

2026

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

ELEVENTH ASSEMBLY

ACT Public School System Resourcing Review – Final report

**Presented by
Yvette Berry MLA
Minister for Education and Early Childhood
27 May 2026**

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ACT Public School System Resourcing Review

**Supporting the delivery of an effective and equitable public
education system in the ACT**

Final report of the Expert Panel

2 April 2026

Acknowledgement of Country

The ACT Government and the Expert Panel acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region.

We also acknowledge the Wreck Bay people as traditional custodians of the land on which the Jervis Bay school is located.

We respect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, and their continuing culture and contribution they make to the Canberra region and the life of our city.

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Transmission letter

Ms Yvette Berry MLA
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ACT Legislative Assembly
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Minister

Thank you for commissioning the ACT Public School System Resourcing Review Expert Panel (the Panel) to provide advice and recommendations to you and the ACT Government. I am pleased, on behalf of the Panel, to present our final report: *Supporting the delivery of an effective and equitable public education system in the ACT*. In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the Panel examined how resourcing arrangements can best support high-quality learning, equity and wellbeing across ACT public schools.

The Panel worked collaboratively and constructively throughout the review. We are confident in the analysis underpinning this report and the findings and recommendations are unanimously agreed by all Panel members. The report directly addresses most aspects of the Terms of Reference, while others could not be canvassed in detail in the time available and will require further analysis. However, the findings and recommendations provide a foundation for short-, medium- and longer-term consideration of these issues. Suffice to say, the challenges the system faces will require a significant and sustained reform effort.

Throughout the report, the Panel's analysis finds there are very real funding pressures facing public schools and the public school system. These can be addressed in part through improvements to how current financial and human resources are allocated and committed across the system. The Panel recommends a 'one public education system' approach compared with the historical legacy in the ACT of more autonomy within each individual public school.

Extensive consultation was central to this review. We are grateful to the many teachers, school leaders, administration and support staff, students, families, unions, professional bodies, peak associations, community partners and experts who engaged with the Panel. Stakeholders approached the process in an open and constructive spirit, which materially strengthened the report.

On behalf of the Panel, I wish to acknowledge the secretariat team who provided professional and timely support throughout the Review. Their coordination, research and logistical assistance were invaluable to the Panel's work.

Finally, thanks to all my fellow Panel members for contributing their unique and collective skills to the analysis of issues and their commitment to completion of this report consistent with our Terms of Reference.

Yours sincerely



Adjunct Professor Ken Smith AO, Chair, ACT Public School System Resourcing Review Panel

On behalf of the Panel: Associate Professor Anna Hogan, Ms Julie Sonnemann, Ms Hayley McQuire, Dr Bill Maiden PSM OAM

Acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym/abbreviation	Full term
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
AEU	Australian Education Union ACT Branch
ARC	Australian Research Council
BSSS	Board of Senior Secondary Studies
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CHA	Community Hubs Australia
CPSU	Community and Public Sector Union
EAL/D	English as an Additional Language or Dialect
EEL	Executive Education Leader
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
ESO	Education Support Office
ICSEA	Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage
KPI	Key performance indicator
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
LNEEP	Literacy and Numeracy Education Expert Panel
MTSS	Multi-tiered systems of support
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NATSIEC	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Corporation
NCCD	Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NSRB	National School Resourcing Board
NSW	New South Wales
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

OV	Occupational violence
OVRA	Occupational Violence Risk Assessment
P&C	Parents and Citizens Association
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SSEMS	School Staffing Expenditure Monitoring System
SFI	Student Family Education and Occupation Index
SOA	School Operational Allocation
SRA	Student Resource Allocation (ACT)
SRS	Schooling Resource Standard (national)
the Directorate	ACT Education Directorate
the Panel	ACT Public School System Resourcing Review Expert Panel
the Review	ACT Public School System Resourcing Review
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Executive summary

Supporting the delivery of an effective and equitable public education system is one of the most essential services a government provides for its citizens. The ACT Public School System Resourcing Review (the Review) was established to help ensure the ACT's public school system is resourced in an equitable, sustainable way to enable schools to deliver the best outcomes for students, now and into the future.

The ACT has a long-standing commitment to equity in public education, reflected in strategies developed over the last decade. Recent strategies recognise that achieving equity requires greater consistency and coordination across the system, marking a shift from a historically autonomous and devolved model for ACT public schools. The structural and organisational changes recommended in this report reinforce the need for a system-wide approach to public education.

Through consultation with stakeholders and analysis of system data, the Panel observed the ACT public education system's strengths lie in its universal accessibility and commitment to students at the centre. However, the Panel found recent budget pressures and operational challenges in schools are often downstream symptoms of deeper structural issues in how the system is organised, supported and resourced. These structural issues, combined with the post-pandemic increase in complexity of student and family health and wellbeing needs, have contributed to sustained cost pressures across the system.

There is a need for a defined operating model to generate clarity in the roles of schools and the central office, enable consistent centralised support to schools, reduce duplication of work and increase transparency and accountability in resourcing decisions.

The Panel's recommendations identify opportunities for the system to use the existing funding envelope more effectively,

while also calling for additional targeted investment in certain areas.

Key cost drivers across the ACT public school system

The Panel focused on 4 interrelated cost drivers that are placing sustained pressure on school budgets and the overall system.

First, increasing complexity in students' learning and support needs is driving greater spending on additional in-class assistance, specialist out-of-class input and targeted supports beyond what is provided through core teaching.

Second, workforce pressures are compounding costs through changing leave patterns, inequitable distribution of staff between schools and rapid growth in Learning Support Assistant roles as a default response to complexity.

Third, ageing infrastructure and rising expectations for inclusive, fit-for-purpose school facilities are increasing maintenance and renewal costs, while school responsibilities for asset management are contributing to inefficiency and uneven quality of facilities across the system.

Fourth, schools face increasing cost pressures due to minimum staffing and compliance requirements. In small primary schools and those with offsite preschools, these pressures are particularly acute as costs typically do not scale down with enrolments, leading to more systemic budget pressures compared to larger primary schools, high schools and colleges.

Strengthening the system through an improved operating model

Establishing a clear operating model would strengthen the ACT public school system's ability to deliver equitable and sustainable outcomes. An effective public school system is one with a clearly articulated vision, where everyone, regardless of their position in schools or the central office, is working together towards common goals related to student outcomes. A system operating model must offer clarity about which responsibilities

are best delivered by schools, and which are most effectively provided by the central office, reducing duplication and improving consistency of support.

The Panel identified a set of core principles to guide the development of an operating model for the public education system in the ACT:

1. A shared vision and collective leadership across schools and the central office are essential to reduce fragmentation and operate as one coordinated public education system, shifting away from the ACT legacy of more autonomous public schools.
2. Clearer allocation of responsibilities between the central office and schools – along with strengthening and maximising central support to schools – is needed to reduce duplication, strengthen accountability and allow schools to focus on teaching and learning.
3. Strategic workforce planning and development are required to ensure staff are appropriately deployed, supported and have the capabilities they need to deliver on the system's priorities.
4. Effectiveness of the system depends on shared accountability for outcomes across the organisation, alongside transparency and visibility of how resources are allocated and how decisions are made.
5. Greater coordination between the education system and other human services is required to ensure students and families receive coordinated support that addresses wellbeing, learning and complex needs.
6. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination must be embedded across governance, decision-making and service design to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Specific issues for implementing the operating model

Successfully implementing a new operating model will require the Education Directorate to put in place stronger system-wide supports and enablers. Specific areas to be addressed include:

- Strengthening data and systems so enrolment, staffing and financial information is accurate, agreed by all, integrated and user-friendly for system-wide planning and budget oversight.
- Reforming system responses to complex student needs, including shifting away from behaviour being managed primarily through work health and safety frameworks and strengthening evidence-based, wraparound services and multi-tiered systems of support, especially universal (Tier 1) teaching and learning practices.
- Strengthening support for principals with clear line management to provide more effective support, enable financial and human resource accountability and drive school improvement strategies.
- Increasing central support in areas where schools are doing work that could be handed more effectively centrally, including asset management, administration, compliance, finance and procurement.

Resource allocation methodology

The current resource allocation framework remains a solid foundation but requires adjustment to better reflect the profile of need in the ACT today and into the future. This means funding formulas need to focus more on supporting equity through loadings for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students aligned with Closing the Gap priorities, and students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) as the cohort grows. Many of these changes can be achieved through rebalancing existing funding envelopes.

The Panel also found some areas require consideration for additional funding. Resourcing for students with disability needs to be demand-driven and responsive to assessed need. This will likely require a larger envelope as the ACT transitions to an educational adjustment-based funding model.

Finally, the Panel recommends the ACT and Australian Governments consider how base funding can better reflect discernible shifts in needs of different school cohorts such as increased developmental needs for children in their early years, increased expectation and need for early intervention, and resulting increases in costs for early years schooling (preschool to year 6).

Future directions

Taken together, the recommendations provide a pathway to strengthen public education delivery in the ACT by articulating a shared vision and clearly defined operating model, and by increasing centralised supports for schools. They address the major pressures affecting sustainability and equity in the system and lay the groundwork for greater integration with other sectors to provide wraparound health, wellbeing and community services via school sites.

The core message is that achieving equity, sustainability and better outcomes requires adjustments to how existing resources are used, as well as targeted additional investment. While effective implementation of such wide-ranging system change will take considerable time and upfront investment, delivering the reforms recommended will ultimately support ACT public schools and strengthen the system's capacity to deliver excellent and equitable public education into the future.

Findings and recommendations

Chapter 4: Cost drivers	
Students with disability	Finding: Students with disability represent a growing (and likely underreported) proportion of ACT public school students.
	Finding: Inclusive education practices promote equity and are an important goal for the system. The policy and practices have significant resourcing implications, which must be acknowledged and understood.
Cost of providing additional supports	Finding: Supporting students with additional needs and providing tiered interventions through the multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) model is a cost driver that needs to be better understood and supported.
Increase in proportion of students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect	Finding: There has been growth in students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) without commensurate growth in funding.
High costs of staffing in the ACT	Finding: Staffing represents the single largest cost to the system, and growth in staff costs therefore impacts the budget more than any other factor.
Overallocation of staff across the system, and uneven distribution of staff	Finding: Overallocation of staff across the system – beyond what is funded through the allocative model (Student Resource Allocation) or through specific additional budget allocation – is a significant cost driver and does not translate to equitable allocation of resources.
Increases in staff leave	Finding: Budgets for casual relief teachers are not keeping pace with actual patterns of personal leave usage.
	Finding: Staff leave without adequate funding or available replacement staff puts further pressures on the workforce and school budgets.
Increase in Learning Support Assistants	Finding: Learning Support Assistant (LSA) costs represent a major component of total cost pressures in schools.

School and system compliance	Finding: The workload generated by increasing regulatory and policy compliance on schools and the system as a whole is a cost driver due to its impacts on staffing, either through employment of more staff, or greater burden placed on existing staff.	
Infrastructure and facilities	Finding: The ACT public school system includes ageing, legacy infrastructure that drives system infrastructure costs and, in some cases, is nearing end of life.	
	Finding: It is costly and burdensome on schools to individually coordinate and manage planned school repairs and maintenance, including cyclical maintenance.	
Viability pressures for small schools and offsite preschools	Finding: Small schools create disproportionate cost pressures on the system.	
	Finding: Minimum staffing requirements to meet all regulatory, compliance and administrative obligations will continue to be a more significant cost driver for small schools and offsite preschools.	
Many of the cost drivers require improved operational system performance	Finding: Many of the identified cost drivers are downstream issues of the need to improve system coordination and operational supports for schools. The response cannot simply be for schools to access additional funds. The priority is to strengthen the way the system operates as an important part of responding strategically to the financial pressures and to reprioritise the use of existing resources as a first response.	
Chapter 5: Operating model principles		
Importance of a well-defined system operating model	Finding: The system does not have a clearly articulated, contemporary operating model that meets the needs of individual schools and the system as a whole.	Recommendation 1: The public education system in the ACT should shift from a historically more autonomous schooling system to one which emphasises a single public education system. The new operating model should deliver unity, consistency and coordination.
Principle 1: Shared vision and leadership for one public education system	Finding: Operating as one consistent, coordinated public school system can benefit all parties involved across schools and the central office.	Recommendation 2: The organisational strategy, culture and structure should be realigned to reflect that all staff are part of one system. It should: • prioritise a narrower set of key strategies with appropriate resourcing and transparency • strengthen central support to schools and review funding allocations to ensure effective delivery • enable schools to more easily navigate the central office and reduce duplication
	Finding: To enable an excellent, equitable and sustainable public education system, the Education Directorate’s leaders should strengthen commitment to a clear vision for public education in the ACT.	
	Finding: A shared vision will be supported by greater involvement of principals in the strategic decision-making of the system.	

	Finding: The organisation has been attempting to achieve too many objectives which are at times inconsistent. Prioritising a limited number of key strategic initiatives, and resourcing these appropriately and transparently, will drive commitment to the shared vision and deliver more meaningful outcomes.	ensure active involvement from schools on the issues affecting the whole system. Recommendation 3: Given the small size of the ACT public education system, the ACT should work with other public education systems and agencies such as curriculum and teaching authorities across Australia to use or adapt existing education frameworks, materials or resources where possible.
	Finding: For a small system, the structure is overly complex for schools to navigate, and it is difficult to see clear lines of accountability for functions. It is necessary to have clearer points of contact for schools to resolve emerging issues.	
	Finding: To some extent both approaches of ‘front door’ (specific interfaces for schools to connect with) and ‘no wrong door’ (whoever is the point of contact will take responsibility for finding the answer) are present within the system but could be better articulated and strengthened.	
	Finding: Developing ACT-specific frameworks, processes, materials and resources can be very expensive for a small system. Collaborating with other state and territory public education systems could support the ACT’s cost effectiveness and free up funds for priority investments.	
Principle 2: Ensure the right work is done by the central office and schools	Finding: There is a need for greater clarity and certainty in where responsibilities lie between schools and the central office on specific functions.	Recommendation 4: Further to the findings and recommendations in this report, the Education Directorate should undertake a more detailed analysis of all functional areas and implement changed responsibilities between schools and the central office. The findings should inform a short-, medium- and long-term improvement strategy that outlines the operating model for the system and ensures resourcing follows function.
	Finding: School workload and work intensity is increasing which can take away from core priorities of teaching and learning for students.	
	Finding: Strengthening central system direction, guidance and supports to schools for a range of functions can allow for more effective delivery of public education.	
	Finding: The system will benefit from the provision of direction, guidance and support to schools to enable consistent teaching and learning practices, in line with the implementation of Strong Foundations. This includes in the	

	areas of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting for years P–10 (noting many aspects of this are already in place for years 11 and 12 through the Board of Senior Secondary Studies).	
Principle 3: A capable, well-deployed and supported workforce	Finding: There is a need for greater allocation of experienced and effective teachers to the most disadvantaged schools, including those with lower socio-economic profiles and students demonstrating greater complexity.	Recommendation 5: School staffing currently above the Student Resource Allocation (SRA) should be redeployed to schools based on identified needs and equity principles, or to support system-wide strategic priorities. In the short- to medium-term, the overallocation should be corrected so that staffing levels are consistent with funding available for school staff within each school and across the system under the SRA. A senior executive within the human resources area should have responsibility for allocation and redistribution of staff. In addition, incentives for school leaders and educators should support equitable distribution of staff. Recommendation 6: The system should strengthen workforce capability in areas of educational leadership, teaching and learning, and financial and human resource management as a top priority. Recommendation 7: Further investigation of the high rates of teacher leave is needed to understand: • the causal factors and subsequent additional costs for replacement staff • potential mitigations, including the feasibility of flexible work arrangements to try to reverse this significant cost driver • the funding needed for casual relief teachers to ensure coverage for actual levels of leave usage, especially for primary schools.
	Finding: There is evidence that staffing in some schools and across the system is not consistent with allocation under the Student Resource Allocation (SRA).	
	Finding: Strengthening professional learning ensures good outcomes from the funding already invested in education. The effective implementation of system initiatives such as Strong Foundations rests on the delivery of high-quality professional learning.	
	Finding: Increasing personal leave usage in schools is a challenge for the system and contributing factors likely include workload impacts on wellbeing, challenges of accessing flexible work and changing approaches to use of personal leave since COVID-19.	

Principle 4: Transparent resourcing, clear accountability and effective communication	Finding: To improve transparency in the ACT public school system, resourcing decisions and formulas need to be more visible to schools and school communities.	Recommendation 8: There should be more transparency of funding for schools and at system level. In particular, the exact methodology used to calculate budget allocations should be visible and more clearly communicated to schools and school communities for each part of the Student Resource Allocation (SRA). Recommendation 9: Establish high-level key performance indicators as part of performance frameworks for: • central office service delivery to schools for key support functions to ensure they are meeting school needs, in addition to financial management and timely and coherent rollout of policy initiatives • school outcomes on teaching and learning, curriculum implementation, assessment, reporting and financial accountability. For both schools and the central office, the framework should include regular feedback and review cycles.
	Finding: To improve school and system accountability, a ‘balanced scorecard’ approach to school performance should be considered.	
	Finding: There is a need for stronger dual accountability in the system – both from the central office to schools, and from schools into the system.	
Principle 5: Leverage cross-governmental health and community services	Finding: Early childhood development results in the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) in the ACT are consistently low, and the reasons are being analysed in greater detail by the ACT Government.	Recommendation 10: To reduce downstream pressure on schools, the ACT Government should consider targeted investment in preventative (e.g. allied health) and a range of early childhood services, delivered through referrals or wraparound supports in schools, as a system level strategy to ease pressure on school-based staffing and improve the sustainability of education funding.
	Finding: Schools require access to a full range of professional supports to assist student wellbeing across early, middle and senior schooling and to enhance participation in learning.	
	Finding: Proposed changes to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the development of Foundational Supports/Thriving Kids services require the Education Directorate to engage with health and community services as well as school communities to ensure early intervention services are accessible for children up to 8 years old.	

Principle 6: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination	Finding: The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Advisory Group operated as an ongoing advisory committee in the Education Directorate until the 2021–22 financial year. After this, formal engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community was prioritised on specific projects.	Recommendation 11: The Education Directorate should work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to support a community-led and ongoing body with access to senior decision makers (e.g. an Indigenous Education Consultative Group), enabling communities to advise on resourcing adjustments and related policy settings, including enrolment choice, to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, consistent with the Jumbunna report. Recommendation 12: Funding and staffing support for Koori Preschools should be on par with mainstream preschools.
	Finding: Cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students significantly enhances the school experience and is a high priority. Families should be able to enrol flexibly to ensure cultural safety and kinship networks are available to them.	
	Finding: There is a gap in funding to Koori Preschools compared to mainstream preschools.	
Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model		
Data and systems are the foundation for effective operations	Finding: For effective operations and management, the Education Directorate needs sufficient resources to develop and implement data and systems that are timely, accurate, agreed and integrated.	Recommendation 13: The Education Directorate should ensure data consistency and greater systems integration across the central office and schools. In particular, there should be an immediate focus on: • agreeing across the system to one consistent source of data for enrolment projections • enhancing the usability, transparency and timeliness of the School Staffing Expenditure Monitoring System (SSEMS) • adopting shared financial management software for both schools and the central office • collecting information about workforce qualifications through the human resources management system to inform strategic workforce planning.
	Finding: Collecting information about the qualification profile of the entire Education Directorate workforce is a priority as it is necessary to enable system planning and capability improvement.	
	Finding: The Education Directorate would benefit from a greater focus on workforce planning, with adequate resources and expertise to achieve this.	

Building a sustainable, system-wide approach to supporting students with disability	Finding: The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) and the new ACT adjustment-based resourcing model are a sound way of understanding the level of need associated with disability in the system, but it is hard for schools to engage fully with these assessment processes. Therefore, schools are likely to need additional technical support to do this fully – in the form of materials, resources and staff expertise – to ensure the full scale of disability in the system is understood, and the full Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) loading supplied to the system.	Recommendation 14: Schools should be given technical assistance to more accurately assess students under the new adjustment-based ACT model, which will flow through to more accurate assessments in the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD).
The system is responding to complex behaviours through a work health and safety lens	Finding: The current approach in the ACT public school system to managing complex behaviours through a work health and safety lens risks labelling students as violent and runs counter to inclusive education principles. This disproportionately affects students with additional needs.	Recommendation 15: The system should prioritise coherent, system-wide approaches to reduce behaviour issues, giving priority to 3 key areas: 1. Lifting the quality of whole class (Tier 1) teaching strategies and academic instruction to help students engage in class to help prevent or reduce any associated behavioural issues, as set out by the Strong Foundations reforms. 2. Improving behaviour management policy and resourcing, including: • upskilling the workforce to deal with complex behaviours • ensuring schools are supported to implement evidence-based approaches such as school-wide behaviour policies and multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) with early intervention and targeted intensive supports • increasing the provision of flexible education offerings both onsite within mainstream schools, and
Evidence around supporting complex student needs & Resetting the system response to complex student needs	Finding: School behaviour approaches and multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) reduce reliance on individualised support over time. In this context, the Strong Foundations reforms are a key priority for improving student learning outcomes while also reducing staffing budget pressures. Finding: The successful implementation of Strong Foundations to improve teaching strategies and academic instruction in Tier 1 (and if necessary, Tiers 2 and 3) will also support the management of complex behaviours in ACT public schools. This needs to be resourced adequately to deliver the expected benefits.	

	Finding: The routine use of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) as the primary intervention to support children with the most complex behaviours is not in line with evidence-based practices and is driving increased costs for schools and the system.	through offsite delivery, with a focus on re-engagement in mainstream education. 3. Significantly reforming the current approach to managing certain complex behaviours primarily as a work health and safety risk. As a priority, the system should: - reassess its approach to the historical Enforceable Undertaking with WorkSafe ACT - avoid labelling students as violent through this process. Overall, the system should ensure: - any staff allocated for behaviour management and to support students with disability are appropriately qualified and trained - there is a strong evidence base with greater alignment to inclusive education policies, and a greater focus on early intervention - funding available is not used for the provision of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) as a default response. A full range of staff (appropriately qualified) should be engaged under the funding available. Other supports including equipment and infrastructure should also be considered.
	Finding: A minimum qualification and/or training requirement for Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) would improve both their ability to support children with complex needs and the teaching workforce, and their ability to transition to further education professional pathways.	
	Finding: More flexible education options are required to better support students whose needs are not well met in mainstream settings, particularly in the early years.	
	Finding: All schools should have access to allied health support, which should be provided in a networked approach and allocated to schools according to need.	
	Finding: Given difficulties in recruiting allied health professionals, there are opportunities to use innovative ways to access services.	
Strengthen accountability and support for schools	Finding: The line managers of principals are important positions and are most valuable when they support consistency across the instructional leadership that principals offer each school. They should help translate information and directions between the different contexts of schools and the central office, acting as a conduit between schools and the centre. They should also be an important support for school leaders.	Recommendation 16: The Education Directorate should ensure in any restructure that: - all principals have a clear point of accountability on all matters through their line manager - the role of line managers is to support principals and schools, including with regard to school improvement and school operations

	Finding: Specialist schools would benefit from reporting to a role with specialist expertise. This role could also support uplift of inclusive practice for students with disability across the public school system.	- principals also have points of contact in the central office they can reach easily to have their schools' needs promptly met - the benefits of specialisation of line managers according to school type, as opposed to geographic focus, is considered - line managers of principals are appointed from the ranks of senior principals, potentially on a 5-year rolling basis, which would provide an opportunity for more principals to attain career progression whilst also gaining wider experience in the system.
	Finding: The current span of management for Executive Education Leaders (at 1 leader to 24 schools) makes it difficult to undertake line management responsibilities.	
Centralise asset management to improve system stewardship	Finding: It is more cost-effective to manage planned repairs and maintenance (e.g. cyclical maintenance) centrally than in a devolved way.	Recommendation 17: The central office should provide stewardship of all assets, meaning: - cyclical maintenance and planned major repairs should be a central responsibility - minor ad hoc repairs should be retained by schools. The central office should clearly and transparently communicate with schools about how projects are assessed, how funds are calculated and allocated for minor and major works, and the timeframes for centrally coordinated works. Recommendation 18: The ACT Government should develop a strategic and planned approach to major upgrading and replacement of ageing education infrastructure within and beyond the budget forward estimates, as part of its longer-term strategic asset management plan, appropriately funded to ensure all school facilities are inclusive, fit for purpose to meet contemporary educational requirements and more responsive to community expectations of the quality of facilities.
	Finding: The ACT public school system includes legacy infrastructure that, in some cases, is nearing end of life. Planning for full renewal or replacement beyond the forward estimates but within the next 20 years must be part of strategic asset management planning.	
Reduce the impact of compliance and administrative	Finding: Administrative and compliance workloads need to be recognised as a major pressure on schools.	Recommendation 19: Given there is a growing regulatory requirement for minimum levels of staffing at every school, the system should review the minimum viable enrolments required for a
	Finding: The ACT can learn from the work of other jurisdictions to reallocate some of these tasks to the central	

workloads for schools	office, and to simplify and streamline the ones schools remain responsible for.	school or preschool to operate effectively and support high-quality provision within available funding envelopes. Recommendation 20: The system should review, on an ongoing basis, the appropriateness of current administrative and compliance requirements imposed on schools. The central office should provide greater support (e.g. resources, training) for compliance, administrative and financial (including procurement) tasks, to remove workload from schools where appropriate. This should include aspects of the early childhood regulation requirements associated with preschools and those associated with Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) in senior school years.
	Finding: The regulatory and legal framework in which schools are operating (including for preschool management and Registered Training Organisation status) is creating funding and workload issues and is likely to increase in the future. This has both financial and human resource impacts.	
	Finding: The central office can reduce administrative burden on schools by better supporting finance functions, especially where these are replicated across schools and could be handled efficiently centrally – including examples such as payment of utility bills and procurement of common goods and services.	
Chapter 7: Resource allocation methodology		
Specialist schools	Finding: Specialist schools are important and valued by some families as part of the education landscape in the ACT and should be resourced appropriately to meet the complexity of student need. They have an important role to play not only in the specialist environment but also in supporting local schools to uplift the capability of staff to better meet the needs of students with disability at all public schools.	Recommendation 21: The system should review the funding methodology for specialist schools, to meet the unique and complex needs of these schools and their students.
	Finding: Specialist schools are effectively enrolment-managed to ensure access for children with highly complex needs. These schools are currently oversubscribed due to high parental demand.	
	Finding: Significant budget overruns in all specialist schools likely result from the complex needs of students being supported including the specialised staffing required.	

Early childhood, primary and combined schools	Finding: There are now significant additional cost pressures associated with the early years of schooling, which are not adequately accounted for in the base funding model. These impact early childhood, primary and combined schools (P–10) for the primary allocation component. At present primary students are allocated only 79.6% of the base funding of secondary students in 2026 (DE (Cth), 2026).	Recommendation 22: Given the increasing costs associated with early childhood and primary schools, consideration must be given to reviewing the current differential base funding model under the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS), and potentially the Student Resource Allocation (SRA), between primary and secondary school students.
Resourcing students with disability	Finding: The disability loading under the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) is the only one that is not binary, is based on need and is the largest and fastest growing within the system. The Australian Government has committed to reviewing the SRS. Because of the significance of the disability loading, it is a matter that clearly needs to be considered within the national review.	Recommendation 23: The ACT Government’s funding for students with disability in public schools needs to be demand-driven and responsive to assessed need. To achieve this: 1. The ACT Government should increase the envelope of funding allocated to supporting students with disability in public schools, so every school can be appropriately allocated funding for students with disability when the new adjustment-based resourcing model is introduced in 2027. 2. The envelope of funding will need to be reviewed annually in response to the outcome of assessments and adjustments required.
	Finding: The existing funding envelope in the ACT for supporting students with disability is not sufficient to meet all children’s needs.	
Resourcing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	Finding: The allocation and distribution of funding for supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is not transparent, with schools seeing limited funding per student.	Recommendation 24: To achieve significant improvement in engagement and outcomes in education for ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, there should be a review of the adequacy of funding and the allocation of that funding to schools and at a system level, to achieve education targets under Closing the Gap.
Resourcing students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect	Finding: Funding to support students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) has not kept pace with the growth of this cohort since at least 2017.	Recommendation 25: To achieve education outcomes for students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D), the envelope for the EAL/D loading under the Student Resource Allocation (SRA) should be reviewed to ensure it grows in alignment with the total level of need for the EAL/D student population in the ACT.
Equity implications of private income sources	Finding: Access to private income sources is uneven across the ACT public school system meaning some schools have greater ability to offer enrichment, extra facilities and other programs, which compounds inequity.	

1 Introduction

1.1 About the ACT Public School System Resourcing Review

The ACT Public School System Resourcing Review (the Review) was established by the ACT Government in October 2025 to provide independent, evidence-based advice to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood (the Minister). The Review's purpose is to support a long-term, sustainable and transparent approach to funding across the ACT public school system. It seeks to identify opportunities to strengthen current resourcing arrangements, so they continue meeting the needs of students, educators and the wider community – both now and into the future.

ACT public schools educate around 50,000 students across 93 schools. While the ACT remains the only jurisdiction in Australia that funds public education above the national Schooling Resource Standard (SRS), schools are experiencing sustained pressure from rising operational demands and increasingly complex student needs. These system-wide pressures highlight the need to refine the current resourcing model to ensure it stays fit-for-purpose, equitable and aligned with community expectations for high-quality public education.

Under the Review, an Expert Panel (the Panel) was tasked with examining the resourcing model for ACT public schools, including:

- drivers of rising costs in the system
- the methodology used to allocate funding
- the core services and distribution of responsibilities across schools and the central office
- opportunities to strengthen system-level sustainability, service delivery and budget management.

The Panel's work is informed by the broader social, economic and demographic changes shaping the ACT community. These include increased demand for health services, disability support and early intervention – areas where stronger system-wide coordination could improve outcomes for children, young people and families. The Review takes a forward-looking approach, recognising that the ACT's education system must continue evolving to meet community expectations and emerging needs.

In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the Panel was required to deliver its final report to the Minister by 2 April 2026. With the Panel established in October 2025, the timeframe required a focused approach to consultation and analysis. Drawing on this work, the Panel has developed evidence-informed findings and recommendations that position the Government for the next stage of system improvement and short-, medium- and long-term planning. The Terms of Reference state the Minister will table the final report, along with the Government's response, in the Legislative Assembly by May 2026.

A full copy of the Terms of Reference for the Review is at [Appendix A](#).

1.2 About the Panel

Adjunct Professor Ken Smith AO — Chair

Ken Smith AO is a senior public sector executive with more than 40 years of leadership experience across education, public administration and social policy. His previous roles include Director-General of the Queensland Department of Education and Chief Executive Officer and Dean of the Australia

and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG). He was previously a member of the National School Resourcing Board for 6 years.

During the Review, he served as a Professor of Practice and Adjunct Professor at Queensland University of Technology, as Chair of The Benevolent Society and as a board member of Housing Australia. Ken was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2021 for his distinguished service to public administration and education leadership.

Ms Julie Sonnemann

Ms Julie Sonnemann is an economist with extensive expertise in education policy, resource allocation and system performance. She previously served as Deputy Program Director at the Grattan Institute, leading major national research programs into teacher workforce issues, professional learning, school funding and educational disadvantage. She is the former Director of Education at Impact Economics & Policy and now works as an independent consultant specialising in evidence-based education policy and system improvement.

Associate Professor Anna Hogan

Associate Professor Anna Hogan is an Australian Research Council (ARC) research fellow within the School of Education at the Queensland University of Technology. A former secondary teacher, she brings expertise in education policy, workforce research and the impacts of emerging technologies on teaching practice. Her current research focuses on philanthropy in schooling, teacher work intensification and the influence of AI-enabled curriculum resources. She is the lead editor of the *Journal of Education Policy* and an Associate Editor of the *Australian Educational Researcher*.

Ms Hayley McQuire

Ms Hayley McQuire is the Chief Executive Officer of the National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition and Co-Chair of Learning Creates Australia. A proud Darumbal and South Sea Islander woman, Ms McQuire is recognised for her leadership in addressing structural inequities in education and her advocacy for Indigenous young people. She has served on multiple non-profit boards and represented Australia on the Youth Advocacy Group for the United Nations Global Education First Initiative.

Dr Bill Maiden PSM OAM

Dr Bill Maiden PSM OAM is a retired ACT public school principal with a distinguished career in school leadership, system governance and educational quality assurance. He has served as Deputy Chair of the ACT Non-government Schools Education Council and as Chair of the ACT Teacher Quality Institute Board. Dr Maiden is an Adjunct Professor of Education at the University of Canberra and was the foundation principal of 2 ACT public schools and contributed to the establishment of several others. He received the Public Service Medal in 2006 and the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2017 for his service to education and professional organisations.

1.3 Policy context of this report

In developing this report, the Panel drew on a wide body of evidence from ACT Government, Australian Government and other state and territory reports, datasets and policy documents, as well as extensive consultation with schools, staff, families and key stakeholders across the ACT public school system. Together, these sources provide insight into how education and early childhood systems operate today, and how they need to evolve to meet future student and community needs. They also highlight changing, and sometimes competing, expectations from families, educators and the broader community, and the opportunities for improved system performance over time. The consultation process and key themes raised by stakeholders are outlined in Chapter 3.

Existing strategies and reform programs provided useful context and helped shape the Panel's forward-focused approach to resourcing in the ACT public school system. The following documents formed key inputs into this Review.

[National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#)

In 2020, Australian governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations agreed on priority reforms across government and outcomes and targets in specific areas, to positively impact life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Australian Government, 2020). Several outcomes and targets focus on education, including in the early years, and require governments to take action to improve education outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap highlights the critical role of education in harnessing the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, for lifelong impact.

[Future of Education](#)

Launched in 2018, the *Future of Education Strategy* outlines the ACT Government's 10-year vision for a high-quality, equitable and student-centred education system (Education Directorate (ACT), 2018). It positions students as active partners in learning, calls for empowered and well-supported educators, and emphasises strong, connected communities. The Strategy highlights the need for responsive systems that support early intervention, equity and excellence across all ACT public schools.

[Set up for Success](#)

Published in 2020, *Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT* provides a 10-year plan to strengthen early childhood education and care (Education Directorate (ACT), 2020). It aims to ensure every child has access to high-quality early learning during foundational years. Set up for Success prioritises equity of access, a valued and skilled workforce, individualised support for children and families, and coordinated services that work together to improve outcomes for young children.

[Inclusive Education Strategy](#)

Inclusive Education: A Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools 2024–2034 sets out a 10-year vision where every child and young person is welcomed, valued and able to access education that meets their needs at their local school (Education Directorate (ACT), 2023). Grounded in principles of the right to education, systemwide commitment and continuous improvement, the Inclusive Education Strategy includes a First Action Plan to strengthen inclusive practice across the system from 2024 to 2026.

[Strong Foundations](#)

On 30 April 2024, the Literacy and Numeracy Education Expert Panel delivered its final report to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs (LNEEP, 2024). In response, the ACT Government commenced the Strong Foundations program – a multi-year initiative supporting schools to implement the Panel's recommendations (Education Directorate (ACT), 2024). Phase 1 began in 2024 and continues through 2025, with Phase 2 being developed in 2026. Strong Foundations focuses on strengthening literacy and numeracy outcomes, improving tiered supports for students, supporting consistent and system-wide curriculum and assessment delivery, and improving evidence-informed teaching practices.

1.4 Report structure

In the time available to complete the Review, the Panel developed a framework to support specific short-, medium- and longer-term changes for future decisions and direction, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness, equity and sustainability of the public school system.

This report presents the Panel's findings and recommendations in the context of the evidence obtained through consultation, internal data, discussions with experts and comparisons with other jurisdictions.

Chapter 1: Introduction provides an overview of the context in which this report was written.

Chapter 2: Background presents an overview of the history and current position of the ACT public school system, and of the funding landscape that governs its resourcing.

Chapter 3: Consultation outlines the consultation process undertaken by the Panel, and some of the key issues raised by stakeholders.

Chapter 4: Cost drivers explores the key factors driving increasing costs and overspends in the ACT public school system. The chapter explores how these costs are interconnected and are likely the downstream effects of larger system challenges. This chapter describes factual information; solutions are proposed in later chapters.

Chapter 5: Operating model principles presents a high-level framework to guide Education Directorate operations for a high-performing public education system. It outlines principles for an operating model that will enable a consistent, unified system to operate with clarity of roles and responsibilities and stronger central support for schools, to allow schools to focus on core education-related responsibilities for children and young people and their families.

Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model offers detailed advice about certain specific areas the system should strengthen to deliver the operating model. This includes system-wide supports as well as areas where central support to schools should be enhanced. All the recommendations align with the consistent, system-wide approach recommended in Chapter 5.

Chapter 7: Resource allocation methodology reviews the current methodology for allocating funds to schools and proposes some specific areas for analysis and reform based on evidence about the changing needs of students, families and the system.

Chapter 8: Future directions offers concluding reflections and high-level considerations for implementation, emphasising the long-term proposition of this report and the changes it recommends.

How the report responds to the Terms of Reference is outlined below. For the full Terms of Reference, see [Appendix A](#).

Terms of Reference	Relevant chapter(s)	Notes
Assessment of the funding required to provide public education in the ACT	Chapter 4: Cost drivers Chapter 5: Operating model principles Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model Chapter 7: Resource allocation methodology	In the time available, the Panel could not definitively analyse the exact funding required. Instead, the report offers observations about specific areas that may require adjustment to existing funding, and potential reallocation of current funding arrangements.
Assessment of how to most effectively and efficiently use funding provided	Chapter 5: Operating model principles Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model Chapter 7: Resource allocation methodology	Greater system support and consistency will facilitate more effective and efficient use of funding. Some adjustments to the resource allocation methodology will further support this.
Explore the best model of central support services for schools in a small jurisdiction	Chapter 5: Operating model principles Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model	By operating as one system, central support to schools can increase, allowing schools to focus on the core business of student learning.
Acknowledge the broad context that ACT public schools currently operate in	Chapter 2: Background Chapter 4: Cost drivers Chapter 5: Operating model principles	The report highlights changing community needs and the impacts on school and system costs, as well as the opportunities for education to partner with other parts of government to better target all service users.

Terms of Reference	Relevant chapter(s)	Notes
Provide an operating model for a high-performing small public education system, including functions and responsibilities that are best delivered at system level and school level	Chapter 5: Operating model principles Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model	Rather than a complete model, the report proposes 6 principles that should underpin a new operating model to be developed by the Education Directorate, as well as specific considerations for maximising central support for certain functions. A full functional analysis and clarity of responsibilities at school and system levels will be a matter for the Directorate in implementation.
Analyse the funding streams into schools, including loadings to support different cohorts of student need	Chapter 2: Background Chapter 4: Cost drivers Chapter 7: Resource allocation methodology	This aspect of the Terms of Reference was addressed in full.
Define the core educational and operational services schools are expected to deliver within their Student Resource Allocation (SRA) funding	Chapter 5: Operating model principles Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model	A detailed list of core services is not provided. However, Chapter 5 posits principles for (and potential functions across) a high-performing education system, and Chapter 6 discusses how to strengthen delivery of some of the key supports required by schools.
Develop baseline staffing and costings required to deliver these core services based on case studies of different school types	Chapter 4: Cost drivers Chapter 5: Operating model principles Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model	Detailed staffing and costings were not feasible in the timeframe. The report reviews the differential needs and allocations for different school types and recommends adjustments to aspects of the resource allocation methodology, as well as proposing ways to strengthen central supports and allocation of resources to schools to ensure staffing matches need.

Terms of Reference	Relevant chapter(s)	Notes
	Chapter 7: Resource allocation methodology	
Develop staffing and costings required to deliver current and upcoming government initiatives, based on case studies of different school types, including: • Positive Behaviours for Learning (including Tiers 2 and 3 supports in school) • Strong Foundations (including multi-tiered systems of support) • Inclusion Strategy (including both small group program and full inclusion models) • Set up for Success Early Childhood Strategy	Chapter 4: Cost drivers Chapter 5: Operating model principles Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model Chapter 7: Resource allocation methodology	Specific staffing and costings were not feasible in the timeframe, but findings and recommendations support the need for an efficient and equitable resource allocation methodology. The report comments on aspects of all the initiatives listed, as well as providing overall advice about the prioritisation and resourcing of initiatives in the context of the operating model.
Provide advice on exceptions to the baseline staffing and costings for core school	See above	See above

Terms of Reference	Relevant chapter(s)	Notes
services, and for the government initiatives above		
Develop benchmarked service standards for education support services provided to schools from the Education Support Office • Provide advice on effective service models to meet service standards • Provide advice on costs to deliver services in line with the service standards	Chapter 5: Operating model principles Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model	Detailed service mapping, costings and development of service standards were not feasible in the timeframe. The report recommends a shift towards more consistent and more centralised supports, underpinned by clear accountability measures, in the context of 6 key principles for a new operating model. Some specific services are discussed in more detail, but largely this will be a matter for consideration through implementation.
Provide advice on improving budget management systems, processes and timeframes to improve transparency for principals and allow transparent system oversight	Chapter 5: Operating model principles Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model	This aspect of the Terms of Reference was addressed in full.

Terms of Reference	Relevant chapter(s)	Notes
Provide advice on functions that could be delivered more effectively and efficiently through centralisation within the Education Support Office including costs for delivery and savings for schools	Chapter 5: Operating model principles Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model	Centralising more administrative and operational functions will deliver a range of benefits for schools and will support the system's shift to greater consistency. Costings were not undertaken in the timeframe.
Provide advice on policy changes that could support schools to operate sustainably	Chapter 5: Operating model principles Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model Chapter 7: Resource allocation methodology	This aspect of the Terms of Reference was addressed in full.

2 Background

2.1 The ACT public school system

The ACT public school system provides education for around 50,000 students and their families in the ACT and Jervis Bay Territory. The system delivers high standards of education and promotes educational opportunity and improved equity. By its nature, the public system does not discriminate: all students can access a universal, free public education. This universal access is a key strength of the system, but also means public schools often support a higher level of student complexity than many schools in the non-government sector. Staff, families and stakeholders across the system are proud of public education and strongly committed to its continued growth and success.

The ACT public education system includes several arrangements that are relatively unique in Australia, including government preschools embedded within public schools and separate colleges for senior secondary students. These settings emphasise the system's transformational capabilities – from the early years to some of the best year 12 results in the country.

In this report, the Panel presents findings and recommendations about the management and resourcing of the ACT public school system to strengthen its commitments to excellence, equity and inclusivity, while ensuring the system is sustainable in a changing education landscape.

Understanding the landscape and history of the system is the foundation to understanding its legacy, current position and future challenges.

2.1.1 History and landscape of the ACT public school system

In 1973, the ACT education system was established as a distinct public education system, transitioning schools from the NSW Department of Education to the newly formed ACT Schools Authority. This shift occurred prior to the commencement of ACT self-government in 1989 and was accompanied by a deliberate move toward a more participatory and autonomous model of schooling featuring high parent and teacher involvement in decision making, with many responsibilities devolved to school boards and principals.

The policy foundations of this approach were grounded in innovation, local context-driven decision making and strong community involvement at a time when Canberra's population was relatively demographically homogeneous, with a predominantly European background (ABS, 1976). This history shaped a system in which greater autonomy at a school level became a defining feature of the ACT compared to other public education systems in Australia.

Since the 1970s, the legacy of school autonomy and limited central office intervention have continued to characterise the ACT public school system. Until the time of this Review, the resourcing approach in ACT public schools was primarily devolved, with funding allocated to schools and most expenditure decisions made locally. These included decisions relating to staffing, budget management, curriculum and assessment, with comparatively limited system-level coordination, guidance or support compared with other jurisdictions. Schools were allocated funding through a centrally determined formula (previously expressed in staffing points and more recently in dollar values), after which responsibility for resource allocation and operational decisions rested largely with individual schools.

While this school-led approach supported local innovation, over time it also contributed to increasing diversity of practice and reduced system consistency, particularly as the ACT experienced significant economic, social, family and demographic change over the last 50 years.

Since the 1970s, the ACT's population has grown from 137,000 to almost 500,000, accompanied by geographic expansion and densification. The ACT has a growing proportion of residents born overseas and strong cultural diversity in newer regions such as Gungahlin and Molonglo Valley (ABS, 2021). Central office data shows 21% of ACT public school students have English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D), and 4.9% of students identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

The ACT has also experienced rising rates of disability among school-aged children, in line with national trends. The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) shows that proportions of students across all levels of adjustment rose in Australia by 6.4% – and 7.3% in the ACT – between 2018 and 2024.

While the ACT population is, on average, the most socioeconomically advantaged in Australia, disadvantage is dispersed and less visible. Deliberate policy decisions to distribute public housing across Canberra rather than concentrating it in large estates has resulted in socioeconomic disadvantage being spread across communities and schools. Due to this, ACT public schools often serve socially and economically diverse cohorts.

2.1.1.1 ACT public school student performance

Although ACT student achievement is often high on raw measures, it compares less favourably with national averages once parental education and socio-economic advantage is considered. In recent years ACT student achievement data across all schooling sectors has indicated priority cohorts with low levels of parental education are not achieving results in line with more advantaged peers with higher parental education levels. Further, even more advantaged ACT students often underperform in NAPLAN against peers of a similar background in NSW and Victoria (Productivity Commission, 2026). Figure 1 highlights the ACT's lower average achievement scores nationally when adjusted for parent achievement.

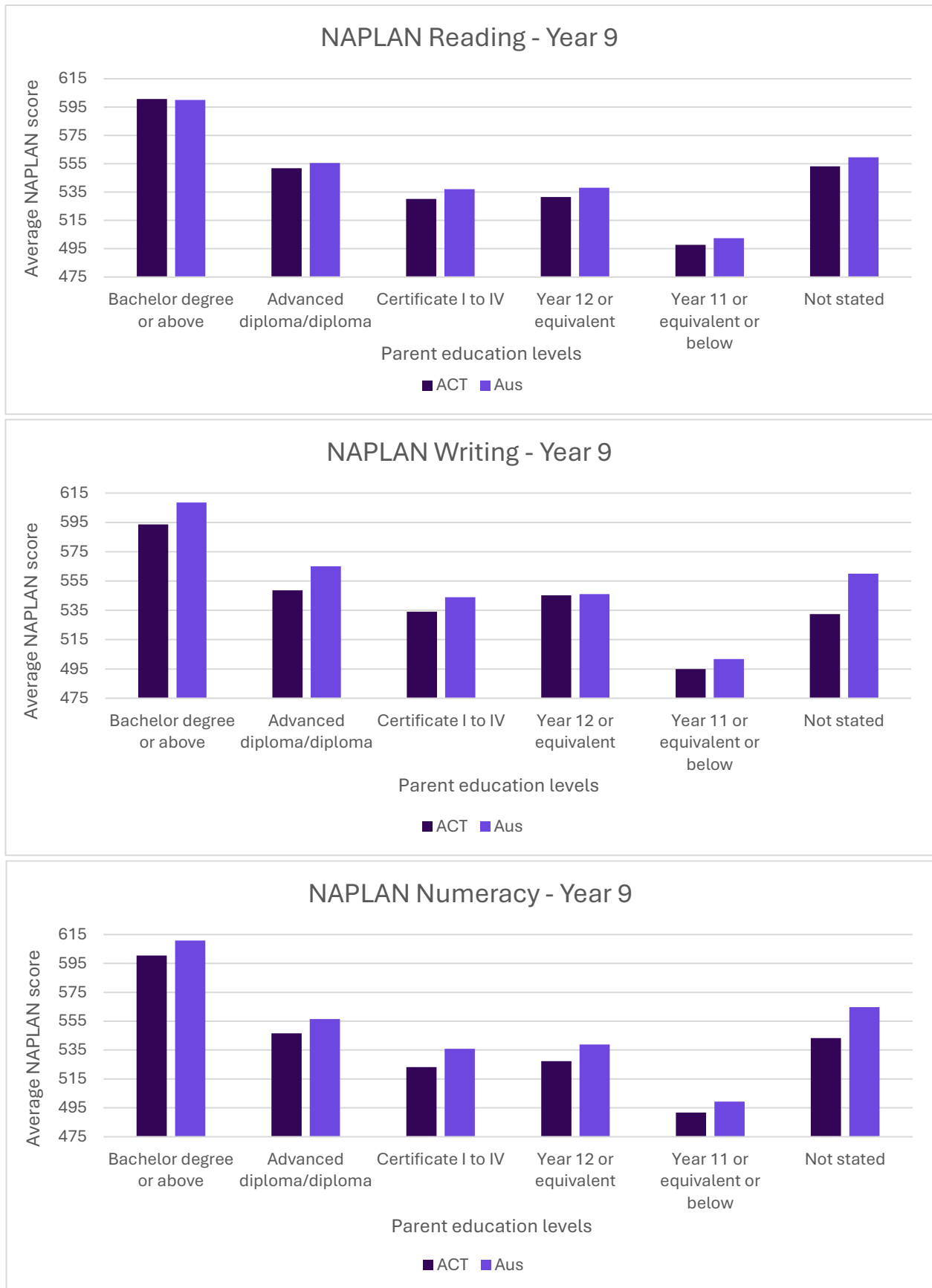


Figure 1: Comparison of ACT and Australian Year 9 NAPLAN scores, by level of parental education, 2025 (Productivity Commission, 2026)

These challenges have prompted a renewed focus on system-level coordination and coherence focused on literacy and numeracy education. In 2024, an independent Literacy and Numeracy Education Expert Panel examined education practices in ACT public schools and recommended a more consistent, system-wide approach to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment (LNEEP, 2024). In response, the ACT Government announced the Strong Foundations reform program in September 2024 (Education Directorate (ACT), 2024), signalling a shift toward clearer system expectations and supports for teaching and learning, including common assessments and strengthened curriculum and pedagogical guidance.

Notwithstanding the need to strengthen literacy and numeracy outcomes, the ACT public school system performs strongly on a range of other measures. The ACT has some of the highest rates in Australia of student attainment for 20- to 24-year-olds across both the government and non-government sectors (ACARA, 2026). The public year 11 and 12 college system is particularly well-regarded, often attracting students from non-government schools back into the public system. This places the ACT public system at a point of change, with clear opportunities to improve from a strong starting position.

2.1.1.2 ACT public education funding

Public education funding continues to be a priority for the ACT Government and is the second-largest area of government spending after health. In 2025–26, \$1.09 billion was allocated in the ACT Budget for public education. Most of this is contributed by the ACT Government, with Commonwealth funds supplementing ACT funding under the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement – Full and Fair Funding 2025–2034* where the Commonwealth is the minority funder for public schooling and majority funder for non-government schooling.

The ACT is the highest spending jurisdiction per student for school education across Australia. There are a range of possible reasons for this, including the commitments to educational approaches that are unique to the ACT, which are worth analysing in greater detail, but were not possible in the current Review. The Directorate should undertake a sensitivity analysis to understand the role of different factors in driving these higher costs compared to other jurisdictions. However, given the relatively high level of spending, and tight fiscal pressures for the ACT government more broadly (Eslake, 2026), there is a need to ensure existing funding within the current budget envelope is being effectively spent. At the same time, growing cost pressures on schools, especially related to increasingly complex student needs and changing expectations for what schools should deliver, mean that the allocation and targeting of funding in certain areas should be closely examined.

2.1.2 Enrolment trends

The ACT Education Directorate is responsible for public education in the Territory, educating 50,292 students from preschool to year 12 (approximately 60.3% of all students in the ACT) in 2025 (Education Directorate (ACT), 2025c). Enrolment data from 2017 to 2025 is summarised in Figure 2, compared with the overall population in the ACT (ABS, 2025) over the same period.

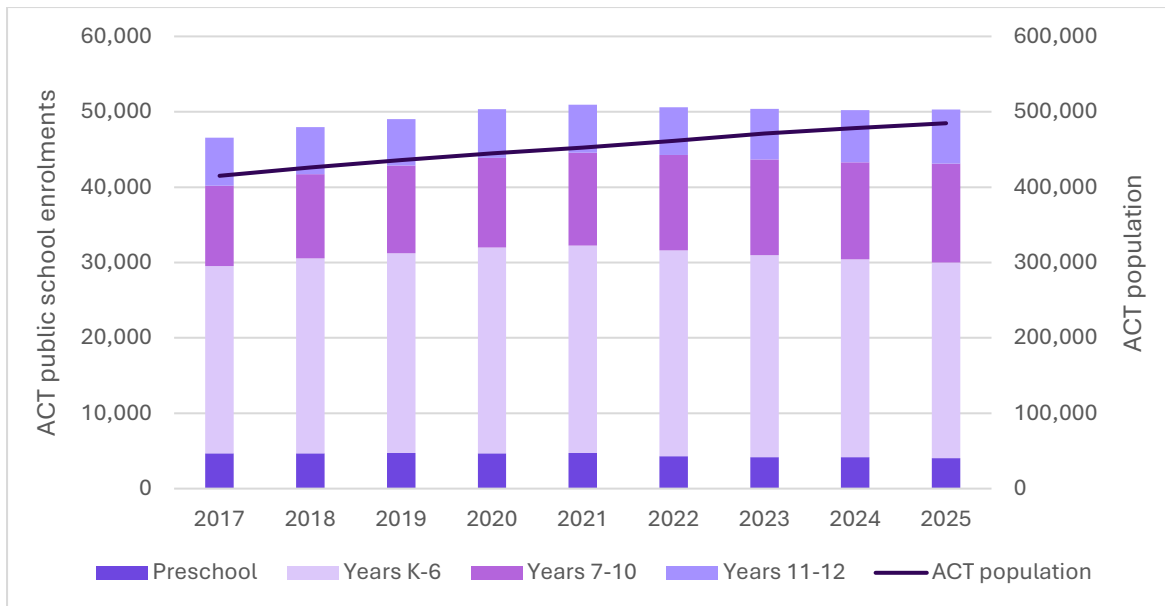


Figure 2: Comparison of ACT public school enrolments (August census data) and ACT total population (ABS, 2025), 2017–2025

The rate of enrolment in public schools has plateaued or declined slightly since 2021, driven by declining birth rates and a net movement of students from the public to the non-government sector. These trends are reflected in Figure 3, which shows the yearly percentage change in enrolment in the different sectors in the ACT over time. This pattern mirrors trends seen in several other states and territories (Productivity Commission, 2026).

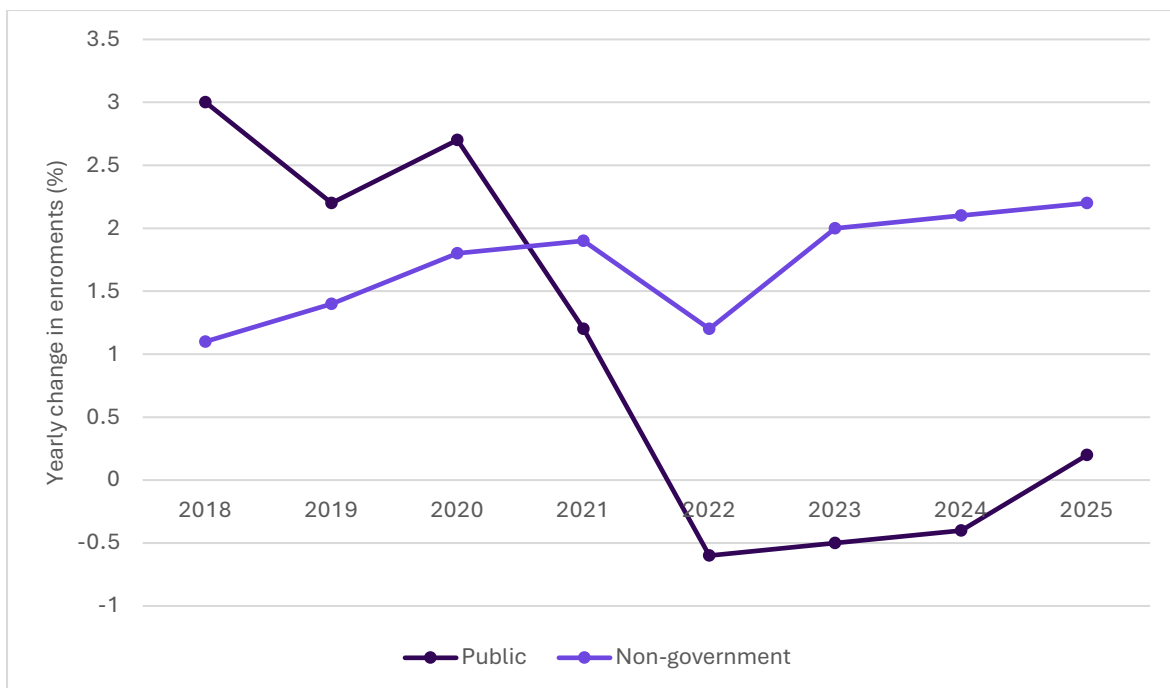


Figure 3: Comparison of ACT public and non-government sector changes in enrolments, 2018–2025 (August census data)

2.1.3 Education settings

In the ACT, core schooling is from kindergarten (which precedes year 1) to year 12. There are also public offerings available to all 4-year-olds and a small group of 3-year-olds (called preschool). Despite its small size, the ACT public school system encompasses a high degree of diversity in school

types and settings, including some relatively unique settings among Australian jurisdictions. In 2026 the ACT public school system comprises 93 schools, consisting of:

- 5 early childhood schools (preschool to year 2)
- 54 primary schools (preschool to year 6)
- 12 high schools (years 7 to 10)
- 8 colleges (years 11 to 12)
- 10 combined schools (preschool to year 10, and year 7 to year 12)
- 4 specialist schools
- flexible education settings.

2.1.3.1 Early childhood schools and preschools

ACT public preschool is delivered to 3- and 4-year-old children through a range of settings including early childhood education and care (ECEC) services, stand-alone early childhood schools, and preschools (including Koori Preschools) attached to primary schools, reflecting the Territory's long-standing emphasis on integration and continuity across the early years (Education Directorate (ACT), 2020). Universal access to quality early childhood education is a key commitment of *Set up for Success: An early childhood strategy for the ACT* (Education Directorate (ACT), 2020).

Universal 4-year-old preschool is delivered through ACT public preschools and provides 15 hours per week, 40 weeks per year of free early learning in the year prior to formal schooling. Unlike most other jurisdictions, all ACT public preschools are administered and managed as part of early childhood, primary or combined schools, with some primary schools operating offsite preschools separate from the main school campus. Since 2024, 3-year-old children in the ACT have also been able to access a preschool program offering up to 300 hours per year of free early childhood education through participating long day care and non-government school-based ECEC services.

Within the preschool offering, the ACT also offers Koori Preschool for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Children attending Koori Preschool can access a 3- or 4-year-old universal program concurrently, providing up to 30 hours per week of early learning for this cohort.

The ACT also offers a targeted 3-year-old public initiative, offered by a small number of public preschools (located in schools) for children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage, which provides 2 days per week, 48 weeks per year of free quality early learning.

The ACT also has 5 early childhood schools for students from preschool to year 2. Early childhood education and care services are also located on these sites, offering a service from birth to preschool.

2.1.3.2 Primary and high schools

Primary schools in the ACT educate children from preschool to year 6 with a focus on foundational learning, early intervention, wellbeing supports and inclusive education. High schools educate students in years 7 to 10, operating as a distinct phase of schooling rather than part of a combined secondary model as in other jurisdictions. This structure of delivering years 7 to 10 in a separate setting from years 11 and 12 supports a clear focus on adolescent learning and wellbeing during the middle years. It allows high schools to specialise in curriculum, pedagogy and pastoral care tailored to early secondary students. Public high schools account for a disproportionately smaller share of ACT students compared with primary schools and colleges.

2.1.3.3 Combined schools

The 10 combined schools in the ACT span preschool to year 10, and in one case years 7 to 12. These schools offer continuity of schooling and can maintain relationships between students, families and staff over longer periods, supporting smoother transitions and stronger community identity.

At the same time, combined schools operate with more structural, staffing and leadership complexity, as they must deliver curriculum, assessment and wellbeing supports across a wide age range within a single organisational setting. The high school portion of combined schools is often larger than the primary, as it also functions as the local high school for other nearby primary schools.

2.1.3.4 Colleges

In the ACT, there are 8 colleges which cater for students in years 11 and 12, separating senior secondary education from earlier phases of schooling and allowing colleges to specialise in curriculum breadth, post-school possibilities and student independence. The ACT is the only jurisdiction with a system-wide senior secondary college approach, with Tasmania offering a small (and decreasing) number of schools with only years 11 and 12 (DECYP (Tas), 2026b). The ACT is also unique amongst senior secondary systems in Australia, in that it is the only system that does not have subject-based external examinations, with students instead completing continuous assessment throughout years 11 and 12, with moderation conducted between teachers and schools every semester, and students completing a single scaling test in year 12.

Public colleges are highly regarded in the ACT, attracting enrolments from the non-government sector for years 11 and 12 because of the diversity of curriculum and teacher expertise available. An independent authority, the Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS), oversees curriculum delivery, assessment and reporting for years 11 and 12 across the ACT (covering both the public and non-government systems).

2.1.3.5 Specialist schools

All students with disability can enrol at their local school. Additionally, the ACT operates 4 specialist schools that provide targeted education for students with moderate, severe or profound intellectual disability and whose needs may be best met in a specialised setting (Education Directorate (ACT), 2025f). Specialist schools have purpose-built facilities and staff with specialist expertise.

2.1.3.6 Jervis Bay School

Jervis Bay School is in Jervis Bay Territory, a Commonwealth-administered territory. Some services including public education are delivered in Jervis Bay Territory by the ACT. Funding for these services comes directly from the Australian Government.

Jervis Bay School is one of the ACT's 93 schools; however, it is funded entirely by the Australian Government through a federally determined funding formula.

2.1.3.7 Flexible education settings

In addition to its 93 schools, the ACT public education system includes a range of flexible and alternative education options designed to support children and young people with complex, intensive or transitional needs (Education Directorate (ACT), 2025a, 2025d). These settings provide tailored programs that prioritise engagement, wellbeing and reconnection to learning, and typically operate through referral rather than direct enrolment. These include:

- Hospital School
- Murrumbidgee School – located within the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Cottage

- Waruga Yardhura – an engagement and support service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- Muliyan – a voluntary support program and outreach service for high school students who need holistic, complex and/or intensive support
- Distance education – offered in partnership with the NSW Finigan School of Distance Education for students who have a medical condition, elite sports involvement, or additional learning needs that prevent them from attending school.

2.1.3.8 The diversity of the ACT public school system relative to its size

The ACT's mixture of school settings represents a level of structural diversity that is uncommon for a jurisdiction of its size, with implications for system coherence, efficiency and consistency when compared to other Australian schooling systems. Adding to the complexity, its geographical location being surrounded by NSW and adjacent to Queanbeyan means the ACT public education system also addresses enrolment demand for some students and families in the surrounding NSW regions.

2.1.4 Education Directorate structure

The Education Directorate is responsible for the delivery of public schooling in the ACT as well as the regulation of and some limited supports for non-government schooling. For public schooling, system-level support and leadership is provided to schools by the central office known internally as the Education Support Office (ESO). Structurally, ACT public schools are organised into 4 networks, each led by an Executive Education Leader (EEL) who provides leadership, oversight and support to principals within their network.

The central office provides central leadership, services and support to the ACT public school system across 5 divisions. Two divisions are directly school-focused, with a remit including leadership capability, school operations and direct service delivery to schools. Another division is focused on local and national strategic policymaking and also interfaces with schools regarding enrolments, data, delivery of public preschools, management of child safety and coordination of the implementation of some reforms. Finally, 2 divisions provide corporate services including finance, infrastructure, human resources, IT and governance across the entire directorate (central office and schools).

Central office staff are also responsible for regulating the early childhood education and care sector, managing non-government school registrations and legislative requirements, teacher registration and quality, and senior secondary certification for public and non-government students.

As of June 2025, the Directorate employed a workforce of 8,962 people. Of the staff employed, 45% were teachers, 39% other school-based staff and 16% central office staff. The central office workforce includes allied health and specialist staff (up to 80 people) who provide services across multiple schools, and the schools cleaning workforce (approximately 375 people). The percentage of the workforce located in the central office decreases to around 10% of total Education Directorate staffing if allied health and cleaning staff are removed from the calculation. Some schools (including all specialist schools) also fund their own allied health staff from their budget allocations.

Central office data shows that over the past 4 years, the Directorate has experienced a 10% growth in its workforce headcount, with the growth being proportionally higher in the central office, which increased by 15%. In this time, the number of student enrolments has remained relatively stable, but 5 additional schools have opened.

The ACT spends similar amounts per student on teaching staff compared to the national average (Productivity Commission, 2026). However, per-student spending on non-teaching staff (both in

schools and the central office) is significantly higher than the national average, despite similar school-level staffing ratios.

Several factors may contribute to this difference, including different methodologies for collecting and reporting this data across jurisdictions which reduces the accuracy of comparisons (as noted by the Productivity Commission), the ACT's relatively small student population which increases central office costs on a per-student basis, the inclusion of roles such as cleaners and other staff who may be employed or funded differently in other jurisdictions, the prevalence of small schools which increases per student costs, and higher remuneration levels for non-teaching staff (in schools and the central office) relative to other jurisdictions.

2.1.4.1 Schools

As of June 2025, 6,654 staff were employed directly in schools, including 4,068 teachers and 867 school leaders. The remainder of school staff comprises administration and support roles such as front office staff, business managers, administrative staff, IT staff, Learning Support Assistants (LSAs), psychologists, social and youth workers, health professionals employed directly by schools, specialist support teams and building services officers.

The teaching workforce is structured across 3 levels of school-based leadership (principals, deputy principals and executive teachers) supporting classroom teachers to deliver teaching and learning. Like the rest of Australia, ACT public schools are impacted by ongoing, although lessening, teaching workforce shortages.

The business side of schools is managed by a team of administrative professionals, led by a business manager for each school. Business managers support the senior leadership team in budgeting and operational decisions. They also oversee the work of building services officers responsible for the upkeep of facilities, along with a range of other finance, enrolments, excursions, compliance and other administrative staff, depending on the individual school's staffing profile. LSAs generally sit within the school's administrative structure but typically support teachers in classrooms or work with students in small group programs.

2.2 Public school system funding landscape

2.2.1 Schooling Resource Standard

School funding arrangements in Australia are grounded in the 2011 Gonski Review of Funding for Schooling, which established the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) as a needs-based benchmark for recurrent funding (DE (Cth), 2026).

The SRS represents an estimate of the total public funding required to meet each student's educational needs. It comprises a base amount per student (differing amounts for primary and secondary) and 6 needs-based loadings, as shown in Figure 4. The intent of the loadings is to ensure all students, regardless of situation or background, have the same opportunity to achieve educational outcomes. Loadings for students with disability, socio-educational disadvantage, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status and low English language proficiency are applied per student. Schools can also attract loadings based on remoteness and size.

The SRS is intended to encompass the total amount required by both schools and the system (including the central office) to meet students' educational needs. Accordingly, total SRS funding is distributed between individual schools and the central office pursuant to the decisions of each jurisdiction. This is also the case in the Catholic education system. As independent non-government schools do not operate as a single system, the entire SRS funding for each school goes directly to the school.

Capital costs are not included in SRS funding amounts. Further, SRS funding is calculated only based on the compulsory years of schooling, kindergarten to year 12. In the ACT, although preschool is also part of the public school system, SRS funding does not contribute to its cost and is not included in the spending calculations and other data that are compared across the country (Productivity Commission, 2026).

School funding is governed by the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement – Full and Fair Funding 2025–2034*, which formalises the shared Commonwealth and state/territory commitment to funding schools against the SRS. Under the Agreement, in 2026, the ACT must contribute at least 80% of the SRS for the government school sector, while the Commonwealth must contribute at least 22.5% (DE (Cth), 2025a). The minimum contribution amounts increase to 81.5% and 25% respectively by 2034. The ACT has consistently been contributing more than the 80% required each year, meaning that it is the only jurisdiction funded at over 100% of the SRS total (NSRB, 2025).

Non-government schools also receive public funding based on the SRS. For non-government schools, the base amount is reduced by a school community’s ‘capacity to contribute’, i.e. their ability to fund part of their child’s education (DE (Cth), 2026). The loadings are not reduced by capacity to contribute. For the non-government sector, the Commonwealth contributes 80% and states and territories contribute 20%.

Other loadings (per school)	School location (not applicable in the ACT as no regional or remote ACT-funded schools)
	School size
Needs-based loadings (per student)	Students with disability
	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
	Students with socio-educational disadvantage
	Students with low English proficiency
Base amount	Amount per student – lower for primary students, higher for secondary students

Figure 4: Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) funding arrangements (DE (Cth), 2026)

2.2.2 ACT funding to schools

While the SRS establishes the overall funding envelope for public education in the ACT, decisions about how that funding is allocated to individual schools are made through the ACT’s internal funding model. This model comprises 2 main components: the Student Resource Allocation (SRA), which largely determines staffing and core program resources, and the School Operational Allocation (SOA), which supports schools’ operational and maintenance costs.

The following sections describe how these allocations operate in practice.

2.2.2.1 Student Resource Allocation

The SRA is the ACT’s internal tool for allocating funding to schools (Education Directorate (ACT), 2025g). It largely mirrors the structure of the SRS, with a base amount per student (weighted for their stage of schooling) as well as loadings for the same 4 student need categories as in the SRS. Additionally, it incorporates base administrative funding amounts for each school type, funding for

programs specific to school types (e.g. careers support for colleges), funding for preschools based on the number of sessions run (with funding for these programs not part of SRS funding as noted earlier), and supplementary allowances for new schools and schools with decreasing enrolments.

The bulk of funding for schools under the SRA is in the form of a staffing allocation, for which funds are held centrally but managed by the school principal. The principal views the funds available for staffing via a platform called the School Staffing Expenditure Monitoring System (SSEMS). Additionally, a small portion of SRA funding is provided to schools as a cash allocation directly into the school's bank account.

2.2.2.2 School Operational Allocation

The SOA is intended to cover the operational activities of schools (excluding staffing) and is paid directly into the school's bank account. It covers the costs of administration, teaching resources, utilities, and both minor and some planned maintenance. The SOA is calculated based on a variety of factors including school size and age, enrolments, school type, types of facilities (e.g. a hydrotherapy pool), and if any specialised programs are offered (e.g. small group learning for children with disability, or an introductory English centre).

The ACT has a history of school boards consisting of community members. School boards approve the school's budget and intended use of the SOA; however, there is no legal responsibility attached to school board members.

Schools cannot transfer their staffing allocation under the SRA into cash in their bank accounts. They can, however, use under-spends in the SOA to top up their staffing allocation. Sometimes schools are asked to use bank balances (arising from previous years surpluses or private income sources) to mitigate staffing overspends if they have staffed their school beyond the SRA staffing allocation, where the Education Directorate determines the staffing overspend is not directly related to addressing student complexity. Otherwise, schools retain unspent SOA funds from year to year and can make decisions about how these funds are used.

2.2.3 Needs-based loadings

2.2.3.1 Students with disability

Students with disability are a growing and diverse cohort both nationally and within the ACT school system. The loading for students with disability is the fastest-growing area in the SRS.

A strength of the public system is that it accepts all students, while non-government schools can choose not to accept enrolments of some students for a variety of operational and capacity reasons. Public schools nationally educate a higher proportion of students with disability than non-government schools (AIHW, 2024). Students with disability are assessed as falling under one of 4 levels of adjustment under the NCCD: quality differentiated teaching practice (where the school or system does not receive an additional funding allocation), and the 3 funded categories of supplementary, substantial and extensive, which attract SRS funding of increasing amounts as adjustments become more intensive.

In 2025–26, a total of \$119.9 million was allocated by the ACT for disability education and programs in public schools. This includes funding allocations to schools, central office staff working on inclusive education and related areas, allied health staff located in the central office supporting schools and students, other relevant programs and some overhead costs.

2.2.3.2 Socio-educational disadvantage

The ACT has relatively low levels of socio-educational disadvantage compared to other jurisdictions, including with no rural or regional areas (other than Jervis Bay School, which is federally funded –

see Section 2.1.3.6) and generally strong access to services. Consistent with this data, ACARA data based on Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) scores indicates the ACT has the smallest proportion of schools in the lowest quartile of socio-educational advantage nationally (ACARA, 2025).

This does not mean disadvantage is absent. In 2025, 6 ACT public schools had ICSEA scores in the lowest 40% of schools nationally, including Jervis Bay School. Disadvantage is unevenly distributed across schools and communities, with some schools serving a much higher concentration of disadvantage than others, particularly in West Belconnen and Tuggeranong. All schools within the ACT have students from the highest and the lowest quartiles of socio-educational advantage.

Under the SRA in 2025, \$13.9 million was distributed to 46 of the ACT's schools with the lowest levels of socio-educational advantage. These schools are identified through an ACT-specific formula called the Student Family Education and Occupation Index (SFI), which is calculated based on parental education and occupation levels. Weighted SFI values are calculated for each school based on their SFI, the average SFI for all schools and their enrolment numbers. Overall funding is allocated based on the weighted SFI scores, which therefore considers the density of disadvantage within each school. In 2025, central office data shows individual schools received amounts ranging from \$12,000 to over \$900,000 per school based on SFI calculations, with part of these amounts paid into school bank accounts and the rest allocated to staffing budgets.

2.2.3.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

In 2025, 2,449 ACT public school students identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (4.9% of the student population), an increase of 64 from August 2024 (Education Directorate (ACT), 2025c). 138 students were enrolled in Koori Preschool programs. According to federal government data, the ACT has the second lowest percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in public schools, second only to Victoria (Productivity Commission, 2026).

Jervis Bay School is part of the ACT public school system. Located near Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Lands, 77% of students identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Jervis Bay School is resourced by the Australian Government according to federal formulas so is not a focus of this Review. The school is still part of the ACT system, however, and students, families and staff are part of the ACT public school community.

Under the SRA, schools receive a cultural integrity allocation which partially supports whole-school cultural integrity uplift and learning, consisting of \$3,060 per school. Additionally, in 2025, \$590,955 was allocated to schools according to the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled and their year levels. Indigenous Education Officers who can work directly with students are also placed across 13 schools (equivalent to 9.8 full-time positions), and there are other initiatives managed centrally that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families.

2.2.3.4 Students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect

Students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) represent a large and rapidly growing cohort within the ACT public school system. Central office data shows that, between 2017 and 2025, total EAL/D enrolments increased from 15.8% to 21.3% of the K–12 student population. Based on students' assessed level of English, schools receive a small amount of funding to support the needs of some EAL/D students. The percentage of funded students has also increased over time, from 10.3% in 2017 to 14.9% in 2025.

EAL/D students are unevenly distributed across the ACT, resulting in significant localised pressure on some schools. In 2025, EAL/D students accounted for around 35% of enrolments in North Gungahlin, compared with approximately 7.5% in Tuggeranong.

Under the SRS, students from a language background other than English and for whom at least one parent has completed schooling only to year 9 equivalent (or below) attract a loading of 10% of the base allocation (in 2025, \$1,399.10 for primary students and \$1,758.20 for secondary students). This recognises these students may require additional support to access the curriculum. In the ACT, the SRA includes a loading for EAL/D students at earlier levels of English learning, regardless of their parents' education levels. Central office data shows that, in 2025, \$7.5 million was distributed to schools for EAL/D students under the SRA.

The ACT public school system offers 6 Introductory English Centres, which operate within separate facilities in mainstream schools to provide intensive English language support for newly arrived students (Education Directorate (ACT), 2025e). These centres are funded through the SOA and primarily teach students assessed at the 'beginning' level of English language proficiency. Students typically attend an Introductory English Centre on a full-time basis for up to 2 terms (primary students) or 3 terms (secondary students) before transitioning into classroom settings at their local school.

2.2.4 Other funding sources

2.2.4.1 Private income sources

In addition to the SRA and SOA, ACT public schools can access a limited range of additional funding sources. The ability to access funds from these sources varies greatly between schools due to differences in community capacity, school size and local contexts.

Some funding sources can supplement school budgets. These include:

- inviting voluntary contributions from families – some of which may be tax deductible
- fees charged for the hire of school facilities by the community (noting the cost of maintaining these facilities may mean the net income generated is minimal)
- philanthropic or sponsorship arrangements (subject to Education Directorate policies)
- funds raised by Parents and Citizens Associations (P&Cs) or in-kind contributions from P&Cs.

Other funding sources go partway to covering costs already incurred by the school. These include:

- subject levies, such as for a food technology or science course (noting students cannot be excluded from classes if these are not paid)
- family payments for excursions and camps (noting where these activities are core to the curriculum, students cannot be excluded from attending).

As a result, variation in school communities and approaches to raising additional income translates into varied income-generating capacity across the system.

2.2.4.2 International students

ACT public schools enrol international students, including students on a Student Visa (subclass 500) and dependents of temporary residents, with tuition fees applying depending on visa status and eligibility for exemptions or waivers. Central office data shows that in late 2025, this cohort included around 300 Student Visa (subclass 500) students and 584 dependants of temporary residents, of whom 118 were enrolled under full or partial fee waivers, with these enrolments concentrated in a small number of schools.

On average, approximately 60% of tuition fees collected from international students is returned to schools through the SRA to support curriculum delivery, targeted learning assistance and staffing costs. Where international students are fee-exempt or granted fee waivers under national-level agreements, or in financial hardship or compassionate circumstances, no alternative funding is

provided to local schools, and costs must be absorbed within existing allocations. This impacts schools differently, depending on enrolment patterns and concentrations of fee-waived students.

3 Consultation

3.1 About the consultation process

The Panel undertook a consultation process established under the Terms of Reference, engaging with an Advisory Group, school leaders and business managers, students, central office representatives, education researchers and experts, and the wider ACT community. The Panel paired analysis of internal data and briefings with consultation findings to build a picture of the system, its strengths and the changes needed. Comparisons with other public and non-government school systems in Australia further supported the Panel to develop findings and recommendations.

This chapter summarises the consultation process and some key themes identified. More detail about consultation activities is at [Appendix B](#).

3.2 Advisory Group

The Terms of Reference established an Advisory Group comprising representatives of unions, parents and carers, principals, business managers, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and other ACT Government directorates.

The Panel met with the Advisory Group 3 times over the course of the Review, with a focus on understanding key issues of interest and sharing information about the Panel's progress. Panel members also met individually with each of the Advisory Group members, sometimes on multiple occasions, to explore matters relevant to them in more depth. Many members also provided input via written submissions.

3.3 Schools

Hearing directly from ACT public schools was a priority for the Panel. Principals, business managers and other school leaders from 62 of 93 schools engaged directly with the Panel between October and December 2025. Principals and business managers from all schools were invited to one of 10 focus group sessions, held in schools and grouped by school type (primary, combined, specialist, etc). At these sessions, leaders discussed strengths and areas for improvement in the system.

The Panel also held dedicated meetings and/or site visits with leaders from 10 schools across the spectrum of school types. A list of all schools engaged is at [Appendix B](#).

3.4 Students

Students are at the centre of the ACT public school system. To understand their perspective, the Panel consulted with students at Kaleen Primary School, University of Canberra High School Kaleen and UC Senior Secondary College Lake Ginninderra. Together, these schools represent a local P–12 pathway within the ACT public system.

Students discussed their priorities for resourcing based on their experiences of the public school system. Student perspectives on how funding should be prioritised between these areas is shown in Figure 5.

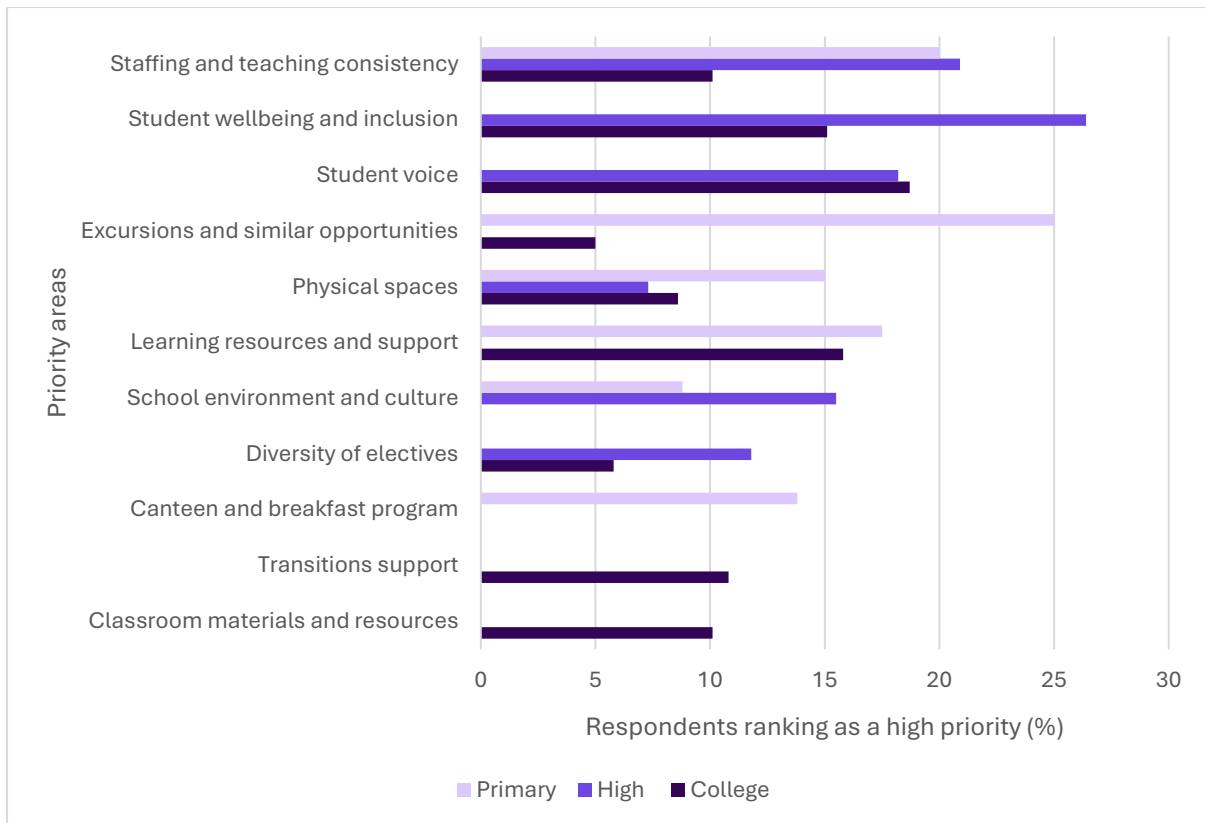


Figure 5: Student priorities for school funding (consultation data)

3.5 Survey

On 24 November 2025, the Panel released a consultation paper calling for public input either through an online survey or by making a submission. The survey asked respondents to consider how to balance school autonomy and system consistency, potential cost drivers, the priorities for the system, examples of innovation and good practice, and the role of private funding sources in the public system. The survey closed on 17 December 2025 and 93 respondents engaged. The distribution of respondents is shown in Figure 6 (note: respondents could select multiple options, so percentages add to more than 100%).

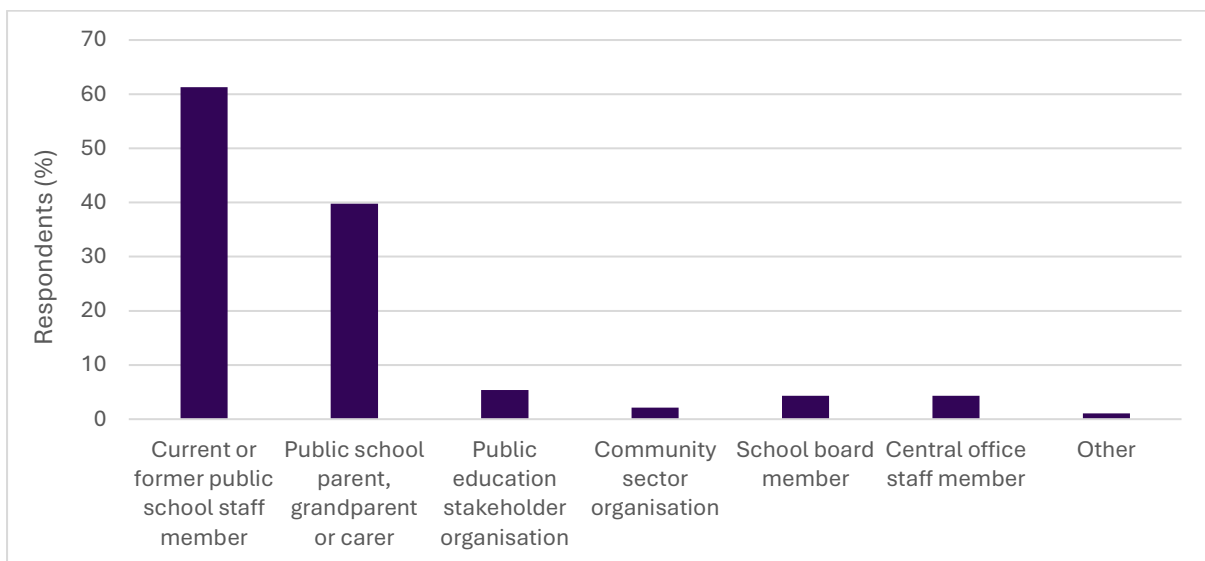


Figure 6: Survey respondent breakdown (consultation data)

3.6 Submissions

Alongside the survey, 32 written submissions were received in response to the consultation paper, allowing stakeholders to provide more detailed information and recommendations to the Panel. The distribution of submission authors is shown in Figure 7.

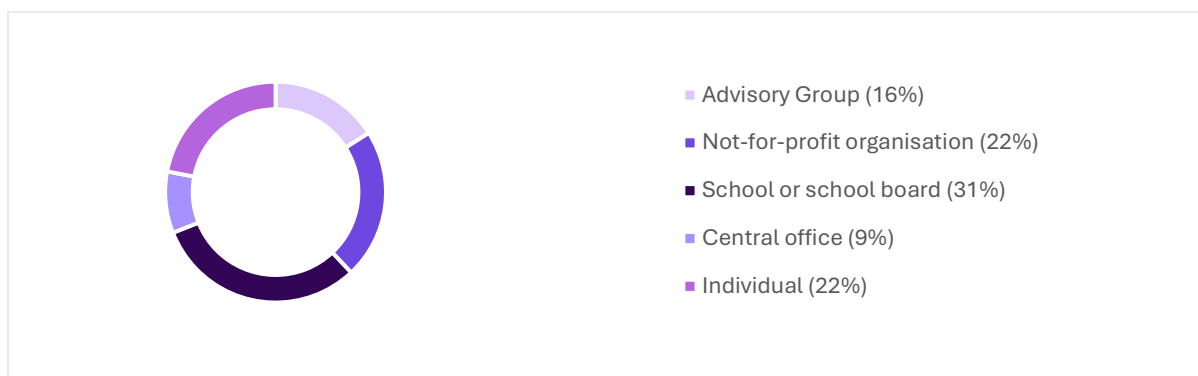


Figure 7: Author breakdown (consultation data)

3.7 Key themes from consultation

Throughout consultation, participants consistently raised a set of issues that underpin the findings and recommendations of this report. These themes are summarised below.

3.7.1 Understanding key cost drivers

Across all consultation groups, key challenges emerged as major cost drivers facing the system, with impacts on both system effectiveness and equity. These insights directly informed the analysis in *Chapter 4: Cost drivers*.

Survey responses, submissions and discussions with Advisory Group stakeholders highlighted key issues such as student complexity, infrastructure costs and staffing challenges. Consultation with schools provided further insight into how these pressures affect day-to-day decision making by principals and school leaders.

Staffing emerged as a particularly strong theme in student consultation, with students emphasising the importance of staff quality, stability and continuity to their experience of schooling.

3.7.2 Operating model

Consultation participants offered varied insights about the key principles needed for a system operating model. There was strong support for a coherent ‘one system’ approach to educational leadership, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and reporting, and generally strong support for consistency across the system.

Student consultation grounded the Panel and this report in the core purpose of public education: supporting students to achieve positive outcomes both in learning and post-school pathways, and in wellbeing, personal development and connection to family and community.

Schools and the Advisory Group particularly highlighted the importance of workforce capability and strengthening business systems as enablers of effective system operation. Submissions and survey responses highlighted community priorities for public education including equity, inclusion and universal access. These issues are covered throughout the report, but especially in *Chapter 5: Operating model principles* and *Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model*.

3.7.3 Wraparound supports and cross-directorate collaboration

Student consultation emphasised wellbeing supports as a key priority. This was reinforced through submissions and survey responses calling for improved access to allied health and other support services within schools. An emerging theme was the importance of broader wraparound services for children and families in the community, and the potential to locate these on school sites as community hubs. This was underscored by the Panel's visit to Evatt Primary School which operates a model like this (as detailed in *Chapter 5: Operating model principles, Section 5.3.5*).

This theme also informed parts of *Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model*.

3.7.4 National and ACT funding implications

From the beginning of the consultation process, stakeholders highlighted that this Review should consider not only how existing funding is managed within the ACT, but also broader resourcing questions including national funding settings. These considerations are reflected throughout the report, particularly in *Chapter 7: Resource allocation methodology*.

4 Cost drivers

4.1 Chapter overview

The Terms of Reference for this Review highlighted that most ACT public schools were not on track to remain within their 2025 budget allocations, signalling the need to better understand the cost drivers shaping school budgets. In response, the Panel examined the operating context of schools, opportunities to strengthen budget management, and the costs associated with delivering public education.

This chapter analyses the key cost drivers currently impacting the school system, drawing on central office data and consultation with schools and stakeholders. It identifies 4 primary cost drivers:

- Increasing complexity of student needs
- Staff-related pressures
- Infrastructure and facilities management challenges
- Viability pressures for small schools and offsite preschools.

Stakeholders consistently emphasised the urgency and inevitability of dealing with these issues. While this chapter focuses on factual analysis, current and recommended responses to these cost drivers can be found throughout *Chapter 5: Operating model principles* and *Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model*.

4.2 Increasing complexity of student needs

Student needs are growing increasingly complex across the system, including through rising rates of students with disability, greater need for tiered learning supports and growing populations with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D). This complexity has been compounded by the impacts of COVID-19, ongoing cost-of-living pressures and broader social challenges affecting children and families.

4.2.1 Students with disability

The Panel heard from many schools and stakeholders that both the quantum and level of complexity in the student population are increasing significantly and this is a major driver of costs. Some of this is documented through the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD).

‘Every principal in the ACT reports that student need complexity has increased over the past three years.’

AEU submission

From 2020 to 2024, growth in the NCCD cohort was higher in government schools than non-government schools, particularly at the highest levels of adjustment (Productivity Commission, 2026). Challenges in data gathering (discussed in detail in Chapter 6) mean it is likely public schools in the ACT are under-assessing or under-reporting the true extent of the educational adjustments required for students with disability in comparison with non-government schools and other government school systems.

Noting this data limitation, Education Directorate data shows that in 2025, 25.1% of K–12 students in ACT public schools were assessed as requiring a level of adjustment under the NCCD, with 16.9% of students categorised into the 3 funded levels. This has increased from 19.9% and 12.8% respectively in 2022, as shown in Figure 8, which also details the average rates across all Australian public schools from 2022 to 2024 (note: 2025 data is not yet available for all Australian public schools).

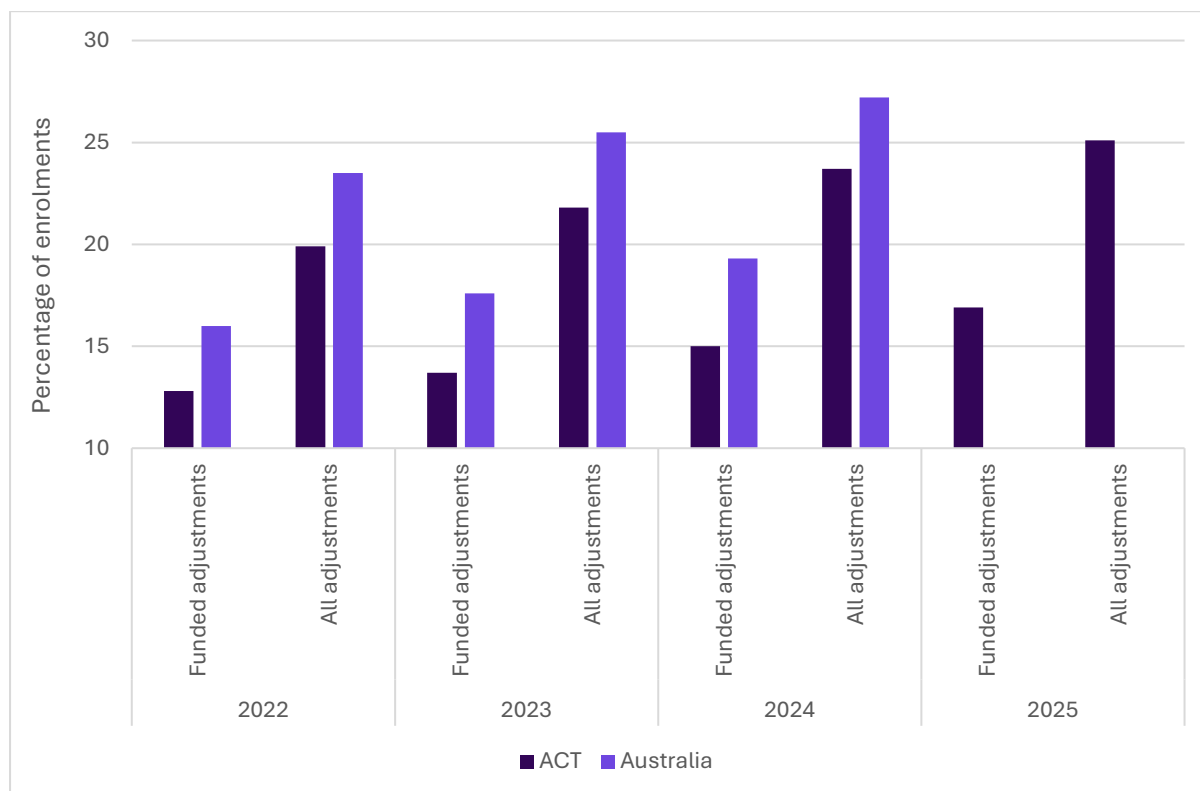


Figure 8: Comparison of NCCD data from ACT public schools (central office data) and Australian public schools (Productivity Commission, 2026), 2022–25

Finding: Students with disability represent a growing (and likely underreported) proportion of ACT public school students.

In recent years, the system’s approach to including students with disability has also shifted (Education Directorate (ACT), 2023). Every child can now attend their local school, where previously specialised inclusion programs and disability support units operated in a subset of local schools. Greater inclusion across 93 schools comes with costs that may exceed schools allocated budgets – including, for example, timely finalisation of modifications, purchasing of new equipment or hiring new specialised staff to support specific needs.

‘When asked the question ‘Are there students with disability at your school who you have to assist using funds from other areas of your budget because they are ineligible for targeted government funding or the amount you receive is inadequate?’, three quarters of ACT principals said yes.’

AEU submission

During consultation, all school leaders and teachers were supportive of inclusive education and wanted to meet the needs of all students at their local school. However, to do this effectively,

schools require sufficient resources, including access to specialist training for teachers and support staff (including Learning Support Assistants [LSAs]) and flexible funding for capital works that support appropriate facilities and access across school campuses.

Finding: Inclusive education practices promote equity and are an important goal for the system. The policy and practices have significant resourcing implications which must be acknowledged and understood.

Recognising increasing student needs as a significant cost driver for the system, *Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model* details evidence-based, system-wide approaches that can help support these students. *Chapter 7: Resource allocation methodology* also explores options to better support these needs through the funding allocation framework.

4.2.2 Cost of providing additional supports

While schools are committed to meeting the needs of all students, the increasing requirement for additional and intensive supports is contributing to growing cost pressures across the system. Many stakeholders noted that embedding multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), including adequate Tier 2 (targeted intervention with small groups) and Tier 3 (intensive individual intervention) supports, will require careful development, time and significant, ongoing resourcing beyond what schools already receive to ensure consistency across the system.

However, it should be noted that improving the quality of Tier 1 (universal) wellbeing, behaviour and academic strategies and supports will reduce the need for Tiers 2 and 3, thereby decreasing the costs of delivering more intensive levels of support. To improve the Tier 1 offerings across schools will require at least some initial investment from the system and schools, including through quality curriculum and resources, professional learning and coaching.

During consultation, stakeholders referred to Strong Foundations as an example of an MTSS which has broad support for uptake at the school level, but an insufficient allocation of resources to do so effectively.

‘While these programs [Inclusive Education Strategy and Strong Foundations] promise great benefit to government school students, they will also require a substantial expansion in the resources allocated to schools if they are to be delivered effectively. As an example, the Strong Foundations program recommends both an increase in the use of assessment and diagnostic tools as well as the rollout of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) in every school. Implementing these two recommendations alone will require significant new resources [...]

Submission, school board member

Finding: Supporting students with additional needs and providing tiered interventions through the multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) model is a cost driver that needs to be better understood and supported.

4.2.3 Increase in proportion of students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect

Students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) represent a large and rapidly growing cohort in ACT public schools, with central office data showing enrolments of funded EAL/D students increased 37% from 2017 to 2025. Growth has been unevenly distributed across the ACT, creating significant localised pressure on schools in high-growth areas.

Despite the large increases in the number of students needing additional support, EAL/D resourcing has increased only modestly, with total funding rising by approximately 19% between 2017 and 2025, which is less than the increase in inflation during the same period (ATO, 2025).

This has resulted in a decline in real funding over time for this cohort of students, even without the large increase in the size of the cohort, placing pressure on school budgets and the amount of support that can be offered to these students. It also places increasing pressure on EAL/D staffing. Over the long term, there has been a very large rise in the EAL/D student to teacher ratio in ACT public schools, from approximately 38:1 in 1999 to around 135:1 in 2025.

Central office staff report schools have identified budget pressures are directly affecting support for EAL/D students. For example, schools report EAL/D teachers are frequently taken off classes to cover mainstream classes when other teachers are absent, limiting their capacity to provide targeted language instruction. In 2025, central office data indicated that one in 5 schools did not have an EAL/D teacher in place to deliver an EAL/D program, resulting in responsibilities often falling to school leaders who are not specialists in this area and have many other competing responsibilities.

Schools are also facing cost pressures emerging from the rapid increase in fee-exempt EAL/D students, particularly children of skilled migrant visa holders, for whom the Directorate and schools do not receive funding. The arrangements for fee-exempt students are set by intergovernmental agreements outside of the control of the Education Directorate, which means the ACT public school system must meet the needs of these students without receiving funding for them. While specialist supports such as Introductory English Centres play an important role for newly arrived students, the overall growth and concentration of EAL/D need is increasingly being absorbed by schools, making EAL/D a significant and growing cost driver within the system.

Finding: There has been growth in students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) without commensurate growth in funding.

Options to respond to EAL/D student need through funding adjustments are discussed in *Chapter 7: Resource allocation methodology*.

4.3 Workforce pressures

4.3.1 High costs of staffing in the ACT

Staffing costs in the ACT are higher than in many other jurisdictions, reflecting comparatively higher salary levels and employment conditions in the ACT (NSRB, 2024; Patel, 2025). While competitive remuneration supports attraction and retention, it also means staffing profiles and workforce conditions have a proportionally larger impact on school budgets.

Although outside the scope of this Review, changes to industrial relations settings have contributed to significant recurrent cost pressures. School costs can increase because of efforts to adhere to class size policies, and reforms that have expanded the use of permanent appointments rather than short term contracts, particularly for LSAs. No recommendations will be made in relation to

industrial legislation. However, the system will need to balance these impacts against the constraints of a defined funding envelope.

As in all jurisdictions, staff remuneration represents the largest single component of school expenditure (around 93%). Cost pressures are not solely a function of total pay levels or total numbers of staff employed, but emerge from the interaction between staffing allocations, student needs, workforce availability and program requirements.

‘The primary cost for public education is ensuring schools are staffed by high-quality, professional teachers, who are well supported to do their job. As wages increase to rightly ensure teachers are appropriately remunerated, overall staffing appropriations from the ACT Budget must also increase to match this.’

Submission, school board member

Finding: Staffing represents the single largest cost to the system, and growth in staff costs therefore impacts the budget more than any other factor.

4.3.2 Overallocation of staff across the system, and uneven distribution of staff

Consultation highlighted a disconnect between school-level experience and system data on overall staffing sufficiency. Many schools reported difficulty staffing classes, and many stakeholders noted these shortages were distributed inequitably across the system, with the most shortages being reported by typically hard-to-staff schools. Hard-to-staff schools tend to be in areas experiencing higher socio-educational disadvantage, so for these schools the staffing challenges further compound other issues.

‘Parents described a system in which some schools can offer music, languages, specialist sports and academic extension, while others struggle to maintain stable staffing and consistent teaching.’

ACT Parents submission

This experience at the school level sits in tension with central office data that suggests overall staffing levels with the ACT system are sufficient, and in the case of some schools, above the indicative allocation as part of the Student Resource Allocation (SRA). Internal data points to about 120 full-time equivalent positions above the level of recurrent funding for staff in 2025, but this has not consistently translated into reduced pressure at the school level, particularly in schools in more socio-educationally disadvantaged areas.

Finding: Overallocation of staff across the system – beyond what is funded through the allocative model (Student Resource Allocation) or through specific additional budget allocation – is a significant cost driver and does not translate to equitable allocation of resources.

Colleges and high schools referred to difficulties in maintaining diverse curriculum offerings within existing staffing allocations, particularly where specialist teachers are essential. Schools reported

that staffing profiles did not always align with the specific needs of their cohorts or the number of classes to be delivered, which can differ from total enrolment figures. Funding allocations calculated against aggregate enrolment do not always account for subject combinations or timetable constraints, particularly in high school and college settings. In addition, staff were not always available or deployable in ways that addressed demands. For example, during consultation, principals and business managers expressed some concern about the mobility round, also known as the ‘transfer round’. They reflected that over time there has been a growing perception that use of the round can be ‘gamed’ and that it is no longer trusted as a pool of high-quality staff.

These challenges point to issues in workforce deployment and allocation methods, beyond simply the total number of staff employed.

4.3.3 Increases in staff leave

Rising levels of leave taken by school-based staff has emerged as a significant system-wide cost driver, putting pressure on school budgets through the cost and availability of finding replacement casual relief staff – or of ‘overstaffing’ a school at the start of the year to ensure excess staff are available to provide internal relief.

Central office data shows an increase in total personal and other leave usage from an average of 14 days per full-time school-based staff member before COVID-19, to an average of 17 to 18 days in recent years, after a spike in 2022–23 (which was influenced by staff taking leave for COVID-19), as shown in Figure 9. This increase in school-based staff leave creates a ‘double whammy’ challenge for schools to adequately cover personal leave absences and to engage cover (particularly casual relief teachers) where required. This impacts some school types more than others.

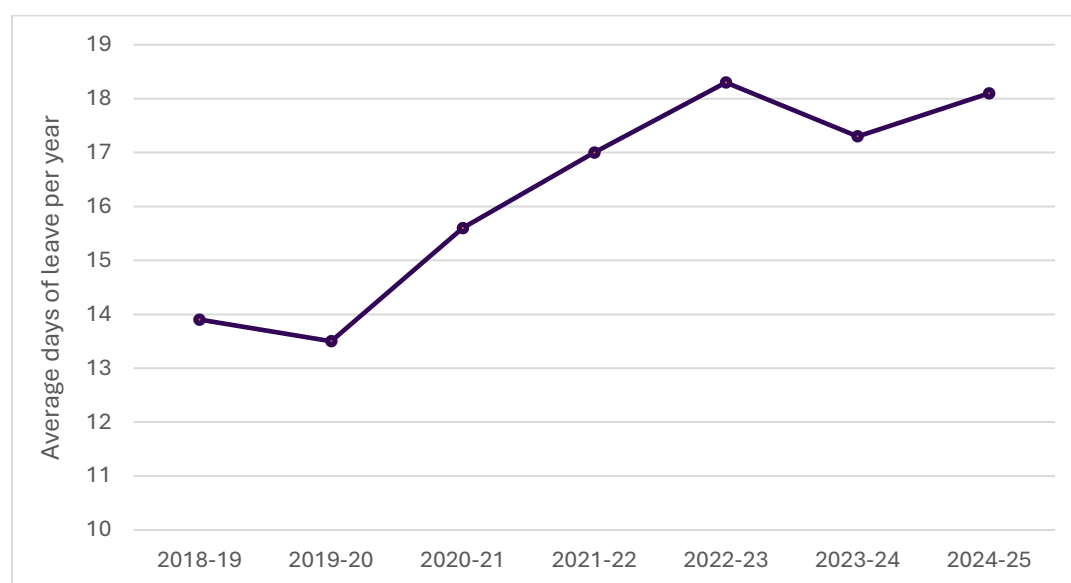


Figure 9: Average days of school-based staff leave per financial year, 2018–19 to 2024–25 (central office data)

A notable trend is that specialist school staff take more leave on average than other school types, which may be influenced by the additional pressures faced by staff in these schools (Fraser et al., 2024; Makri et al., 2025). This poses a further cost pressure for specialist schools, which already face significant other unique cost challenges (more on this in Chapter 7).

Schools suggested a variety of factors may be driving increased levels of personal leave usage, including changing attitudes to illness since COVID-19, workload, work intensity, staff burnout and changing perceptions of acceptable use of personal leave.

Where schools were able to source casual relief teachers to cover teacher leave, the funding amounts allocated to schools to cover these costs were reported to be inadequate. The allocation to schools for casual relief teachers is calculated as 70% of the cost of a teacher, multiplied by the total expected number of days of cover per year. However, schools and the central office both reported the expected days of cover are based on historical averages which are no longer representative of the reality (as shown in Figure 9).

Casual relief teacher allocations also need to cover teachers and staff who are absent for reasons other than personal leave, including attending camps, excursions, meetings and other school activities. The only time teacher leave costs are not deducted from a school's budget is if a teacher takes leave for more than 10 weeks during a calendar year. Schools reported regularly exceeding their casual relief budgets because of these factors.

'Our casual allocation [...] does not go close to covering the amount of personal leave our staff take throughout the year. We should be able to book casual replacements for any staff member who is on leave without being worried about our casual budget.'

Submission, public school staff member

Finding: Budgets for casual relief teachers are not keeping pace with actual patterns of personal leave usage.

A central issue raised through consultation was the widespread shortage and cost of casual relief teachers. Many schools reported difficulty securing casual relief staff, particularly in schools serving communities with high levels of socio-educational disadvantage, students with complex needs, students with cultural or linguistic diversity, and schools perceived to have difficult working conditions.

In schools with chronic staff shortages, the impact on students can be 'significant, including loss of specialist subjects for extended periods, reduced continuity of learning and increased stress for children and families' (ACT Parents submission). In the same submission, ACT Parents noted the impacts are greatest on students who already experience barriers to learning, and are most pronounced in the most socio-educationally disadvantaged parts of the ACT. Staffing consistency and quality was also the highest priority identified by students across all ages in consultation.

When unable to fund or find replacement teachers, schools reported relying on collapsed classes, supervision rather than teaching, reduced subject offerings or shortened teaching time. Primary schools face persistent challenges in covering staff absences due to the requirement for a teacher in every class, limiting the flexibility available to manage short-term staffing pressures compared with secondary settings.

Schools also described a reinforcing cycle in which insufficient access to relief staff increases workload for existing teachers, contributing to fatigue, reduced wellbeing and higher rates of absence, which in turn further increases demand for relief staffing.

Finding: Staff leave without adequate funding or available replacement staff puts further pressures on the workforce and school budgets.

4.3.4 Increase in Learning Support Assistants

Central office data shows the number of LSAs has increased substantially in recent years, growing 42% from 2020 to 2025, as shown in Figure 10. Teacher numbers have only seen a very small increase in the same period, reflective of the stable student enrolment numbers over this period. There have also been changes in industrial conditions in recent years that have seen an increase in the number of permanent staff in LSA roles.

The large increase in headcount reflects the system's use of LSAs in classrooms to respond to increasing student complexity, particularly in relation to behaviour management, disability support and student wellbeing (see *Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model* for more on this issue).

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Change 2021–2025
LSA headcount	795	832	971	1,063	1,127	+ 41.76%
Teacher headcount	3,968	3,923	3,897	3,978	4,009	+ 1.03%

Figure 10: Learning Support Assistant (LSA) and teacher headcount numbers, 2021–2025 (central office data)

Despite this increased level of resourcing, schools continue to report unmet student needs and ongoing pressure on staff. This raises questions about whether resources are being directed to the most effective mix of staffing, whether LSAs are adequately supported and trained to maximise their impact, and whether sufficient allied health and specialist expertise is available within the system.

Finding: Learning Support Assistant (LSA) costs represent a major component of total cost pressures in schools.

This issue is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6, including evidence that indicates strengthening systematic and explicit instruction, and whole school behaviour and MTSS approaches could reduce reliance on individualised LSA support over time.

4.3.5 School and system compliance

The Panel heard from many schools that increasing compliance requirements (and associated administrative workload) are a growing concern. These tasks increase workload for both administrative staff and educators. Some schools have chosen to hire additional staff to respond to this, while others describe staff wellbeing concerns due to overwork. Either way, this represents a significant current and future cost driver.

Stakeholders mentioned specific areas of concern, including medication management, risk assessments for camps and excursions, and adherence to early childhood education regulations.

‘Operational compliance further drives cost growth through expanding requirements across WHS [work health and safety], child safety, risk management, reporting, and data/reporting systems. These pressures place sustained financial and workload strain on schools, particularly where cost drivers sit outside local control yet must be absorbed within local fixed budgets.’

Submission, school board member

This issue is not unique to the ACT. An audit of administrative tasks in NSW identified 345 tasks completed by schools, with 105 of these tasks causing high workloads and 35 causing very high workloads (DoE (NSW), 2024). An independent review conducted in Victoria found administration and compliance activities significantly increased workload and stress on principals and school staff and suggested the department should reallocate some tasks and responsibilities to the central office to allow principals and schools to focus on teaching and learning (Roberts-Hull, 2025).

Finding: The workload generated by increasing regulatory and policy compliance on schools and the system as a whole is a cost driver due to its impacts on staffing, either through employment of more staff, or greater burden placed on existing staff.

4.4 Infrastructure and facilities

The age and condition of school infrastructure is an increasingly important cost and equity issue for the ACT public school system, particularly given the scale of legacy assets requiring maintenance and upgrade. Central office data shows 48% of school sites are more than 50 years old. More than two-thirds were built before self-government began in 1989. Ageing infrastructure is typically more expensive to maintain, particularly where facilities require upgrading to meet contemporary accessibility and inclusion standards.

Infrastructure and facilities investment for 2025–26 is allocated across:

- major upgrades and new public schools (delivered by Infrastructure Canberra, meaning funds are not managed by the Education Directorate): \$551.4 million combined total value committed as at 2025–26
- centrally managed repairs and maintenance: \$27.9 million
- asset renewal program (including modifications for inclusion of students with disability): \$30.1 million
- the Public Schools Heating and Cooling Fund (managed by Infrastructure Canberra): \$7.5 million
- repairs and maintenance managed by individual schools and allocated through the School Operational Allocation (SOA).

In recent years and with rising infrastructure costs across the board, the expense of upgrading facilities to ensure schools are accessible and inclusive to all students has been a significant cost driver. In 2019–20, the cost of infrastructure modifications for disability access was \$5.75 million and by 2024–25 it was nearly double that at \$11.3 million. In contrast, the total asset renewal budget for 2024–25 of \$29.8 million – which includes inclusive works as a sub-component – was only 41% more than in 2019–20. Inclusive works therefore represent a growing proportion of the total asset renewal budget.

As most stakeholders highlighted during consultation, these trends mean the asset management budget outside of inclusive works is increasingly limited and therefore triaged by priority of need. This means non-urgent maintenance may not be funded as more urgent issues take priority – but over time this increases costs as it leads to bigger, more expensive repairs.

The Panel notes broad stakeholder concern about the variation of age of infrastructure and facilities as an equity issue, given the divergent standards between recent capital works and existing legacy infrastructure.

‘Many ACT schools, particularly those housed in ageing infrastructure, face disproportionately higher costs in maintenance and utilities that are not adequately reflected in their budgets.’

ACT School Business Managers Association submission

School facilities are assessed on a 3-year cycle against the industry-standard Condition Grade Index, using a visual assessment methodology that focuses on the observable condition of electrical systems, surface finishes and mechanical infrastructure. In 2025, 43 of the 173 Directorate-managed facilities (note: preschool sites are counted independently) were assessed and all were found to be in ‘good’ or ‘very good’ condition. While this assessment suggests most school sites remain technically safe, the Panel also acknowledges they may not necessarily be fit for purpose for contemporary teaching and learning environments and/or align with community expectations around the aesthetic and contemporary presentation of schools. As various school leaders observed during consultation, facilities and infrastructure can influence school choice and enrolments in public schools versus other sectors.

Finding: The ACT public school system includes ageing, legacy infrastructure that drives system infrastructure costs and, in some cases, is nearing end of life.

The Panel notes there is currently a large workload placed on schools in the management of facilities. This includes planning for and funding regular, cyclical maintenance (such as contracting the painting of building interiors or replacing floor coverings). This adds to the workload of principals and may be more effectively managed through a coordinated approach in the central office. This is especially the case in a small geographic jurisdiction such as the ACT, where contractors can be engaged to conduct the work across all schools or large groups of schools that are located within geographic proximity. This approach would require development of a regular, planned maintenance schedule, combined with an appropriate yearly funding arrangement.

Centrally coordinated cyclical maintenance has the potential to reduce disparities in facility quality across public schools while minimising the need for unexpected, emergency maintenance or large-scale upgrades over time.

Finding: It is costly and burdensome on schools to individually coordinate and manage planned school repairs and maintenance, including cyclical maintenance.

This issue is discussed in greater detail in *Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model*, including suggested recommendations for how to address stakeholder concerns.

4.5 Viability pressures for small schools and offsite preschools

As the ACT’s population shifts to growth areas in Gungahlin, West Belconnen and Molonglo, where new schools are being built to respond to demand, some more established areas (e.g. Tuggeranong) are seeing a decline in enrolments. Small schools experience cost pressures as fixed operating costs become harder to sustain with lower enrolments, and schools cannot realise economies of scale. These high overhead costs include both teaching and administration and support staffing, infrastructure and facilities management, and operational costs such as utilities.

There is a mechanism within the SRA that aims to buffer schools against decreasing enrolments, with supplemental funds provided and the school then developing a plan to address the changing context over time. However, enrolment trends are often outside the control of schools and represent broader demographic shifts – meaning the school may not be able to reverse this trend over time.

Offsite preschools present a similar challenge as small schools, with significant overheads beyond those of the main school campus, but only a small number of additional children and limited funding. These sites often have limited enrolments (and may not deliver a service every year) but have high staffing costs due to legislated staff to child ratios and the need for additional staff travel from the main site to provide lunch break coverage and support students with toileting and other needs. Some of these sites also have higher compliance and management costs, due to the age and condition of the facilities. The cost-effectiveness of maintaining all offsite preschool facilities into the future may need to be considered, to ensure all children are offered a high-quality, equitable and cost-effective preschool experience.

Finding: Small schools create disproportionate cost pressures on the system.

In consultation, many schools and some stakeholders called for a minimum administrative staffing structure to be funded, regardless of school size, particularly in the context of increasing regulatory, safeguarding, reporting and administrative needs. In some cases, this advocacy sought a minimum staffing guarantee.

Baseline staffing costs are a component of the SRA, with each school receiving a base amount that ‘represents the minimum allocation that is required to open a school’ (Education Directorate (ACT), 2025g, p. 5). These amounts¹ are intended to account for the fixed costs of operating a school, such as a principal, business manager, and – depending on school type – a certain number of administrative staff. From consultation, it appears this component of the SRA is not transparent to school leaders.

Finding: Minimum staffing requirements to meet all regulatory, compliance and administrative obligations will continue to be a more significant cost driver for small schools and offsite preschools.

4.6 Chapter summary: Many of the cost drivers require improved operational system performance

This chapter summarised the cost drivers identified by the Panel that place pressure on school budgets – and by extension, the system budget. The most significant cost drivers relate to increasing student complexity, staffing pressures, school infrastructure and pressures from small schools and offsite preschools.

The cost drivers are interconnected. As student need has become more complex, schools are increasingly required to provide additional staffing and new infrastructure – and the higher complexity of the work can drive up leave usage which in turn increases staffing costs. These pressures interact cumulatively, contributing to sustained and compounding financial pressure for

¹ In 2025, these amounts were \$622,800 for early childhood schools under 80 students; \$832,216 for early childhood schools over 80 students, all primary schools, high schools and colleges; and \$1,218,792 for combined schools.

the system over time. The system has historically operated with low consistency and high levels of responsibility placed on schools, which has resulted in duplication of functions across the current 93 schools in the ACT, low visibility of emerging issues for strategic planning purposes, and reduced capacity to manage cost pressures in a coordinated, system-wide way.

Finding: Many of the identified cost drivers are downstream issues of the need to improve system coordination and operational supports for schools. The response cannot simply be for schools to access additional funds. The priority is to strengthen the way the system operates as an important part of responding strategically to the financial pressures and to reprioritise the use of existing resources as a first response.

A more coordinated system approach is needed that supports schools to focus on high quality teaching and learning, effective whole school practices and the wellbeing of students and staff. Strengthening the way the system operates and supports schools is an important part of responding to the financial pressures outlined in this chapter.

Considering these converging cost pressures on schools, there is a need for operational improvements across the whole system, which can make teachers' and leaders' jobs easier and more sustainable. System-level changes are outlined in *Chapter 5: Operating model principles* and *Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model*.

5 Operating model principles

5.1 Chapter overview

The Terms of Reference ask the Panel to provide an operating model for a high-performing small public education system, including functions and responsibilities that are best delivered at system level and school level. This chapter finds that greater system coordination is required to deliver equity, consistency and sustainability, and recommends 6 core principles that should underpin the future design of an operating model that strengthens central support, better aligns roles and enables schools to focus on teaching, learning, curriculum rollout, assessment and reporting.

The Panel identified that the following 6 principles are essential for a high-performing public education system:

1. A shared vision and leadership for a coordinated public education system
2. Clear allocation of responsibilities between the central office and schools
3. A capable, effectively and equitably-deployed and supported workforce
4. Transparent resourcing, clear accountability and effective communication
5. Stronger integration across government, particularly with health and community services
6. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination embedded across the system.

Adopted together, these principles should underpin an operating model that improves equity, effectiveness and consistency across the system, supports sustainable use of resources and allows schools to concentrate on their core work of teaching and learning.

5.2 Importance of a well-defined system operating model

ACT families expect their children will receive a similar educational experience no matter which public school they attend. The only way to achieve this is through a clear operating model which stipulates specific elements that must be consistent across the system. To achieve this, the entire public-school apparatus – both schools and the central office – need to work together as one system under a single, integrated operating model.

Recent reforms, including the Inclusive Education Strategy and Strong Foundations signal a deliberate shift towards greater consistency, coherence and equity across the system; a change that will require development of a new operating model.

This Review provides a foundation for those reforms by ensuring school resourcing reflects the reorientation towards a more systematic, consistent, coherent and evidence-based approach. Under these new directions, there should be a focus on maximising central support from the system and minimising administrative burden on schools.

Despite the increasing need for coordination across the ACT public education system, a clearly defined operating model has not been articulated. This means there is ambiguity within the system about the functions that need to be delivered, and the different roles of schools and the central office.

An operating model is a framework that guides how a system functions to achieve its strategic goals. Operating models are used across many professional sectors and look different depending on the needs of the organisation (Galbraith et al., 2002; Kakabadse et al., 2011; Warren, 2021). At a high

level, they define the key functions of the organisation, who needs to deliver those functions and how they will be delivered – all to achieve a shared goal.

Finding: The system does not have a clearly articulated, contemporary operating model that meets the needs of individual schools and the system as a whole.

Recommendation 1

The public education system in the ACT should shift from a historically more autonomous schooling system to one which emphasises a single public education system. The new operating model should deliver unity, consistency and coordination.

5.3 Six principles to guide the future operating model

The Panel proposes the 6 principles below which should underpin the future operating model that the Education Directorate will need to develop.

5.3.1 Principle 1: Shared vision and leadership for one public education system

The ACT's small public education system should operate as a unified entity, working towards a shared vision clearly articulated by its leaders, and centred always around students and their families.

5.3.1.1 System unity and coordination

What are the issues?

When asked about the strengths of the system, schools repeatedly told the Panel that the ACT's small size is a unique strength. Both the number of schools and geographic span of this system are small by Australian standards. Participants described how much they value the networks this fosters with colleagues, the opportunities to innovate and share ideas, and the fact that it has historically been easy to 'pick up the phone' and speak to a trusted colleague when a problem needs to be solved.

However, across consultation, the Panel also heard this strength is becoming less salient. Instead, there is a growing sense of 'us versus them' between schools and the central office. The Panel also observed that the system has set schools up to operate much like independent small businesses, rather than in a coordinated and cooperative way. The unity of the system is declining, with schools and the central office alike describing a growing disconnect, noting that the previously strong culture of informal communication and 'picking up the phone' is diminishing.

Stakeholders reported that new initiatives are often introduced without sufficient coordination, sequencing or consideration of their impact on schools, making it difficult to determine priorities. They also reported a recurring gap between the ambition of announced reforms and the resources provided to implement them.

Furthermore, schools reported that the growing number of policies and regulations they must comply with is draining their capacity for innovation and distracting from focusing on core educational services of teaching, learning and student wellbeing. As the AEU (2025, p. 7) notes, 'teachers and school leaders generally want to prioritise activities directly related to teaching and

learning, such as planning and delivering lessons,’ with time spent on administrative and compliance tasks detracting from this core work.

What does the data and research tell us?

High-performing school systems operate in a coordinated way (NCEE, 2020), an approach the ACT is well-placed to implement given its size and capacity. The recent introduction of Strong Foundations (Education Directorate (ACT), 2024) means it is even more essential for the system to operate as one entity, because consistent, coordinated practices are essential to implement system-wide curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting on literacy and numeracy education.

Strong Foundations represents a significant shift from the ACT’s historically autonomous model, under which schools (apart from colleges) have largely been responsible for most aspects of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. There are many benefits to being part of a system where curriculum, assessment, instructional practices and professional learning are consistent and aligned to evidence-based practice. These include consistency in core teaching and learning practices aligned to evidence, more efficient delivery of system-level functions at scale and reduced duplication arising from schools ‘reinventing the wheel’.

The existing ACT public college system is an example of this system-wide approach already working well in practice. Curriculum and assessment are centrally guided by the Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) across public and non-government schools, moderated across the system to ensure consistency and producing excellent results. This has long been one of many examples of excellence, innovation and world-leading practice across the system, contributing to enrolment demand for colleges across the ACT.

In the current education landscape, schools are increasingly taking on responsibility for a growing range of administrative and business operational functions. A system-wide consistent approach creates the ability to shift the burden of these responsibilities more towards the central office. Doing so can help schools focus on their core business of helping students learn, thus giving them more ability to innovate and tailor their approaches in the functions that matter most to them and their students.

‘In a small jurisdiction like the ACT, system-level coordination should be a strength. Central office should provide the structures, staffing models, and specialist supports that ensure consistency, effectiveness and efficiency in schools across the Territory.’

ACT Parents submission

Finding: Operating as one consistent, coordinated public school system can benefit all parties involved across schools and the central office.

A shift towards consistency starts with a shared understanding of what the public education system is seeking to achieve. This enables everyone within the system to see how their role contributes to that objective, and to see themselves as part of a larger organisation with responsibility for stewarding the system toward that vision.

Finding: To enable an excellent, equitable and sustainable public education system, the Education Directorate’s leaders should strengthen commitment to a clear vision for public education in the ACT.

A vision must be supported by leaders through coherent, consistent policies and practices across the organisation (Lind et al., 2026). Leaders across the system need to work together to promulgate the vision and drive change (Cairney & Toomey, 2025). Involving system leaders – both school- and centrally-based – in decision making is an opportunity to solidify their engagement with the system vision, and to leverage their expertise in strategising how to achieve it.

Decision-making forums, such as principal meetings which also include central office executives, provide important opportunities for discussion and debate on the directions of the organisation. These meetings should encourage input and constructive debate from principals, who are important leaders within the organisation. Importantly, once a decision is taken, the issue must be closed until such time as a scheduled review or evaluation cycle arises.

Finding: A shared vision will be supported by greater involvement of principals in the strategic decision-making of the system.

A key role for the organisation’s senior leadership is to translate the shared vision into a concise set of strategic objectives. This supports prioritisation: enabling the system to focus on a limited number of objectives which must then be appropriately and transparently resourced both in schools and centrally. Ad hoc initiatives often arise when strategic priorities are not clearly defined – and, throughout the Panel’s consultation, schools reflected that this creates both uncertainty and additional workload burden.

Stakeholders across the system told the Panel that evidence-based initiatives and reforms have high levels of commitment, and that they are eager to implement them if supported by transparent and adequate resourcing.

‘Develop and document an integrated planning and budgeting framework that clearly demonstrates how strategic plans and initiatives for ACT public schools are resourced.’

AEU submission recommendation

Finding: The organisation has been attempting to achieve too many objectives which are at times inconsistent. Prioritising a limited number of key strategic initiatives, and resourcing these appropriately and transparently, will drive commitment to the shared vision and deliver more meaningful outcomes.

In such a small system, all schools should be able to reach the central office and receive a timely, high-quality service response. The Panel observed the central office structure to be at times duplicative and difficult to navigate. It appears this reflects a legacy of new elements being added to the structure when new initiatives are introduced. The complexity of the structure impacts schools’ ability to reach into the central office when they need support or guidance.

Finding: For a small system, the structure is overly complex for schools to navigate, and it is difficult to see clear lines of accountability for functions. It is necessary to have clearer points of contact for schools to resolve emerging issues.

To address this complexity for schools requires a ‘no wrong door’ approach: i.e. whoever is the point of contact will take responsibility for finding the answer, even if it is not their core business. To build on the ACT’s strength as a small system, the central office should adopt a client-centric attitude to supporting schools. In addition to the ‘no wrong door’ approach, there is also opportunity to create more ‘front door’ services for schools to interface with. These are central points of contact, with the specific function of coordinating other parts of the central office to answer questions and resolve issues.

Case study: Business Manager Front Door

Established in 2022, the Business Improvement and Support team in the central office delivers a dedicated help desk service (‘the Business Manager Front Door’) and provides centralised resources for Business Managers, Principals, and the central office on school business operations.

The team aims to acknowledge all requests within 24 hours and is staffed by experienced Business Managers who describe the service as ‘where to go when you don’t know where to go.’ They respond to enquiries directly or connect schools with the appropriate specialist areas. A significant part of their role involves coordinating information and actions across central office to ensure schools receive timely, accurate support.

Over 5,500 interactions were recorded by the team in 2025, covering a full range of operational areas such as human resources, policy and governance, work health and safety, travel, digital and facilities.

Feedback about the Business Improvement and Support service is overwhelmingly positive. Schools, especially Business Managers, told the Panel repeatedly about how helpful they find it.

Finding: To some extent both approaches of ‘front door’ (specific interfaces for schools to connect with) and ‘no wrong door’ (whoever is the point of contact will take responsibility for finding the answer) are present within the system but could be better articulated and strengthened.

Recommendation 2

The organisational strategy, culture and structure should be realigned to reflect that all staff are part of one system. It should:

- prioritise a narrower set of key strategies with appropriate resourcing and transparency
- strengthen central support to schools and review funding allocations to ensure effective delivery
- enable schools to more easily navigate the central office and reduce duplication
- ensure active involvement from schools on the issues affecting the whole system.

5.3.1.2 Small size constraints for the ACT

While the ACT system's small size is a strength when it comes to opportunities for coordination and consistency, the size of the system also means it faces high overhead costs and challenges in realising economies of scale. Much like the pressures facing small schools discussed earlier in *Chapter 4: Cost drivers*, the ACT system and central office require minimum staffing to support certain functions (e.g. policy support for national education department forums) even though these represent a disproportionate cost to the ACT compared to larger jurisdictions.

These pressures mean it is imperative for the system to prioritise, streamline activities and collaborate with other jurisdictions (and national bodies such as the Australian Education Research Organisation) to avoid duplicating efforts where possible. In a small system, there is less capacity for unnecessary or burdensome activities, as these directly detract from other priorities.

This applies particularly to the development of frameworks, policies, materials and procedures. The creation of new material, for example, requires a major outlay of resources across research, planning, drafting, editing and testing. If materials that meet ACT standards already exist elsewhere in Australia, then significant time and cost savings can be realised by leveraging those existing materials rather than developing new ones.

Finding: Developing ACT-specific frameworks, processes, materials and resources can be very expensive for a small system. Collaborating with other state and territory public education systems could support the ACT's cost effectiveness and free up funds for priority investments.

Recommendation 3

Given the small size of the ACT public education system, the ACT should work with other public education systems and agencies such as curriculum and teaching authorities across Australia to use or adapt existing education frameworks, materials or resources where possible.

5.3.2 Principle 2: Ensure the right work is done by the central office and schools

As the system implements new reform directions and shifts towards greater consistency, the operating model needs to ensure responsibilities for each of the organisation's functions are appropriately balanced between individual schools and their local contexts, and the central office. There appear to be many opportunities for better central support to schools, particularly through clearer articulation of system functions and a more deliberate allocation of responsibilities between schools and the central office to ensure schools can focus on teaching and learning.

What are the issues?

At a high level, the functions of the ACT public school system have not been clearly articulated. The Panel observed that while most school-based and central office staff understand their individual work responsibilities, they do not have a shared framework in which to locate these. A documented operating model would include an articulation of these functions.

Some documentation does exist delineating responsibilities of schools and the central office in certain areas (for example, the School Management Manual). However, these documents are at times incomplete and only cover a subset of the functions of the wider system.

The result of this is a lack of clarity around what should be done by schools and what should be centralised. The Panel regularly heard contradictory information from schools and the central office about how certain processes work or who is responsible for what.

Finding: There is a need for greater clarity and certainty in where responsibilities lie between schools and the central office on specific functions.

In practice, schools are taking on too much, including responsibilities over which they have little control, but which impact their budgets. Schools consistently told the Panel their administrative workloads are too high and take them away from focusing on the students and teaching and learning that should be their main priority. Stakeholders agreed, calling for greater support from the central office for school business and operational functions.

Finding: School workload and work intensity is increasing which can take away from core priorities of teaching and learning for students.

‘Provide better resourcing of the Education Support Office [central office] to enhance educational support services to schools and to achieve efficiencies by centralising non-educational functions.’

AEU submission recommendation

What does the data and research tell us?

The following key functional areas commonly support the work of schools (DoE (NSW), 2024; Roberts-Hull, 2025):

- Student learning and development (including curriculum, pedagogy and assessment)
- Student management and wellbeing
- Finance (including budget management, purchasing and procurement)
- Human resources (including recruitment and staff management)
- Facilities and asset management
- Information technology
- Legal, compliance and reporting
- Strategy and planning.

Within each function, schools and the central office should have certain responsibilities. How these are delineated should be based on the principle that the central office should maximise support to schools and minimise their administrative burden so that they can focus on teaching and student outcomes.

Several Australian jurisdictions have recently completed functional analyses across their public schools to understand workload pressures and enable schools to focus on core educational delivery (DoE (NSW), 2024; Roberts-Hull, 2025). Evidence from other Australian jurisdictions shows efficient centralised supports can help to reduce administrative and compliance workloads on already-strained school-based staff. For example, in Victoria, recent central office service initiatives designed with school staff users in mind have delivered more efficient administrative workflows and been well-received by school staff (Roberts-Hull, 2025).

Consultation with ACT schools and stakeholders suggested significant school budget and workload efficiencies could be achieved by delivering some key administrative functions centrally rather than in a devolved way. This can be particularly beneficial to principals, who increasingly hold responsibility for administrative and business functions on behalf of their school. A significant body of research suggests principals need to be able to focus on instructional leadership as their primary activity, rather than spending large amounts of time on the administrative operations of the school (Beswick et al., 2023; Hart et al., 2020; Jensen et al., 2017; Leithwood & Azah, 2017).

Where an activity is routine or duplicated across multiple schools or could be done more efficiently at a central office level, it is logical for this activity to sit with the central office. This includes examples such as:

- providing curriculum-aligned resources that can be adjusted later by individual teachers
- ensuring consistency in assessment and reporting frameworks
- cyclical or planned maintenance, e.g. repainting the whole school or replacing flooring
- procuring educational technologies or platforms that are used by multiple schools
- developing policies that apply to most or all school contexts.

Finding: Strengthening central system direction, guidance and supports to schools for a range of functions can allow for more effective delivery of public education.

One key function in which greater central support is imperative is student learning and development. Student learning is the core business of schools. At its foundation, building the knowledge and skills of students will always be the core work of teachers and school leaders. However, Strong Foundations introduces a powerful role for the central office in setting parameters and providing support to schools to improve teaching and learning.

The central office must guide the parameters of curriculum and pedagogy, which schools and teachers then implement and differentiate according to their professional expertise to meet the needs of their students. Other jurisdictions in Australia have independent curriculum authorities that set parameters and offer guidance and support in the form of materials, templates and examples. The ACT already has this for the college system (in the form of the BSSS) but not for the P–10 years. It is logical for the central office to assume this responsibility. This process has already begun through Strong Foundations, for instance through new curriculum, pedagogy and assessment policies that provide more consistent expectations for schools and structured advice on how to meet these requirements. Over time, the system needs to expand central support, oversight and direction-setting to cover all curriculum areas, including but not limited to literacy and numeracy.

Central support to schools in this function can take many forms. Provision of curriculum-aligned materials and sample lesson plans can reduce workload for teachers, while still allowing them to tailor lessons and differentiate their instruction within their local context. Central procurement of common assessment tools for use by all schools allows school leaders and administrative staff in schools to focus on other urgent priorities and saves resources for the system. The central office should also synthesise emerging evidence about teaching practice and disseminate this to schools through planned professional learning, enabling teachers to engage with and understand evidence-based practices without needing to keep up with all the latest research developments.

Finding: The system will benefit from the provision of direction, guidance and support to schools to ensure consistent teaching and learning practices, in line with the implementation of Strong Foundations. This includes in the areas of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting for years P–10 (noting many aspects of this are already in place for years 11 and 12 through the Board of Senior Secondary Studies).

Recommendation 4

Further to the findings and recommendations in this report, the Education Directorate should undertake a more detailed analysis of all functional areas and implement changed responsibilities between schools and the central office. The findings should inform a short-, medium- and long-term improvement strategy that outlines the operating model for the system and ensures resourcing follows function.

5.3.3 Principle 3: A capable, well-deployed and supported workforce

The operating model must ensure the right people are doing the right roles in the right places to deliver the system vision.

What are the issues?

As outlined in *Chapter 4: Cost drivers*, not all schools have the staff they need. Schools experiencing socio-educational disadvantage face the greatest challenges in employing teachers – meaning the schools and students which need the most support may be receiving the least. Across the system, many of the schools with relatively low complexity have more experienced teachers and fewer new educators than schools with higher complexity. In low complexity schools, executive teachers (School Leader C) are often able to take on leadership roles and mentor more junior staff, where in more complex environments which are harder to staff, they are often deployed as classroom teachers or to manage student behaviour, with limited capacity to coach or develop others. Harder-to-staff schools also struggle to secure casual relief teachers when staff are absent.

Finding: There is a need for greater allocation of experienced and effective teachers to the most disadvantaged schools, including those with lower socio-economic profiles and students demonstrating greater complexity.

The existing process for teacher mobility between schools is not always trusted and is not resulting in equitable redistribution of staff. Teachers are appointed to a school for an initial 5-year period, after which a mobility process is triggered, though schools may elect to retain the teacher, limiting the system's ability to redistribute staff in response to need. At the time of this Review, there was no process for Learning Support Assistant (LSA) mobility between schools. Recent industrial changes increasing the permanency of LSA roles have further anchored LSAs to individual schools, regardless of changes in the location or needs of the students they were originally engaged to support.

Stakeholders highlighted to the Panel that there is a perception of contradictory advice, as they are told by the central office that a previous teacher shortage has been resolved, but simultaneously some schools lack the staffing required to run full weekly schedules. The reality is that both can be true at once, as central office data showed that some schools can be overstaffed while others are understaffed. Further complexity is introduced when specialist teachers are factored in (e.g. there may be enough teachers in total across the system, but not enough specialist maths teachers to cover those classes in all colleges).

‘There is a persistent misalignment between the allocation of funding, staffing resources and the actual operational needs of schools.’

ACT School Business Managers Association submission

Finding: There is evidence that staffing in some schools and across the system is not consistent with allocation under the Student Resource Allocation (SRA).

The Panel heard consistently that engagement of staff with the right competencies, and ensuring ongoing capability uplift, are required across parts of the organisation to support the delivery of system priorities. This is particularly important given staff salaries represent the Directorate’s largest investment, totalling \$978.4 million or around 77% of total Directorate expenditure in 2024-25 (Education Directorate (ACT), 2025b), and continue to grow over time. This investment represents strong value for money only if staff capability is strong and aligned to the system’s strategic direction.

Through its consultations, the Panel identified opportunities to improve professional learning for relevant school staff in finance and budget management. Business managers, for example, outlined a desire for more access to professional learning. In some cases, this training already exists, but staff often do not have time to attend due to competing pressures and so capability is varied across the system.

‘There is a pressing need for dedicated financial management training tailored to school leaders, including SRA modelling, SSEMS interpretation, and financial forecasting.’

ACT Principals’ Association (secondary) submission

Finding: Strengthening professional learning ensures good outcomes from the funding already invested in education. The effective implementation of system initiatives such as Strong Foundations rests on the delivery of high-quality professional learning.

As outlined in *Chapter 4: Cost drivers*, an additional challenge for the workforce is that the current rate of leave usage by school-based staff is higher than historical averages. The drivers of this are not fully understood, but the Panel heard observations and suggestions from schools about potential contributing factors including:

- High workloads, high work intensity and other stressors in the workplace (e.g. aggression from parents). These pressures mean staff are more likely to get sick and to need recovery time.
- Anecdotally, there may be some occasions where staff take personal leave and in fact complete work tasks while at home (e.g. marking, administrative work). This may be driven in part by the fact school-based staff do not have access to flexible work arrangements and otherwise need to complete this work at home anyway, but to do so after hours or on weekends.

- Changing attitudes to illness since COVID-19 mean it is no longer considered acceptable to attend work or school when unwell. This means staff take leave more often than they used to when they are unwell. It also means staff are taking more personal leave to care for sick children. Both uses of leave are encouraged by the system and are commended. There is no question that personal leave should be used for illness. However, this does represent an important change from previous decades where staff and students often went to work and school even when they were sick.

Ultimately, the increase in personal leave results in increased costs and challenges of securing coverage – either from casual relief teachers or from in-built relief (i.e. other teachers already employed within the school). When coverage cannot be secured either due to budget pressures or lack of available teachers, educational outcomes can suffer. This is a particularly salient issue for primary and early childhood schools where the options to manage staff absences are far more constrained.

‘When the flu, RSV or COVID sweep through in winter we (as a system) do not have a capacity to cope with the absences and classes are collapsed across the system.’

Submission, public school staff member

Finding: Increasing personal leave usage in schools is a challenge for the system and contributing factors likely include workload impacts on wellbeing, challenges of accessing flexible work and changing approaches to use of personal leave since COVID-19.

What does the data and research tell us?

To address the imbalance and inequities in staffing between the most- and least-advantaged schools, the system needs to ensure the most qualified or experienced people are in the most appropriate roles. This requires flexibility in the deployment of staff and means redistribution may be required. Therefore, at the end of each school year and after the February census date, some staff may need to transfer between schools in response to student population changes, in line with class size policies. This would align with approaches in some other jurisdictions and would be facilitated by the small size of the ACT and the relatively low travel time between all parts of Canberra. A single position within the human resources area would need to have final decision-making responsibility for these movements to ensure they balance for equity consistently across the entire system.

Achieving this aim also requires the system to find ways to incentivise and reward staff distribution that promotes greater equity (and remove any disincentives). Incentives can include financial as well as non-financial drivers, such as opportunities to take on extra leadership responsibilities or access greater professional development. Flexibility may be required with staffing to retain highly qualified staff, such as in colleges for specialist subjects (such as specialist mathematics or automotive studies) or in the case of specialist schools, highly experienced and skilled teachers.

Recommendation 5

School staffing currently above the Student Resource Allocation (SRA) should be redeployed to schools based on identified needs and equity principles, or to support system-wide strategic priorities. In the short- to medium-term, the overallocation should be corrected so that staffing levels are consistent with funding available for school staff within each school and across the system under the SRA. A senior executive within the human resources area should have responsibility for allocation and redistribution of staff. In addition, incentives for school leaders and educators should support equitable distribution of staff.

High quality professional learning provides the mechanism through which workforce capability is built, sustained and aligned to Directorate priorities, and is essential to ensuring that investment in staff translates into improved outcomes for students.

Strengthening financial and budget management capability can support more effective school-level decision-making and provide better support to principals, who retain ultimate accountability for their school budgets. Various sources, including the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (2013), emphasise the importance of ensuring leaders have the appropriate skills to perform these aspects of their roles.

Recommendation 6

The system should strengthen workforce capability in areas of educational leadership, teaching and learning, and financial and human resource management as a top priority.

Ensuring full coverage of teacher leave should be a priority as it directly impacts student learning. There appears to be an interaction between increasing student complexity, workload intensity and rising levels of staff leave. Additional support from the central office, alongside greater flexibility in how and when work is undertaken, could help improve staff wellbeing and reduce usage of leave.

The system could explore providing flexible work arrangements for teachers, such as options to work from home for non-teaching tasks such as lesson planning, marking and professional learning, as well as more flexible start and finish times that better accommodate caring responsibilities. Schools also emphasised the importance of fair and predictable work allocation, including timetables that, for teachers, embed protected non-contact time, instead of having the option to be put on extra classes. Together, these measures may help reduce fatigue and burnout, potentially stemming the growth in staff leave and the associated costs to schools.

The system will also benefit from ensuring schools have casual relief budgets that are appropriately calibrated to the likely leave usage of staff. This ensures schools do not have to choose between staffing essential teaching activities or exceeding their budget.

Recommendation 7

Further investigation of the high rates of teacher leave is needed to understand:

- the causal factors and subsequent additional costs for replacement staff
- potential mitigations, including the feasibility of flexible work arrangements to try to reverse this significant cost driver
- the funding needed for casual relief teachers to ensure coverage for actual levels of leave usage, especially for primary schools.

5.3.4 Principle 4: Transparent resourcing, clear accountability and effective communication

The system needs to operate with clarity about resourcing decisions, effective communication between different parts of the organisation and a culture of accountability for system outcomes.

What are the issues?

The Panel heard clearly during consultation that the processes for determining, allocating and adjusting schools' budgets are opaque. Schools cannot see how figures are arrived at, nor is it clear how actions agreed to by the central office throughout the year (e.g. additional LSAs to support newly enrolled students with high needs) are reflected in the budget management software used by the Directorate (the School Staffing Expenditure Monitoring System or SSEMS).

From the Panel's own observation of SSEMS it is indeed difficult to determine how a school is tracking against its budget as it does not always reflect recent financial information, and the formulas used to calculate specific budget items are not visible, meaning schools are also unable to estimate how their budget may change when circumstances change.

Decisions made centrally at the end of each year in response to school budget overruns are also not transparent or consistent. Some schools reported having their operational bank balance garnished to cover staffing overspends in some years, but not in others. A range of other opaque decisions were highlighted to the Panel by schools, which left them unable to predict how over- and under-spends would be managed from year to year.

'Under the current framework for resource modelling and staff funding there is a lack of clarity for intention of the funding, how the figures were arrived at, and its scope of use. This lack of clarity creates ongoing uncertainty for school leaders in how they best utilise funding whilst staying true to its intention and remaining within Directorate requirements.'

Submission, school board member

The Panel also heard greater transparency, and better communication could improve consistent implementation of system-wide initiatives, such as Strong Foundations.

Finding: To improve transparency in the ACT public school system, resourcing decisions and formulas need to be more visible to schools and school communities.

Recommendation 8

There should be more transparency of funding for schools and at system level. In particular, the exact methodology used to calculate budget allocations should be visible and more clearly communicated to schools and school communities for each part of the Student Resource Allocation (SRA).

Another challenge for the Education Directorate is a lack of clear accountability metrics or mechanisms across schools and the central office.

What does the data and research tell us?

The 2024 Literacy and Numeracy Education Expert Panel Final Report found there are consistent characteristics of high-performing school systems, including accountability (LNEEP, 2024). Suggett (2015) reports school systems with high accountability deliver better outcomes for students. Accountability relies on transparency and requires accurate and available data that can be used to track outcomes, expenditure, etc. (more on data in *Chapter 6, Section 6.2*).

Within the system, schools and the central office need to be clear about their different accountabilities. As outlined earlier in this chapter, schools are responsible for the delivery of education. They are accountable to children and families, and to the system, for their performance. Frameworks for monitoring school performance exist across all systems, with many jurisdictions using an approach that aligns with a ‘balanced scorecard’ approach to accountability (Clayton, 2024; Mandzic et al., 2017). Originating with Kaplan and Norton in the 1990s in management literature, balanced scorecards measure performance across multiple domains encompassing financial, customer, internal processes and learning and growth (Kaplan, 2010; Madsen, 2025). This approach to measuring performance has been expanded and adapted across many sectors, including not-for-profits (Kaplan, 2001; Mandzic et al., 2017), higher education (Camilleri, 2021; Hladchenko, 2015) and schools (Clayton, 2024; Coskun & Nizaeva, 2023; Sims & Sims, 2004). Existing monitoring and accountability frameworks in other jurisdictions already apply elements of this approach and offer an example for the ACT to use or adapt in developing its own accountability monitoring framework.

Finding: To improve school and system accountability, a ‘balanced scorecard’ approach to school performance should be considered.

The central office is responsible for policy, strategy and implementation work to support schools to deliver on their responsibilities. The central office is accountable to schools, but also to the Minister and the elected government as the representatives of the community. While the Panel saw clear evidence of the central office’s attention and accountability to the government, support to schools is an area that needs improvement. Greater accountability will rely on data collection about operational performance in supporting schools, which could be assisted by implementing a customer relationship management system over time to record and track instances of service provision.

In all support that is provided to schools, there is a need for a customer service culture where schools are the customer. This means effectiveness and practicality must be prioritised, and responses need to be provided within timeframes that reflect the pace schools operate at. Clear points of contact in all communication should be present so schools know who they are dealing with and who they can contact if an issue arises. These and other customer service accountability metrics should form part of key performance indicators (KPIs) for central office service delivery to schools – and the teams that provide this support must be resourced adequately to meet reasonable expectations. To assess against these KPIs, a monitoring framework will be required, including consideration of the data that will need to be collected to monitor performance.

See *Chapter 6: Specific issues for implementing the operating model* for more on areas of support that can be strengthened.

Finding: There is a need for stronger dual accountability in the system – both from the central office to schools, and from schools into the system.

Ultimately, the system must be accountable to the ACT community, via the Minister, the Cabinet and the Legislative Assembly. Aligned with the vision is the requirement for the operating model to be one system (see Principle 1).

Recommendation 9

Establish high-level key performance indicators as part of performance frameworks for:

- central office service delivery to schools for key support functions to ensure they are meeting school needs, in addition to financial management and timely and coherent rollout of policy initiatives
- school outcomes on teaching and learning, curriculum implementation, assessment, reporting and financial accountability.

For both schools and the central office, the framework should include regular feedback and review cycles.

5.3.5 Principle 5: Leverage cross-governmental health and community services

The operating model for the public education system needs to enable linkages and collaboration with other parts of the human services system to provide the best health and community supports for children and families.

What are the issues?

Throughout consultation, the Panel heard about the increasing complexity of student needs, particularly in the early years (more detail is in *Chapter 4: Cost drivers*).

This is particularly highlighted by declining early childhood development outcomes. The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), conducted every 3 years, assesses the developmental progress of all children in Australia in their first year of schooling (DE (Cth), 2025b). AEDC results show the number of young people in the ACT who are developmentally on track in all 5 domains has decreased in every cycle since data collection began in 2009. The ACT is now the second lowest scoring state or territory, higher only than the Northern Territory. The exact reasons for the decline in results over time are not yet clearly understood. For more on the ACT's AEDC results, see *Chapter 7, Section 7.2.2.1*.

Finding: Early childhood development results in the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) in the ACT are consistently low, and the reasons are being analysed in greater detail by the ACT Government.

As student needs become more complex and intersect across learning, health, wellbeing and family circumstances, schools are increasingly required to respond to needs that extend beyond the traditional limits of education, as they are often the front line of contact with the community. Where external services are limited or difficult to access, schools often absorb this demand through additional staffing, behaviour interventions and greater reliance on school-based wellbeing responses. This dynamic contributes to rising workload and cost pressures within schools, while also highlighting the potential role of schools as community hubs in mitigating the impacts of increasing student complexity.

What does the data and research tell us?

Schools are an important resource for communities and families and increasingly provide an effective location for delivery of a range of services for children of all ages. The reality is that schooling is one of the few universal services available for this cohort. As a result, schools can function as a convenient ‘one stop shop’ for services that address the needs of this cohort and their families. There is national and international evidence about the potential for wraparound services to improve outcomes for young people and their families, as well as for schools, the wider community, service providers and governments (Jeremy et al., 2026; Molina et al., 2025; Our Place, 2026; Paproth, 2025). Locating – or better coordinating with – services such as speech and occupational therapists, child and youth health services, psychologists, social workers, guidance officers and community liaison officers on school sites or elsewhere can enable coordinated support for the needs of students. It can also improve timely access for families who may otherwise face long wait lists in public or private systems, or who may not be likely to access services in a less convenient or more clinical setting.

Finding: Schools require access to a full range of professional supports to assist student wellbeing across early, middle and senior schooling and to enhance participation in learning.

The potential for approaches that integrate these services within schools to more effectively support students was detailed in the *Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System* (O’Brien et al., 2023), which included recommendations related to full-service school models, improving referral pathways, improving uptake of screening and services and greater investment in prevention and early intervention.

The provision of wraparound services via school sites can also deliver significant returns on investment. Deloitte (2021, 2024) found returns of \$2.20 to \$3.50 per dollar invested in Community Hubs Australia (CHA). CHA runs 100 hubs across NSW, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria, in both government and non-government schools. The investment itself includes the in-kind provision of school facilities and resources contributed by schools themselves. Therefore, while there is good evidence for the benefits of this model, it does still represent a new investment that would be required from the public school system, as well as from other government agencies or other funding sources. It would therefore be most effective, and provide the greatest returns, if this model is targeted to the most disadvantaged areas of the ACT, where the largest populations of children and families with high needs reside.

Stakeholders shared examples of integrated service provision or collaboration with outside providers already working well and delivering benefits both for students and community.

Case study: Evatt Primary School’s community hub approach

Evatt Primary School has embedded a community hub model through Family Connect, a community-driven initiative coordinated by the school, for the community. A dedicated member of the school’s leadership team leads Family Connect, overseeing a range of universal programs that support families with children from birth onwards.

Family Connect coordinates the co-location of community services on site, including parent support sessions, access to allied health providers, and onsite guidance and advocacy for families navigating systems such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). In addition, Family Connect provides case management for a significant number of families, delivering wraparound wellbeing support and enabling early intervention for children identified as being at risk.

Family Connect operates from Evatt Primary School's family and community centre, The Nest – a purpose-built community hub featuring the first all-abilities indoor play space and café within an ACT public school. Designed to provide safe and inclusive access to play, the space removes barriers for families who may otherwise feel excluded from community environments. Activities are tailored to support diverse sensory needs and developmental stages, enabling meaningful participation for every child. The Nest reflects a strong commitment to inclusion, creating a welcoming environment where all children and families feel valued and connected to their school community.

The initiative is supported through a combination of school-based resourcing and supplementary grant and philanthropic funding, enabling the leadership role and support team. The wraparound family support provided through Family Connect reduces pressure on teaching staff, allowing teachers to focus on high-quality teaching and learning.

This initiative builds and sustains trust with families and the wider community by actively addressing critical gaps in existing service provision, ensuring children and families receive timely, coordinated support.

Funding arrangements for the provision of services in these models will need to be negotiated appropriately. However, the Panel considers further engagement may be beneficial particularly with the Health and Community Services Directorate, and potentially other support agencies in the non-profit sector, around cross-government arrangements to fund such supports.

Recommendation 10

To reduce downstream pressure on schools, the ACT Government should consider targeted investment in preventative (e.g. allied health) and a range of early childhood services, delivered through referrals or wraparound supports in schools, as a system level strategy to ease pressure on school-based staffing and improve the sustainability of education funding.

Consideration of this issue must acknowledge the pending rollout of Foundational Supports. Thriving Kids is the first phase of Foundational Supports and is for children aged up to 8, with developmental delay and/or autism with low to moderate support needs (DHDA (Cth), 2026).

The principle behind Foundational Supports is to provide additional disability supports beyond those offered under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Many people are not eligible for the NDIS but may need more support than they currently receive through mainstream services, even when these services are inclusive (DSS (Cth), 2024a).

While at the time of this report it was not yet known exactly how Thriving Kids or Foundational Supports would ultimately operate, delivering and connecting with wraparound supports in schools is an opportunity to provide some of these new services in a way that integrates well with the school system (Whiffen, 2025).

Finding: Proposed changes to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the development of Foundational Supports/Thriving Kids services require the Education Directorate to engage with health and community services as well as school communities to ensure early intervention services are accessible for children up to 8 years old.

5.3.6 Principle 6: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination

The operating model must embed and prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination across all aspects of the system.

What are the issues?

Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to have an increased sense of belonging within their school supports their long-term educational learning journeys. In the ACT, several programs and funding streams exist to support better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. However, the system is not adequately meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and the evidence is in the learning outcomes, attendance, school completion and wellbeing data, as well as the disproportionate reporting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in occupational violence statistics (see *Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2.1*). The 2025 *Independent review into the over-representation of First Nations people in the ACT criminal justice system* (known as the Jumbunna report) highlights these intersecting issues and the way racism and other structural factors contribute to schools not always being welcoming places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Cunneen et al., 2025).

In consultation, stakeholders identified concerns about the amount of funding allocated, and the ability of the system to practically engage with and support every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student in every school. They also raised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community voices have fewer avenues to be heard within the Education Directorate than they used to, after a previous advisory group ceased to operate without another ongoing body being put in place. This contrasts with the principles of self-determination (United Nations, 2007), and to recommendations regarding an increased need for self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT and specifically in the education system (Cunneen et al., 2025).

It should be noted the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Corporation (NATSIEC) is set to establish Indigenous Education Consultative Groups in all states and territories with funding from the 2024–25 Federal Budget (NATSIEC, 2024).

Finding: The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Advisory Group operated as an ongoing advisory committee in the Education Directorate until the 2021–22 financial year. After this, formal engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community was prioritised on specific projects.

One concern raised during consultation for this Review was that across 93 schools, 13 Indigenous Education Officers are employed (representing 9.8 full time equivalent positions). This limits schools' ability to engage deeply with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families and reduces the likelihood that students in every school will receive dedicated, culturally safe support if they need it. Stakeholders outlined that more resourcing for Aboriginal Liaison Officers (a slightly different role with more emphasis on family and community connection) could benefit both schools and communities, and that having a community-oriented role focused on learning support for children would benefit all parties.

A challenge faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the ACT is school choice. Children in the ACT are generally expected to attend their local school, even if another school is understood within the community to offer greater cultural safety. A lack of cultural safety can have real impacts on student outcomes. While certain provisions exist within the ACT's enrolments policy for children to enrol outside their local area for wellbeing reasons or to attend school within a kinship relationship, this does not offer full access and requires families to provide documentary

evidence to support their claims. Cultural safety is determined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and therefore should not require ‘proof’ through documentation.

‘A lack of funding and investment in culturally-safe schools has been consistently cited as a barrier to the effectiveness and sustainability of programs and is a barrier that can affect the consistency of service delivery, availability of resources, and capacity to maintain long-term outcomes (Elek et al., 2020).’

Submission, community organisation

Finding: Cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students significantly enhances the school experience and is a high priority. Families should be able to enrol flexibly to ensure cultural safety and kinship networks are available to them.

Finally, the Panel heard funding for additional supports for preschool students with disability is not allocated for Koori Preschool sessions. Schools delivering Koori Preschool can still receive this funding for students attending mainstream preschool sessions, but this does not appear to be an equitable model. This means schools with students who attend both Koori and mainstream programs may not receive funding proportionate to those students’ needs.

Finding: There is a gap in funding to Koori Preschools compared to mainstream preschools.

What does the data and research tell us?

Notwithstanding the issues outlined here, it was also clear to the Panel that there are examples of excellence in cultural integrity, cultural safety and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outcomes in the ACT. Closing the Gap reporting shows in 2021, 82.1% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20 to 24 in the ACT had attained a Year 12 certificate, Certificate III or above (Productivity Commission, 2021). This contrasts with the Australian average of 68.1% and is the highest of any state or territory. Innovative and community-based initiatives exist across the ACT public school system which are supporting students to thrive. The ACT has a strong foundation to build on in this space and should ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination guides the improvements proposed here.

Recommendation 11

The Education Directorate should work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to support a community-led and ongoing body with access to senior decision-makers (e.g. an Indigenous Education Consultative Group), enabling communities to advise on resourcing adjustments and related policy settings, including enrolment choice, to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, consistent with the Jumbunna report.

Recommendation 12

Funding and staffing support for Koori Preschools should be on par with mainstream preschools.

Case study: Melrose High School is building a reputation as a school with high cultural integrity

Through a deliberate focus on embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across the school, Melrose High School is gaining a reputation beyond its local area as a culturally safe place for families in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The school is working to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into core teaching and learning, with a focus on engagement and cultural integrity in learning rather than reliance on separate programs.

The school has a specifically appointed Cultural Integrity executive teacher who works with a Cultural Integrity team of teacher representatives from each faculty who focus on integrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across the curriculum in all subjects. Additional youth workers provide regular check-ins focusing on student learning and attendance, while also working alongside year coordinators and focusing on early transition work with the feeder primary schools.

The team is looking at strengthening community connections through partnerships with youth organisations like Gudan Gulwan, and new internal mentoring opportunities are being developed to connect students with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working at the school. The school has also formally adopted a Ngannawal statement into its logo – Gundjayaina Baladjiggin Dhari meaning ‘stand proud and true’ – approved by Ngannawal Elders, as a visible expression of cultural respect and belonging.

While school leadership acknowledges the approach is still evolving, the focus remains on cultural integrity, consistent attendance and inclusion within mainstream learning, with further family engagement seen as an important next step for the school.

The Panel heard from members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community that Melrose High School is one where community feels safe and where students and families are eager to attend.

5.4 Chapter summary

This chapter outlines the 6 principles that must underpin the operating model the Education Directorate develops for the public education system. It touches on the role of leaders in setting a vision for the system to work towards as one organisation. Greater central support for schools is key to this, and the following chapter will consider ways to strengthen these supports in more detail.

Operating as one system with greater consistency and support will be facilitated by other principles such as ensuring the workforce is capable and appropriately deployed, enhancing transparency and accountability, and engaging more with other agencies across government to secure the services that are needed to support children and families.

The principle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination cuts across the entire system and must be embedded in all practices, structures and strategies of the public education system.

6 Specific issues for implementing the operating model

6.1 Chapter overview: Why system-wide supports and enablers are required to address key issues

The Terms of Reference ask the Panel to provide advice on improving budget management systems and oversight, the functions that can be delivered more effectively through centralisation, and policy changes that can support sustainable operations.

This chapter considers the specific system-wide issues that must be addressed to translate the operating model principles outlined in Chapter 5 into practice. It focuses on specific supports and enablers required at a system level to enable schools to deliver high-quality educational outcomes. The recommendations in this chapter are directed at freeing up schools to focus on their core work of teaching and learning, while improving budget sustainability, equity and consistency through stronger system-level support.

This chapter focuses on the following specific issues for implementing the operating model:

- Data and systems required for effective planning and budget management
- System responses to increasing student need and complexity
- Accountability and support for school principals and school improvement in one public education system
- Increasing central supports to schools that reduce workload and improve equity, including for:
 - infrastructure and asset management
 - compliance and administrative functions
 - school finance and procurement functions.

6.2 Data and systems are the foundation for effective operations

Data collection, analysis, software systems and integration between technical platforms within the Education Directorate must be strengthened to support system effectiveness, operational oversight and workforce and financial management.

What are the issues?

During consultations, the Panel heard from many stakeholders that the Directorate's internal digital capability and data systems are regarded as inadequate and unreliable because they do not operate in a timely way that reflects a recent point-in-time for schools. For example, school financial information on the budgeting dashboard used by principals (the School Staffing Expenditure Monitoring System or SSEMS) often reflects a point in time around 2 months earlier; enrolment projections that inform budget allocations do not always match principals' estimates of local cohorts; and important data is not always collected within the system (e.g. workforce qualifications).

The use of different software systems for the same functions between schools and the central office can create duplication and inefficiency. For example, at the time of this report, schools used Xero accounting software while the central office (and the ACT Government broadly) used Oracle. This created an additional workload for central office staff who had to transfer information and reconcile between the systems.

There are also perception and trust issues that lead to disagreement on data. For example, some principals report they do not always have confidence in the enrolment projections they receive from the central office and instead plan their school staffing based on their own projections. However, system data shows central projections have low variance from actual numbers and are accurate at a higher rate than principal estimates. The issue is therefore one of agreement more than accuracy – and in one system, all schools must agree to work with the data available. More transparency about how the projections are calculated, and an opportunity for principals to advise about local knowledge that might impact those projections, would support agreement.

Finding: For effective operations and management, the Education Directorate needs sufficient resources to develop and implement data and systems that are timely, accurate, agreed and integrated.

More specifically, timely, accurate, agreed and integrated data and systems mean:

- **Timely:** to inform decision-making and budget management, schools and the central office must have access to recent data for enrolments, finances and staffing (noting these cannot be real-time as they can only reflect point-in-time information held in payroll or other systems).
- **Accurate and agreed:** data needs to be collected rigorously and the methodology made transparent, so that the data is trusted and agreed by all as the basis for decisions.
- **Integrated:** information needs to move seamlessly between different platforms – or platforms need to be consolidated to reduce duplication.

Data and systems also pose barriers to workforce planning. The current system has no visibility of the skills of its workforce, as this data is not collected or stored in a consistent way. This hinders both the system's ability to assess the current workforce profile (e.g. the system does not know what, if any, qualifications are held by its Learning Support Assistants) and the system's ability to plan for future workforce development.

Finding: Collecting information about the qualification profile of the entire Education Directorate workforce is a priority as it is necessary to enable system planning and capability improvement.

Additionally, at the time of this Review, the Education Directorate's human resources area was staffed by only a small team and therefore had capacity only for limited functions (e.g. recruitment, performance management). There was no dedicated function for system-wide workforce planning, coordinated learning and development, or crafting of a whole system workforce strategy, due to the minimal resources allocated to this area.

Finding: The Education Directorate would benefit from a greater focus on workforce planning, with adequate resources and expertise to achieve this.

Recommendation 13

The Education Directorate should ensure data consistency and greater systems integration across the central office and schools. In particular, there should be an immediate focus on:

- agreeing across the system to one consistent source of data for enrolment projections
- enhancing the usability, transparency and timeliness of the School Staffing Expenditure Monitoring System (SSEMS)
- adopting shared financial management software for both schools and the central office
- collecting information about workforce qualifications through the human resources management system to inform strategic workforce planning.

6.3 System responses to complex student needs

This section deals with 2 key issues impacting system resourcing: meeting the needs of students with disability and responding to complex and challenging student behaviours. As outlined in *Chapter 4: Cost drivers*, these overlapping issues contribute to the cost pressures experienced by the system. This section proposes key actions to strengthen system supports in these areas.

While there is some overlap between students with disability and students with complex behaviours, the funding and support systems operate differently, and they will be dealt with separately.

The ACT public school system is committed to inclusion of all children. Inclusion broadly understood encompasses all types of complex needs, as well as all areas of diversity. However, in the Education Directorate the use of the term ‘inclusive education’ generally refers to inclusion of students with disability, as per the *Inclusive Education Strategy* (Education Directorate (ACT), 2023). For clarity, the language used in this report will reflect this current usage by the Education Directorate.

6.3.1 Building a sustainable, system-wide approach to supporting students with disability

ACT public schools and stakeholders are committed to the principles of inclusion. All parties want every student to have their needs met appropriately at any public school they attend. Unfortunately, in consultation, schools and stakeholders alike reflected that the system is not yet equipped to do this well at every school. The resources required – particularly in the context of smaller schools – to supply both specialised infrastructure and appropriate staffing mean this is not immediately practical for every child in every school. All parties in the system (central office, schools and education stakeholders) shared with the Panel their deep concern at the idea that any student might not be fully supported or included.

‘Evidence consistently shows that inclusive settings produce stronger academic, social and emotional outcomes for students with disability, and create benefits for all learners through reduced bullying, improved acceptance and other social and academic gains.’

Submission, community organisation

Issues related to system supports for students with disability centre around:

- accurate data on students with disability in the system
- how funding for students with disability is used

- the quantum of funding and how this is allocated between schools to support students with disability – this is dealt with separately in *Chapter 7: Resource allocation methodology*.

6.3.1.1 Accurate identification of the level of educational adjustment is a prerequisite for equitable resourcing

The fact that the public system offers universal access and accepts all enrolments is one of its strengths, however it also means the level and complexity of student disability in the public system is higher than in non-government systems. Students with disability are counted nationally under the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data for School Students with Disability (NCCD), which classifies students according to the level of adjustment they need.

There are higher NCCD rates in public school systems across Australia: around 27% for public schools and approximately 23% for non-government in 2024 (approximately 4 percentage points higher rate in public schools). However, other measures of disability suggest the rate of students with disability in public schools could be closer to 7 percentage points higher than in non-government schools (AIHW, 2024). This suggests the NCCD rate for the public system may be higher than currently reported. Anecdotally, education professionals told the Panel that there is underassessment of children against the NCCD in the public schooling sector as staff have less time and less training to assess educational adjustments compared with non-government systems which have invested significantly in training teachers to report under the NCCD.

With 3 of the 4 NCCD categories attracting SRS loading amounts (of which the Australian Government is responsible for at least 20%), it is likely the public system in the ACT (and potentially other jurisdictions) is under-accessing federal funding for students with disability, and under-allocating the ACT's contribution accordingly, due to inadequate data collection. This is important as the ACT is moving to an adjustment-based resourcing model from the previous disability diagnostic model starting in 2027. The adjustment-based model will be consistent with the NCCD. This is discussed in more detail in *Chapter 7, Section 7.3*.

Finding: The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) and the new ACT adjustment-based resourcing model are a sound way of understanding the level of need associated with disability in the system, but it is hard for schools to engage fully with these assessment processes. Therefore, schools are likely to need additional technical support to do this fully – in the form of materials, resources and staff expertise – to ensure the full scale of disability in the system is understood, and the full Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) loading supplied to the system.

Recommendation 14

Schools should be given technical assistance to more accurately assess students under the new adjustment-based ACT model, which will flow through to more accurate assessments in the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD).

6.3.1.2 Using disability funding more flexibly and effectively

What are the issues?

A critical issue is not only how funding for students with disability is allocated, but how effectively it can be used to meet student needs in practice. In the ACT, funding for students with disability is largely provided as staffing allocations, which constrains schools' flexibility to deploy resources in

the most effective ways. There is separate funding to respond to complex behaviours posing work health and safety risks and this is discussed in *Section 6.3.2*.

A high portion of disability funding allocations is used to employ Learning Support Assistants (LSAs). While LSAs may hold a range of skills and qualifications, there is no minimum qualification requirement for these roles and the LSA skills profile is not well understood (see *Section 6.2*).

Schools also offer a range of other supports for students with disability, including small group programs. However, during consultation many schools and staff reflected that they would benefit from greater professional development around inclusive education and how to support specific students with additional needs (e.g. being able to seek advice from allied health professionals in the system).

Regarding physical infrastructure adjustments, the central office manages an asset renewal fund, of which \$11.3 million in 2024–25 was used to support modifications for students with disability.

What does the data and research tell us?

The Panel notes with concern that the system is often relying on its least-qualified staff to support its most complex students, highlighting a mismatch between student need and workforce capability. Evidence suggests the use of school assistants is not the most effective primary strategy for supporting students, and the way LSAs have become effectively anchored to schools regardless of the movement of students has also caused issues (see *Section 4.3.4* for more information).

‘While [employing LSAs to support children who require adjustment] is a consistent approach nationally and internationally, there is little or no evidence in support of this practice (Butt 2016). Graham and Spandagou (2011) found that many school principals discuss funding in terms of school assistant hours, rather than a flexible resource, suggesting a tendency to consider learning support assistants (or additional people) as the critical resource required for inclusion (Punch 2015).’

Submission, community organisation

Instead, the system requires flexible and evidence-based resources to respond to students’ inclusive education needs. Not all specialist services needed to support students with disability need to be available at an individual school level; these resources and staff can often be more effectively delivered at a central or network level. However, they need to be made available to all schools and students equitably.

6.3.2 The system is responding to complex behaviours through a work health and safety lens

‘Complex behaviours’ refers to often-challenging behaviours children may present with for a variety of reasons, usually related to some needs (e.g. sensory, trauma, language, cultural, etc) not being met across some or all parts of their life. Students presenting with complex behaviours often overlap with other priority cohorts (e.g. students with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D), etc).

Complex behaviours have always been present in the school system – and always will be to some extent. Following incidents in 2016 and 2017 in which students’ complex behaviours caused or potentially caused injury to staff at 3 schools, the Education Directorate entered an Enforceable

Undertaking with WorkSafe ACT, the Territory’s work health and safety regulator (WorkSafe ACT, 2018).

Since 2018, complex behaviour incidents have increasingly been managed through the work health and safety frameworks established under the Enforceable Undertaking, termed as Occupational Violence Risk Assessments (OVRAs). Incidents involving behaviours such as kicking, biting, hitting, spitting, and swearing are reported through a risk portal, and patterns of severe incidents trigger involvement from the central office to develop risk management controls. Where the risk is deemed high or extreme, controls can include one-to-one support from an LSA for the student.

Whilst there are valid concerns of school communities for safety of all staff, this prescriptive system is not in place in other Australian public systems or other school sectors within the ACT. The Panel is concerned that the language of occupational violence is not used in the same way in other jurisdictions and is considered by many stakeholders to inadvertently label students as ‘violent’, rather than responding to the root environmental causes of their behaviour. Many stakeholders shared the Panel’s concern that this labelling is arguably inconsistent with inclusive education principles. Therefore, where possible, the terminology of ‘work health and safety concerns’ will be used in this section.

Figure 11 demonstrates school reporting of work health and safety incidents has increased significantly in recent years, mirrored by a corresponding increase in the number of students who have occupational violence plans. Note: 2025 numbers of student plans only includes data to June 2025, so the final number for the year is likely higher than 2024.

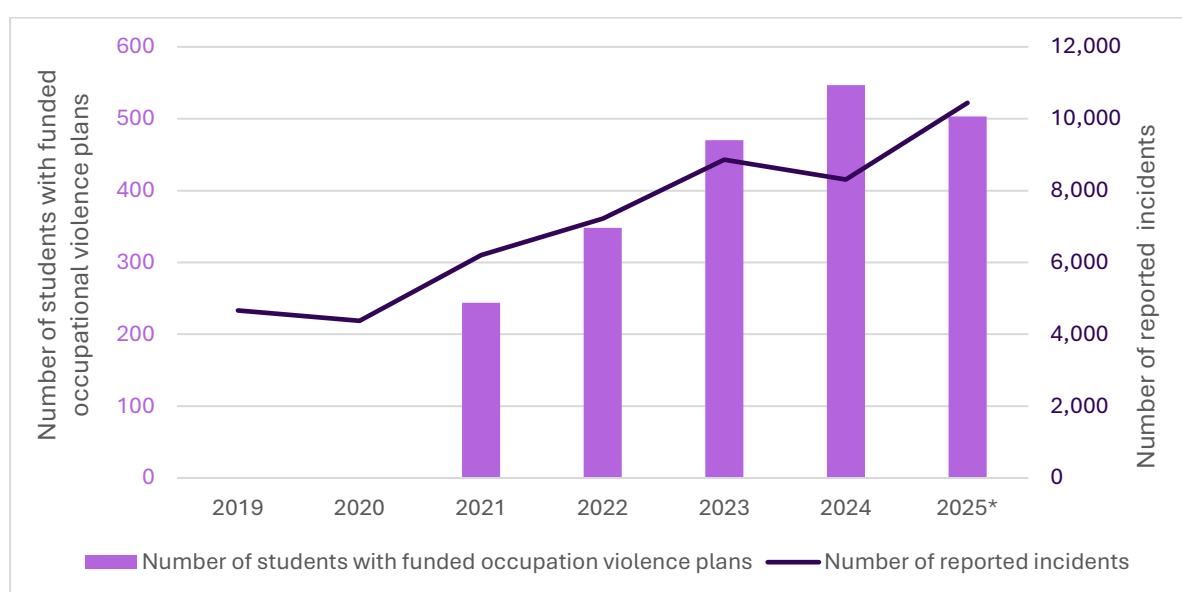


Figure 11: Trends over time in reported work health and safety concerns (central office data)

The Panel heard during consultation that, in addition to their duty to respond to safety risks, schools are effectively incentivised to report any type of student incident as a work health and safety matter, because this is one of the very limited ways in which they are able to access additional funding to support students with complex needs.

Also concerning to the Panel were reports from schools and stakeholders alike that the current system is not improving safety for staff or students. Incident reports continue to increase, and LSAs assigned to support student’s one-to-one were described to the Panel at times as ‘bodyguards’ or ‘punching bags.’

‘Current response mechanisms are both dangerous and irresponsible. They too often involve engaging learning support assistants (often unqualified and inexperienced staff, who are asked to work intensively with the highest-need students in our schools) or youth workers to keep students separated. Without a clear and intentional program, this method of engaging support staff treats them as little more than human shields.’

AEU submission

Increased incidents of violence and aggression are not a concern for the ACT alone, with other jurisdictions also seeing increased incidents, including South Australia (DfE (SA), 2024), Queensland (Brewster, 2026) and Tasmania (DECYP (Tas), 2026a). However, the ACT’s reported incident rates far surpass those of other jurisdictions. For example, Queensland data showed 20,833 incidents of occupational violence and aggression reported by teachers in state schools in 2025 (Brewster, 2026). In this same period, the ACT saw 10,442 reports (or 50% of Queensland’s incidents), despite only having approximately 10% of Queensland’s enrolments.

6.3.2.1 Disproportionate impacts of the work health and safety approach

Data from the work health and safety system in 2025 shows that the students who were managed under this framework were:

- disproportionately students with disability (approximately 48% received disability funding in 2025 under the diagnosis-based model – the Directorate estimates the actual rate of disability in this cohort is much higher once teacher-identified disability is accounted for)
- disproportionately Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (17%, compared to the student population rate of 4.9%)
- concentrated in the preschool to year 2 cohorts (see Figure 12).

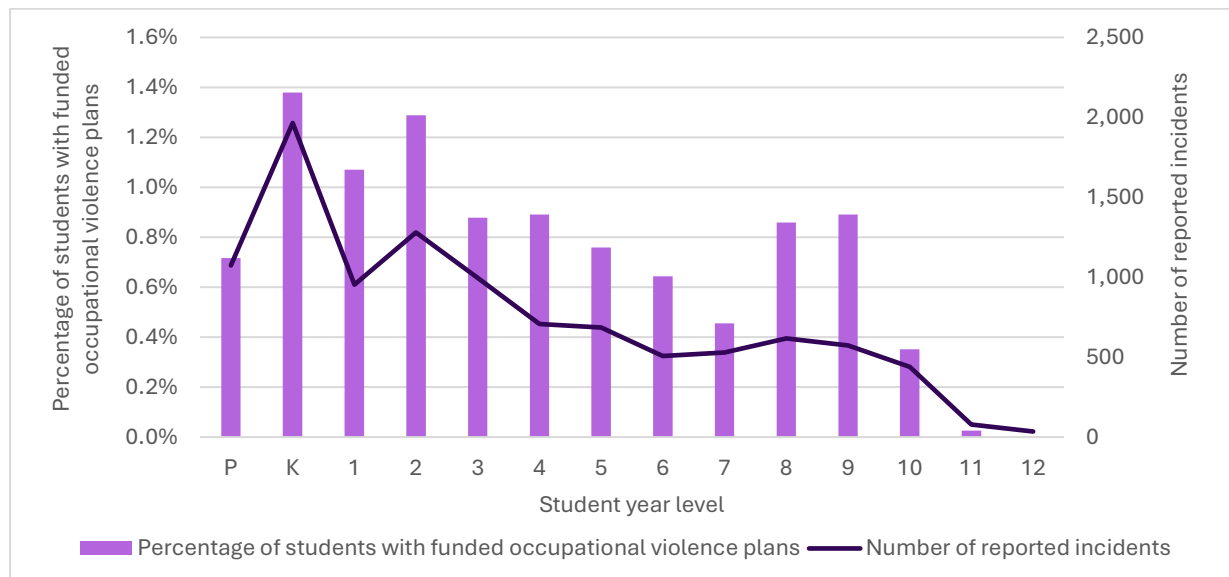


Figure 12: Distribution of work health and safety concerns by student year level, 2025 (central office data)

The Panel has identified the disproportionate representation of priority cohorts in the reporting on work health and safety issues as a concern. For example, labelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as violent cannot be divorced from race-based perceptions and the history of exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children within education systems. The National

Indigenous Youth Education Coalition's School Exclusion Project documented the historical exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from government schools across Australia, well into the twentieth century (NIYEC, 2024). The report shows how this history continues to influence contemporary patterns of school exclusion and disciplinary practices experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Finding: The current approach in the ACT public school system to managing complex behaviours through a work health and safety lens risks labelling students as violent and runs counter to inclusive education principles. This disproportionately affects students with additional needs.

6.3.3 Evidence around supporting complex student needs

As discussed in the previous section, complex behaviours often arise due to children's needs not being met across some or all parts of their life, and there is sometimes overlap with children from other priority cohorts experiencing disadvantage or additional need.

This section deals with the evidence available about effective complex behaviour management and ways the system can strengthen support in this area.

6.3.3.1 Evidence focus: Multi-tiered systems of support as the evidence-based foundation for academic and behaviour support

Supporting children with complex behaviours is a core function of schools in Australia and internationally. National and international research on supporting students with emotional or behavioural needs identifies the following strategies as the most effective (DfE (SA), 2024; French, 2019; Pihl et al., 2018; Simpson et al., 2011; Soares et al., 2025; Stevenson et al., 2022):

Student-focused strategies

- Prevention focused on student wellbeing, including teaching self-regulation strategies and social skills
- Offering students support or self-management strategies for high-risk times (e.g. class transitions, recess and lunch times)
- Consistent behaviour-specific praise and positive reinforcement for student behaviour from staff
- Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) approaches, including tiered responses that incorporate wellbeing, emotional and social supports as necessary.

Staff-focused strategies

- Improving teacher-student relationships
- Staff training in de-escalation and other effective prevention and intervention strategies.

Environment-focused strategies

- Clear and consistent school-wide expectations
- Consistent structure and predictability both in and out of class
- Engagement of parents in planning and supports offered
- Interventions that reinforce a positive classroom environment and traits such as empathy and moral engagement.

Under Strong Foundations, MTSS provides a structured approach to instruction and support across 3 levels (LNEEP, 2024):

- Tier 1 is universal teaching for all students, including differentiation and reasonable adjustments. It occurs in all classrooms.
- Tier 2 is targeted support, usually in small groups outside of the classroom, for students who have been identified as having a gap in a specific skill or area of knowledge.
- Tier 3 is interventions one-to-one or with a very small group, highly targeted, and for those children for whom Tiers 1 and 2 have not enabled them to sufficiently master a skill.

Each tier requires more resources than the one before it, so there is a strong incentive for systems to invest in Tier 1 approaches to ensure as few children require Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports as possible. MTSS approaches can be applied to both academic instruction and student wellbeing and behaviour management, and these are mutually reinforcing.

Finding: School behaviour approaches and multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) reduce reliance on individualised support over time. In this context, the Strong Foundations reforms are a key priority for improving student learning outcomes while also reducing staffing budget pressures.

Importantly, the evidence around complex behaviours emphasises that high-quality and effective Tier 1 (and if necessary, Tiers 2 and 3) teaching strategies and academic support are an effective strategy to reduce and manage complex behaviours, as they ensure students can engage and achieve success academically. This is further complemented by wellbeing-focused MTSS approaches.

Finding: The successful implementation of Strong Foundations to improve teaching strategies and academic instruction in Tier 1 (and if necessary, Tiers 2 and 3) will also support the management of complex behaviours in ACT public schools. This needs to be resourced adequately to deliver the expected benefits.

6.3.3.2 Evidence focus: Enhancing the role of Learning Support Assistants in supporting complex needs

The prescription of one-to-one support from (at times untrained) LSAs to respond to complex behaviours and work health and safety issues has resulted in the engagement of many additional staff members – especially LSAs – in schools in recent years. The Panel understands from central office data that expenditure on the work health and safety response was approximately \$25 million in 2025 – around \$12 million over the projected budget. As noted above, the provision of LSAs as the primary method of support is not aligned with evidence-based practices.

Finding: The routine use of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) as the primary intervention to support children with the most complex behaviours is not in line with evidence-based practices and is driving increased costs for schools and the system.

LSAs have no minimum required qualification. While internal data does not reflect the qualifications this workforce holds, anecdotal reports suggest many are in fact students undertaking a teaching degree or other similar qualification – but this is not verified.

Previous inquiries and reviews have suggested implementing minimum qualifications for LSAs, alongside establishing qualification pathways and offering focused professional learning that aligns with the needs of the students and staff they are supporting (ACT Auditor-General, 2023; Caple, 2017; Shaddock et al., 2015). LSAs themselves are also eager for more professional learning.

‘LSAs report that while Team Teach provides useful de-escalation strategies, it does not sufficiently prepare them for the direct management of OV incidents. Several newly commenced LSAs describe feeling unprepared and, in some cases, freezing when confronted with OV, highlighting a critical training gap.’

CPSU submission

Given many LSAs are already completing teaching qualifications, transitioning to higher training or qualification requirements over time could benefit the entire workforce.

Finding: A minimum qualification and/or training requirement for Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) would improve both their ability to support children with complex needs and the teaching workforce, and their ability to transition to further education professional pathways.

There are already examples in the system of schools investing in the development of the LSA workforce to create longer-term professional pathways that retain skills in the public system.

Case study: the Woden School LSA development pathway

The Woden School is one of 4 specialist schools in the ACT that provide targeted education for students with moderate, severe or profound intellectual disability. Specialist schools require teachers with specialised skills and training to meet the complex needs of the student cohort. Schools report it can be difficult finding these highly skilled teachers.

Recognising this long-term challenge, the Woden School intentionally developed a teacher recruitment pathway that begins with LSAs who are already completing a teaching qualification at university and have an interest in working in the specialist environment. During their time as LSAs, the school’s leadership team provides additional training and support to develop their specialist skills working with students with disabilities.

Once their teaching qualifications are complete, the extra training and skills developed by these LSAs gives them a competitive advantage for teaching staff vacancies at specialist schools, as they bring with them on-the-job experience, contextual knowledge of the school and relationships with students. One of the Woden School’s executive teachers followed this pathway, journeying from LSA to classroom teacher to school leader, and is now helping to grow the next generation of specialist LSAs, teachers and leaders within the system.

This career progression pipeline for LSAs contributes to strong staff culture, teacher retention and long-term employment opportunities for staff at the Woden School.

6.3.3.3 Evidence focus: Flexible education as an inclusive system response

For some children and young people, the mainstream classroom environment does not represent a safe or appropriate learning option. Flexible education settings provide an alternative way for students to engage in learning, whether it be onsite at a mainstream school or through specialist offsite programs, focusing on learning as well as wellbeing and engagement.

The ACT system already provides several flexible education offerings, listed in *Chapter 2, Section 2.1.3.7*:

- Specialist and therapeutic settings for students with complex behavioural or mental health needs, including Muliyan (years 7–10) and the CAMHS Cottage
- Alternative arrangements for students unable to attend mainstream school due to health (the Hospital School), custody (Murrumbidgee School at Bimberi Youth Justice Centre) and distance education arrangements
- Targeted engagement and support programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people through Waruga Yardhura.

Consultation highlighted clear gaps in current offerings, including limited places, issues with referral pathways and no flexible education options for primary-aged students. As a result, schools report some students with complex and high needs remain in mainstream environments that are not well-suited to them, creating pressure on staff, other students and school resources.

‘These students’ needs fall between existing settings. They need more than a local school can provide, but there is nowhere else for them to go. Working with students who have high behavioural needs is not a generalist teaching role – it requires investment in specialist staff and the establishment of a variety of programs targeted at meeting diverse student needs.’

AEU submission

Importantly, flexible education should not be understood as a form of school exclusion, recognising the impacts and legacy of school exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (NIYEC, 2024). Flexible education, when appropriately resourced and integrated within the public system, can provide an inclusive alternative that supports student engagement while ultimately aiming to re-engage students in mainstream classes where possible.

Finding: More flexible education options are required to better support students whose needs are not well met in mainstream settings, particularly in the early years.

6.3.3.4 Evidence focus: Allied health services as a system-level support

Allied health professionals (e.g. social workers, occupational therapists, psychologists, speech therapists) offer a targeted level of support for student management and wellbeing. They can particularly support students with disability and students with complex behaviours as discussed in this section but also have an important role in supporting other students with a range of acute or ongoing needs. They can also work with teachers and other staff to help them more effectively respond to student’s needs.

In consultation, schools unanimously valued allied health professionals in supporting students. Many schools and stakeholders called for all schools to have an allied health professional as part of their core staffing. The Panel’s view is these services should be allocated centrally or via a networked approach (e.g. grouped around geographic regions), rather than being permanently attached to a specific school. This allows for equitable distribution of the system’s allied health staffing resources according to student need at each school. In this context, allied health staff would all be part of a central/network-based team with access to appropriate professional supervision through that team. Having a central/network-based team of allied health professionals would still allow these staff to be

located on school sites, and for schools to have one or more allied health professionals onsite full-time (provided the needs of students supported this allocation).

Finding: All schools should have access to allied health support, which should be provided in a networked approach and allocated to schools according to need.

A challenge in the provision of allied health services is the workforce shortages in these fields. Even when positions are available, central office data shows these roles are not always filled. One stakeholder suggested telehealth could present an alternative avenue for schools to access these services. Evidence from other jurisdictions indicates virtual delivery models can improve access to allied health services while reducing delays associated with recruitment and travel (Arefadib & Moore, 2017). For example, Royal Far West has delivered virtual health and wellbeing services to more than 120 rural schools in NSW since 2019, reporting positive outcomes for children and families (Emery, 2025).

Finding: Given difficulties in recruiting allied health professionals, there are opportunities to use innovative ways to access services.

6.3.4 Resetting the system response to complex student needs

During consultation, the Panel overwhelmingly heard from schools, education stakeholders and the community that the current approach to managing complex behaviours is not working well.

Responding to these behaviours through a work health and safety framework precludes investment in evidence-based preventive approaches including MTSS, use of allied health expertise, and even the use of LSAs (as is currently the case) with more appropriate training and qualifications in place. For already-vulnerable students, this approach can inadvertently label students as violent, and there is no telling the repercussions this might have on students' trajectories through not only education but the rest of their lives. Finally, the Panel is not convinced the system is keeping staff any safer.

In addition to most schools and stakeholders having reservations about the process, the current approach also represents a significant cost pressure for the Education Directorate budget. The appetite for change is therefore significant, and the Directorate should capitalise on the energy of schools and stakeholders across the system to design a more effective and ultimately inclusive response.

Recommendation 15

The system should prioritise coherent, system-wide approaches to reduce behaviour issues, giving priority to 3 key areas:

1. Lifting the quality of whole class (Tier 1) teaching strategies and academic instruction to help students engage in class to help prevent or reduce any associated behavioural issues, as set out by the Strong Foundations reforms.
2. Improving behaviour management policy and resourcing, including:
 - upskilling the workforce to deal with complex behaviours
 - ensuring schools are supported to implement evidence-based approaches such as school-wide behaviour policies and multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) with early intervention and targeted intensive supports

- increasing the provision of flexible education offerings both onsite within mainstream schools, and through offsite delivery, with a focus on re-engagement in mainstream education.
3. Significantly reforming the current approach to managing certain complex behaviours primarily as a work health and safety risk. As a priority, the system should:
- reassess its approach to the historical Enforceable Undertaking with WorkSafe ACT
 - avoid labelling students as violent through this process.

Overall, the system should ensure:

- any staff allocated for behaviour management and to support students with disability are appropriately qualified and trained
- there is a strong evidence base with greater alignment to inclusive education policies, and a greater focus on early intervention
- funding available is not used for the provision of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) as a default response. A full range of staff (appropriately qualified) should be engaged under the funding available. Other supports including equipment and infrastructure should also be considered.

6.4 Strengthen accountability and support for schools

The Panel heard frequently throughout consultation about the unique role of Executive Education Leaders (EELs) both for school support but also in accountability, especially for principals. At the nexus between schools and the central office, the role is critically important in translating priorities and information between the settings and facilitating consistency across the system. Rather than making recommendations specific to the individual role, the Panel's findings and recommendations have broadened this issue to be about clear and achievable line management for principals incorporated as part of the system responsibility for school improvement.

What are the issues?

It was clear from consultation that the EEL role is not consistently understood and is not adequately resourced to support principals as both line managers and mentors to deliver both instructional leadership and effective operational management. For example, EELs have an important role regarding school budget management. As the line managers of principals, they should be monitoring school budgets and supporting principals where challenges are arising. They can also support newer principals to understand budgeting – which is an important part of a principal's role and an area in which many new principals need additional training or support.

The EEL function is currently delivered by 4 network-based EELs, who each manage around 24 principals. There are a further 2 EELs who support school improvement and school operations functions. The EELs operate with just one administrative support staff member. They described to the Panel that they would be better able to coordinate supports to schools if the EEL function was better resourced, such as through the establishment of a larger coordination and administrative team.

What does the data and research tell us?

While the EEL function must deal with operational matters at a high level, it is not efficient for an EEL to manage day-to-day minor operational enquiries that could be better handled by a central 'front door' or other service. Increasing support staff for these roles can help address this. A 'front door'

support option for schools has been created through the School Operations branch and available feedback suggests it is valued by schools. However, there are opportunities to strengthen the capacity of the team and its integration with other operational supports for schools, to make it more effective and sustainable.

Rather than coordinating support to schools for day-to-day operational issues, EELs should work in close collaboration with principals to support them and their school's leadership. EELs could also deliver or coordinate professional learning for staff in the schools they are responsible for, in the areas in which they have expertise, creating further opportunities to align professional development with system priorities.

Finding: The line managers of principals are important positions and are most valuable when they support consistency across the instructional leadership that principals offer each school. They should help translate information and directions between the different contexts of schools and the central office, acting as a conduit between schools and the centre. They should also be an important support for school leaders.

Insights from consultation: the role of Executive Education Leaders (EELs)

All school focus groups touched on the role of EELs. Schools reflected the importance of balance in the EEL role – between strategic implementation of the student-centred school improvement framework, and a detailed understanding and operational support of schools in their day-to-day needs. Many highlighted that the role has historically been weighted one way or another on this scale – and that changes to the role have often swung the pendulum too far towards the other end.

Most schools expressed an interest in having a close relationship with their EEL. They felt this was hindered when the EEL had too many competing priorities, and many described an earlier time when EELs were more available to schools.

Schools consistently advised the Panel that their school type has unique characteristics and needs, and that their instructional leadership must take these into account. Schools therefore found it particularly valuable when their EEL had experience or expertise in their school type.

Specialist schools reported a preference for experience or expertise in specialist settings from their EEL, noting that in the current structure this is not typically the case and that specialist schools do not all report to the same EEL. Given the unique needs of specialist schools, their principals would benefit from this kind of tailored support.

Finding: Specialist schools would benefit from reporting to a role with specialist expertise. This role could also support uplift of inclusive practice for students with disability across the public school system.

One of the Panel's observations about the system was the limited number of opportunities for principals to progress within the system whilst maximising the value of their instructional leadership expertise.

Finding: The current span of management for Executive Education Leaders (at 1 leader to 24 schools) makes it difficult to undertake line management responsibilities.

Recommendation 16

The Education Directorate should ensure in any restructure that:

- all principals have a clear point of accountability on all matters through their line manager
- the role of line managers is to support principals and schools, including with regard to school improvement and school operations
- principals also have points of contact in the central office they can reach easily to have their schools' needs promptly met
- the benefits of specialisation of line managers according to school type, as opposed to geographic focus, is considered
- line managers of principals are appointed from the ranks of senior principals, potentially on a 5-year rolling basis, which would provide an opportunity for more principals to attain career progression whilst also gaining wider experience in the system.

6.5 Key operational areas for increasing central supports to schools

The cost and workload pressures facing schools cannot be addressed through school-level action alone. This section focuses on key areas where increased central supports for schools would improve equity, reduce duplication and support more sustainable use of system resources. Drawing on the cost drivers identified in Chapter 4 and the operating model principles set out in Chapter 5, it outlines some specific opportunities to strengthen central supports so schools can better meet student needs while remaining financially viable. These supplement the central supports for teaching and learning and human resources management already discussed in Chapter 5.

This section identifies the following priority areas where the system should increase central support for schools:

- Centralising asset management to improve system stewardship
- Reducing compliance and administrative workload for schools
- Delivering school finance functions more efficiently at scale.

6.5.1 Centralise asset management to improve system stewardship

Greater centralisation of infrastructure and asset management will enable more effective stewardship of the asset portfolio while reducing pressure on school budgets. The Panel recommends responsibility for cyclical and planned maintenance should sit with the central office, with schools retaining responsibility for minor ad hoc repairs.

What are the issues?

In consultation, schools reported they are expected to complete significant infrastructure or asset management projects within small annual operational budgets (see *Chapter 4, Section 4.4*). This can result in more expensive routine maintenance activities being delayed due to a lack of available budget, or in challenges resolving pressing issues for the school which are not a high priority across the system.

Schools explained they are expected to set aside funds each year from their operational budget for cyclical maintenance like carpet replacement or indoor painting throughout the whole school. However, operational budget balances can and have historically been used to cover staffing overspends, thus negating this as a valid option for schools.

Schools with older infrastructure reported that their facilities and maintenance budgets were not appropriately calibrated to account for the level of capital works required in their facilities in comparison with newer schools.

What does the data and research tell us?

ACT public schools are government assets and should be managed as such. From the Panel's perspective, this means the school should operate like a tenant, completing minor maintenance and repairs for damages caused during regular use, while the central office is responsible for major works as well as planned and cyclical activities.

Planned and cyclical maintenance should include facilities- and asset-based compliance activities, such as playground audits, annual testing-and-tagging for electronics and annual microwave testing. Some of these functions have already been centralised, such as the annual tree and playground audit. The central office has greater capacity than individual schools to engage contractors cost-effectively, schedule cyclical maintenance and fund these activities.

Finding: It is more cost-effective to manage planned repairs and maintenance (e.g. cyclical maintenance) centrally than in a devolved way.

It should be noted that with greater centralisation of these activities, schools must be able to clearly and transparently see when works will be completed for projects at their school. This applies to all works – not only those which are being centralised – and to the allocation of the operational budget schools receive for the minor repairs and maintenance they remain responsible for.

Recommendation 17

The central office should provide stewardship of all assets, meaning:

- cyclical maintenance and planned major repairs should be a central responsibility
- minor ad hoc repairs should be retained by schools.

The central office should clearly and transparently communicate with schools about how projects are assessed, how funds are calculated and allocated for minor and major works, and the timeframes for centrally coordinated works.

One function which requires not only central office support, but engagement from central government services, is long-term infrastructure planning for the construction of new public schools and for major upgrades, renewal or replacement of existing schools as they begin to approach end-of-life. While the central office has a documented strategic asset management plan, it is not always clear how these fit within the larger property portfolio of the ACT Government.

Finding: The ACT public school system includes legacy infrastructure that, in some cases, is nearing end of life. Planning for full renewal or replacement beyond the forward estimates but within the next 20 years must be part of strategic asset management planning.

Recommendation 18

The ACT Government should develop a strategic and planned approach to major upgrading and replacement of ageing education infrastructure within and beyond the budget forward estimates, as part of its longer-term strategic asset management plan, appropriately funded to ensure all school facilities are inclusive, fit for purpose to meet contemporary educational requirements and more responsive to community expectations of the quality of facilities.

6.5.2 Reduce the impact of compliance and administrative workloads for schools

Recognising the significant workload that compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks represents, alongside other administrative tasks, this is an area where greater central support can have a major impact by reducing workloads of school-based staff, reducing budget pressures and ensuring compliance and administrative tasks are completed with greater consistency.

What are the issues?

Legal and compliance requirements, and associated reporting, are an increasing burden on principals, teachers, and administration and support staff (as outlined in *Chapter 4: Cost drivers*). The issue is not unique to the ACT, with several other jurisdictions seeking to reduce this workload for schools through greater central office support (DoE (Qld), 2025; Roberts-Hull, 2025). Compliance workload includes many different areas, including medication management, with 2 staff required to dispense medication to certain students (especially in early childhood and primary settings).

'We have over 30 students requiring medication to be administered throughout the day (two person check), combined with first aid, therapists onsite etc. Our [front office] team do not have time to complete admin work that should be taken off teachers so teachers can focus on teaching and learning.'

Submission, public school staff member

Some of the compliance workload in the ACT arises from functions that, in many other jurisdictions, are delivered outside the public school system. One of these is that the Education Directorate is the approved provider for all 78 public preschool sites in the ACT, but compliance and regulated functions for preschools are still predominately delivered and managed at an individual school level. ACT primary, early childhood and combined schools all need to manage preschools within their larger responsibilities, even though early childhood legislation and regulations are far more prescriptive than those for K–12 education.

At the other end of schooling, vocational education and training (VET) represents a compliance and regulatory workload for 3 of the system's colleges, whose principals are also CEOs of Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). VET courses must be delivered by an RTO, but maintaining RTO accreditation incurs monetary as well as time costs. Compliance requirements for RTOs are extensive and change often, requiring the CEOs to regularly review and adjust VET offerings.

Beyond compliance, a wide range of administrative tasks represent significant workload pressures for staff in schools. While schools employ administration and support staff, these teams can be very small. For example, in smaller schools with a single front office staff member, business managers may be required to take on a large volume of front office administrative tasks when that staff member is absent.

Many schools and stakeholders expressed to the Panel that the workload required for compliance and administration in schools means a minimum administrative staffing structure is required in every school (e.g. a minimum of 2 front office staff is required to provide medication management). The Panel was supportive of this in principle but noted there should also be consideration of school size.

Finding: Administrative and compliance workloads need to be recognised as a major pressure on schools.

What does the data and research tell us?

Other jurisdictions are also seeking to reduce administrative and compliance workloads. In Victoria, the central office has standardised and streamlined certain policies for consistent application across all public schools. Roberts-Hull (2025) notes this approach has reduced administrative workload for schools and recommends further standardisation to support school workload reduction.

Finding: The ACT can learn from the work of other jurisdictions to reallocate some of these tasks to the central office, and to simplify and streamline the ones schools remain responsible for.

Regarding compliance requirements for preschools, there is an opportunity for the central office to take a stronger role as the approved provider in relation to these requirements. Though principals and senior preschool staff must legally retain obligations under the national law, the central office could provide more consistent resources, policy advice and professional learning to ensure it is easier for school leaders to deliver on those obligations.

In relation to VET, the Panel notes the central office could assume the RTO CEO responsibilities currently assigned to college principals. Alternatively, RTO offerings could be delivered through a partnership directly with Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT). CIT and the Education Directorate are both public entities under the ACT Government and already work together in some areas. A deeper partnership, particularly for VET delivery, could extend the scope of the public education system to include elements of higher education and support stronger transitions to further learning for public school graduates. VET is an increasingly dynamic learning environment which is highly adaptable to the changing world of work. The VET sector, including CIT, is strengthening its focus on quality and excellence, creating an opportune moment for an expanded partnership.

In addition, an expanded partnership with CIT could offer opportunities to share facilities and resources, and to support upskilling of the school-based workforce through CIT course offerings. For example, if the Education Directorate were to introduce a minimum qualification for LSAs (see Section 6.3.3.2), CIT could support the delivery of the relevant training, with other emerging workforce needs addressed from senior schooling through to higher education at CIT.

Finding: The regulatory and legal framework in which schools are operating (including for preschool management and Registered Training Organisation status) is creating funding and workload issues and is likely to increase in the future. This has both financial and human resource impacts.

Recommendation 19

Given there is a growing regulatory requirement for minimum levels of staffing at every school, the system should review the minimum viable enrolments required for a school or preschool to operate effectively and support high-quality provision within available funding envelopes.

6.5.2.1 Provide more central support for school finance functions

Finance and budget management is one component of the administrative workload undertaken daily by school finance officers, business managers and other administrative staff.

A key tension in the current system is the expectation that individual schools and their leaders manage budgets and resourcing decisions in ways that draw them away from their core focus on students and families. This report recommends a key shift in the system, whereby funding allocations based on agreed formulas set clear limits on the engagement of human resources. With greater central support and where allocative arrangements are no longer exceeded, the expectation of budget management on principals and school leaders reduces. A financial management function would remain as schools will still need to manage finances for day-to-day operations and urgent needs that require immediate response.

These functions should be managed via a financial software system that is aligned with the central office, to eliminate time spent reconciling between separate systems, as in the case currently (see *Section 6.2: Data and systems are the foundation for effective operations*). Day-to-day needs should be provisioned for in the School Operational Allocation (SOA), which is distributed to schools directly into their bank accounts.

The central office should reduce school workload by centralising finance functions that are duplicated across schools, or inefficient for individual schools to deliver. For example, the payment of utility bills could be centralised, rather than each school being allocated funds through the SOA to make separate payments to the same utility providers.

Procurement of goods and services is another area where centralisation could reduce duplication and lower school administrative workloads. Procurement is a highly regulated government activity requiring significant documentation and careful procedural adherence. In the ACT, any procurement over \$25,000 requires at least 3 written quotes to be sought and an assessment conducted. Particularly in larger schools, this threshold is easily exceeded (e.g. for camps and excursions).

To reduce school workload for procurement, the system could implement centralised standard templates to support faster, school-led processes. Additionally, the central office could coordinate across schools to identify common procurements and instead centrally purchase those goods or services, such as camps and excursions where many schools visit the same locations.

Similarly, schools reported many currently purchase separate licences for the same education software products. Centralising procurement would reduce workloads in schools and enable the system to obtain better value through bulk purchasing. This approach has already been implemented for the purchase of Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT) for use in all schools under Strong Foundations.

Finally, the central office could look to support longer term sustainability by engaging with ACT Government procurement areas to consider potential process adjustments to enable more efficient procurement of common education supplies.

Other areas schools raised that would benefit from centralised procurement include waste management services, curriculum resources, data and analytics tools, and professional learning.

Finding: The central office can reduce administrative burden on schools by better supporting finance functions, especially where these are replicated across schools and could be handled efficiently centrally – including examples such as payment of utility bills and procurement of common goods and services.

Recommendation 20

The system should review, on an ongoing basis, the appropriateness of current administrative and compliance requirements imposed on schools. The central office should provide greater support (e.g. resources, training) for compliance, administrative and financial (including procurement) tasks, to remove workload from schools where appropriate. This should include aspects of the early childhood regulation requirements associated with preschools and those associated with Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) in senior school years.

6.6 Chapter summary

This chapter covered detailed pressure points and recommendations about how to strengthen system supports under a new operating model. It emphasises the role of central support to schools in maximising schools' ability to focus on core activities while minimising the need to spend time and money on administrative and other operational or business functions.

The proposals outlined in this chapter are directed toward how existing resourcing (funding, staff) across the system can be used more effectively to allow both schools and the central office to focus on what they do best. Chapter 7 extends this analysis by considering how the resource allocation methodology can be reshaped to reinforce the operating model, address identified cost pressures and better support schools in practice.

7 Resource allocation methodology

7.1 Chapter overview

Chapters 5 and 6 set out principles and specific implementation considerations for a strengthened operating model for the ACT public school system, focused on clearer system roles, stronger central support and more effective use of existing resources to enable schools to focus on core educational activities. The Terms of Reference for this Review sought advice on how funding can be most effectively allocated to support these system-level reforms.

This chapter considers how the resource allocation methodology – that is, how funding is distributed across schools and student cohorts – aligns with contemporary patterns of student need, cost pressures and policy intent.

As outlined in Chapter 2, funding for the ACT public school system is guided by the Australian Government's Schooling Resource Standard (SRS), which informs the ACT Student Resource Allocation (SRA) as the system's primary mechanism for allocating resources to schools. The School Operational Allocation (SOA) provides a further stream of funding. Together, these mechanisms determine how funding flows to schools through base per-student amounts, loadings and other allocations.

This chapter analyses how resources are currently allocated and identifies areas where the methodology is no longer keeping pace with need. It finds that while the SRA remains a sound model overall, targeted adjustments are required to improve equity, transparency and responsiveness, particularly for specialist schools, schools serving early childhood cohorts, students with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D). The Panel makes recommendations for strengthening the resource allocation methodology to better support sustainable resourcing at the school level and improve outcomes across the system.

7.2 Distribution of resourcing pressures by school type

Resourcing pressures are not experienced evenly across the ACT public school system. Analysis of 2025 staffing budget outcomes shows that specialist schools, early childhood schools, primary schools and combined schools face the most acute resourcing pressures, driven by structural settings and increasing complexity in student needs, particularly in the early years.

In July 2025, 77 of 92 schools (84%) were projected to be over budget – creating the impetus for a renewed focus on ACT public school resourcing and ultimately this Review. By the end of 2025, 80 of 92 (87%) had in fact exceeded their staffing budget allocations, but the total overspend was lower than projected, at \$37.24 million. This represents approximately 3.6% of the total public education budget for 2024–25.

Although many schools in each school type were over budget, the overspends were not equally distributed across all school types, as shown in Figure 13. Specialist schools, early childhood schools, primary schools and combined schools experienced more significant budget overruns.

School type	Schools with staffing budget overspend, 2025	Total variation (as %) from allocated staffing budget by school type, 2025
Specialist schools	100%	20.9%
Early childhood schools (P–2)	100%	9.2%
Combined schools (P–10 and one 7–12)	90%	6.4%
Primary schools (P–6)	89%	7.4%
High schools (7–10)	83%	3.4%
Colleges (11–12)	50%	<1%

Figure 13: Distribution and extent of staffing budget overspends at end 2025, by school type (central office data)

7.2.1 Specialist schools

Specialist schools serve students with the most complex needs in the ACT public school system and have consistently exceeded their staffing budgets. Examining resourcing in these schools provides important insight into whether the current resourcing model adequately reflects the true cost of supporting this cohort.

There are 4 specialist schools in the ACT. Entry is subject to detailed assessment criteria, and only available to students diagnosed with moderate, severe or profound intellectual disability, although eligible students can also choose to attend their local school. The Education Directorate recognises families may wish to access a specialised environment. The ACT's specialist schools are standalone sites, not attached to a local school, reflecting historical design decisions, as all specialist schools were built before 1975. Contemporary practice more commonly integrates specialist facilities into local school settings.

Within the ACT's existing and diverse portfolio of 93 schools, it was evident that not all schools have the facilities, equipment and services required to meaningfully educate some students with particularly complex needs in their local school environment. Schools are highly committed to the inclusive education agenda – but operating across 93 environments means this will take time to fully realise.

Specialist schools, on the other hand, are already equipped, not only with specialised infrastructure (though specialist schools expressed this could be upgraded), but also with expert teachers, administrative staff and Learning Support Assistants (LSAs). Teachers and other staff in these schools hold significant knowledge about meeting the needs of students with very complex needs, and many families actively seek enrolment in these settings for the specialised environments they offer.

Specialist schools report facing enrolment demand in excess to their capacity. Despite this demand from families, specialist schools described feeling, at times, forgotten or marginalised within the current system.

Finding: Specialist schools are important and valued by some families as part of the education landscape in the ACT and should be resourced appropriately to meet the complexity of student need. They have an important role to play not only in the specialist environment but also in supporting local schools to uplift the capability of staff to better meet the needs of students with disability at all public schools.

Finding: Specialist schools are effectively enrolment-managed to ensure access for children with highly complex needs. These schools are currently oversubscribed due to high parental demand.

Specialist schools also have the highest budget overspends, likely driven by the significant and complex needs of their students, which they report have increased over time. In consultation, specialist schools explained that once the reasons for their overspends were explained (e.g. urgent need for additional staff to support a student; new infrastructure required), those reasons were always accepted by the central office and the overspend agreed.

Finding: Significant budget overruns in all specialist schools likely result from the complex needs of students being supported including the specialised staffing required.

Recommendation 21

The system should review the funding methodology for specialist schools, to meet the unique and complex needs of these schools and their students.

7.2.2 Early childhood, primary and combined schools

Early childhood, primary and combined schools are experiencing the most acute and persistent resourcing pressures in the ACT public school system. Analysis of staffing budget outcomes shows these school types are not only more likely to exceed their budgets, but to do so by larger margins than high schools and colleges. This reflects a growing misalignment between the base funding model and the realities of operating schools that serve younger cohorts with increasingly complex developmental, wellbeing and regulatory needs.

The data shows schools with students in the early years face increasingly more significant budget challenges than high schools and colleges. The SRS base amount for 2026 per primary student is 79.6% of that for secondary students (DE (Cth), 2026). This lower base allocation is also reflected in the ACT's SRA allocations for primary students.

'As primary principals, we understand all schools face a variety of cost pressures, but our point is that early childhood, specialist, P/K-10 and P-6 primary schools face the greatest pressures.'

ACT Principals' Association (primary) submission

When the current national SRS base amount was established, it was based on analysis of funding in schools across the country where most students reached a certain level of achievement. It is likely the higher amount for secondary students reflects the additional cost of specialised subject teachers required in the middle and senior years, among other differences.

More recently, research has focused on the importance of the early years and early intervention to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for all students, especially those most at risk (DSS (Cth), 2024b; LNEEP, 2024; O'Brien et al., 2023). Government policy and practice have also shifted towards a greater emphasis on early intervention and support in the early years. However, this has not been mirrored by a change in the base allocation model for primary schools at either the federal or ACT levels.

Further, schools with children in the P–6 years have less flexibility than other school types to manage staff absences. Additionally, class sizes tend to be lower, regulations about teacher-to-student ratios are stricter, and the cohort requires greater support for non-educational needs (e.g. medication management). All these factors represent additional cost drivers for early childhood, primary and combined schools.

An additional challenge for schools with primary-aged students is the increase since 2020 in rates of safety incidents reported by staff. Risk mitigation strategies associated with these incidents often involve additional staffing. The efficacy of this model is discussed in *Chapter 6, Section 6.3*. However, the key point here is that the highest rates of reporting of these safety incidents are in the early years (as shown in Figure 14), and the associated costs are therefore borne most by early childhood, primary and combined schools.

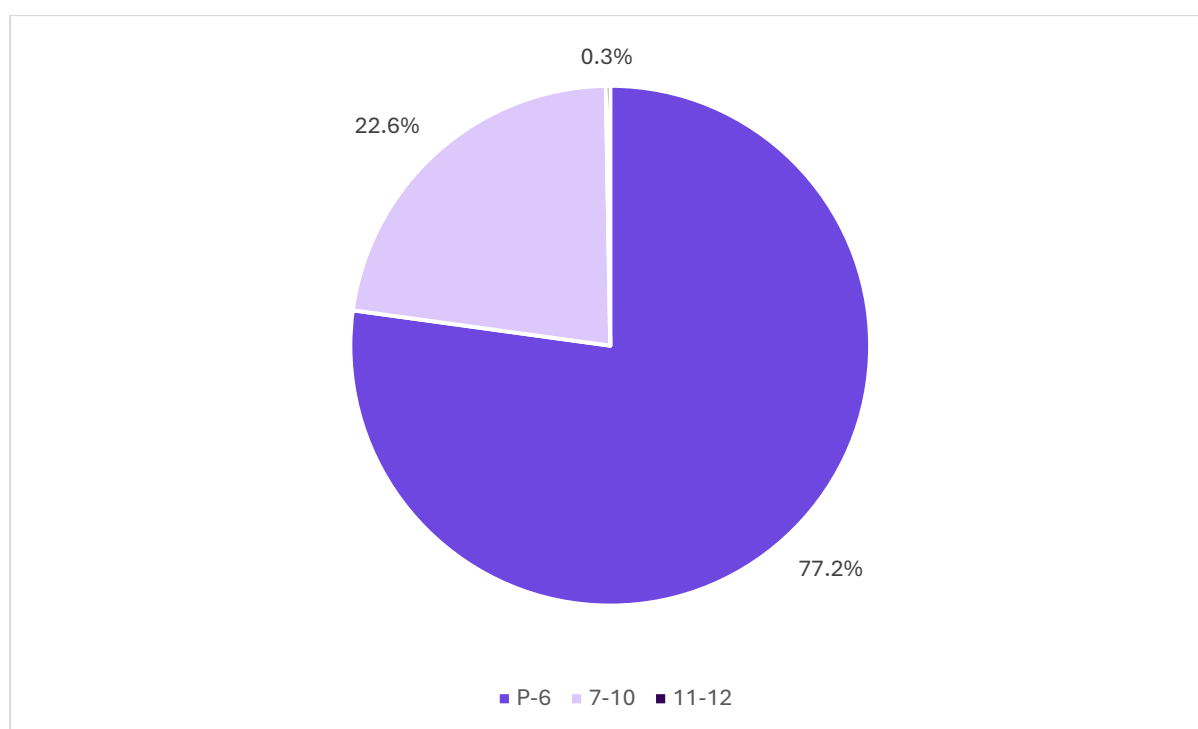


Figure 14: Proportion of funded work health and safety arrangements by student year level, 2025 (central office data)

The integration of preschools within early childhood, primary and combined schools in the ACT also presents resourcing challenges for these school types. Different industrial and regulatory conditions apply in the preschool environment, which may result in schools needing to employ more staff to meet all required conditions. When schools have preschools located offsite, this also poses challenges due to travel time between sites and the inability to flexibly move staffing within a single site to comply with regulations in the preschool setting. This complexity is further increased where one school manages multiple offsite preschools. Combined schools also operate from multiple campuses, which requires them to balance different industrial conditions for teachers in the preschool, primary and secondary areas.

7.2.2.1 Decline in early childhood development outcomes in the ACT

Early childhood development outcomes in the ACT are deteriorating, with increasing numbers of children commencing school with higher and more complex developmental needs, putting additional pressure on primary and early childhood schools. This trend is evident in both stakeholder feedback and system data, including successive Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) results showing a steady decline in the proportion of children arriving at school developmentally on track (DE (Cth), 2025b).

Conducted every 3 years, the AEDC measures children’s development across 5 domains (physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge) as they begin their first year of full-time school.

The 2024 survey (with children mostly born in 2018 and 2019) found the number of students on track in all 5 domains in the ACT (43.8%) was the second lowest nationally after the Northern Territory, as shown in Figure 15. This is the latest in a declining trend since 2009 where the ACT, despite its relatively advantaged population, is trailing its peers.

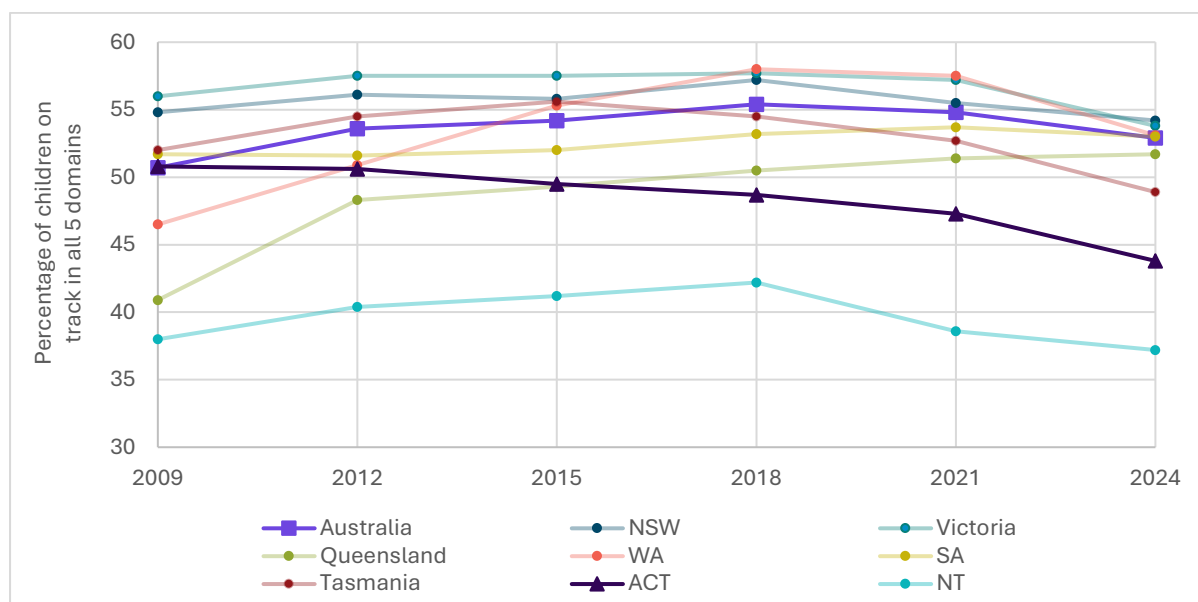


Figure 15: Comparison of Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) results across Australia, 2009–2024 (DE (Cth), 2025b)

The ACT result in 2024 is more than 9 percentage points lower than NSW, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, despite the ACT having almost no children living in regional or remote areas and comparatively low levels of socio-economic disadvantage (with these groups typically scoring lower on the AEDC) (DE (Cth), 2025b). Looking in more detail at the individual domains, the ACT scores below all other states (except the Northern Territory) in the domains of physical health and wellbeing (physical readiness for the school day, physical independence and gross and fine motor skills) and communication skills and general knowledge (broad developmental competencies and skills) (DE (Cth), 2025b, p. 6). This data suggests children in the ACT are arriving at school with increasing levels of need.

Stakeholder feedback reflects the AEDC results, noting increasing developmental concerns for children in preschool and kindergarten and decreasing readiness for school.

‘The number of ACT children starting school who are developmentally vulnerable is higher than the national average [...] This shift necessitates more staff, greater focus on inclusion, and attention to work, health and safety for staff.’

Submission, school board member

A common example of cost pressure in primary school settings is the high level of support required for students who are not toilet trained. In preschools, including those located offsite, early childhood education regulations require nappy changing to be undertaken by at least 2 staff, sometimes

necessitating staff travel to offsite locations multiple times each day. This increases staffing costs and reduces flexibility, particularly for primary schools managing multiple offsite preschools.

‘Staffing preschools to ensure compliance when supporting toileting needs is a growing concern across the system [...] This requires a minimum of two Educators (LSAs) per class.’

Submission, public school principals

Stakeholders suggested that one potential reason for decreased school readiness was a perceived decrease in the availability of early intervention services, which began after the introduction of the NDIS. Stakeholders suggested this had the effect of increasing wait lists to access key developmental support services, such as occupational therapists.

Strengthening the effectiveness of early intervention and developmental support to ensure children are school ready would improve student outcomes and reduce the escalating costs absorbed by schools in addressing needs that may be better mitigated earlier in childhood. This is discussed in more detail in *Chapter 5, Section 5.3.5*.

Finding: There are now significant additional cost pressures associated with the early years of schooling, which are not adequately accounted for in the base funding model. These impact early childhood, primary and combined schools (P–10) for the primary allocation component. At present primary students are allocated only 79.6% of the base funding of secondary students in 2026 (DE (Cth), 2026).

This points to the need to reconsider the differential base funding allocations for primary students compared to secondary. However, given the significant number of high schools and colleges over budget, there is not scope to rebalance within the existing funding envelope. Instead, this requires medium-term consideration within the national context.

Recommendation 22

Given the increasing costs associated with early childhood and primary schools, consideration must be given to reviewing the current differential base funding model under the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS), and potentially the Student Resource Allocation (SRA), between primary and secondary school students.

Other school types also experience unique conditions and challenges. High schools and colleges have specialised infrastructure for elective subjects and therefore need to employ specialist teachers and balance the different requirements of Vocational Education and Training (see *Chapter 6, Section 6.5.2* for more on VET and Registered Training Organisations). Colleges also note additional workload pressures to meet the requirements of the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies. The Panel considers these pressures to be meaningful but is of the view they can be managed by improvements to the operating model and budget management systems as outlined in Chapters 5 and 6, along with internal adjustments.

7.3 Resourcing students with disability

Resourcing students with disability is one of the most significant and fast-growing challenges facing the ACT public school system. The number of students requiring adjustments is increasing, and the

way funding is allocated to support these students has implications for equity, school sustainability and student outcomes.

This section addresses the methodology for allocating funding within the ACT public school system to support students with disability. Funding to the system is based on the SRS loading for students with disability, which funds students at the highest 3 levels of adjustment under the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data for School Students with Disability (NCCD).

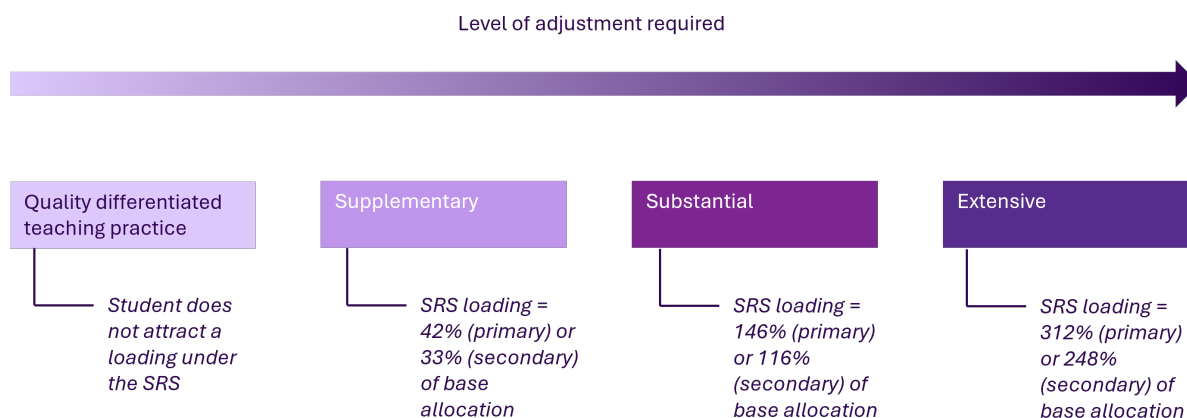


Figure 16: NCCD levels of adjustment and associated Schooling Resource Standards (SRS) loadings

Finding: The disability loading under the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) is the only one that is not binary, is based on need and is the largest and fastest growing within the system. The Australian Government has committed to reviewing the SRS. Because of the significance of the disability loading, it is a matter that clearly needs to be considered within the national review.

While the ACT has collected NCCD data since 2013 and received SRS funding based on this data since 2018, until 2026 SRA funding for students with disability was determined through a diagnosis-based funding model. Under that model, around 6% of students attracted funding. From 2027, an educational adjustment-based model aligned with the NCCD is scheduled to be implemented.

Under the new model in the ACT from 2027, similar to the SRS, students categorised in the supplementary, substantial or extensive adjustment categories will attract funding to their school through the SRA. Students who have a disability and whose adjustment needs can be met through quality differentiated teaching practice are considered to have a disability, but will not attract funding, consistent with the SRS.

This transition is expected to see an increase of students attracting SRA funding for disability from approximately 6% to over 17%. In 2025, 16.9% of ACT students required adjustments under the 3 NCCD categories that attract SRS funding (supplementary, substantial and extensive). NCCD rates are growing every year, so in 2027 the percentage of students in those categories will likely be higher than 17%.

At this stage the total quantum of funding allocated to supporting students with disability across the system is not planned to increase. This would leave the system in a position of either redistributing the existing funding envelope across a much larger number of students or trying to meet additional need from other existing resources.

Regarding redistribution of the existing funding envelope, the Panel heard consistently from both schools and the central office that the existing funding for students with disability is insufficient to meet the needs of all students at their local school. Redistributing this amount more widely is therefore not a viable option.

Meeting additional need from within existing resources may be a viable strategy to a certain extent. For example, some funding to address work health and safety incidents – many of which involve students who have a disability – could be repurposed to better support these students through early intervention and supports (as outlined in *Chapter 6, Section 6.3*). However, the Panel’s view is this would not constitute the increase required.

Finding: The existing funding envelope in the ACT for supporting students with disability is not sufficient to meet all children’s needs.

Recommendation 23

The ACT Government’s funding for students with disability in public schools needs to be demand-driven and responsive to assessed need. To achieve this:

1. The ACT Government should increase the envelope of funding allocated to supporting students with disability in public schools, so every school can be appropriately allocated funding for students with disability when the new adjustment-based resourcing model is introduced in 2027.
2. The envelope of funding will need to be reviewed annually in response to the outcome of assessments and adjustments required.

7.4 Resourcing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are adequately resourced is central to achieving equitable outcomes in the ACT public school system and to meeting commitments under Closing the Gap. The way funding is allocated and distributed to support these students therefore warrants close examination.

The SRA allocates funding to each school (as cash rather than a staffing allocation) under the cultural integrity allocation. The formula for calculating this in 2025 was based on a flat rate per school (\$3,060), plus an additional allowance per Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolled (\$243 per student in most year levels, with higher rates of \$340 in years K-2 and \$389 in transition years 7 and 11). There is concern these amounts are lower than per-student funding in other jurisdictions². The amounts are also significantly lower than the SRS loading for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students – which start at \$2,893.40 per primary student and \$3,636 per secondary student in 2026 (DE (Cth), 2026) and scale up based on the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the school.

SRS amounts are by design intended to be distributed between schools and the central office – and the central office does offer a range of policy and program supports to schools for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, including the Indigenous Education Officers mentioned in *Chapter 5, Section 5.3.6*. However, from the perspective of schools and communities, the portion of this funding that flows to schools does not always feel effectively targeted.

² For example, Western Australia provides funding of approximately \$2,000 to \$3,000 per student (DoE (WA), 2025).

Finding: The allocation and distribution of funding for supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is not transparent, with schools seeing limited funding per student.

Recommendation 24

To achieve significant improvement in engagement and outcomes in education for ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, there should be a review of the adequacy of funding and the allocation of that funding to schools and at a system level, to achieve education targets under Closing the Gap.

7.5 Resourcing students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect

Students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) represent one of the fastest-growing cohorts in the ACT public school system, with demand for language support increasing more rapidly than the funding allocated to meet it.

As outlined in *Chapter 4: Cost drivers*, from 2017 to 2025 the ACT saw a 37% increase in the numbers of students in the Beginning, Emerging and Developing stages of the Australian Curriculum EAL/D Learning Progression. These students attract a loading under the SRA.

The calculation of the SRA loading works from a total envelope allocated each year for the EAL/D loading. Central office data shows that, while the number of EAL/D students in the ACT eligible for funding increased by 37% from 2017 to 2025, the total funding envelope for the loading increased by only 19%. This increase did not keep pace with the consumer price index, which rose 27% during the same period (ATO, 2025). This significant decline in funding in real terms has contributed to decreased funds available per student, and a large increase in the number of students per EAL/D teacher. Internal census data from 2025 showed 20% of schools did not have an EAL/D teacher to implement EAL/D programs in their school.

EAL/D funding also does not cover international students (except refugees) who are fee-exempt or have fee waivers. Central office data shows the number of fee-exempt EAL/D students increased sharply from around 500 in early 2024 to more than 1,200 by August 2025. As these students are fee-exempt and do not attract EAL/D funding, schools with high numbers of these students are meeting essential language needs using general school funding, placing a growing burden on already constrained budgets.

Finding: Funding to support students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) has not kept pace with the growth of this cohort since at least 2017.

Recommendation 25

To achieve education outcomes for students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D), the envelope for the EAL/D loading under the Student Resource Allocation (SRA) should be reviewed to ensure it grows in alignment with the total level of need for the EAL/D student population in the ACT.

7.6 Equity implications of private income sources

While not a component of the resource allocation methodology, private income sources (see *Section 2.2.4* for a summary of these) represent a stream of funding to schools and were raised throughout consultation. Many consultation participants expressed unease about the role of private sources in supplementing the funding of public schools because of the equity implications it raises in a public education system.

‘[Private funding] cannot be relied upon for necessary supports and amenities [...] reliance on this only further disenfranchises schools in lower income communities and makes it so that people in richer areas have access to better education.’

Survey respondent, public school staff member

There is indeed great disparity in schools’ ability to raise private income, often connected to the socioeconomic status of the local community and its capacity to make voluntary contributions. Central office data indicated that in 2025, the school with the lowest voluntary contributions raised only a few hundred dollars, while the highest raised approximately \$279,000 (it should be noted the second highest raised around \$85,000). Research shows this differing ability to generate private income can further widen inequities between public schools that serve more and less advantaged communities (Hogan & Thompson, 2023; Rowe & Perry, 2020).

It should be noted local community capacity is not the only influencing factor. Other variables including the school’s capacity to engage with philanthropic partners, and the quality of facilities for community hire also impact this funding stream.

Finding: Access to private income sources is uneven across the ACT public school system meaning some schools have greater ability to offer enrichment, extra facilities and other programs, which compounds inequity.

By their nature, private income sources for schools are difficult to measure, and some are not visible to the system at all (e.g. the impact of initiatives funded directly by P&Cs). Beyond socio-educational disadvantage already accounted for in the SRS and SRA, some contributions may improve the position of individual public schools; however, centralising and redistributing these contributions would likely reduce the total amount raised.

Other jurisdictions have designed approaches that seek to supplement funding for schools with low capacity to raise private income, without reducing funding for schools that are able to generate higher levels of parent contributions. For example, in New Zealand, schools in less advantaged areas are eligible to opt into a scheme whereby they receive funding directly from the government (\$166 per student in 2026) but cannot ask parents for voluntary contributions except for overnight camps (MoE (NZ), 2026). Schools that do not opt-in can raise private income through usual channels. While this approach ensures the least-advantaged schools still receive a minimum amount, it does not address the equity issue, as the most-advantaged schools will likely still raise far more than \$166 per student.

Another way to promote greater equity is by covering some of the education costs that would otherwise be borne by families, to ensure more equitable access to things like extracurricular activities, camps, excursions and uniforms. In Queensland schools receive \$100 per primary student

and more for secondary students – held by the school but directed by parents towards costs of learning materials (DoE (Qld), 2026a). In Victoria a similar fund exists for low-income students to fund camps, sports and excursions (DE (Vic), 2026).

The ACT has a similar model, except that it funds families directly, rather than having schools hold those funds. Under the Future of Education Equity Fund, eligible low-income families receive funds directly, which they can use for uniforms, excursions, and/or extracurricular activities (Education Directorate (ACT), 2025e). In 2026, this fund offers \$400 a year for preschool students, \$500 for primary, and \$750 for high school and college. The Equity Fund is also open to eligible students attending non-government schools in the ACT.

Given the existing measures in place and the challenges of balancing for equity without reducing total contributions (which no other system has achieved), the Panel notes this issue but does not provide recommendations.

7.7 Chapter summary

This chapter analysed aspects of the current resource allocation methodology and recommended review and adjustments to the way resources are allocated for:

- specialist schools
- schools with children in the primary cohort
- students with disability
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- EAL/D students.

The Panel also commented on the issue of private income sources and the challenge of attracting these whilst also promoting equity across the system.

Broadly, the SRA is a viable resource allocation methodology which requires some adjustments to reflect a greater equity focus, as outlined in this chapter. The application of the SRA should have far greater transparency so that schools understand exactly how their funding is calculated (as discussed in *Chapter 5, Section 5.3.4*).

One major adjustment required in relation to the resource allocation methodology is that significantly more total funding is needed to support students with disability. Some of this can be redirected from existing funding areas – for example, from the large overspend on management of work health and safety incidents (see *Chapter 6, Section 6.3*). However, this will also require an additional injection of funds, particularly as the ACT transitions in 2027 to a new, adjustment-based resourcing model for disability.

This chapter concludes the Panel's analysis for this Review.

8 Future directions

The ACT public school system has a proud history of achievements on which it can build a solid future of improved educational outcomes for the ACT community. The changes experienced by the ACT community since the establishment of the public education system in 1973 and the proclamation of self-government in 1989, and more recently as a result of COVID-19 in the 2020s, present an opportunity to review, renew and reform the system in pursuit of greater equity, excellence and sustainability. This report sets out findings and recommendations to guide changes required to steward the system to achieve these outcomes. Ultimately, it will be up to the ACT Government, the Education Directorate, schools and school communities and a range of key stakeholders to refine, shape and implement policies that will benefit the ACT community.

Key themes within the report should guide the change process that will follow. These include:

- recognition of the immediacy of key cost pressures and the direct impact these have on students, staff and the system
- the need for the Education Directorate to operate as one system bringing together schools and the central office with a focus on consistent, evidence-based practice supported by strong and well-resourced central support services
- equity as an ongoing, guiding principle and priority, with student and school need driving the allocation of resources
- opportunities to respond to resourcing challenges through both reprioritisation and redistribution of existing resources, alongside targeted additional investment where required.

The report is wide-ranging, reflecting the breadth and diversity of the public education system: a system that engages with tens of thousands of children and young people and their families, dedicated public education staff and a range of key stakeholders. Implementing the report's recommendations will take time, upfront investment and sustained change management effort across the system to bring the organisation together, embed new ways of working, establish consistent supporting systems and give effect to a shared vision. Reform will require a multi-year program of change, underpinned by a continuous process of monitoring, adjustment, improvement and prioritisation.

Not everything can be done immediately. Many of the recommendations in this report will require careful sequencing to ensure they are implemented effectively. The report also reflects on the importance of focusing on a manageable number of priorities and delivering them well, rather than over-committing and under-delivering. While the Panel has not been able to set out a detailed sequencing of short-, medium- and long-term actions within the time available, several areas emerged as early priorities as they will enable further changes. These include:

- building system capability, including in data, finance and human resources
- driving organisational culture and structural reform
- strengthening central supports to schools.

By focusing first on these foundational areas, the system can better equip itself to manage further change with greater coherence and impact.

In support of implementation, the ACT public education system is fortunate to be comprised of dedicated, hardworking and professional staff, community members, stakeholders, leaders, families and students who believe in public education and are ready to contribute to meaningful change. The organisation can and should draw on this collective commitment in designing and shaping a public

education system that delivers both equity and excellence, while remaining sustainable in the changing ACT and national landscape.

The Panel was consistently moved by the passion, professionalism and openness to improvement demonstrated in all the extensive consultations that informed this report. It is this combination of commitment, clarity of purpose and alignment between operating model and resourcing that will ultimately determine the success of reform and the future strength of public education in the ACT. The Panel is optimistic about the future of the system and commends its staff, school communities and all stakeholders for their readiness to embrace the change necessary to realise that future.

9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix A – Terms of Reference

ACT Public School System Resourcing Review

Terms of Reference

Preamble

ACT public schools deliver education for children and young people with a focus on excellent, fair and equitable education where all students feel safe, valued and supported to thrive.

There are currently 92 ACT public schools with the 93rd school due to open at the start of 2026. ACT public schools deliver education to more than 50,000 students, including through early childhood and preschools, primary schools, high schools, colleges, and specialist schools.

Funding for ACT public schools is informed by the Schooling Resourcing Standard (SRS), a nationally consistent formula for funding allocation based on student enrolments. The ACT is the only jurisdiction in Australia to exceed the SRS funding allocation for public education. Despite this, the majority of ACT public schools are not currently on track to remain within their budget allocations for 2025.

A national review of the SRS is being progressed by Education Ministers as part of the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, however this work is currently not due to be completed until 2029.

Under chapter 4A of the *Education Act 2004*, the Minister for Education and Early Childhood may establish a school education advisory committee as required to advise the Minister about school education or a related matter, for a specified period. The Minister, Yvette Berry MLA, has established this Public School System Resourcing Review Expert Panel to provide independent advice on ACT public school funding allocations in meeting the core requirements and expectations for quality education provision.

Membership

The Expert Panel will be chaired by Ken Smith AO.

Other members of the Expert Panel are:

- Julie Sonnemann
- Associate Professor Anna Hogan
- Hayley McQuire
- Dr Bill Maiden PSM OAM

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Members have been appointed based on their experience in system operational leadership, education system expertise, economics and advocacy.

Members will uphold the ACT Government code of conduct for members of boards or committees.

Role and functions

The Expert Panel has been established to provide the Minister with independent advice on the resourcing needs of the ACT public school system. This will include an assessment of the funding required to provide public education in the ACT, how to most effectively and efficiently use funding provided. The Expert Panel will also explore the best model of central support services for schools in a small jurisdiction.

While a review of the broader human services system is out of scope, the review will acknowledge the broad context that ACT public schools currently operate in, including the social and economic policy settings and their impacts on delivery of education. This includes factors outside the education system that impact on demand for student support within schools, including limited access to external services such as mental health care, disability support, and early intervention programs, and the extent to which schools are required to respond to unmet needs in the broader service system.

The Expert Panel will review the available evidence, including benchmarking:

- Provide an operating model for a high-performing small public education system, including functions and responsibilities that are best delivered at system level and school level
- Analyse the funding streams into schools, including loadings to support different cohorts of student need
- Define the core educational and operational services schools are expected to deliver within their SRA funding
- Develop baseline staffing and costings required to deliver these core services based on case studies of different school types
- Develop staffing and costings required to deliver current and upcoming government initiatives, based on case studies of different school types, including:
 - Positive Behaviours for Learning (including tiers 2 and 3 supports in-school)
 - Strong Foundations (including Multi-Tiered Systems of Support)
 - Inclusion Strategy (including both small group program and full inclusion models)
 - Set up for Success Early Childhood Strategy.
- Provide advice on exceptions to the baseline staffing and costings for core school services, and for the government initiatives above
- Develop benchmarked service standards for education support services provided to schools from the Education Support Office

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- Provide advice on effective service models to meet service standards.
- Provide advice on costs to deliver services in line with the service standards.
- Provide advice on improving budget management systems, processes and timeframes to improve transparency for principals and allow transparent system oversight
- Provide advice on functions that could be delivered more effectively and efficiency through centralisation within the Education Support Office including costs for delivery and savings for schools
- Provide advice on policy changes that could support schools to operate sustainably.

When considering different cohorts of student need, the Expert Panel will broadly consider diverse and intersecting needs. The Expert Panel will also ensure that any advice and modelling including financial proposals are benchmarked against public and comparative non-government school systems (not individual schools).

External engagement

The Expert Panel will seek external advice in fulfilling its role and functions. The Expert Panel will be informed by engaging directly with stakeholders through an advisory group comprising representatives nominated by:

- Australian Education Union ACT Branch
- Community and Public Sector Union ACT
- United Workers Union ACT
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body
- ACT Parents
- ACT Principals' Association
- ACT School Business Managers' Association
- Other ACT Government Directorates, in particular: Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, Health and Community Services Directorate, and Justice and Community Safety Directorate.

Secretariat

The Education Directorate will organise a Secretariat to provide administrative support for the Expert Panel. In consultation with the Chair, the Education Directorate will coordinate the secretariat to coordinate the provision of research and advice and arrange consultation activities. Where required the Directorate will procure external technical advice to support the work of the Panel and advice to the Minister. The Secretariat will draft the Expert Panel's advice as directed by the Chair and approved by Expert Panel members.

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The Directorate will consider the procurement of additional expert modelling and financial advice to support the Expert Panel in consultation with the Chair.

The Education Directorate will undertake to provide all information and advice needed to support the Advisory Panel in fulfilling their functions as requested from time to time by the Chair.

Reporting

The Secretariat will provide a summary of the Expert Panel's work to the Minister when required or requested. The summary will be approved by the Chair.

The Expert Panel will address the Terms of Reference and present a final report to the Minister by 3 April 2026.

The Minister will table the Expert Panel's final report and the Government's response in the Legislative Assembly by May 2026.

9.2 Appendix B – Further detail on consultation

9.2.1 Schools engaged face-to-face

Specialist schools

1. Black Mountain School
2. Cranleigh School
3. Malkara School
4. The Woden School

Early childhood schools (P–2)

5. Isabella Plains Early Childhood School
6. Lyons Early Childhood School
7. O'Connor Cooperative School
8. Southern Cross Early Childhood School

Primary schools (P–6)

9. Ainslie Primary School
10. Aranda Primary School
11. Arawang Primary School
12. Bonython Primary School
13. Campbell Primary School
14. Duffy Primary School
15. Evatt Primary School
16. Fadden Primary School
17. Farrer Primary School
18. Forrest Primary School
19. Gilmore Primary School
20. Giralang Primary School
21. Gordon Primary School
22. Kaleen Primary School
23. Lyneham Primary School
24. Macquarie Primary School
25. Margaret Hendry Primary School
26. Mawson Primary School
27. Miles Franklin Primary School
28. Monash Primary School
29. Palmerston District Primary School
30. Strathnairn School
31. Taylor Primary School
32. Torrens Primary School
33. Turner School
34. Wanniasa Hills Primary School
35. Weetangera Primary School
36. Yarralumla Primary School

Combined schools (P–10 and 7–12)

37. Amaroo School
38. Caroline Chisholm School
39. Evelyn Scott School
40. Gold Creek School
41. Harrison School
42. Kingsford Smith School
43. Melba Copland Secondary School (7–12)
44. Namadgi School
45. Telopea Park School
46. Wanniasa School

High schools (7–10)

47. Belconnen High School
48. Calwell High School
49. Campbell High School
50. Canberra High School
51. Shirley Smith High School
52. Lanyon High School
53. Melrose High School
54. University of Canberra High School Kaleen

Colleges (11–12)

55. Canberra College
56. Dickson College
57. Erindale College
58. Gungahlin College
59. Hawker College
60. Lake Tuggeranong College
61. Narrabundah College
62. UC Senior Secondary College Lake Ginninderra

9.2.2 Panel meetings

Category	Engagement
Advisory Group meetings	Advisory Group meeting 1, 31 October 2025
	Advisory Group meeting 2, 12 December 2025
	Advisory Group meeting 3, 26 February 2026
Individual meetings with Advisory Group representatives	Australian Education Union
	Community and Public Sector Union
	United Workers Union
	ACT Principals' Association (primary)
	ACT Principals' Association (secondary)
	ACT School Business Managers Association
	ACT Parents
	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body
Meetings with ACT Government and ACT Public Service representatives	Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, Justice and Community Safety Directorate, Health and Community Services Directorate
	Minister for Education and Early Childhood
	Treasurer
	Head of Service
	Director-General, Health and Community Services
External subject matter experts	CEO, Canberra Institute of Technology
	Professor Barney Dalgarno, Chair, Literacy and Numeracy Education Expert Panel
	Ross Fox, Former Director, Catholic Education Archdiocese Canberra and Goulburn
	Sharon Goldfield, Murdoch Children's Research Institute
	Strong Foundations Implementation Partners Group
	Chris Wardlaw PSM OLY
	Julie Elliott, Chair, Education Directorate Audit Committee

Education Directorate leadership and central office business units	Director-General
	Deputy Director-General
	Chief Operating Officer
	Chief Financial Officer
	Finance and Infrastructure
	System Policy and Reform
	School Improvement, including Education Executive Leaders
	Strategic Finance and Procurement
	People and Performance
	Learning and Teaching
	Strategic Policy
	Work, Health and Safety & Managing Complex Behaviours
	Engagement and Wellbeing Support Services
	Early Childhood Education
	Board of Senior Secondary Studies

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