agreed actions and complementary initiatives supporting the strategy's six focus areas. In 2024, this was enhanced to include a 'Measuring Progress' component, providing a clearer view of outcomes and indicators aligned to the Strategy's objectives.

In 2025:

- Implementation of workforce actions continued across governments and partners, spanning the Strategy's six focus areas: professional recognition; attraction and retention; leadership and capability; wellbeing; and qualifications and career pathways.
- The Biannual National Workforce Forum brought together governments, sector representatives and stakeholders to share progress, emerging insights and priorities for the workforce.
- Research commissioned under the Strategy continued to build the evidence base to inform workforce initiatives. This included:
  - research by the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) on mentoring and induction (FA1-3), highlighting these supports as critical to educator retention, wellbeing and practice
  - research by AERO on options for a professional practice network (FA3-3), highlighting opportunities to strengthen collaboration and workforce capability through national and place-based approaches
  - research by Scyne Advisory and SNAICC on pathways for regional and remote educators and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators (FA2-1), highlighting barriers, success factors and the importance of targeted, place-based supports to grow and sustain the workforce.<sup>6</sup>

### **Preschool Reform Agreement**

The Preschool Reform Agreement 2022–2027 (PRA) supports the delivery of 15 hours a week (or 600 hours a year) of quality preschool for all children in the year before they start school. To maximise the benefits of preschool, reforms aim to lift preschool enrolments and attendance and measure outcomes. The PRA has enabled a better understanding of the number of children in the year before full-time school cohort, a measure of children's attendance over a whole term and funding flowing directly to sectors where children are accessing preschool.

The new preschool outcomes measure includes the development of four components:

- National learning progressions in two learning domains (executive function and oral language and literacy);
- A national formative assessment tool;
- Professional learning materials; and
- An alignment criteria and process guide.

A trial of the prototype of the national tool took place between July and September 2025. States and territories with an existing formative assessment tool participated by aligning their tools to the national learning progressions.

### **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.

In 2025, the majority of the Centre Based Day Care and Outside School Hours Care sector entered grant agreements, covering over 200,000 workers (at December 2025) and protecting most families through the fee constraint.

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<sup>6</sup> SNAICC – National Voice for our Children' was formerly called the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC).

### **Building a universal early childhood education and care system**

The Australian Government is committed to building a universal ECEC system that is simple, affordable, and accessible for every family, and has taken important steps towards this through:

- Establishing a \$1 billion Building Early Education Fund which will see more services built or expanded in areas of need;
- A Three-Day Guarantee which replaced the current Child care subsidy (CCS) Activity Test from January 2026 with a guaranteed entitlement to three days per week of subsidised ECEC for CCS eligible children; and
- Development of an Early Education Service Delivery Prices project to better understand the cost of delivering services around the country and underpin future reform.

These new measures will build on the Government's Cheaper Child Care reforms in 2023 and the Worker Retention Payment in 2024, while being informed by the Productivity Commission and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's work on the ECEC system completed in 2024.

### **National Agreement on Closing the Gap**

The Australian Government continued to work in partnership with the Coalition of Peaks and all levels of government to progress the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. In 2025, efforts to advance Closing the Gap Outcomes and Priority Reforms in early childhood education and care were embedded across relevant Commonwealth policies and programs. This included work on initiatives such as the Building Early Education Fund, the 3-Day Guarantee changes to the Child Care Subsidy, and the expansion of the Connected Beginnings program, as reflected in the Commonwealth Closing the Gap 2025 Annual Report.

### **Formal Partnership Agreement with SNAICC – Voice for our Children**

In March 2025, a formal Partnership Agreement between the Department of Education and SNAICC was finalised to give effect to Priority Reform 1 (formal partnerships and shared decision making) under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. The Partnership Agreement 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. The Partnership Agreement continues to guide the way in which the department works through a process of shared decision making with SNAICC as its First Nations partner in early childhood, to improve outcomes for First Nations children and families in their early years.

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

Let's Count is an early mathematics program for children aged three to five 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.

### **Froebel Australia's Little Scientists Program**

Little Scientists provides professional learning for early childhood educators that aims to improve their confidence and ability to introduce STEM concepts in a fun and engaging way to children (aged 3 to 6 years old) in their care. The program is aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework, combines inquiry-based learning with age-appropriate STEM exploration and encourages daily scientific exploration. The Australian Government has funded this program since 2016–17.

## State, territory and sector initiatives

In the Australian Capital Territory:

- The Quality Engagement Program provided targeted support to eligible early childhood education and care approved providers and their services to lift quality and improve outcomes for children.
- The Education Directorate conducted a survey and needs analysis of the ACT's ECEC and Out of School Hours Care workforce to enhance understanding of sector challenges and future opportunities.
- Minister's round table forums on child safety were convened to foster meaningful engagement across the Early Childhood and Care sector, bringing together stakeholders, including peak bodies, early childhood educators, and parents and carers from across the ACT.

The NSW Department of Education:

- Committed \$430 million in fee relief to support families with three- to five-year-old children enrolled in preschool, long day care services, and community and mobile preschools.
- Awarded \$11.7 million in grants to create 187 additional licensed places under the Building Early Learning Places program, a targeted grants program that supports the creation of additional community preschool and long day care places for children under the age of six, in identified undersupplied areas and in early learning services operated by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

In the Northern Territory:

- Families as First Teachers continued to strengthen early childhood education by building parent capability and delivering high-quality early learning, recognising families as children's first and most influential teachers. The program provides intentional parent learning, coaching and modelling to support frequent, responsive interactions with children.
- The Safe Start, Strong Futures 2026 Plan was announced to implement national child safety reforms and improve Early Childhood Education and Care services. The plan focuses on consistent child safety practice through stronger accountability, targeted investment, continuous improvement and meaningful engagement. Key actions include building service capability against the National Quality Standard and establishing NT Early Childhood Key Stakeholder Communities of Practice, bringing together providers, government, Registered Training Organisations, sector partners, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, researchers and early childhood leaders to drive system-wide improvement.

In Queensland:

- Funding for Free Kindy continued, resulting in 64,181 children aged 4 and 5 enrolled in kindergarten programs, a 9.3% increase (5,456 additional enrolments) compared to 2023 (the year prior to Free Kindy commencing). This included 10,942 disadvantaged children (up 7.2%) and 5,779 children with disability (up 15.5%).
- \$1.85 million was allocated to develop national mandatory child safety training on behalf of all jurisdictions and invested an additional \$1 million to support the early childhood sector in implementing new child safety reforms and guidance materials.
- The K–2 Sandpit – a toolkit of resources supporting high-quality, culturally appropriate early years programs – was delivered, providing a consistent, evidence-based approach to curriculum delivery.
- Refinements to the Kindergarten Learning Progressions Toolkit, (an aligned tool as part of national work on a Preschool Outcomes Measure) with educators, teachers, and stakeholders (including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Expert Advisory Committee) actively involved in co-designing resources.

The South Australian Department for Education:

- Commenced implementation of Preschool Plus, a targeted early intervention program funding additional hours for eligible 3- and 4-year-old children identified as developmentally vulnerable. Children enrolled in the program access 30 hours per week (1,200 hours per year) of preschool in the two years before school at Integrated Hubs and non-Hubs.
- Progressed workforce supports to build a quality early years workforce to enable reforms related to the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care, including facilitating qualifications and incentives to join the early childhood workforce.

In Tasmania, the Early Learning for Three Year Olds initiative continued to increase access to early learning for three-year-olds through place-based trial sites developed in partnership with the Education and Care sector, families and communities. In 2025, trial sites commenced operating in communities across Tasmania to test different models of early learning to meet local community needs.

In Victoria:

- Implementation of the Best Start, Best Life reforms continued, including:
  - The transition of four-year-old kindergarten to Pre-Prep commenced, with pre-prep delivered across 6 regional local government areas;
  - The first four of 50 government-owned early learning and childcare centres were opened, operated by Early Learning Victoria;
  - Approximately 97% of services offered Free Kinder to families; and
  - Participation in universal three-year-old kindergarten increased to 92.2%.
- Additional supports continued to be provided to engage vulnerable and disadvantaged children in kindergarten, including Aboriginal children, refugee and asylum seeker children and children known to Child Protection.

In Western Australia:

- KindiLink continued to be delivered as a free play-and-learn program for Aboriginal children not yet enrolled in school, offering up to 6 hours per week for children and their families at participating schools. The program fosters culturally responsive environments and strengthens partnerships between schools and communities to support children's transition into formal schooling.
- Early childhood teachers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officers deliver learning aligned to the Early Years Learning Framework, supporting children's social, emotional, language and cognitive development.
- Planning commenced for a pilot of free full-time kindergarten for four-year-olds from 2026, to give more children access to the high-quality early learning experiences.
- The Kimberley Schools Project and Scaling Up Success in Remote Schools program strengthened existing strategies to accelerate learning in kindergarten to Year 2, with a focus on improving outcomes for Aboriginal students and ensuring consistent and effective early years teaching, curriculum delivery and assessment.

Through the Preschool Reform Agreement, the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia distributed \$4.98 million to 132 independent schools to support kindergarten operational costs for 15 hours of weekly programs. Additional initiatives included targeted professional learning for leadership, curriculum and pedagogy, education assistant training, cultural responsiveness programs, and targeted regional and remote support, including for Aboriginal schools, to enhance program quality, kindergarten readiness and educator capability.

Early childhood leaders in South Australian independent schools were supported through targeted workshops aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework, My Time Our Place and the National Quality Standard. Leaders also received guidance to prepare for child safety reforms under strengthened national Early Childhood Education and Care legislation, building leadership capability and strengthening the provision of safe, responsive learning environments.

Catholic education strengthened its national provision of early childhood education in 2025 through continued expansion of services and targeted jurisdictional investment. Nationally, Catholic education operated more than 700 Early Childhood Education and Care services, representing approximately 4% of all services within the scope of the National Quality Framework. These services spanned preschools, kindergartens, long day care, family day care and outside school hours care, reflecting a broad national commitment to supporting young children and families. This national growth was reflected in specific jurisdictional initiatives. In Victoria, capital grants supported the Sandhurst and Melbourne dioceses to deliver kindergarten services on Catholic school sites through the Victorian Government's Building Blocks Partnership. In Tasmania and Western Australia, Catholic education authorities delivered more than 100 state-funded four-year-old kindergarten programs within Catholic schools outside the scope of the National Quality Framework.

### 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.

#### Teacher Resource Hubs

Since 2012, the Australian Government has invested in a suite of online teacher resource hubs that provide free, quality-assured, curriculum-aligned resources to teachers, school leaders, and families nationwide. In 2025, the Hubs were expanded to add a wide range of primary years content to the [Civics and Citizenship Education Hub](#), [Digital Technologies Hub](#), [Literacy Hub](#) and [Mathematics Hub](#). The [Early Learning Languages Australia](#) program expanded registrations to all eligible F–2 classrooms nationwide, giving more young Australians the opportunity to build confidence, curiosity and intercultural understanding. The Literacy Hub added five professional learning modules and 14 phonics and morphology lesson packs to the resources, and the Digital Technologies Hub added a module to support F–10 teachers to use generative AI tools effectively and responsibly.

#### State, territory and sector initiatives

The ACT Education Directorate supported the building of foundational skills in the primary years through:

- Teacher and leader professional learning on English and Mathematics instruction
- Provision of quality examples of curriculum planning and resources
- Connecting teachers and leaders across schools to share quality practice.

The NSW Department of Education:

- Developed and trialled the Year 1 Number Screening Check in 2025 in preparation for 2026 administration to all Year 1 students in NSW public schools. The screener assessed students' knowledge and skills in early number sense. Schools were supported to administer the screener, analyse results and provide targeted teaching and intervention to support student learning in response. An early years numeracy check is a key initiative of the Australian Government's Better and Fairer Schools Agreement.
- Continued to revise K–6 English and mathematics implementation resources to strengthen foundational skill development in the primary years. This included planning materials, instructional sequences, lessons, and professional learning enabling regular, systematic practice and explicit teaching of foundational knowledge and skills. Resources were aligned with NSW public schools' system priorities, including the Explicit Teaching statement. These resources formed part of the Department's curriculum reform support package for primary teachers.

In the Northern Territory:

- The Minister for Education and Training launched the *Boosting Literacy and Numeracy Plan*, reaffirming a consistent, evidence-based approach to explicit teaching through implementation of the NT Learning and Teaching Model. A strengthened system-level assessment schedule improved early identification of students requiring additional support with foundational reading skills, alongside completion of the first annual Year 1 Phonics Check by Government schools in Term 3, 2025.
- The first fully funded swimming program for all students in Years 1–6 was launched, with schools delivering Royal Life Saving's *Swim and Survive* curriculum aligned with national and Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Health and Physical Education standards.
- Three system-wide school improvement priorities were implemented: boosting literacy and numeracy, raising attendance and increasing Year 12 completions. Schools embedded these priorities in annual improvement plans, with literacy and numeracy efforts informing the 2026 focus on explicit and targeted instruction.

The Queensland Department of Education:

- Prioritised foundational literacy and numeracy skills by providing teachers with high-quality, evidence-informed resources to support effective teaching and learning.
- Mandated the use of the Year 1 Phonics Check in 2025 and rolled out Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) 8th Edition as part of Universal Screening tools in state schools to identify and address learning needs. An Early Years Numeracy Screener was also trialled.
- Focused on reading as a key priority under the implementation of the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0, emphasising evidence-informed practices such as explicit instruction and multi-tiered systems of support.
- Continued to support state and non-state schools through the Reading and Writing Disorders Service, which provided resources and built capability to identify and support reading disorders, including dyslexia.

The South Australian Department for Education:

- Implemented the Phonics Screening Check for Year 1 students, reaching 11,350 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.
- Supported over 1,200 teachers and leaders to complete professional learning in numeracy, ahead of the statewide implementation of the South Australian Numeracy Check for all Year 1 students in 2026.

Tasmanian Government primary schools continued to receive targeted training and resources to support systematic and cumulative curriculum delivery. This included building workforce capability to deliver explicit and structured literacy instruction in all classrooms, with a focus on embedding evidence informed strategies. UFLI Foundations and Word Origins were the department-endorsed foundational literacy programs for government primary schools, ensuring consistent, high-quality literacy instruction across all government primary schools.<sup>7</sup>

In Victoria:

- The Year 1 Phonics Check was optional for Victorian government schools ahead of the mandate the following year. This screening assessment supports understanding of early reading skills and is aligned to Victoria's reading position, requiring a daily minimum of 25 minutes of systematic synthetic phonics in Foundation to Level 2.
- Victorian government primary schools were invited to participate in a Year 1 Numeracy Check pilot (2026), helping teachers identify students at risk of falling behind in mathematics.
- The Primary Mathematics and Science Specialists initiative began its 2-year program to build teacher and whole-school capability. Participants received 20 days of professional learning and 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) release time to strengthen their practice, support colleagues, and drive school-wide improvement. Cohort 8 (2025–2026) focused on mathematics, engaging 100 teachers and leaders from 54 schools, to help students develop strong foundational numeracy skills that underpin success across the primary years.

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<sup>7</sup> UFLI stands for University of Florida Literacy Institute.

In Western Australia:

- The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) updated early childhood education standards, releasing new statements for Kindergarten to Year 2. These documents promote quality, child-focused education designed to enhance children’s learning, development, and wellbeing from the foundation years.
- The Centre for Excellence in the Explicit Teaching of Literacy built primary teachers’ and leaders’ capability in explicit literacy instruction. Through an annual internship, targeted professional learning and mentorship from a highly accomplished Centre School, the program supported schools to embed consistent, high quality literacy practices. The Australian Education Research Organisation has conducted an evaluation of the first three rounds of the program, assessing its effectiveness in professional learning delivery and its contribution to the evidence base on improving professional learning for teachers and students across Australia.

The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia delivered targeted support to improve reading, writing and numeracy outcomes for students requiring additional assistance, including English as an Additional Language or Dialect learners. This included 35 numeracy workshops and 26 literacy workshops delivered to more than 500 participants.

Independent Schools NSW strengthened foundational numeracy through K–6 Numeracy Screening Tools, supporting early identification and intervention for students at risk in Number and Algebra. The Primary Numeracy Project complemented this work through targeted professional learning and curriculum support, strengthening evidence-based practice in independent primary schools.

The Association of Independent Schools ACT initiated a coordinated approach to strengthening foundational skills across the primary years through targeted professional learning, including workshops and a Literacy and Numeracy Continuous Improvement program aligned to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0. This work was supported by action research and assessment data to guide teaching adjustments and better meet individual student needs.

Catholic education authorities nationally strengthened foundational skills in the primary years through more deliberate screening, assessment, structured intervention and evidence-based curriculum approaches. Across jurisdictions, systems used early identification and data-informed teaching to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes and to support students at the point of need. Canberra-Goulburn implemented phonics screening, piloted mathematics screening, expanded intensive literacy programs and supported schools with knowledge-rich curriculum resources. Catholic Education South Australia used standardised assessment schedules and early years data, including phonics, number and Progressive Achievement Tests measures, to guide intervention and reinforce carefully sequenced curriculum delivery. Catholic Education Northern Territory participated in a Learning Alliance, which strengthened precision in teaching, collaborative practice and improvement in literacy and numeracy. Catholic Schools NSW also promoted foundational learning through its Early Years Symposium, which highlighted the long-term value of early childhood education and schools’ role in supporting children’s learning and hope.

### 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

The Teacher Resource Hubs added a wide range of middle years content to the [Civics and Citizenship Education Hub](#), [Digital Technologies Hub](#), [Mathematics Hub](#) and [Student Wellbeing Hub](#).

The Mathematics Hub published an additional Explicit Teaching in Maths module, and the Digital Technologies Hub published two professional learning modules to support F–10 and 7–10 teachers to understand and implement generative AI in the classroom.

#### State, territory and sector initiatives

In the Australian Capital Territory:

- 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.
- Enhancement of middle years development has been progressed by expanding *Everyone Everyday* resources and delivering targeted training with Macquarie University. Through the Community of Practice, Learning Support Assistants, and Small Group Learning Networks, educators accessed evidence-based strategies. These initiatives, alongside National Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability related professional learning, ensure data integrity and pedagogical excellence, fostering inclusive environments for all students.

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 assisted schools to identify how students are performing and helped teachers tailor learning to meet student needs and support planning.
- Made the Transition to Year 7 literacy and numeracy assessment available for individual students who did not complete Year 6 Check-in assessments in semester 2 of the previous year. The assessment provided teachers with a snapshot of literacy and numeracy skills demonstrated by students on entry to Year 7.

In November 2024, the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training established the Secondary Reform Program to implement 15 recommendations from the Review of Secondary Education in the NT, including the shift from the middle school model in urban areas to comprehensive Year 7–12 schools. In 2025, following public consultation, the Government approved the new Urban Comprehensive Education System, involving nine government schools in Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs. The reforms aim to improve attendance and retention, increase Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training completions, and better align post-school pathways with industry and skills needs. Schools in Darwin and Palmerston undertook preparation during 2025 for a phased transition commencing in 2026. Alice Springs schools will begin preparations in 2026, with transition from 2027. Full implementation of the comprehensive Year 7–12 model is expected by 2028.

The Queensland Department of Education continued a system-wide, sustainable transformation of junior secondary, publishing a research and evidence paper alongside resources for school leaders and staff. These resources align to the department's education strategy through the design and implementation of an evidence-informed approach to young adolescent learner engagement prioritising educational achievement, wellbeing and engagement, and culture and inclusion. They also provided strategies to build the professional capabilities required to support the learning and engagement of all young adolescent learners; and created the conditions for innovation and reimagining how junior secondary is implemented in Queensland through a bold and responsive approach.

In South Australia:

- The middle years are treated as a distinct phase of development, reflecting the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration's emphasis on wellbeing, voice, engagement and strong foundations in literacy and numeracy, and South Australian evidence showing dips in belonging and other wellbeing measures around Years 6 to 8.
- South Australian Curriculum for Public Education, aligned to Australian Curriculum Version 9.0, continued to be implemented, framing improvement work around learner agency, wellbeing, equity and excellence.
- The School Mental Health Service, Student Wellbeing Leaders, Tailored Learning for disengaged secondary students, and the South Australian Aboriginal Secondary Training Academy Connect program for Aboriginal students in Years 7 to 9 were used to strengthen participation, belonging and successful transition through and beyond the middle years.

In Tasmania:

- Government schools consolidated use of 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 and spelling program, endorsed in 2024, provided a structured approach to literacy instruction supporting students to develop their spelling reading and vocabulary skills. A pilot group of schools trialled instructional materials for the explicit and systematic teaching of Mathematics to inform further system-wide implementation. This pilot included students from upper primary and supported them to develop their numeracy skills.
- Instructional materials were made available for all schools for the explicit and systematic teaching of Mathematics for Prep to Year 10.

In Victoria:

- The Middle Years Literacy and Numeracy Support initiative supported over 7,300 Year 10 students in government schools who were assessed as Needs Additional Support in Year 9 NAPLAN. The initiative provided targeted learning support to students 1:1, in small groups or within class so that they have the literacy and numeracy skills they need for future work and study.
- Over 19,000 places in the Victorian High-Ability Program (VHAP) were provided to students in Years 5 to 8 in Victorian government schools. VHAP is a 10-week online extension program in English and mathematics delivered by [Virtual School Victoria](#). After completing the virtual program, students participated in face-to-face masterclasses with other high-ability students from schools in their local area.

In Western Australia:

- The Career Taster Program continued to be a valued initiative, providing engaging, hands-on experiences for Year 9 students to spark curiosity about future study and careers. This was alongside the ongoing support for Years 7–12 through the Career Learning Toolkit, which builds work readiness, self-awareness, and informed pathway planning.
- Engagement and transition teams in the regions, focused on wellbeing support to improve outcomes in the middle years. Transition supports between primary and secondary schooling contributed to improved continuity of learning and reduced disengagement during this critical phase. These teams liaised with external agencies to identify support and transition options, working within the home, the school, and in the community. Support was provided to participating secondary schools to assist with the engagement and transition of selected at-risk or disengaged students in Years 7–10.

The Association of Independent Schools of the Australian Capital Territory engaged middle years transitions by empowering educators through the Middle Leaders Pilot Program. By integrating pedagogical leadership with Youth Mental Health First Aid, Respectful Relationships and Individual Learning Plan support, the association supported member schools to deliver responsive, holistic programs tailored to the unique developmental needs of early adolescence.

Independent Schools Queensland supported middle years development through a blended Mathematics program grounded in cognitive science and explicit instruction. Schools received sustained professional learning and implementation support across the year, trialled evidence-informed practices, built whole-school alignment, and were able to share their impact at the annual Teaching and Learning Showcase.

Catholic education authorities supported middle years learners nationally through targeted professional learning, responsive teaching, and curriculum design informed by student data and research. Across jurisdictions, this work strengthened teaching practice and helped schools respond more effectively to the learning needs of students in the middle years. For example, Catholic Schools NSW supported middle years development through professional learning at its Curriculum Reform Conference, with a focus on writing instruction, curriculum implementation, and Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) planning. In Canberra-Goulburn, middle years learners were supported through knowledge-rich curriculum resources, responsive teaching approaches, full participation strategies, and sequenced learning plans. Catholic Education South Australia used Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT) and NAPLAN data to identify curriculum areas requiring further support and to inform high-impact instruction, planning, and assessment. In the Northern Territory, Catholic education implemented middle years units and assessments for Aboriginal Catholic Community Schools, alongside a Years 5–9 literacy framework informed by Australian and international research.

### 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 two 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.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 3.1:** Senior secondary certificates of education (SSCEs), Australian states and territories, 2025

| State/territory | Senior secondary certificates of education   |
|-----------------|--|
| NSW             | Higher School Certificate (HSC)  |
| Vic             | Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE)<br>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](http://www.acaca.edu.au)), states and territories.

#### National Schools Constitutional Convention

The 30th National Schools Constitutional Convention (NSCC), held from 25–27 March 2025 in Canberra, provided 119 senior secondary students with a platform to engage in high-level discussions on the Australian Constitution and civic responsibilities. Under the guidance of constitutional experts, student delegates explored Section 51 (ii) and 90 to “reimagine Australian Federalism”, examining whether the Constitution allows us to maintain national priorities while embracing new regional economic possibilities. Through workshops, debates, and expert presentations, students explored historical changes to state and federal revenue arrangements, examined their implications for policymaking, and discussed taxation strategies addressing regional and inter-state economic inequalities.

<sup>8</sup> Each state and territory has different Year 12 certification standards and eligibility. Successful completion and certification definitions may also differ between states and territories. Data on the completion of Year 12 or equivalent (AQF Certificate II or III) is reported in Chapter 8: Student Attainment, and in the Participation and Attainment data set on the National Report on Schooling data portal.

### State, territory and sector initiatives

The ACT Education Directorate continued working partnerships with tertiary institutions including the Australian National University and University of Canberra to provide university courses for senior secondary students in the Australian Capital Territory. These courses provided tertiary pathways for students who may not have previously considered further study and assisted students to transition to tertiary education.

The NSW Department of Education:

- Continued Stay Healthy HSC, which provided resources to assist students to stay healthy, active and connected during the HSC.
- Supported the Stage 6 Syllabuses in implementation with comprehensive packages. These packages included professional learning, scope and sequences, units and other support documents. The Secondary Curriculum Unit delivered 300 Stage 6 professional learning events to over 4,780 teachers supporting more than 500 schools.
- Provided funds to support HSC teachers and students involved in newly created Year 12 extension classes, through the HSC Common Start program.

In the Northern Territory:

- The Secondary Review sets a vision for an excellent and equitable secondary education system that supports local pathways to Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) completion. In regional and remote areas, the focus is on strengthening local secondary provision so students can complete the NTCET close to home, supported by programs aligned with industry needs and community aspirations. This includes reducing reliance on boarding and expanding distance education and regional delivery models to complement local learning.
- The Northern Territory Department of Education and Training worked with regional and remote schools to assess readiness for secondary delivery and identify required supports, alongside planning enabling projects tailored to local contexts. Transition to the new model will occur at different rates depending on school readiness.
- The Youth Voice Peak Group engaged students to inform secondary education policy and reform, strengthening student voice and building skills for leadership and community participation.

The Queensland Department of Education:

- Enabled schools to use a variety of strategies and interactive resources to help students reflect on their learning journeys and explore future possibilities.
- Ensured students were supported to make informed pathway decisions aligned with their individual strengths, interests, and aspirations.
- Equipped teachers with the Career Education: Pathways Program for Educators to deliver high-quality, evidence-informed career education.

In South Australia, the Curriculum Leaders' Network was established. This connected leaders of curriculum (Years 7–12) with peers, expert insight and shared resources to strengthen the collective capability of this teaching cohort. The network partnered with SACE to co-design professional learning for curriculum leaders in senior secondary settings.

The Tasmanian Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) implemented programs, support and services, including:

- Virtual Learning Services that supported equitable access to senior secondary education, particularly for students in regional and remote areas. Aligned to DECYP's Digital Inclusion Blueprint, these services expanded curriculum access, supported flexible pathways, and improved student participation and retention.
- A range of face-to-face and online short qualifications that enhanced learner success and employability skills.
- DECYP'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.
- The addition of two Applied Capability Qualifications focused on Social and Emotional Learning to the suite, providing more attainment opportunities for Years 9–12 learners.

In Victoria:

- The Department of Education and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority continued significant reform to senior secondary schooling. Significant policy and program design was undertaken for subjects undertaken in the VCE Vocational Major to be made available to all VCE students in 2025.
- In 2025, student enrolments in the VCE Vocational Major were 44.2% higher than its predecessor, the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning. Investment in VET has resulted in Victoria being the only Australian jurisdictions to record five consecutive years of growth in school VET student enrolments, up nearly 19% over that period to 61,513 students in 2025. The Head Start program supported students in school-based apprenticeships and traineeships in 317 government schools.
- The Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms have contributed to a sharp increase in the apparent retention rate in Victorian government schools from Years 10 to 12 to 85%, the highest in eight years.

In Western Australia:

- The School Curriculum and Standards Authority continued to undertake a refresh to the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) to ensure that it remained rigorous and contemporary, reflecting the needs of young people, and stakeholders to support students' active citizenship and transition to further study, training or work.
- The School-Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship (SBAT) Support Scheme provided targeted funding to individual students to support successful completion of SBATs and qualifications with mandatory work placements. Students had access to resources promoting early engagement in pathway planning, with a focus on self-awareness, career exploration and action planning.
- VET funding of \$33.5 million was provided to support schools with teacher training and the delivery of workplace learning.
- The Pathways to Post-School Success Review outlined 33 recommendations based on research and consultation, many of which align with the School Curriculum and Standards Authority's refreshment of the WACE.

Independent Schools NSW supported senior secondary education through its Curriculum Reform Portal. The portal provides targeted professional learning, syllabus familiarisation, programming guidance and implementation support for new and revised Stage 6 syllabuses, strengthening instructional leadership and curriculum delivery across Years 11 and 12.

Catholic education authorities supported senior secondary education through curriculum reform, certification processes and a broad range of post-school pathways across Australia. Catholic Schools NSW convened 300 delegates at its Curriculum Reform Conference to consider senior curriculum reform, assessment and vocational education. Canberra-Goulburn supported senior students to pursue diverse pathways beyond school, including university, vocational education and training, and workforce entry, through partnerships with employers, universities and training providers. Catholic Education South Australia supported schools to use South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) flexibilities and to offer combinations of VET, higher education courses and subjects aligned with students' interests and strengths. Catholic Education Northern Territory supported the delivery of the Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET), including moderation processes, and expanded NTCET pathways in Aboriginal Catholic Community Schools. This included the use of SACE Recognition of Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge and Learning, strengthening culturally responsive senior secondary opportunities while supporting students to transition confidently into further study, training, employment and community life.

### 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.

#### GENERATION Survey

The GENERATION survey of post-school destinations, a new national longitudinal survey of young people, was implemented in 2022. GENERATION is a joint Australian, state and territory government initiative that aims to gain insights into young people’s pathways from school into post-school education, training and the workforce, particularly for young people from key equity groups. The survey commenced in 2022 with over 15,000 Year 10 student participants across almost 300 schools. The survey has completed four waves of interviews, from 2022 to 2025, with data from the 2025 interviews to be publicly released on the Australian Data Archive in 2026. Participants will be followed up annually until around age 25.

#### State, territory, and sector initiatives

In the Australian Capital Territory:

- The Government continued its approach to effective transitions across the education lifecycle, with a strong focus on students with disability. For children entering four-year-old preschool, Continuity and Transitioning statements captured educator, child and family reflections, ensuring children’s stories were shared with receiving schools or services and supports were in place from day one. Transitions were further strengthened through four Preschool Pathways Partners working with schools and families to support children with disability or learning difficulties.
- Transition sessions were also organised for families of children with disabilities moving between school settings, while specialist schools collaborated with the National Disability Insurance Scheme to deliver information sessions on post-school options. In secondary settings, public schools supported effective transitions from school to work through flexible learning pathways, Vocational Learning Programs and work experience, enabling students to develop skills, industry awareness and clearer post-school pathways.

## In New South Wales:

- The Regional Industry Education Partnerships program linked over 73,300 students from 719 NSW schools with 1,585 industry partners, helping students explore jobs, develop skills, and build employer networks.
- Universal resources supported all school leaders to plan for pathways in their School Excellence Plans. It set measures and activities to ensure high quality career education is complemented with school and industry engagement and students have optimal curriculum offerings to support pathways diversity and transition into meaningful post-school pathways.
- The Educational Pathways program improved education and career outcomes for young people by introducing NSW public high school students to a range of vocational training and employment pathways. This program has eight individual initiatives that 183 participating high schools have access to and is available in 18 Central Schools in regional, rural and remote areas of NSW.

## In the Northern Territory:

- Students from two schools participated in the South Australian Certificate of Education Learner Profile pilot, exploring ways to recognise student capabilities alongside academic achievement. This work will continue through the Capabilities within the SACE Feasibility Program from 2026, supporting a more comprehensive understanding of student learning and helping students navigate future education and training choices.
- Under the Secondary Reform Program, work progressed on a system-wide secondary education delivery framework to strengthen pathways to Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training completion. Consultation with schools commenced in 2025 to identify local needs and supports, with the framework designed to clarify academic, vocational and cultural pathways and support transitions into, through and beyond schooling.
- In late 2025, the Northern Territory and Australian governments also formalised bilateral plans under the National Skills Agreement, strengthening vocational pathways and access to foundation skills to support successful transitions into training and employment.

## The Queensland Government:

- Collaborated with the University of Melbourne in 2025 to develop evidence-based guidance for improving transition practices from Kindergarten to Senior Secondary, supporting seamless transitions for children and families.
- Supported students transitioning to further education, training, or employment through initiatives like Senior Education and Training planning, developed in Year 10 to map education goals and pathways.
- Equipped teachers with the Career Education: Pathways Program for Educators to deliver high-quality, evidence-informed career education.
- Assisted schools in delivering high-quality vocational education and training, building students' skills for employment and lifelong learning.
- Delivered the Regional School Industry Partnership program, connecting schools with industry. For example, the Ergon/Energex school-based cadetship program provided rural students with pathways to apprenticeships and careers in the energy sector.

## In South Australia:

- Port Augusta and Tonsley Technical Colleges were opened, expanding vocational and alternative learning pathways for students. The Port Augusta Technical College includes overnight accommodation for regional students. An additional technical college was completed for opening in 2027.
- The first cohort of students from Findon Technical College successfully graduated in November, with students who commenced the university pathway in Year 12 completing the first year of their degree and progressing to second year at Flinders University.

## In Tasmania:

- The Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP)'s RTO held statewide professional learning for all senior secondary VET teachers, connecting teachers with industry representatives to strategically align VET in Schools with workforce demand.
- *Careerify* was expanded, including support for careers in the disability sector and resources for students with disability and First Nations learners.
- The *Driving for Jobs* program, supporting at-risk and disadvantaged learners in obtaining a driver's licence, had record delivery. 76 participants obtained a learner licence and 62 progressed to a provisional licence.
- The Youth Career Facilitator North/Northwest co-designed a hospitality pathways program in partnership with schools, peak bodies and industry, utilising a mixture of classroom learning, virtual reality and hands-on training.
- Beacon Foundation delivered work-based learning services to over 4500 students, with 94% of educators reporting tangible benefits for students and a strengthening of their school's career education efforts.

## In Victoria:

- Career exploration and work-based learning activities continued. 90% of Year 9 government school students participated in the My Career Insights diagnostic tool and unpacking interviews to support informed decision making about subjects and post-school pathways.
- The department piloted the Work-Based Learning app to streamline work experience and Structured Workplace Learning placements, rolled out in all government schools in 2025.
- New supports for early school leavers commenced including a Career Advice Service for early school leavers, and appropriate supports for First Nations young people and young people with a disability. More than 3,000 early school leavers have enrolled in high-quality programs to complete Year 12 at TAFE.
- A pilot commenced in 2025 to give government school students access to Vocational Taster Experiences to support their decision making about senior secondary pathways.
- Victoria's 10 Tech Schools continued to enhance STEM learning and pathways through hands-on, immersive experiences.

## In Western Australia:

- Regional Workforce Coordinators were funded across all education regions to support schools to build partnerships with RTOs and industry and to further develop the capability of staff delivering Vocational Education and Training programs.
- 70 public schools across WA continued to be funded for qualified career practitioners to lead whole-school career development from Years 7 to 12 and facilitate engagement with industry, supporting pathways and post-school transitions. Career conversation events continued to be held throughout the state for students and parents to discuss employment opportunities with local industry panels.
- A dedicated Education Officer was employed to work with the Departments of Justice and Health on a pilot intervention program, supporting young people at risk of incarceration.

The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia provided funding support for schools to deliver VET in schools programs and provided professional learning and consultancy services to support VET and Pathways coordinators to design and deliver high-quality VET outcomes for students across the sector. Funding support was also provided for Year 9 students to explore diverse career pathways and vocational opportunities and introduce them to vocational studies as a valued and credible educational pathway.

Independent Schools NSW supported student transitions through its RTO, working with independent schools to deliver Stage 5 and HSC VET courses, AQF recognised qualifications, work placement support and school-based apprenticeships and traineeships. Participation in VET programs delivered through Independent Schools NSW's RTO increased by 56% compared with 2022.

Catholic education authorities strengthened transitions and pathways nationally through vocational education and training (VET), career education, improved data sharing, and targeted transition supports. This national focus supported students at key transition points within schooling and into further education, training, and employment. Examples were evident across jurisdictions:

- Catholic Schools NSW supported pathways through VET teacher training and student participation in externally delivered vocational education and training and school-based VET programs, with 5,694 High School Certificate qualifications achieved across Certificate I–III levels.
- Catholic Education South Australia supported structured career education from Year 5 and strengthened industry partnerships, immersion opportunities, apprenticeships, traineeships, and work placements.
- In Canberra-Goulburn, transitions were supported through Year 6–7 programs, teacher information exchange, a single enrolment process, and Australian School-based Apprenticeships for students in Years 10–12.
- In the Northern Territory, Catholic education improved transitions through Year 6–7 data transfer, support for careers counsellors, community-based employment initiatives, and dashboards supporting preschool-to-school transition.

### 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.

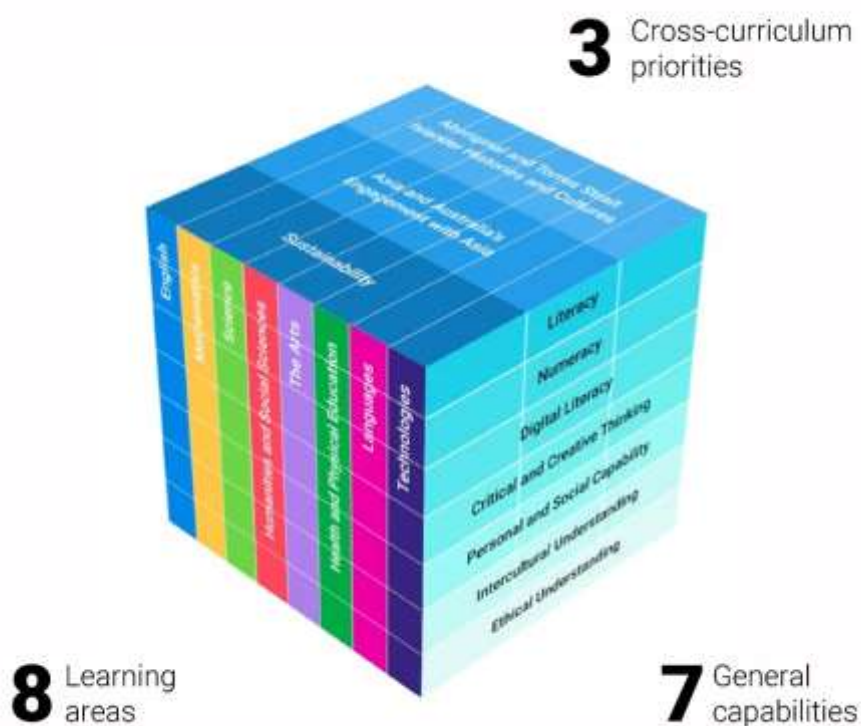
#### Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority

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 eight learning areas, alongside general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.

#### The three dimensions of the Australian Curriculum



There are eight 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 seven 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 three 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 eight 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 eight 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 publication of the *Australian Curriculum: Languages* was completed in 2024.

### **FIRST framework**

In February 2024, ACARA published the First Nations in the Australian Curriculum Resources and Support for Teachers (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 2025, work continued 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. This work continued in 2025.

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

## Curriculum projects

In 2025, 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](#) (NFARB) project to explore solutions to enable the publication of advice and resources to support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0.
- Approval of the NFARB rebased project plan by Ministers in September. Development of Phase 1 formative assessment resources and subsequent publication in December.
- Publishing additional annotated work samples to the [Resources](#) section of the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 website. By April 2025, 314 work samples had been published.
- Publishing new modules on ACARA's [Professional Learning \(PL\) 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 Australian Curriculum website to support user engagement with the Australian Curriculum.
- Developing a [Curriculum connections](#) resource that supports teachers to plan career education learning using the Australian Curriculum F–10.
- Researching and development of a framework for curriculum implementation and advice for school leaders through the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (NTWAP) project. This included the scoping and development of a curriculum planning reflection tool and associated support resources.

## Approved Learning Frameworks

In December 2022, the Education Ministers Meeting approved the updated versions of Australia's two 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, Key Performance Measures (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.

## NAPLAN 2025

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (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, state and territory governments.

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 four 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.

2025 marked the third year the NAPLAN test event was held in March, with all schools across Australia completing the NAPLAN tests online. This development has 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.

More than 1.3 million Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students across 9,465 schools and campuses completed their NAPLAN testing online this year. Schools and education authorities received preliminary school and student results (excluding writing results) from the assessments early in Term 2, around four weeks after the test period ended on 24 March 2025.<sup>9</sup> The final school and student results (including writing) were made available from 13 June 2025.

### 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.<sup>10</sup> 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 in 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

<sup>9</sup> Writing results are made available later than results for the other four domains due to the time taken to mark the writing scripts.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

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.

- **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.
- **NAP – Information and Communication Technology Literacy (NAP–ICTL):** The seventh NAP–ICTL assessment was conducted in May 2025, following a successful field trial in October/November 2024. This was first time the assessment was administered in May rather than October. The NAP–ICTL public report providing the findings of the was published in May 2026.
- **NAP Opt-in Assessments:** NAP sample assessments in science literacy, civics and citizenship, and ICT literacy for Year 6 and Year 10 students are being made available as opt-in assessments for all schools. This started with science literacy in 2024, followed by the addition of civics and citizenship in 2025, and finally ICT literacy will be added in 2026. The NAP Opt-in assessments in science literacy, and civics and citizenship were conducted in May 2025. Overall, 200 schools participated from across all sectors and jurisdictions. Just under 12,000 students participated in NAP Opt-in science literacy assessments, and over 8,800 students participated in NAP Opt-in civics and citizenship assessments. Results of NAP Opt-in assessments will be available to participating schools to support their teaching and learning programs but will not be reported publicly by ACARA. The results will be reported to schools on the same national scales as established for each corresponding NAP sample program.

### 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 three years and assesses 15-year-olds in reading, mathematical literacy, and scientific literacy. PISA is developed and administered internationally by the Organisation 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 2025 results will be released in late 2026.
- **Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS):** The TIMSS assessments take place every four 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, with results released in May 2023.

## State, territory and sector initiatives

The ACT Education Directorate supported the delivery of world-class curriculum and assessment through:

- the development of Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment Practice Guides and scope and sequence documents for English and Mathematics K-6,
- the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Northern Territory to share curriculum resources,
- implementation of territory wide assessments for students,
- professional learning on assessment, including the effective use of screening tools such as Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS).

The NSW Education Standards Authority:

- Continued delivering a new curriculum to streamline and strengthen what is taught in schools. Thirty-one new K–12 syllabuses were released, including 10 for Year 11–12 Creative Arts and 8 for Year 11–12 Science. The new syllabuses focus on essential content, outlining the core knowledge and skills students need to progress. Schools and teachers are given at least 12 months to prepare for implementation. Development continued to involve strong community input, with 25 draft syllabuses released for public consultation.
- Updated its K–12 curriculum policy framework to streamline consolidated policy settings and clarify curriculum related requirements for planning, assessment and reporting with guidance and professional learning for schools to support implementation.

In the Northern Territory:

- Government schools completed the first annual Year 1 Phonics Check in Term 3, providing teachers with timely data to identify students requiring additional help and plan targeted supports. Enhanced professional learning and guidance supported implementation of the Curriculum, Assessment, Certification and Reporting policy. System-level resources strengthened school leadership to drive coherent, whole-school curriculum and assessment planning aligned to local contexts and the evidence-based NT Learning and Teaching Model.
- Respectful Relationships Education (RRE) was delivered across learning areas, supported by professional learning and resources. Delivered from Early Years to Year 12 through a planned, age-appropriate, whole-school approach aligned with UNESCO guidance, RRE supports respectful, healthy and non-violent relationships.
- Principals and system leaders participated in a 2-day literacy and numeracy conference showcasing evidence-based practice, supported by training in the NT Learning and Teaching Model delivered through teacher and leader orientation in January 2025.

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.
- Continued to implement Version 9.0 of the curriculum, with English and Mathematics being completed by the end of 2026 and the remaining learning areas by 2028.
- Provided a suite of high-quality Prep to Year 10 curriculum planning and assessment resources that supported schools to implement all eight learning areas of the curriculum.

## In South Australia:

- The South Australian Curriculum for Public Education continued to be refined in collaboration with public education teachers and leaders across the state, adapted from the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0.
- English language proficiency for students learning English as an additional language or dialect was supported through the Learning English: Achievement and Proficiency (LEAP) framework. A LEAP App was developed to support teachers to analyse student writing samples and generate LEAP Level reports aligned with the framework, including language improvement goals and teaching strategies, supporting consistent assessment practices and targeted language instruction to accelerate students' development of Standard Australian English.
- The Curriculum Leaders' Network was established to build more consistent curriculum leadership across the state, enabling coordinated practice aligned to system priorities and a shared, site-wide approach to learning design.

All Tasmanian Government schools planned, taught and assessed based on the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0. Teachers were supported to implement the English curriculum. Instructional materials 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 English and Mathematics quality teaching position statements.
- Contracted Ochre to create instructional materials for English and Mathematics.
- 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.
- Aligned a K–12 system-provided Moderation Day to allow all teachers to participate in consistency of judgements of the relevant curriculum(s).

The Victorian Curriculum F–10 Version 2.0 was launched in June 2024. The revised curriculum ensures the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 is implemented in Victorian government and Catholic schools while maintaining Victorian priorities and standards. Victoria has also published the Foundation Levels A to D for English and Mathematics, with the remaining curriculums to be published in early 2026. Foundation Levels A to D is a curriculum for students with an intellectual or cognitive disability. Victoria has also published a revised English as an Additional Language curriculum. The curriculum has been published on a new website with a new Resource Hub which supports schools implement the curriculum. 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 (the Authority) completed adopting and adapting the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 within the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment outline.
- To ensure teachers and schools can effectively manage the curriculum changes, the Authority has taken a staggered approach with gradual updates to the curriculum implemented on a yearly basis from 2024 to 2027. Pre-primary to Year 10 English and Health and Physical Education were implemented in 2025.

The Collecting Evidence of Achievement project undertaken by South Australian independent schools strengthened teachers' capabilities to plan purposeful assessment, collect evidence of achievement and make consistent judgements across Years F–10. Moderation, annotation of work samples and curriculum mapping enhanced teachers' skills and confidence in designing authentic, standards-aligned assessment.

The Association of Independent Schools of the Australian Capital Territory has supported member schools to deliver responsive and purposeful curriculum and assessment through providing targeted curriculum and assessment workshops to better understand the changes to the Version 9.0 implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

Independent Schools Queensland delivered multiple forums to support school leaders to understand the changes to Version 9.0 of the Australian Curriculum and plan for implementation within their local school contexts. It also provided significant tailored support to schools to ensure consistent delivery of high-quality curriculum and assessment practices.

Catholic education authorities across Australia advanced the delivery of world-class curriculum and assessment through nationally coherent approaches that reflected both Catholic system priorities and jurisdictional requirements. Within the framework of ACARA's Australian Curriculum Version 9.0, Catholic systems supported schools to strengthen consistency, quality and responsiveness in teaching, assessment and reporting. In New South Wales, Catholic Schools NSW supported large-scale digital assessment through synchronous online Trial High School Certificate examinations in Science Extension, Software Engineering and Enterprise Computing. In South Australia, Catholic Education South Australia developed A–E performance standards aligned to Australian Curriculum achievement standards and produced curriculum maps, unit plans and lesson resources in English and Mathematics. These efforts demonstrated the Catholic sector's ongoing commitment to high-quality curriculum implementation, robust assessment practice and improved learning outcomes for students across Australia.

### 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”.

#### First Nations Education Policy

The Australian Government is working in partnership with key First Nations education stakeholders and states and territories to develop a new First Nations Education Policy. The Policy will provide a strong national framework to accelerate improvement in First Nations education outcomes, from early childhood education through schooling and into post school pathways.

The Policy will sharpen the national aspirations for First Nations education by defining shared priorities and establishing how change will be implemented and evaluated. It will translate national commitments – such as the Mparntwe Education Declaration, Better and Fairer Schools Agreements 2025–2034 (BFSA), the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy, the Universities Accord, and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap – into tangible action.

#### Boarding support

In 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 commenced in Term 1 2025 supporting more than 50 boarding providers to deliver accommodation and wrap-around supports for 2,500 First Nations students.

#### Indigenous Cultural Responsiveness Initiative

In the 2024–25 Budget, the Government committed \$2 million to support further work on the Indigenous Cultural Responsiveness Initiative (ICRI). ICRI supports schools and education systems to embed culturally responsive practices and improve outcomes of First Nations students.

The initiative focuses on strengthening workforce capability, promoting culturally safe and inclusive learning environments, and supporting genuine partnerships with First Nations communities. Through these efforts, ICRI aims to increase student engagement, achievement and wellbeing, and contributes to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

#### GO Foundation

In July 2024, the Australian Government announced \$4 million (over four years) for the GO Foundation to support scholarships for First Nations students attending primary and secondary schools and universities; to provide more students with career pathways support, cultural workshops, language preservation activities, opportunities to engage with First Nations leaders and communities, and access to health and wellbeing services. The GO Foundation Scholarships Program grant agreement was executed in March 2025. As of October 2025, 508 scholarships had been awarded across Sydney, Adelaide and Canberra, exceeding the annual target of 500.

#### English Language Learning for Indigenous Children (ELLIC) Trial Expansion

In the 2024–25 Budget, the Government committed \$5.5 million to expand the English Language Learning for Indigenous Children (ELLIC) Trial from 20 to up to 120 schools and preschools (Foundation to Year 3). The expansion supports First Nations preschool children who are EAL/D learners to develop English through a fun, play-based program underpinned by interactive apps co-designed with First Nations communities and experts.

The ELLIC Trial Expansion contract was executed in March 2025. As of 31 December 2025, 46 primary schools across WA, NT and QLD have enrolled, and 14 preschools from the previous trial have re-joined. A total of 3,967 Indigenous students are now participating across registered schools.

### First Nations Teacher and School Leader Strategy

In 2024, the Australian Government announced funding of \$2.4 million over three years to work in close partnership with First Nations stakeholders to develop and implement a Strategy to strengthen the attraction, development, retention, and success of First Nations educators. The Strategy aims to address systemic barriers and to promote culturally safe, inclusive education environments, strengthening a diverse teaching and school leader workforce that values First Nations expertise.

Between February and May 2025, 49 stakeholders were consulted, including First Nations peak bodies, First Nations and education stakeholders and jurisdictions. The Australian Government Department of Education continued to draft the Strategy in close consultation with First Nations peak bodies and it is due to be released in 2026.

### Scaling Up Proven Primary Reading Programs

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

In 2025, the Australian Government committed a further \$1.5 million to extend the MultiLit program to the end of the 2026 school year, providing a total of \$31.79 million over 2021–22 to 2025–26 for all three programs.

### State, territory and sector initiatives

In the Australian Capital Territory:

- The ACT Education Directorate worked towards better meeting the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners. Key initiatives included CORE Cultural Learning, On Country Walks, Nggunawal language workshops, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Symposium. Secondary and Tertiary Scholarships, together with Mura Awards bursaries, provided targeted financial support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students demonstrating engagement, leadership and commitment to their education.
- Indigenous Education Officers played critical roles in supporting schools to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, knowledges and cultures through locally responsive initiatives. Curriculum development projects further strengthened the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, languages and cultures, ensuring students see themselves reflected in their learning. Together, these initiatives fostered inclusive school environments that empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to thrive and reach their full potential.

The NSW Department of Education:

- Completed implementation of the Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (2023–2025), focused on building trust, confidence and culturally safe workplaces with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure best possible educational outcomes.
- Continued to deliver its Commitment to Aboriginal Education, developed with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and supported by a 2025–2027 Action Plan focused on partnerships with Aboriginal communities and improving outcomes for Aboriginal students.
- Provided funding for Small Group Tuition in all public schools. This supported 67,750 students in 2025, with progress tracked through the Literacy and Numeracy Progressions. Professional learning was also delivered to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people.
- Continued to improve access to selective schools and opportunity classes through the Equity Placement Model, reserving up to 20% of places for students from equity groups.

## In the Northern Territory:

- Government schools transitioned to enrolment-based funding, ensuring schools were funded for enrolled students rather than attendance. This simplified approach delivered increased funding, particularly for schools with the greatest disadvantage, and enabled earlier planning, improved workforce recruitment and a stronger focus on student engagement and attendance.
- Targeted investment through the On Country Learning Measure continued to support improved engagement and education outcomes across Central Australia. Initiatives strengthened literacy and numeracy, flexible secondary learning, Aboriginal employment, on-country learning, attendance, and access to allied health services.
- Schools were further supported through wellbeing and attendance initiatives, including School-Based Police Officers, Aboriginal Liaison Officers and School Attendance Officers. Clontarf and Stars programs also supported student engagement across government schools. In late 2025, the Northern Territory and Australian governments progressed Closing the Gap commitments under the National Skills Agreement, strengthening pathways into training and employment.

## The Queensland Department of Education:

- Provided study support to help rural and remote educators complete early childhood qualifications.
- Delivered the Building Cultural Capability in State Schools initiative, including It's Still Everyone's Business and Crossing Cultures Intelligence, to enhance understanding of shared stories and the impacts of past and present policies on First Nations peoples.
- Funded five non-government providers to deliver programs across 59 state schools, supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to improve attendance, reduce disciplinary absences, and complete Year 12 through mentoring, case management, and post-school pathways support.
- Led the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aspirations program, an academic challenge, fostering creativity and critical thinking to solve real-world challenges.
- Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through the Partnership Initiative, providing place-based responses and staffing resources to embed culturally connected curriculum.
- Assisted students in remote communities through the Transition Support Service, enabling access to secondary education via distance learning, boarding schools, or private hostels.

## In South Australia:

- Mandated professional learning, Aboriginal Business is Everyone's Business, was released and cultural responsiveness reflection embedded in all employees' performance and development planning.
- An Anti-Racism Lived Experience Advisory Group established and developed an anti-racism policy and action plan.
- Over 10,360 students participated in Aboriginal languages programs.
- The Anangu Bilingual Education Policy was co-developed with the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee, enshrining Anangu children and young people's right to a culturally affirming education in their First Language.
- The Department for Education partnered with the South Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Consultative Committee to reset its strategic approach to supporting Aboriginal children and young people.
- Warriappendi Secondary School opened, following relocation to a culturally significant place for Kurna people.
- The SACE Board approved the Recognition of Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge and Learning, understood to be the only program of its kind in the world. In 2025, 99 students earned credits for their cultural learning, fostering two-way learning and greater appreciation for cultural diversity across school communities.

In Tasmania, the Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) continued implementing the Aboriginal Education Services (AES) Action Plan 2024–2025, strengthening culturally responsive practice and improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners in targeted schools. DECYP prioritised stronger connections with Aboriginal families, communities and organisations, reinforcing its commitment to standing up for Aboriginal learners and co-designing learning opportunities that reflect culture, Country and identity. Teachers were supported to participate in Explore Sea Country which allowed learners to experience, understand and respect Sea Country. Schools received guidance from Aboriginal Education Services to embed Aboriginal perspectives across the curriculum and ensure learners saw themselves and their cultures reflected in daily learning. DECYP also contributed to national conversations on the development of the First Nations Education Policy, ensuring Tasmania's perspectives informed emerging national directions. These actions contributed to more culturally safe learning environments and improved wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners.

The Victorian Department of Education improved outcomes for First Nations learners through:

- Grants for 27 Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) to employ Education Liaison Officers; 12 RAPs to implement curriculum and languages initiatives; and for the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated to establish a community engagement team to strengthen relationships and build capacity of Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups.
- Professional learning modules for schools to strengthen culturally safe and responsive environments.
- Curriculum resources to support delivery of the cross-curriculum priority *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures*.
- Funding 3,592 First Nations primary students in government schools needing additional support in literacy and numeracy.
- Commencing development of the new First Nations education strategy informed by the Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026 strategic evaluation.
- The Aspiring Koorie Teachers Now program successfully supported 25 candidates to be employed in Education Support positions and receive accredited training.

In Western Australia:

- The Follow the Dream program, delivered in partnership with the Polly Farmer Foundation, was provided in 95 public secondary schools. The program supports aspirational Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to 'Follow their Dreams' and reach their learning potential by accessing opportunities and experiences, mentoring and additional academic support.
- The Culturally Responsive School Leadership program continued to focus on developing the cultural responsiveness of school principals and creating organisational cultural and systems change. The program supported two broad objectives: promoting reconciliation and strengthening Aboriginal student outcomes.
- There was further expansion of on-country learning and Aboriginal languages provision.
- The BHP Pilbara Education Partnership provided on-school site early learning programs across the Pilbara. The Waja Guma Aboriginal Early Learning Program in Karratha, supported by Rio Tinto, welcomed Aboriginal families into a culturally safe learning space.
- The Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework continued to drive work to create culturally responsive schools.

The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia Future Footprints initiative supported 639 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in non-government boarding schools, strengthening cultural identity and culturally safe learning environments. Through expos, workshops and networking, the program fostered student connection, community engagement and improved educational outcomes for students.

Independent Schools NSW supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through the Waratah Project, involving 45 schools across NSW and the ACT. The project supported schools to improve literacy, numeracy, wellbeing and cultural connection through community-informed, whole-school strategies.

Catholic education authorities strengthened support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners through culturally responsive pedagogy, professional learning, scholarships and targeted initiatives across Australia. Nationally, this work focused on embedding culturally responsive practice, strengthening staff capability and improving targeted supports for students and communities. In the Northern Territory, Catholic Education Northern Territory advanced this work by strengthening support in Aboriginal Catholic Community Schools through collaboration with the Catholic Aboriginal Leadership Team and Inclusion Support Services. It also provided cultural enrichment for staff, expanded access to occupational therapy services, and trialled My Mind Check with Macquarie University to support student wellbeing.

### 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 six loadings for priority equity cohorts, school size and school location. For most non-government schools, the base amount is discounted by the school’s Capacity to Contribute (CTC), which is a measure of the capacity of parents and guardians ability 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 2025, the Australian Government reached agreement with state and territory governments to put all schools on a pathway to 100% of the *Schooling Resource Standard* through the Better and Fairer School Funding Agreement (BFSA) and the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement – Full and Fair Funding (Full and Fair Funding Agreement). The Agreements aim to improve educational outcomes for all Australian students and tied to targeted, evidence-based reforms aligned to the three priority reform areas agreed by Education Ministers in December 2023: 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 seven 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 100,000 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 participate in the Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award. The Disadvantaged Youth Program assists disadvantaged young people, including those 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, to build academic and non-academic skills and gain an internationally recognised credential. Participants engage in activities such as literacy development, life skills, and social and cultural programs. Through the Award, young people are supported to strengthen resilience, develop adaptability and build capabilities that help prepare them for future education, employment and community participation.

### **Disability Standards for Education**

In 2025, the Australian Government commenced a review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (the Standards) to make sure they are supporting students with disability to access and participate in education and training. The review considered whether the Standards are being implemented effectively, how to support inclusive decision-making and complaints handling, and whether responsibilities for assessment authorities and course developers are clear. The final review report will be published on the Department of Education website in 2026.

### **Literacy Support for Tasmanian Students**

The Australian Government provided \$2 million in 2025–26 to support specialist literacy and numeracy programs for Tasmania’s most vulnerable children. The funding supports the delivery of Tasmania’s Literacy Framework and Literacy Action Plan – including the development of literacy resources, literacy coaches and professional development for Tasmanian teachers.

### **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.<sup>11</sup> 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 2025, over 88,000 students participated in the program, with the Government providing more than \$10.1 million in rebates to schools to support their visits. The Government has committed a total of \$40.7 million in approved funding for the PACER program from 2025–26 to 2029–30.

### **Curious Minds**

The Curious Minds program, jointly delivered by the Australian Mathematics Trust and Australian Science Innovations, 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.

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<sup>11</sup> 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](http://www.pacer.org.au).

## National Lending Library

Through the National Lending Library, Adelaide University provides a range of resource kits and curriculum resources to assist with the delivery of digital technologies, including Artificial Intelligence 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

The ACT Government continued to strengthen equity, inclusion and student wellbeing across ACT public schools. For students at risk of educational disadvantage:

- The Future of Education Equity Fund provided annual financial assistance to low-income families to help meet essential education costs, reducing barriers to participation.
- The Meals in Schools program provided free breakfasts and lunches in selected schools, contributing to improved learning and engagement.
- Access to onsite and centralised health and wellbeing services delivered by allied health and youth work professionals supported safe education access.

Implementation of the First Action Plan under the Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools 2024–2034 continued through school-based Inclusion Coaches, expanded professional learning, development of an adjustment-based resourcing model, ongoing Student Voice Forums, and preparation of an Inclusion Self-Reflection Tool for piloting in 2026.

In New South Wales:

- The School Engagement Support program (formerly known as the Perfect Presence Pilot program) provided targeted, early intervention for students identified at risk of disengaging from school and their learning. In 2025, providers established 244 programs across 78 NSW secondary schools, supporting over 3,160 students, including 611 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
- The first phase of the Enrolment Policy and Procedures update was completed. This update aims to improve equitable access to NSW public schools for temporary resident students, students with additional learning and/or wellbeing needs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, siblings of enrolled students particularly those in support units, children of Defence Members, and students in statutory out-of-home care, on bail, or transitioning from schools in youth justice centres or custody.

In the Northern Territory:

- In response to the Disability Royal Commission, the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training strengthened the policy, governance and workforce foundations for inclusive education across Northern Territory schools.
- Planning progressed for a new secondary special education school in Palmerston, purpose-built to provide an inclusive learning environment for up to 200 students in Years 7–12 (expected opening for Term 1, 2029). The design incorporates feedback from experienced educators, families of students with additional needs and people with lived experience.
- Independent advocacy services for families of students with disability were expanded to additional regions, supporting families to navigate enrolment, participation and access to inclusive education. Multi-tiered systems of support are being expanded so that students that need additional support can access it to help them meet their potential. Work was commissioned to improve the consistency and transparency of reasonable adjustments provided to students with disability.

## The Queensland Government:

- Invested \$30 million in Kindy Uplift, funding over 2,000 kindergarten services to support the educational and developmental needs of approximately 62,000 children, focusing on those at risk of educational disadvantage.
- Allocated \$13.8 million to Inclusion Support programs for sessional kindergarten services, partnering with Autism Queensland, Hear and Say, SPELD, and Down Syndrome and Intellectual Disability Queensland to build educator capability.
- Upheld its Inclusive Education policy, ensuring all children could access high-quality education, and learn in a safe, supportive environment.
- Provided all state schools with access to specialist support services, including advisory visiting teachers, principal advisors, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech language pathologists, and registered nurses. These specialists supported schools in identifying barriers, planning reasonable adjustments, and delivering professional development.
- Invested in professional development for teachers under the \$222.1 million More Teachers, Better Education initiative, strengthening staff capability to support students with disability and create inclusive learning environments.

## In South Australia:

- The Student Device Program provided over 50,000 devices to students, with all School Card students (a concession card for eligible low-income families) in Years 7 and 10 to receive a digital device at no cost by the end of 2026. The Student Home Internet Program provided free, reliable home internet access to students in the public education system requiring it for learning purposes.
- The Literacy Guarantee Unit supported students at risk of educational disadvantage through targeted reading intervention and evidence-informed literacy practices, including supporting students with dyslexia, and supported a network of 15 schools using a train-the-trainer model to build teacher and leader capability.
- From 2025, the Index of Educational Disadvantage, used to allocate additional resources to schools across seven categories based on socio-economic status, was calculated using only school-based data, improving the accuracy of disadvantage identification and resource targeting for government schools.

In Tasmania, the Department for Education, Children and Young People increased its capacity to support students at risk of educational disadvantage through additional professional support staff, the provision of graduate scholarship pathways and expanded student placement partnerships with universities. These activities contributed to workforce capacity and access to specialist support in identified priority areas. Service delivery was aligned to a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) model, providing a structured range of universal, targeted, and intensive supports addressing mental health and wellbeing, literacy, student engagement, behaviour, and harmful sexualised behaviour. An emphasis on early identification and responsive intervention was incorporated into service approaches. Student voice informed aspects of service design to support relevance and accessibility. Inter-agency partnerships were established and strengthened, including Medicare Mental Health Kids Hubs and family-focused services, to support coordinated service provision. Collectively, these actions addressed barriers to learning and supported educational engagement and outcomes for students experiencing vulnerability.

## In Victoria:

- Implementation of the Disability Inclusion reform meant that all Victorian government schools transitioned to the new strengths-based funding and support model. School workforce capability-building initiatives, including the Diverse Learners Hub and Inclusion Outreach Coaching Initiative continue across Victoria.

- The Department of Education introduced a new Preventing and Addressing Racism in Schools policy. The policy supports compliance with Child Safe Standards 1 and 5, and requires schools to prevent, respond to and report racism and religious vilification.
- Other key strategies supporting young people at risk of educational disadvantage included:
  - School Saving Bonus which provided all government school students with \$400 towards school essentials.
  - Glasses for Kids program expansion to more government schools and provision of the 10,000th pair of free glasses since 2015.
  - Affordable School Uniforms program investment in partnership with State Schools' Relief.
  - School Breakfast Clubs Program and Free Period Products.
  - Refugee Education Supports.

## In Western Australia:

- In October 2025, the State Government responded to a legislative review of the School Education Act 1999 commissioned to identify opportunities to strengthen access and inclusion for students with disability. Priorities include legislative change, improved enrolment and complaints processes, and enhanced staff capability to reduce barriers for students at risk of educational disadvantage.
- The Complex Behaviour Support Coordinators initiative enhanced system-wide capacity to support students with complex needs, reducing teacher workload by appointing 64 FTE coordinators across 192 schools to work with leadership teams on tailored strategies.
- The Small Group Tuition initiative funded 350 schools to deliver targeted literacy and numeracy support in groups of 2–5 students, improving outcomes and easing teacher workload.

South Australian independent schools implemented a Year 1 phonics check so teaching can be targeted to address learning needs and improve individual achievement. A licensing agreement with the SA Department for Education enabled the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia to train school staff in conducting a Year 1 numeracy check for implementation from 2026.

Independent Schools NSW supported students with disability through collaborative planning, reasonable adjustments, and the implementation of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS). Schools were assisted with behaviour and attendance strategies and meeting compliance with the Disability Standards for Education, strengthening equitable access to learning.

Independent Schools Queensland worked with member schools to assist them to reduce educational disadvantage through supporting them to implement MTSS. This framework enables schools to identify and address student needs more effectively, ensuring targeted interventions and equitable access to learning opportunities, including social, emotional, behavioural and academic learning.

Catholic education authorities supported young Australians at risk of educational disadvantage through cross-sector collaboration, targeted intervention and inclusive practice. Nationally, Catholic education highlighted that a substantial and growing proportion of students experiencing disadvantage were enrolled in Catholic schools, reinforcing the need for equitable support across all sectors. In New South Wales, Catholic Schools NSW advanced Connected Catholic Communities work to strengthen partnerships beyond the school gate and address out-of-school factors affecting learning. In South Australia, Catholic education expanded support through Diversity and Inclusion and allied health services. In Canberra-Goulburn, the Catalyst approach strengthened literacy and numeracy foundations, with reading competence positioned as a key protective factor. In the Northern Territory, Catholic education supported inclusion through wellbeing supports, inclusion services and flexible NTCET-linked pathways.

### 3.13 Strengthening accountability and transparency with strong meaningful measures

In the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, 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.

#### **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 2025, 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 2025.

## 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) provides initial teacher education (ITE) data and teacher workforce data across Australia, providing a comprehensive picture of Australia's teaching workforce, from ITE through all stages of the teacher career, across all states, territories, and employer sectors.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (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 Schools Unique Student Identifier**

The Schools Unique Student Identifier (Schools USI) is a National Enabling Initiative (NEI) under the BFSA. The initiative will enable a unique number to be assigned to all primary and secondary school students in Australia, including students in alternative schooling arrangements such as home schooling. This identifier will travel with an individual throughout their school years and into vocational education and training and higher education.

In 2025, the Australian Government continued delivering national components of the Schools USI National Enabling Initiative including work towards the development of regulations to support the *Student Identifiers Act 2014* and a national Data Governance Framework, design of the IT system and delivery of a multi-phase program of social research to inform national communication activities.

### **Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability**

The Australian Government continued to invest in quality improvement for the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) to build schools' capacity to implement the NCCD and improve outcomes for students with disability. The program of work is delivering a content review and refresh of the NCCD Portal to provide clearer, streamlined content tailored specifically for schools and parents. It will also contribute to implementing national actions arising from the 2025 Review of the Disability Standards for Education.

### **State and territory initiatives**

In the Australian Capital Territory:

- The ACT Learning and Teaching Policy was developed to help facilitate change through Strong Foundations and set the directions in curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and academic reporting.
- Accountability was strengthened through audited learning plans, NCCD training and moderation sessions, ensuring data integrity, system alignment, and turning compliance into high quality inclusive classroom practice.

The NSW Department of Education continued implementing Our Plan for NSW Public Education, which launched in 2023. The Plan outlines the Department's commitment to enhancing accountability and transparency in public education through robust, data-driven success measures within six focus areas and enablers. The Plan's system-wide measures provide clear guidance for school leaders and are designed to lift outcomes for all students. This commitment to evidence-driven actions, coupled with systematic progress reports, ensures that the goals of the Plan are achieved efficiently and effectively, with clear visibility provided on progress against strong and meaningful measures.

In the Northern Territory:

- The Department of Education and Training launched its Strategic Plan 2025–2028, setting clear measures across five priority areas aligned with the Better Fairer Schools Agreement and NT Budget Paper 3. This alignment strengthens consistency and a unified approach to performance monitoring. Key measures include student wellbeing and teacher-student relationships measured through the NT School Survey, literacy and numeracy outcomes through NAPLAN, attendance, and Year 12 and VET attainment. Schools align Annual School Improvement Plans to these measures, setting achievement targets supported by departmental tools that promote high quality data use. Accountability is reinforced through system reporting, and through regular school level monitoring of progress against student targets.
- The Minister for Education and Training co-signed the Northern Territory’s VET Data Streamlining Bilateral Implementation Plan under the National Skills Agreement, guiding adoption of a shared framework affecting all Registered Training Organisations and 45 student management system providers.

The Queensland Government:

- Advanced the aspirations of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration through its commitment to place-based approaches, local decision-making, and strengthened accountability.
- Strengthened accountability and transparency measures to foster genuine partnerships and close educational gaps, ensuring improved outcomes for all learners.

The South Australian Department for Education’s refreshed Workforce Strategy was monitored against success statements, each with specific data indicators tracked over time, providing meaningful and transparent measures to support decision making and investment. A coherent set of system measures was developed in collaboration with stakeholders including the Education Innovation Council and approved for internal use, providing a framework to track and communicate progress against the South Australian Strategy for Public Education.

The Tasmanian Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) strengthened accountability and transparency through the development and implementation of the Independent Education Review (IER) Implementation Plan (2025–2027). The Plan consolidated all Review recommendations into a sequenced, three-year delivery schedule, clearly identifying actions, timeframes and accountabilities. The Implementation Plan was published on the DECYP website to provide transparency to the community. Progress against the Plan was supported by structured quarterly reporting, providing visibility of achievements, activities underway and next steps. This approach ensured reform delivery was monitored consistently across all workstreams, with particular focus on the Minister’s priority areas. Annual updates to the Implementation Plan were scheduled to ensure continued transparency and to reflect progress over time.

Victorian government schools worked to strengthen the alignment of their teaching and learning programs with contemporary evidence about how students learn, supporting Victoria’s delivery of the Better and Fairer Schools Agreements. Developed in collaboration with the Australian Education Research Organisation, the updated Victorian Teaching and Learning Model (VTLM 2.0) embeds explicit teaching in every classroom, including best-practice phonics instruction in the early years.

In Western Australia, distinct review processes across public schools continued to support school improvement for the delivery of high-quality education to students. These processes include public school reviews and principal professional reviews. Public school reviews provide clear, targeted information to inform schools' improvement planning through a validation and feedback process. They provide information to school communities about the performance of public schools. Schools requiring additional support are prioritised for access to services across the system. The principal professional review serves as an assurance mechanism, validating a principal's self-reflection and analysis while providing constructive feedback to guide their professional growth and goal setting.

The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia Leading Impactful Schools Amplifying Leadership Hub was developed to strengthen leaders' capacity to design, implement and evaluate high-impact initiatives that directly improve student outcomes. The hub supported leaders to use evidence and data to target areas of need, strengthen teaching and learning practices to improve educational outcomes for students.

Catholic education authorities strengthened accountability and transparency through more systematic use of research, data and reporting. Catholic Schools NSW published research and issues briefs through the Kathleen Burrow Research Institute, contributing evidence-informed analysis on contemporary schooling issues. Catholic Education South Australia strengthened system oversight through school quality and performance structures and data-accuracy processes that supported case management, decision making and parent access to assessment information. In the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, the Catalyst initiative maintained a strong evaluative culture, using monitoring and external review to measure implementation, student growth and program impact. Catholic Education Northern Territory supported more timely reporting to families through digital platforms and strengthened data-informed school improvement through a continued focus on student growth and achievement. Collectively, these initiatives improved transparency, supported stronger performance monitoring and reinforced public confidence in Catholic education systems nationally, across Australia and in their local communities.