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

ELEVENTH ASSEMBLY

**Future of Education - One public education system - Interim Government
Response to the ACT Public School System Resourcing Review**

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

- Future of Education: One public education system

Interim Government response to the ACT
Public School System Resourcing Review

Acknowledgement of Country

The ACT Government acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the lands of the ACT and recognises any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. The Government also acknowledges the Wreck Bay peoples as traditional owners and custodians of the lands on which Jervis Bay School is located. The ACT Government respects the continuing culture, and the contribution that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make to the life of the region.

The Government pays respect to Elders past and present. We recognise the emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders who are learners in government schools today, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff who support our entire public school system.

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GPO Box 158, Canberra City 2601

act.gov.au

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Introduction

In October 2025, the Minister for Education and Early Childhood commissioned the ACT Public School System Resourcing Review (the Review), led by an independent Expert Panel (the Panel). The Panel was tasked with investigating structural cost pressures and providing advice on how to equitably, effectively and sustainably allocate resourcing across the public education system, after a majority of ACT public schools were projected to exceed their allocated budgets in 2025.

Between October 2025 and March 2026, the Panel consulted widely and reviewed research and expert evidence to understand:

- the key drivers of rising costs across the system
- the methodology used to allocate resources to schools
- the distribution of core services between schools and the central office, and
- options for a clearer and more effective system-wide operating model.

The Panel delivered its final report on 2 April 2026, with 25 recommendations covering a wide range of areas across the public education system. The report found the ACT public school system has real strengths but is also facing pressing challenges in the contemporary education landscape. Broadly, recommendations focused on:

- introducing a new operating model to bring together historically autonomous schools into one public education system with greater consistency, coordination and central support
- allocating resources more equitably according to need
- strengthening accountability, transparency and governance mechanisms
- improving practices for supporting students with complex needs.

This ACT Government response, *Future of Education: One public education system*, marks an important next chapter in the approach to public education in the ACT. Building on current and former strategies, it commits to implementing the core changes proposed in the report by shifting to operate as one public education system. The foundations of this shift have been built over the past decade, first through the *Future of Education Strategy* and more recently through the *Inclusive Education Strategy* and *Strong Foundations* as well as our ongoing commitment to *Closing the Gap*, which prioritise equity and excellence across the system. Through the implementation activities outlined in this Government response, those reforms will be underpinned by structural changes to how the Education Directorate organises itself to deliver on key functions including school operations, business and enabling services.

Implementation will take time and requires a phased approach, backed by initial investment in system improvements that will ultimately deliver greater sustainability for the system in the long term.

Of the 25 recommendations in the report, the Government has **agreed** to 18 and **agreed in principle** to 7. Those recommendations agreed to in principle reflect a need for more detailed review or industrial consultation requirements that will be needed first, in order to deliver on the core intent of those recommendations.

The Government thanks the advocates, community members, students, families and staff who provided advice and input to the Review, and who continue to support the strengthening of public education in the ACT.

Responses to Recommendations

Overview of response

The Government's response commits to generational change in the way public education is delivered and supported in the ACT. The Government is committing to building one public education system, moving away from a legacy of autonomous schools to a coordinated system that is more consistent in its approach, equitable in responding to student need, and financially sustainable.

The ACT public school system became independent from NSW in 1973 with 58 schools and around 30,000 students. The system at the time was designed to empower each school with maximum autonomy, the rationale being that schools were the experts in the needs of their local communities and could innovate to best meet those needs.

Over time, the system has grown to 93 schools in 2026 and around 50,000 students. A central office has also grown alongside schools, providing corporate services as well as strategic policy, service design and delivery, and school planning and improvement functions. However, corporate functions have also continued to be required in each school to support their unique operations. A portion of corporate services resourcing therefore continued to be devolved to schools, leaving central corporate services to be delivered by small teams with limited capacity.

Like the system, the ACT community has also evolved since 1973. Student diversity and complexity have increased, and students who may have previously been excluded from schools or institutionalised are now rightfully attending school – often in the public system with its universal, free access.

Despite these changes, ACT public schools have remained largely autonomous in how they spend money, staff their schools, design learning programs, teach students, manage behaviour and support student wellbeing. This has led to significant inequity between schools that needs to be addressed.

The *Future of Education Strategy* laid the foundation for these changes. The underpinning principles of equity, access, inclusion, and agency continue to underpin our public education system, along with our commitment to evidence-informed practice. We have also been strengthening work to deliver consistency in the way we teach numeracy and literacy, the way we support students with disability and diverse learning needs, our commitment to Closing the Gap and our focus on quality early childhood education. This work depends on a one system approach to achieve consistency and equity in every school, which is why these changes are needed now.

Becoming one public education system will take time and significant transformation of the way the Education Directorate is structured and organised. In responding to this important review, the Government is committed to building a consistent, equitable and sustainable public education system for generations to come.

The Government is investing \$9.326 million to deliver on these reforms. This includes:

- \$2.033 million to review and update funding models to enhance equity
- \$2 million to establish new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance arrangements
- \$1.970 million to increase centralised HR capacity to better meet the needs of schools
- \$1.124 million to increase line management support for principals
- \$0.8 million to support organisational design work
- \$0.5 million to undertake an ICT feasibility study to consider improved financial and HR management systems
- \$0.5 million to update the Education Directorate's Strategic Asset Management Plan
- \$0.4 million to develop a school modernisation pipeline to better inform future government investments.

The Education Directorate will also establish a time-limited implementation team to deliver on these commitments over the next 2 years from reprioritised resources.

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.

Government response: Agree

The Government commits to building one public education system in response to the report's recommendations. This will see the ACT move away from a legacy of autonomous schools towards a coordinated system that is more consistent in its approach, equitable in responding to student need, and financially sustainable. This change builds on the foundations commenced under the *Future of Education Strategy*, and ongoing work to deliver consistency in both evidence-based literacy and numeracy education and support for students with disability and diverse learning needs.

Achieving this change will require the Education Directorate to reorganise and change its ways of working. Organisation design work commenced in the Education Directorate in March 2026 will support this change. The organisation design work will inform structures, functions and ways of working across the central office, which will feed into the development of a new operating model to better meet the needs of our education system. Adoption of a new operating model will be staged and carefully sequenced to ensure staff across schools and the central office have input across the design and implementation phases. Getting this model right will support the ongoing changes required to deliver a more sustainable, equitable public education system over time.

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.*

Government response: Agree

The *Future of Education Strategy* has laid the foundation for these changes, and the underpinning principles of equity, access, inclusion, and agency will continue to underpin our public education system. Moving forward we are delivering on these principles in ACT public schools through *Set up for Success, Strong Foundations, Inclusive Education* and *Closing the Gap*.

A revised organisational structure and shared system leadership between executives and school leaders will be required to deliver strengthened centralised supports for schools and ultimately benefit students and families. The organisation design work underway will deliver a functions and services catalogue as well as structure and capability-building options, which intend to inform stronger central support to schools and transparent resourcing aligned with functions. A new organisational structure is needed to simplify how schools engage with the central office and reduce duplication. The updated structure will support a clearer purpose and strategic alignment across the organisation, underpinned by new models and structures that bring school leaders more into system decision-making.

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.

Government response: Agree

Using and adapting existing resources developed in other jurisdictions is an important part of policymaking and program delivery in any government organisation. In the ACT, leveraging existing resources is even more crucial given the small size of the jurisdiction and the Government's wide range of responsibilities. Established practices for this are already in place. Under *Strong Foundations*, for example, a Memorandum of Understanding was recently agreed between the ACT and Northern Territory Governments to enable ACT schools to use the NT's evidence-based curriculum materials and teaching resources for kindergarten to year 10 English and Mathematics.

The Education Directorate will provide system direction on the education frameworks, materials and resources that can be utilised from other jurisdictions, to ensure alignment with a *one public education system* approach.

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.

Government response: Agree

Organisation design work commenced in March 2026 is helping the Education Directorate clarify the functions required for a successful, contemporary public education system. Additional work will be required to determine how those functions are best distributed between schools and the central office to maximise effectiveness and support student outcomes. In all this work, the principle that resourcing follows function will be paramount: any movement of functions must be accompanied by the resources (including staff) required to deliver them. This work will inform a phased strategy over

multiple years which will include the new system operating model, organisational structure and strategic direction, ensuring resourcing follows function and reforms are implemented in a coordinated and sustainable way.

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.

Government response: Agree

Equity is a guiding principle for ACT public education, and school staffing needs to support this. While existing mechanisms such as the teacher mobility process go some way to supporting workforce movement within the system, the report shows this is not sufficient and not all schools have the staffing they need to meet the needs of their communities. The Government agrees a more coordinated approach is required to support equity in school staffing.

A new team in the Education Directorate will consult with school-based staff to design and implement a refreshed approach to school staffing that supports the system's aim of equity in meeting student needs. All aspects of this work will include close consultation with staff and unions in line with industrial frameworks.

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.

Government response: Agree

High workforce capability is an enabler of a successful system, including the ability to implement other reforms. Significant system-wide capability uplift is already underway in educational leadership and teaching and learning through *Strong Foundations*, including the rollout of evidence-based pedagogical practices like explicit instruction delivered by internationally recognised providers such as DataWORKS. Capability building is also occurring through targeted professional learning focused on disability and inclusive education aligned with the *Inclusive Education Strategy*, including mandated training on the Disability Standards for Education, a suite of opt-in online learning modules, and a pilot of inclusion coaches in schools.

The Government will strengthen business, financial and human resource capability across the system.

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.*

Government response: Agree

The report itself notes that some of the increased personal leave usage observed across the teaching workforce results from staff using leave when they or their families are unwell – where previously they may have come to work. This is a positive change reflecting greater community awareness around illness and transmission, and staff will always be encouraged and supported to use their personal leave whenever they are ill, or they need to care for a family member.

However, the Government knows other drivers including growing workloads and work intensity are also contributing to these increases. The Education Directorate has already begun investigating this increase and the contributing factors and will continue this work with a view to understanding potential additional supports for staff that could mitigate this, including consideration of access to flexible work arrangements. The Government is investing in additional staffing in the Education Directorate to continue investigating causes and mitigations and analyse the impacts on school budgets.

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).

Government response: Agree

The Report recommends reviewing elements of the current resourcing allocation methodology to ensure funding is appropriately targeted to priority cohorts. The Government is investing in a specialist team in the Education Directorate to undertake this review (see response to recommendations 12, and 22–25, for more on this).

When this review is complete and resourcing allocation methodologies updated, clear communications and guidance materials will be published so that schools and school communities can understand how funding decisions are made across the system.

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.

Government response: Agree

Organisation design work commenced in 2026 is helping the Education Directorate establish parameters and success criteria for the functions that need to be delivered by the central office (see the response to recommendation 4 for more). Additional work is required to establish key

performance indicators for measuring school outcomes, noting the Education Directorate's existing strategic indicators already measure student outcomes at the system level. This work will inform the design of high-level key performance indicators for use in ACT Public Service performance and development processes, which have built-in feedback and review cycles each year.

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.

Government response: Agree

In the first instance, the Government will implement this commitment through design and rollout of the Thriving Kids program, a nationally-agreed early support initiative for children aged 0 to 8 with developmental delay or autism who have low to moderate support needs. Thriving Kids will improve and strengthen existing services in the ACT, such as early intervention and allied health supports, and create new services where there are gaps.

The Education Directorate and Health and Community Services Directorate will work together closely as Thriving Kids is implemented, with \$63.4 million over 5 years already committed from federal and ACT funding.

Additionally, existing commitments under the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement* to support connections between schools and other non-school services will support students to come to school ready to learn. This includes work underway to review the Education Directorate's Allied Health Service and improving access to multi-disciplinary services.

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.

Government response: Agree

The Government is committed to working in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, consistent with the Jumbunna report recommendations and Closing the Gap priorities. Community-led advice is fundamental to effective and culturally responsive education policy and is needed to inform implementation of recommendations 12 and 24 with explicit impacts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Implementation of other recommendations (e.g. recommendation 9 – KPIs for central office and schools) should also be informed by advice from this body.

The Education Directorate has commenced a community-led consultation and design process to establish an ongoing body. This includes working with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Corporation as well as engaging with community through ACT-specific channels including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

Recommendation 12

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

Government response: Agree in principle

Per session public preschool funding is already provided equitably to schools for each Koori Preschool and mainstream preschool session they deliver. However, the review has highlighted that per-session funding is supplemented by a small loading for educational adjustments for preschool students with additional learning needs – which is currently calculated based on the population of students attending mainstream sessions. This is because children who attend Koori Preschool can also attend mainstream preschool on other days of the week.

While Koori Preschools also provide adjustments for individual children during those sessions, it is acknowledged that funding for adjustments is not adequately delivered to those preschools. To address this funding inequity, the Government is investing in a specialist team in the Education Directorate to review and amend the funding methodology for all ACT public schools. This will ensure it appropriately balances for equity in the contemporary environment (this team will also support the implementation of recommendations 8 and 22–25). Additional funding may be required following this review.

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.*

Government response: Agree in principle

The Government agrees in principle to implement this recommendation, pending a feasibility analysis to identify enhanced ICT solutions and capability needed to implement this recommendation in full. The feasibility study will investigate the viability of creating a shared digital environment between schools and the central office. The shared environment is a prerequisite for shared financial management and workforce management software which would enable a single data source, shared information management, and enhancements to both SSEMS and to strategic workforce planning.

The STEP model provides a reliable method for projecting enrolments across our system however the model will be updated in 2026 with the most recent data available. Principals will continue to be engaged to provide on ground insights on enrolment projections as part of budget setting processes.

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).

Government response: Agree

The Education Directorate is providing technical assistance to schools to implement the Student Adjustment Matrix (SAM). The SAM is an ACT-specific tool for capturing adjustments made for individual students aligned with the NCCD. Improving the NCCD data collection will ensure the right funding is available from the Commonwealth and ACT to adequately support students with disability in ACT public schools. This team is supporting the transition to an adjustment-based resourcing model from 2027.

Recommendation 15

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

- *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.*
- *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.*
- *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.*

Government response: Agree in principle

Uplifting Tier 1

The Government continues to implement *Strong Foundations* by strengthening universal high-quality teaching and learning (Tier 1) across schools for literacy and numeracy instruction. Dedicated professional learning, curriculum resources and teaching and learning policy changes are strengthening Tier 1 instruction across the system. Effective explicit instruction, consistent classroom routines and clear expectations are inclusive practices that help prevent and reduce behavioural challenges, including for students with additional needs. Many schools are also implementing behaviour supports aligned with these approaches, and stronger central guidance will drive more consistent and coordinated practice.

Improving behaviour management and responding to occupational violence

The Government is directing investment to pilot new approaches to preventing and addressing behaviours that constitute occupational violence under current frameworks. This will draw on existing funding from the ACT and federal governments under the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement*. Workforce capability, multi-tiered systems of support and school-wide behaviour policies are all in scope for the pilot. Following the outcomes of the pilot, the Education Directorate will set system wide expectations on evidence-based and effective behaviour management policies and practices that schools must follow consistently across the public education system.

The Education Directorate has commissioned a review of flexible education which will inform future government decisions in relation to that service offer.

The Government is sensitive to the issues raised in the report about inadvertently labelling students. The pilot will inform future changes to language to ensure it reflects the support required both for students with complex behaviours, and for staff who have a right to safety in the workplace. This work will be carried out in consultation with schools, teachers, students and families.

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.*

Government response: Agree in principle

The Government supports the intent of this recommendation and agrees in principle to implementation subject to industrial consultation. In the first instance, the Government is investing in supporting principal line management.

The exact nature of changes to the Executive Education Leader role will be subject to industrial consultations.

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.

Government response: Agree

The Government agrees to transition all cyclical and planned repairs and maintenance to central management, as part of one public education system. Schools will maintain responsibility for minor, ad hoc repairs and maintenance. The work that will be undertaken to consider which functions are best distributed between schools and the central office will identify the central capacity required to manage and deliver all cyclical and planned maintenance and repairs. Functions currently funded in schools that need to move to central management will do so with their resourcing attached, informed by appropriate industrial consultation.

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.

Government response: Agree in principle

The Government agrees in principle to implement this recommendation, pending review of the existing *ACT Infrastructure Plan – Education* to prioritise upgrades and replacement of school infrastructure to address inclusion, safety and population growth needs, which would inform Government decisions on future capital investment. The Government is investing in work to develop a school modernisation pipeline and update the Education Directorate's Strategic Asset Management Plan to provide further advice to Government on future priorities.

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.

Government response: Agree in principle

The Government supports the intent of this recommendation, that is, to respond to the cost challenge that small schools represent for the system. However, the recommendation implies a minimum enrolment number under which a school should not be considered viable, and the Government does not support this framing. The Government recognises the value of diverse educational environments for the different needs of the ACT community, including in some cases the benefits offered by a small school or setting.

The Government will therefore implement the recommendation's intent by exploring how best to meet regulatory requirements in small schools and preschools without incurring disproportionate costs. This may for example consider greater utilisation of priority enrolment area levers to ensure all schools have sufficient enrolments to deliver an equitable and sustainable education offering and alternative leadership structures such as networked principals for clusters of small schools. This will be undertaken with appropriate industrial consultation and within existing resources in the Education Directorate.

The Directorate will continue to monitor preschool enrolments when determining how many sessions each school operates, including for offsite preschools. Where enrolments for offsite preschools create a viability issue for those schools, the Education Directorate will consider

consolidation of sessions in alignment with the legislative requirements for early childhood education and care 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.

Government response: Agree

The establishment of a new Early Childhood Education Branch in 2025 has aided in enhanced centralised supports for public preschools.

Review of administrative and compliance requirements, including for preschools, VET and RTOs, as well as the functions needed to meet them, will be required. This work will also consider non-core policies and compliance requirements that can be removed.

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.

Government response: Agree

The ACT Government will invest in a review of the funding methodology to develop a new and workable model for our specialist schools. This investment includes funding for an external consultant to assist in undertaking the review. Given the small number of schools within the system and the high needs of the student cohort, it is likely the new methodology will need to be highly tailored and adjusted based on actual needs of each school's student profile each year.

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.

Government response: Agree

The Government will invest in a review of the current resource allocation methodology, to ensure funding is appropriately balanced for equity and aligned with system priorities. This includes examining whether current funding settings appropriately reflect cost pressures across different school types. This investment includes funding for an external consultant to assist in undertaking the review.

In parallel, the ACT Government will engage with other jurisdictions and the Commonwealth on the upcoming national review of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) and the potential to explore the differential funding base between primary and secondary students as part of that 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.*

Government response: Agree in principle

The Government recognises the growing complexity and diversity of student needs in public schools and the importance of ensuring schools are appropriately resourced as the new adjustment-based resourcing model is introduced from 2027. The funding envelope for students with disability is already informed by the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) which determines funding based on actual levels of need within ACT public schools. The allocation of this funding however will also be aligned to the NCCD from 2027, ensuring more equitable allocation of funding according to the profile of student needs in each school. Adjustments, including any additional funding requirements to ensure this funding remains demand-driven will be considered by Government in future budget processes.

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.

Government response: Agree

The Government is committing to review the ACT's resource allocation methodology via a specialist team in the Education Directorate (see recommendation 22 for more). The review will consider how the methodology balances for equity, including exploration of outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This will be informed by consultation with the community body to be established under recommendation 11.

Additionally, existing staff in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education section of the Education Directorate will work alongside community, and internal finance and data areas, to build a shared understanding of how whole-school cultural integrity work and support for individual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can sit alongside each other, both with appropriate resourcing, to enable optimal outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the ACT.

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.

Government response: Agree

The Government is committing to review the ACT's resource allocation methodology via a specialist team in the Education Directorate (see recommendation 22 for more). The review will consider how the methodology balances for equity, including how to ensure resourcing to support EAL/D students matches levels of need.

Additionally, the Education Directorate will investigate the impact of fee exemptions and waivers applied to students under certain visa categories, for example diplomats and some skilled worker visa holders, and engage with the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate and the Australian Government as appropriate to ensure these arrangements offer students the access they need as well as remaining financially sustainable for schools.