

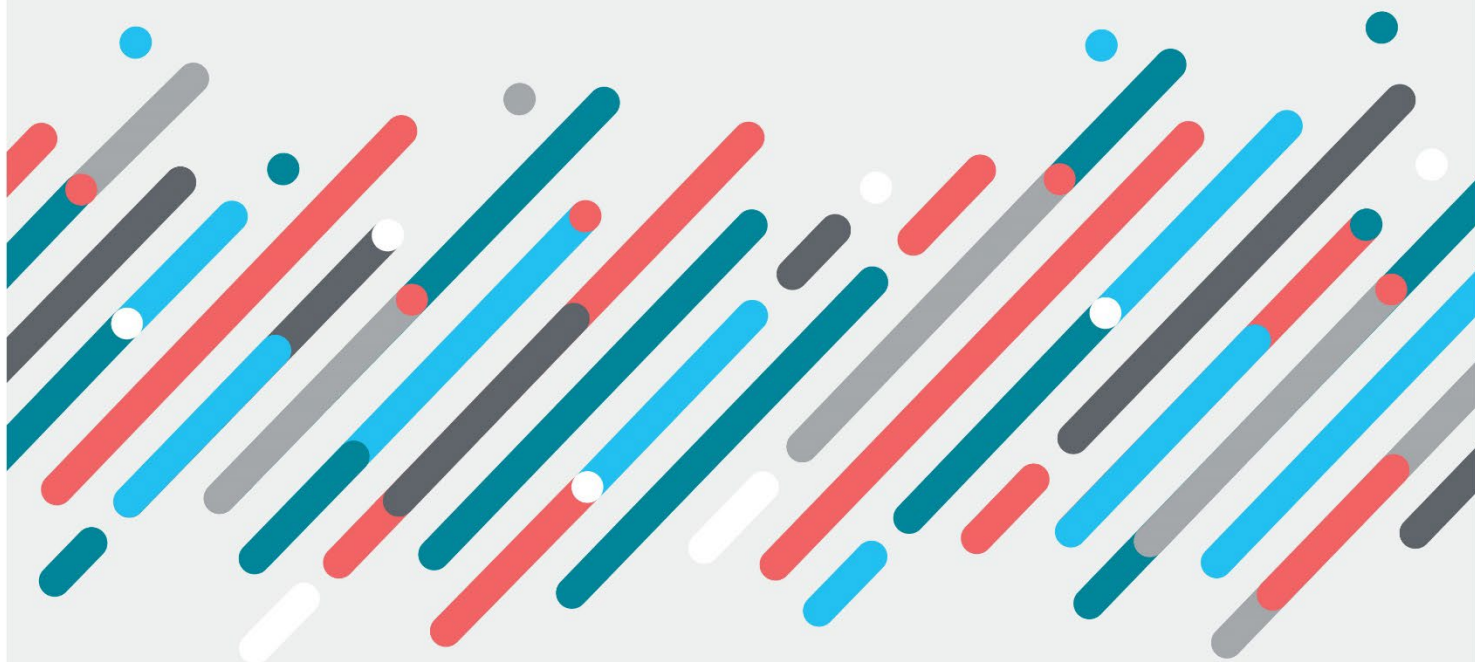


Australian Government
Department of Education

Choice and Affordability Fund Work Plan 2026-27

The Association of Independent Schools of New
South Wales (AISNSW)

Date agreed – 21 November 2025





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Summary of Work Plan 2026-27

The activities proposed under the Choice and Affordability Fund (CAF) are necessary to support independent schools address the national priorities of the fund. Projects and activities include distributed funds provided directly to schools and centralised programs to best support schools. While these activities complement AISNSW core services, the projects are clearly demarcated. The programs go well beyond the normal provision of AISNSW services; the significant project costs of these activities mean their delivery would not be possible without the additional resources provided under the CAF. AISNSW will contribute additional funds for specific project costs where necessary to enhance the impact of the programs and ensure their integrity.

All independent schools represented by the AISNSW Non-Government Representative Body (NGRB) will have opportunities to access program activities including targeted professional learning opportunities for boards, principals, teachers and staff, tailored support, specially developed tools, and high-quality resources informed by strong research. Distributed funds will be available to schools through specific grants programs, under centralised programs, through Transition Assistance and Special Circumstances.

AISNSW will undertake the following activities to support the national priorities of the Choice and Affordability Fund:

Priority A – Choice and affordability of schools

Affordability and Choice Program

The *Affordability and Choice* program will continue to support schools to develop sustainable business models and financial governance practices that will maintain and/or improve affordability and choice for parents by helping schools transition to a different funding level. Support provided by this program also addresses the purpose of Priority B – Transition Assistance. As such, schools receiving transition assistance grants from AISNSW to ease their transition to the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) funding arrangements will be supported by accessing the Affordability and Choice Program. Where necessary, grants will be distributed to subsidise travel necessary to support regional and remote schools access training in metropolitan areas.

Priority B - Transition assistance

Regional Transition Assistance Grants

To best support represented schools transition to the DMI funding arrangements, AISNSW will use the quarantined Regional Transition Assistance funds to provide transition assistance funding directly to each of the 27 schools identified as being eligible to be considered for regional transition assistance.

National Adjustment Assistance Fund

Support will be made available to schools that would have been eligible to receive support through the former National Adjustment Assistance Fund, including transition assistance funding to schools requiring support to transition to the DMI funding arrangements who meet agreed transition assistance criteria.

Additional Transition Assistance

AISNSW will allocate further transition assistance funding to schools requiring support to transition to the DMI funding arrangements who meet agreed transitional assistance criteria.

Priority C - Special circumstances funding

Special Circumstances Funding

AISNSW will distribute grants directly to schools requiring short term emergency assistance when unexpected circumstances or events cause severe and temporary financial difficulty. AISNSW will also provide special circumstances funding to schools in response to priority areas or natural disaster, including drought, flood and bushfire, by establishing specific grant programs. Such programs may also address unexpected and urgent impact of events such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Priority D - Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students

The Waratah Project

The Waratah Project will continue to support participating schools to develop and implement strategies to improve literacy, numeracy and other academic outcomes of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, including initiatives to support wellbeing and strengthen relationships with students' families and communities. Building on the positive impact of the program in 2020-25, AISNSW aims to consolidate and embed the project over 2026-27. Grants will be distributed to schools participating in the program. AISNSW will also contribute up to \$20,000 each year to support the participation of schools not eligible to receive support from AISNSW under CAF.

Strengthening School Outcomes

The *Strengthening School Outcomes* initiative will continue in 2026 and 2027 with expanded scope to develop the capacity of school staff to enhance quality teaching practices to improve student and school outcomes at a whole school level. *Strengthening School Outcomes* will encompass long-term quality improvement planning for schools; improved use of school data; support to strengthen teaching practice and impact; support to improve teacher quality and extend teachers' professional practice against the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*; and provision of quality assured resources to optimise and improve school operations and outcomes.

Teaching School Hubs

The *Teaching School Hubs* will continue to support the development of 'classroom ready' initial teacher education graduates through employment of current initial teacher education students in independent schools during their studies. Building on the positive impact of the program in 2020-25, this initiative will continue to support participating schools and initial teacher education students to assist with retention of those graduates in the teaching profession, and to develop a stable, nuanced high quality teacher pipeline. The Teaching Schools Hub also benefits existing staff through enhanced skills through mentoring and reflection on practice.

Strengthening School Leadership

Strengthening School Leadership is a new initiative aimed at strengthening school leadership by supporting principals, deputy principals, senior staff and middle leaders across independent schools in NSW. It is designed to strengthen the sustainability and effectiveness of school leadership in independent schools by enhancing leadership confidence and competence, improving decision making, and equipping school leaders to better support staff, ultimately contributing to improved school culture, staff retention, student outcomes, and a sustainable pipeline of future leaders. It will build leadership capacity, professional networks and foster deeper engagement with the broader education community through a range of tailored, evidence-informed support such as professional companionship, group reflective practice, expert-led professional learning, networking, and shadowing opportunities.

Priority E - Student wellbeing and support

Behaviour Support, Student Engagement and Anti-bullying

Behaviour Support, Student Engagement and Anti-bullying builds capacity in schools through a suite of three interconnected initiatives designed to address student behaviour and respond effectively to bullying which are critical to ensuring safe, respectful, and engaging learning environments. The *Classroom Practices* initiative will support teachers to implement proactive, evidence-based classroom practices that encourage positive behaviour and engagement. The *Challenging Behaviour* initiative will provide teachers with strategies to support student self regulation and manage escalating behaviour, as well as guidance on appropriate planning processes. The *Anti-bullying* initiative will assist school leaders to strengthen tier-two responses when incidents are identified, including refining policies, procedures, and referral pathways, and engaging families effectively. These initiatives will be delivered through a leadership-focused train-the-trainer model, designed to be sustainable and adaptable, enabling school leaders and experienced teachers to embed professional learning, strategies and resources within their school context to suit their needs.

Whole-school Wellbeing

Whole-school Wellbeing will continue to be offered and expanded in 2026 and 2027. Three new initiatives will be introduced that build on and complement existing initiatives, providing four interconnected services as a broad suite of supports designed to strengthen wellbeing for students, staff, and the wider school community. Together, these four initiatives provide a cohesive, evidence based suite of supports that enable schools to embed and sustain wellbeing practices at multiple levels. By strengthening the capacity of staff, leaders, and school communities, the initiatives will contribute directly to the CAF priority of ensuring safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments that enhance student engagement, belonging, and resilience. The initiatives include a *Whole-school Wellbeing* program where schools are supported to develop, review, and strengthen whole-school wellbeing across their communities, building the capacity needed for a sustainable, whole-school approach to student wellbeing. In addition, schools can access *two extension pathways* designed to embed, sustain, and strengthen their wellbeing practices. Schools can also access a *Whole-school Wellbeing Audit Tool* to conduct a structured analysis of their wellbeing practices with support from AISNSW Consultants with expertise in wellbeing. There will also be a tailored service on *Trauma Informed Practice* designed to support schools in adopting trauma-informed approaches aligned to their context and values.

Overarching Risk Management

Risk	Treatment: How the risk will be managed
In person delivery of professional learning prevented due to impacts of natural disaster, pandemic or like event	AISNSW has invested in the necessary infrastructure to dial up availability of remote delivery as required to replace in person professional learning as necessary. AISNSW already offers a range of learning options to meet the needs of a diverse schools sector; on-demand learning, such as access to recorded webinars, self-paced eLearning modules and easy access to online AISNSW support materials among them.
Distributed funds unspent by schools	Schools agree to terms of expenditure to receive CAF funds. Schools in receipt of any government funds distributed through AISNSW are required to complete an annual financial acquittal process confirming the funds were received and expended for the purpose they were provided.
School unable to fulfil its commitment to a CAF program (early withdrawal)	Schools are invited to express interest to AISNSW to participate in CAF projects. After the commitment required from the school is clearly explained to them, AISNSW determines whether the school is ready to give the required commitment of time and resources to ensure success. This selection process ensures more schools complete their project commitment.
External partner fails to deliver	Contractual agreements in place for external partners, setting out agreed milestones, deliverables and expectations.

Budget for 2026–2027

Priority	Activities/Initiatives	2026		2027	
		Centralised \$	Distributed \$	Centralised \$	Distributed \$
A – Choice and Affordability	Affordability and Choice	1,069,572	130,000	1,101,659	130,000
B – Transition Assistance	Regional Transition Assistance	0	4,987,329	0	5,110,472
	National Adjustment Assistance Fund	0	1,876,218	0	1,519,688
	Additional Transition Assistance	0	1,594,890	0	1,551,593
C – Special Circumstances	Special Circumstances	0	1,000,000	0	0
D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students	The Waratah Project & Wingara Project	976,706	922,500	1,006,007	922,500
	Strengthening School Outcomes	1,976,438	350,000	1,675,232	360,500
	Strengthening School Leadership	517,911	0	533,448	0
	Teaching School Hubs	640,856	1,075,000	660,082	1,075,000
E – Student wellbeing and support	Behaviour Support, Student Engagement & Anti Bullying	1,544,692	0	1,591,033	0
	Whole-school Wellbeing	1,784,139	0	1,837,663	0
Administrative costs		312,268	0	319,175	0
Total		8,822,582	11,935,937	8,724,299	10,669,753

Other funding sources

Activities/Initiatives	Other funding source	2026	2027
Affordability and Choice	Co-contribution from participating schools	\$503,800	\$513,990
	AISNSW Contribution	\$642,450	\$642,450
The Waratah and Wingara Projects	AISNSW contribution and co-contribution from schools AISNSW does not represent as an NGRB	\$20,000	\$20,000
Strengthening School Outcomes	Co-contribution from participating schools	\$684,000	\$813,000
	AISNSW Contribution	\$256,000	\$256,000
Teaching School Hubs	Co-contribution from participating schools	\$1,935,000	\$1,935,000
	AISNSW Contribution	\$262,000	\$262,000
Strengthening School Leadership	Co-contribution from participating schools	\$163,000	\$163,000
	AISNSW Contribution	\$90,000	\$90,000
Behaviour Support, Student Engagement & Anti-bullying	Co-contribution from participating schools	\$88,200	\$88,200
	AISNSW Contribution	\$100,000	\$100,000
Whole-school Wellbeing	Co-contribution from participating schools	\$136,000	\$136,000
	AISNSW Contribution	\$85,000	\$85,000

Affordability and Choice Program

Activity/Initiative	Affordability and Choice Program
Priority	A – Choice and Affordability

Description

AISNSW will continue to deliver the Affordability and Choice Program in 2026 and 2027, to assist schools maintain ongoing financial viability and support parent choice and opportunity. Program activities seek to enhance strategic financial governance for schools and school boards, underpinned by the continued development of sound financial management practices in schools.

AISNSW will continue delivery of professional learning on financial management and financial literacy, strategic planning for school capital assets, negotiating and understanding contracts and cash flow modelling. AISNSW Governance specialists will also provide targeted support to school boards and school leaders to support them ensure ongoing operational viability. This will include the delivery of professional learning in risk management, not for profit requirements, crisis management and business continuity.

AISNSW will continue delivery of the *AISNSW Cyber Security Advisory Program*, designed to improve governance and financial management practices by providing support for schools in cybersecurity. School leaders will access support and education from AISNSW cyber security specialists to address the increasing financial risks associated with cyber security threats to schools. The *AISNSW Cyber Security Advisory Program* includes a targeted education campaign to raise awareness among school leaders of the specific cybersecurity threats facing schools today, the potential financial costs and the actions schools can take to mitigate risks. Due to increasing demand for this program in 2025, the program will be scaled up from 2026 to allow access by more schools.

Travel subsidies will be made available to support regional schools to meet additional travel costs involved in accessing Sydney-based training programs.

Eligible schools

All independent schools represented by the AISNSW NGRB are eligible to access the activities under this program.

Timeframes

The Affordability and Choice Program will be delivered in 2026 and 2027.

Outcomes

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
Schools will be supported to maintain ongoing financial viability due to improved financial literacy of executive level decision makers.	- By the end of 2027, at least 100 school leaders and board members from independent schools will participate in courses covering financial literacy to improve decision making. - By the end of 2027, at least 80 school business managers from independent schools will participate in courses covering education

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
	sector financial operations, funding, taxation and compliance to improve sound financial management practices.
School leaders and school boards will be supported to ensure ongoing operational viability through good governance knowledge of executive level decision makers.	• By the end of 2027, at least 250 board members and school leaders from at least 60 schools will participate in professional learning courses covering key responsibilities such as financial governance; risk management; not-for-profit compliance; crisis management; and business continuity. • By the end of 2027, at least 1500 board members and school leaders from at least 150 schools will participate in online modules including financial compliance; risk management; not-for-profit requirements; legal compliance; strategic thinking in schools; reputation risk; executive supervision; and critical priorities of the board.
School leaders will have increased: • awareness about cybersecurity, privacy, fraud and financial risk for schools. • capacity to evaluate the strength of their own cybersecurity and data security measures, identify threats (including threats to insurance), prepare for and protect against cyber-attacks.	• By the end of 2027, at least 100 schools will receive support from the AISNSW Cyber Security Advisory Program. Support may include: – An audit of the school's IT systems by AISNSW and/or an expert cybersecurity vendor. – Participation in AISNSW cyber security professional learning, online modules and/or webinars on topics including cyber risks, cyber security threat assessment, cyber security scenario-based workshops, selecting and adopting a cybersecurity benchmarking framework, cybersecurity and the Australian Privacy Principles, developing a Notifiable Data Breach Response Plan, developing a school cybersecurity policy, and educating school staff about their role in maintaining cybersecurity. – Dedicated support for schools that experience a data breach or near miss. – Accessing discounted products and services that help to mitigate cyber risks.

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
	• At least 100 participants from independent schools attend an annual AISNSW Cybersecurity Symposium in 2026 and 2027. ✓ At least 75% of participants report increased awareness of cybersecurity issues for schools and increased capacity to understand and prepare for potential cyber security threats. • By the end of 2027, at least 100 school board members across a range of schools will complete a cybersecurity online learning module educating school boards about their responsibilities in overseeing the school's management of cyber risks. • By the end of 2027, school executive and ICT Teams from at least 25 schools participate in a dedicated AISNSW Cybersecurity Table Top Workshop. This interactive workshop is designed to help independent schools strengthen their response to cyber incidents, through real-world simulations. ✓ A formal Cyber Security Tabletop Report is provided for 100% of participating schools to implement recommendations that are specifically targeted to heighten their cyber security defences. • By the end of 2027, at least 25 schools receive a partial activation grant to undertake an ethical hack by a reputable third party to help identify cyber risks relevant to their school context and remediation strategies to address the risks.
Barriers to accessing Sydney based training will be eased for regional schools otherwise unable to attend.	• By the end of 2027, at least 150 school leaders and/or board members from regional schools receive travel support grants to attend face to face training in Sydney under the Affordability and Choice Program.

Key stakeholders

All independent schools represented by the AISNSW NGRB will have the opportunity to participate in activities as appropriate, with schools receiving Transition Assistance Funding under Priority B and regional schools identified as key stakeholders.

Regional Transition Assistance

Activity/Initiative	Regional Transition Assistance
Priority	B – Transition Assistance

Description

In 2026 and 2027, AISNSW will continue to provide Regional Transition Assistance grants directly to identified regional schools to support them transition to the DMI funding arrangement, easing their transition to a lower funding level.

In 2020, AGDESE provided AISNSW with a list of 27 schools eligible to be considered for regional transition assistance under CAF. In 2026 and 2027, AISNSW will provide each of these schools with an annual grant to help offset the immediate impact of DMI, allowing them to continue to adjust their financial planning to sustain the lower funding level in the long term. AISNSW will work with schools to ensure their long term financial sustainability plans will allow them to successfully adjust to a lower funding level through the Affordability and Choice Program.

Eligible schools

The 27 schools identified by AGDESE as being eligible for regional transition assistance. AISNSW will distribute AISNSW CAF funds quarantined for regional transition assistance to these 27 schools by 2029.

Timeframes

AISNSW will distribute **\$10,097,801** over 2026 to 2027 to the 27 eligible schools. AISNSW has calculated grant amounts and communicated the amounts to the schools. Each school has signed a funding agreement committing to specific accountability conditions in return for receiving the grants at the start of the 2026 and 2027 school years. Schools are required to acquit the funds to AISNSW each year.

In 2027, AISNSW will review the allocation formula to ensure it is providing the fairest distribution of funds to the identified schools based on their need at that point. If necessary, AISNSW will adjust the allocation/s before issuing each school a new funding agreement for 2028 and 2029.

Outcomes

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
Identified schools supported in the transition to the new DMI funding arrangement, allowing them time to adjust their financial planning to sustain the lower funding level in the long term.	The 27 identified schools receive the allocated funds each year in 2026 and 2027.

Key stakeholders

The 27 schools identified in 2020 by AGDESE are the only schools eligible to be considered for regional transition assistance. AISNSW communicates with these 27 schools regularly about their regional transition assistance grant support and provides advice where necessary to support their long term transition plans as their funding moves to the correct level by 2029.

National Adjustment Assistance Fund

Activity/Initiative	National Adjustment Assistance Fund Transition Assistance
Priority	B – Transition Assistance

Description

In 2026 and 2027, AISNSW will continue to provide National Adjustment Assistance Fund Transition Assistance grants directly to schools to support their transition to the DMI funding arrangement, easing their adjustment to a lower funding level.

In 2020, AGDESE provided AISNSW with a list of 25 schools that would have met the criteria to have access to support through the former National Adjustment Assistance Fund (NAAF). Of these 25 schools, three are also on the list of identified Regional Transition Assistance schools and are being supported under that category.

AISNSW considered the financial need of the remaining 22 NAAF schools in comparison to all other independent schools and prioritised direct grant assistance to those with the greatest need and determined that nine NAAF schools met the eligibility criteria¹;

- Two of these nine schools received Short Term Transition Assistance, i.e. fixed annual grant amounts between 2020 and 2024. While AISNSW noted the need for some additional support for these schools, short term assistance was determined to be more appropriate to their circumstances.
- Seven of these nine eligible schools will continue to be supported with an annual grant in 2026 and 2027 to help offset the immediate impact of DMI, allowing them to continue to adjust their financial planning to sustain the lower funding level in the long term.

Eligible schools

The 25 schools identified by AGDESE are the only schools eligible to be considered for this transition assistance. Of these 25 NAAF schools, AISNSW will provide direct financial assistance (transition assistance grants) to 12 schools over the life of the CAF Program; three under Regional Transition Assistance and nine under NAAF Transition Assistance. The 13 NAAF schools not provided direct financial assistance did not satisfy AISNSW eligibility criteria, either because they are not experiencing a great enough loss (compared to other schools) and/or because their private income ensures their capacity to accommodate a reduction without additional support (many charge an annual average fee over \$25k per student, and some more than \$30k or \$40k per student).

Timeframes

AISNSW will distribute **\$3,395,906** to seven eligible schools over 2026 to 2027. AISNSW has calculated grant amounts and communicated the amounts to the schools. Each school has signed a funding agreement committing to specific accountability conditions in return for receiving the grants at the start of the 2026 and 2027 school years.

¹ AISNSW applied a consistent methodology to all independent schools represented by the AISNSW Non Government Representative Body (NGRB) to determine those in greatest need of direct financial assistance to support them transition to the DMI funding arrangement.

Schools are required to acquit the funds to AISNSW each year.

In 2027, AISNSW will consider the allocation formula to ensure it is providing the fairest distribution of funds to the identified schools based on their need at that point. If necessary, AISNSW will adjust the allocation/s before issuing each school a new funding agreement for 2028 and 2029.

Outcomes

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
Identified schools supported in the transition to the new DMI funding arrangement, allowing them time to adjust their financial planning to sustain the lower funding level in the long term.	The identified schools receive the allocated funds each relevant year during 2026 and 2027.

Key stakeholders

AISNSW communicates with the seven eligible schools regularly about their National Adjustment Assistance Fund Transition Assistance grant support and provides advice where necessary to support their long term transition plans as their funding moves to the correct level by 2029.

Additional Transition Assistance

Activity/Initiative	Additional Transition Assistance
Priority	B – Transition Assistance

Description

In 2026 and 2027, AISNSW will continue to provide Additional Transition Assistance grants directly to schools to support their transition to the DMI funding arrangement, easing their adjustment to a lower funding level.

Eligible schools

AISNSW developed eligibility criteria and a grant distribution formula to best support schools in greatest need of financial assistance to manage their transition to the DMI funding arrangements. AISNSW applied a consistent methodology to all independent schools represented by the AISNSW NGRB to determine those in greatest need of direct financial assistance to support them transition to the DMI funding arrangement. AISNSW determined that 23 schools met the eligibility criteria (nine of them NAAF schools). In 2024, one school was identified as no longer needing additional transition assistance. In 2026 and 2027, AISNSW will continue to distribute Additional Transition Assistance grants under this program to 13 schools.

Timeframes

AISNSW will distribute **\$3,146,482** over 2026 to 2027 to 13 eligible schools. AISNSW has calculated grant amounts and communicated the amounts to the schools. Each school has signed a funding agreement committing to specific accountability conditions in return for receiving the grants at the start of the 2026 and 2027 school years. Schools are required to acquit the funds to AISNSW each year.

In 2027, AISNSW will review the allocation formula to ensure it is providing the fairest distribution of funds to the identified schools based on their need at that point. If necessary, AISNSW will adjust the allocation/s before issuing schools new funding agreements for 2028 and 2029.

Outcomes

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
Identified schools supported in the transition to the new DMI funding arrangement, allowing them time to adjust their financial planning to sustain the lower funding level in the long term.	The identified schools receive the allocated funds each relevant year during 2026 and 2027.

Key stakeholders

AISNSW communicates with the 13 eligible schools regularly about their Additional Transition Assistance grant support and provides advice where necessary to support their long term transition plans as their funding moves to the correct level by 2029.

Special Circumstances

Activity/Initiative	Special Circumstances
Priority	C – Special Circumstances Funding

Description

Special Circumstances funds may be used by AISNSW to support schools and/or students impacted by special circumstances or in priority areas such as rural, regional and remote locations and areas affected by drought or other natural disasters. The disbursement of Special Circumstances Funding will be dependent on the specific context and situation of each school and/or student.

AISNSW will distribute grants from Special Circumstances Funding directly to schools that require short term emergency assistance when unexpected circumstances cause severe and temporary financial difficulty to the school or in response to other priority areas or natural disasters. Funds to support students will be distributed to schools to provide the necessary support.

In order to receive special circumstance funding, schools must submit an application and provide evidence that their school is in need of assistance or that students are in need of assistance.

Eligible schools

All independent schools represented by the AISNSW NGRB are eligible to apply. In the event a school applies for short-term emergency assistance, AISNSW will assess the application in accordance with the criteria set out in Section 9(c) of the CAF Guidelines.

If a school applies for short term assistance on behalf of a student or group of students, AISNSW will assess the application based on the context and information provided by the school. Where possible and appropriate, the principles set out in Section 9(c) of the CAF Guidelines will be applied to the decision making process.

AISNSW may also use the Special Circumstances Funding to establish specific grant programs to respond to priority areas or natural disasters. Such programs may also address unexpected and urgent impact of events such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Timeframes and Key Stakeholders

Schools in need of Special Circumstances Funding will be provided with financial assistance as needed. As circumstances require, special grant programs will be established and criteria communicated to eligible schools so they may apply.

Outcomes

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
Eligible schools in need of short term emergency grants due to unexpected circumstances receive financial assistance to address the immediate need.	Grants are distributed directly to schools that satisfy the criteria.

The Waratah Project and Wingara Project

Activity/Initiative	The Waratah Project and Wingara Project
Priority	D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students

Description – The Waratah Project

The Waratah Project supports participating schools develop and implement strategies to improve the literacy, numeracy and other academic outcomes of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, including initiatives to support student wellbeing and strengthen relationships with the families and communities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The project's goals are underpinned by priorities of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy 2015 and align with the national priority of the Choice and Affordability Fund to strengthen outcomes for educationally disadvantaged schools and students.

The design and implementation of *The Waratah Project* is informed by external evaluation findings and recommendations by the Jumbunna Institute at the University of Technology Sydney (Jumbunna) of the pilot project, the external evaluation undertaken in 2022 by Murawin, an Indigenous evaluation and social impact organisation, and an external evaluation undertaken by Yulang Indigenous evaluators in 2024 and 2025.

The project is underpinned by the Waratah Outcomes Framework, co-designed by participating schools, AISNSW and the Jumbunna Institute, which identifies four key focus areas for participating schools:

1. Student outcomes: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have improved educational, sociocultural and wellbeing outcomes.
2. Relationship outcomes: Relationships between key stakeholders (in schools and the wider community) have become stronger and more culturally informed.
3. Staff outcomes: School leadership and staff are engaged, supportive and culturally competent towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
4. School outcomes: Indigenous cultures and perspectives are acknowledged, valued, and integrated into curriculum and school life.

Using a proven hub and spoke model, nine networks of schools will operate in 2026 and 2027, each with a designated hub school in the lead. These networks will allow participants to learn from and with each other, leveraging opportunities for professional learning and collaboration. This proven, scalable approach creates a community of practice and a critical mass of effective and innovative practice to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within the NSW independent school sector.

Distributed funding will be provided, through individual agreements with each participating school, to implement tailored strategies and initiatives appropriate to the needs of each school community in line with project aims.

Eligible schools – The Waratah Project

All AISNSW NGRB represented schools with a significant number (according to ABS data) of enrolled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are eligible for participation. AISNSW will meet with leadership staff at prospective schools to discuss the time and resource commitment required as part of the selection process. Factors considered for school selection will include demonstrated need (including the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in the school, as well as their enrolment type i.e. day or boarding students), and the school's readiness to commit to the project.

In addition to the schools eligible under CAF, the 2026-2027 cohort includes two schools for which AISNSW is not the designated NGRB, funded by AISNSW and a co-contribution from the school. They include an independent school in the ACT and an independent school in NSW represented by the Catholic Schools NSW NGRB.

Description – Wingara Project

In 2026 and 2027, AISNSW will continue support NSW independent schools elevate the engagement and academic achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and improve retention in education. Due to increasing demand for this program, AISNSW will increase internal capacity from 2026 to allow more schools to participate.

Wingara Project will develop the capacity of school staff to enable cultural responsiveness at a whole school level, authentically engaging parents and communities in students' education. This proven model of responsive, proactive and customised professional learning and advice includes:

- Delivery of tailored professional learning, designed to extend teachers' understanding of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cross-curriculum priority in all Key Learning Areas (KLAs) across Kindergarten to Year 12 (K-12) and to strengthen the cultural responsiveness of NSW independent schools and broader teacher workforce.
- In partnership with Western Sydney University, deliver a NSW independent schools Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Leadership Event to provide Year 8-11 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from across the state with opportunities to engage with cultural workshops, leadership capability building and post-school planning.
- Delivery of online learning webinars designed to promote best practice strategies for supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families in the boarding school context.

Eligible schools – Wingara Project

All independent schools represented by the AISNSW NGRB are eligible to participate.

Timeframes

The Waratah Project and Wingara Project will be delivered in 2026 and 2027.

Outcomes

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
Waratah Project	
Schools will be better equipped to authentically engage parents and community in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' education; with school leaders able to implement effective strategies to enable cultural responsiveness at a whole school level, and school staff able to lead the development and implementation of Personal Learning Processes to meet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' educational and wellbeing outcomes.	- In 2026 and 2027, 44 schools participate in The Waratah Project using a culturally responsive school improvement outcomes framework co-designed by participating schools, and the Jumbunna Institute as a basis for engagement: ✓ 100% of participating schools will engage in and contribute to hub and spoke activities, including collecting baseline data, tracking progress towards identified priorities and identified professional learning. ✓ 100% of participating schools will engage in required monitoring and evaluation activities.
In participating schools, there will be an increase in student academic and other outcomes, and school staff will have increased capacity to use a range of methods and data sources to demonstrate students' progress towards academic and other outcomes. Teachers will demonstrate a greater awareness of culturally inclusive approaches to inform the development of quality learning for and engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through evidence-based pedagogy.	- School reports will identify at least 85% of participating schools reported that for their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, participating in the project led to: ✓ improved academic outcomes ✓ increased aspiration and expectations for further education and future employment ✓ strengthened connection to and pride in indigenous culture and heritage ✓ positive and successful transitions into the school environment
Schools outside of the project will benefit from the learning about what works and why for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in different school contexts.	- Impactful Waratah Project strategies will be shared with other schools, including the sharing of case studies. - Waratah resources will be updated annually and available to all schools through a dedicated webpage.
Wingara Project	
Strengthened post school aspirations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.	At least 120 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 8-11 engage with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Leadership Event, delivered by AISNSW in partnership with Western Sydney University.

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
- School leaders will implement effective strategies to enable cultural responsiveness at a whole school level. - Teachers will demonstrate a greater awareness of culturally inclusive approaches to inform the development of quality learning for and engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through evidence-based pedagogy. - Teachers better understand the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cross-curriculum priority in all KLAS K-12. - School staff will be better equipped to authentically engage parents and community in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' education, particularly for boarding schools.	The project will deliver the following measures of success by the end of 2027: - At least 500 school staff engage in AISNSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education professional learning. Evaluations will show that: ✓ at least 85% of participants report an increased understanding of how best to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through evidence-based practice. ✓ at least 75% of participants report an increased understanding of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cross-curriculum priority in KLAS K-12. ✓ at least 75% of participants report understanding that improving cultural responsiveness at a whole school level is likely to improve the rates of Year 12 completion among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, through improved student engagement and academic achievement, and increased retention. - By the end of 2027, at least 15 school staff will engage in a week long Learning On-Country: East Arnhem Land Cultural Immersion program with AISNSW.
Independent boarding schools will be able to share information and strategies to effectively support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students.	AISNSW Boarding School Network will meet four times a year with participants invited from more than 40 boarding schools.
Barriers to accessing Sydney based training and events will be eased for regional schools otherwise unable to attend.	By the end of 2027, at least 50 school staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from regional schools receive travel support grants to attend face to face training and/or events in Sydney under the Wingara Project.

Key stakeholders

The Waratah Project: Participating schools enter a contract with AISNSW that sets out their obligations for participation and the support provided by AISNSW. AISNSW plans regular touchpoints with individual schools as well as whole network meetings at least each term.

Wingara Project: Professional learning opportunities are advertised on the AISNSW website and distributed to schools via direct email and social media. Information about the Wingara Project offerings is shared with schools via direct email and through established consultative mechanisms.

Strengthening School Outcomes

Activity/Initiative	Strengthening School Outcomes
Priority	D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students

Description

Strengthening School Outcomes will continue in 2026 and 2027, with expanded scope encompassing quality improvement planning for schools, improved use of school data, support for strengthening teaching practice, and quality assured resources to optimise and improve school operations and outcomes.

Strengthening School Outcomes will develop the capacity of school staff to enhance quality teaching practices to improve student and school outcomes at a whole school level, which aligns to Priority D of the Choice and Affordability Fund. Strengthening School Outcomes includes a range of components, including:

- The long-term quality improvement initiative, the *Effective Schools Service* aimed at improving school outcomes. AISNSW will work with individual participating schools for a defined period (one to three years depending on need), supporting school leaders to develop and deliver on strategic improvement goals that will strengthen outcomes for the school in specific priority areas, such as student learning. AISNSW will provide tailored support to each participating school to review the quality of school and educational outcomes and develop practical implementation plans to realise their strategic improvement goals. Individual support for each school is enhanced by the provision of targeted professional learning and cohort network days (metropolitan and regional) where participating schools can share their learning and showcase their improvement stories.
- Schools will be supported to undertake continuous assessment processes throughout their improvement journey using various, context-appropriate mechanisms. As part of the assessment process, schools can elect to access the *Perspectives – Your School in Focus (Perspectives)* suite of surveys and/or the *Effective Schools – School Conditions Rubric* where these align with the needs of the school. Through Perspectives, schools are supported to collect, analyse, interpret, and use data from their schools to develop initial and subsequent improvement goals, and/or use data to evaluate the effectiveness of their implementation plans. Perspectives allows schools to undertake large school data collections across five domains that are known to impact school and student outcomes: School Environment, Teaching and Learning, Student Wellbeing, Leadership and Community. Schools accessing *Perspectives* will be eligible to access a partial subsidy to support their successful completion of the initiative.
- Targeted support will also be available to schools seeking to engage in more focused teaching support over a defined period (two years) through the comprehensive *High Impact Teaching* initiative. This program focuses on quality evidence based instruction with explicit and systematic instruction for all subject areas across all year levels. This support includes a combination of school based professional learning, and where appropriate online self-paced learning modules, delivered by AISNSW teaching specialists. Implementation support is a key additional feature.

- Targeted support designed to improve teacher quality will also be available through a range of professional learning programs and resources to strengthen the quality of NSW independent school outcomes and broader teacher workforce. These programs are designed to extend teachers' professional practice in line with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* at the career levels of Highly Accomplished and/or Lead Teacher, with a focus on individual teacher impact on colleagues and students' outcomes.
- Provision of quality assured resources to support schools to optimise and improve school operations and outcomes.

Teachers and school leaders from regional NSW will be supported to access Sydney based training and professional learning events.

Eligible schools

All independent schools represented by the AISNSW NGRB are eligible to participate.

Timeframes

Strengthening School Outcomes will be delivered in 2026 and 2027.

Outcomes

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
Participating teachers and leaders assess, plan, implement and evaluate priorities that strengthen outcomes for schools.	• By the end of 2027, at least 50 schools will have completed their engagement in Strengthening School Outcomes initiatives.
Participating schools develop and deliver on strategic improvement goals that strengthen outcomes for the school in identified priority areas.	• Evaluation by schools participating in the Effective Schools Service will show: ✓ at least 75% of schools report that leaders demonstrate greater clarity around determining strategic direction ✓ at least 75% of schools have an increased capability to prioritise and implement actions to achieve improvement goals ✓ at least 75% of schools identify a measurable improvement in school outcomes.
Participating schools use a range of data more effectively to inform their decision-making.	By the end of 2027, at least 45 schools use Perspectives to collect, analyse and use data from their school to develop initial and subsequent improvement goals, and/or use data to evaluate the effectiveness of their practice or implementation plan/s.

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
Participating leaders and teachers feel enabled and confident to implement reliable and impactful teaching strategies to improve student outcomes.	- By the end of 2027, at least 30 schools will participate in the High Impact Teaching initiative. ✓ At least 75% of participating teachers report explicit instruction training improved their knowledge about a range of reliable teaching techniques. ✓ At least 75% of participating teachers report explicit instruction training improved their confidence to know how and when to use the most appropriate strategy and technique based on the context.
Participating teachers and leaders will be supported to extend teachers' professional practice against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers at the career levels of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT)	- Over 2026 and 2027, AISNSW will gain NESA approval for AISNSW delivered professional learning programs that enable participants to develop and demonstrate their practice and impact aligned with the Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher Standards. - By the end of 2027, at least 40 Independent school teachers will participate in HALT professional learning delivered by AISNSW. ✓ At least 75% of teachers report that participating in the HALT training improved their knowledge and application of the HALT Standards. ✓ At least 75% of teachers report that participating in the HALT training improved their confidence to apply for HALT accreditation.
Schools will be supported to optimise and improve school operations and outcomes by accessing quality assured resources.	Over 2026 and 2027, AISNSW will develop an enhanced suite of quality assured resources designed to improve school operations and outcomes and make these available to schools through the AISNSW website.

Key stakeholders

All independent schools represented by the AISNSW NGRB are eligible to participate. The program components will be promoted to schools from Term 4, 2025 and then regularly through targeted communications with school Principals and teachers.

Teaching Schools Hub

Activity/Initiative	Teaching Schools Hub
Priority	D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students

Description

Due to the positive impact of the **Teaching Schools Hub** pilot program in 2023-2025, this program will continue in 2026 and 2027 with expanded scope to enable additional schools to participate. The Teaching School Hubs project brings together independent schools (Hub Schools), Initial Teacher Education students (Education Trainees) and Affiliate Universities in a proven employment based training structure.

This program is designed to strengthen outcomes for schools by providing opportunities for school Mentor Teachers to support Education Trainees to regularly apply Initial Teacher Education (ITE) learning in an authentic, immersive school environment while completing their formal qualifications. There is proven reciprocal benefit to a school and existing staff as they support Education Trainees through mentorship and enhance their own knowledge and skills. The long-term goal is to address the ongoing teacher shortage through an employment-based model to improve the attraction, training, induction, and retention of high-quality teachers.

Education Trainees apply to be part of the AISNSW Teaching School Hubs program. Education Trainees will be employed by Hub Schools as part time Teaching Assistants, one day per week. This employment with the school is in addition to the Professional Experience Placements which will take place in other schools and sectors. Education Trainees may be Conditionally Accredited in the final year of their degree and may be employed as a teacher. Each Hub School will have a minimum of two Education Trainees, except in small or regional schools where it is not feasible to support more than one Education Trainee. Participating schools generally employ Education Trainees using a one-to-one model in their school, however they have the flexibility to engage with other models, such as rotating models with other schools where the Education Trainee may transition to another participating school in subsequent years.

Hub Schools provide each Education Trainee with a Mentor Teacher trained by AISNSW, who will model exemplar teaching, encourage deep reflection on teaching practice and guide the Education Trainee in the application of ITE theory. AISNSW will provide professional learning for both Mentor Teachers and Trainees to complement the ITE course.

There will be an annual Teaching School Hubs professional learning session where participating schools present to the wider education sector about mentoring, balance of ITE theory and practical experience, teacher and trainee wellbeing, practical workforce supports and metropolitan and regional experiences.

In 2026 and 2027, the Teaching School Hubs program will move to a co-contribution model with AISNSW and Hub Schools contributing to costs associated with the program in addition to CAF funding. Distributed funding will be provided, through individual agreements with each participating school, to engage and implement tailored strategies to support teacher mentors and education trainees in line with project aims.

Eligible schools

All AISNSW NGRB represented schools will be eligible for participation.

Timeframes

Teaching Schools Hub will be delivered in 2026 and 2027.

2026	2027
20 Hub Schools 66 Education Trainees	22 Hub Schools 70 Education Trainees

Outcomes

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
Enable independent schools and higher education institutes to provide experiences for initial teacher education students that increase confidence and ensure classroom ready teachers.	• By 2027, AISNSW receives more than 100 applications from new Education Trainees in the Teaching School Hubs program. • Participating schools report increased confidence in Education Trainees readiness to teach based on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers Graduate Standard. ✓ At least 80% of Mentor Teachers report increased confidence in Education Trainees readiness to teach. ✓ At least 80% of Education Trainees report increased confidence in their readiness to teach.
To support high quality and diverse candidates completing teacher education and gaining employment in the independent sector.	• By the end of 2027, there will be 22 schools participating in the AISNSW Teaching School Hubs program. ✓ At least 30% of participating schools will be in regional NSW. ✓ Participating schools retain a minimum of two Trainees each year. ✓ At least 80% of participating schools report greater confidence in meeting future staffing challenges. • By the end of 2027, there will be 70 Education Trainees engaging in the AISNSW Teaching School Hubs. ✓ On graduation, a minimum of 90% of Education Trainees indicate they will stay

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
	in the teaching profession for more than 5 years. ✓ At least 80% of Education Trainees are extended job offers by a participating school.
Schools and Higher Education Institutes external to the project will benefit from learning about the AISNSW Teaching School Hubs and employment models to support alternative pathways through initial teacher education.	• There will be an annual Teaching School Hubs professional learning session where a selection of participating schools share their learnings with the wider education sector on topics including mentoring; balance of ITE theory and practical experience; teacher and trainee wellbeing; practical workforce supports; and metropolitan and regional experiences. ✓ Leaders, teachers and Education Trainees from at least 20 schools will attend each event. ✓ Academics from at least 6 Higher Education Institutes will attend each event.

Key stakeholders

The Teaching School Hubs program is designed to provide opportunities for independent schools from a range of contexts, pedagogical approaches, religious affiliations and cultures to access the program from across a wide range of geographical locations in NSW. Key stakeholders include hub schools, education trainees and affiliate universities across five hubs located in metropolitan Sydney, Central West, New England, Mid North Coast and North Coast with regional schools prioritised to participate.

Strengthening School Leadership

Activity/Initiative	Strengthening School Leadership
Priority	D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students

Description

The **Reflective Practice for Leaders** initiative represents a targeted investment in the sustainability and effectiveness of school leadership. The program responds directly to systemic pressures currently facing principals, senior staff and middle leaders where complexity, constant change, and cumulative stress are significantly impacting leadership capacity and retention.

The program provides differentiated, evidence informed support for two key leadership cohorts – Principals and Senior/Middle Leaders. Principals access structured *Professional Companionship* with certified, experienced former school leaders. This one-on-one model enables principals to engage in confidential, high-level reflection on governance, stakeholder management, and strategic leadership challenges. Senior and middle leaders participate in *Group Reflective Practice*, a structured process bringing together small, curated peer groups of like roles or schools to work through pressing issues including complex student needs, staff support, parent engagement, and personal resilience. Importantly, this is facilitated by an expert mental health practitioner with working knowledge of the Independent school sector. The Senior and Middle Leader stream is underpinned by targeted capacity building workshops focused on leadership case studies, navigating organisational complexity, and wellbeing in schools.

Participation occurs over a 12-month cycle, during which leaders also contribute to communities of practice. These communities consolidate learning, extend professional networks across schools, and provide continuity of support. By embedding reflection, collaboration, and skill development into leaders' professional routines, the initiative directly strengthens their confidence, competence, and capacity to lead effectively.

The initiative improves leadership capability and decision making, enhances leaders' ability to support staff, and fosters the resilience required to sustain leadership roles. This, in turn, contributes to stronger workforce stability, reduced attrition of experienced leaders, and the cultivation of a pipeline of future leaders. The broader system benefits include healthier school cultures, improved staff retention, and enhanced student outcomes.

Reflective Practice for Leaders builds a more confident, connected, and sustainable leadership workforce. By proactively addressing both professional practice and wellbeing, the initiative ensures that school leaders are equipped not only to manage immediate challenges but also to sustain their effectiveness over the long term, safeguarding the quality and stability of leadership across the sector.

Insight and Connections is an initiative for school leaders at a Deputy Principal level (or equivalent), designed to build leadership capacity and foster strong professional networks. Participants will engage in expert led professional learning, structured networking opportunities, and a shadowing program that focuses on key areas of the most senior leadership responsibilities in schools. The project seeks to address the unique professional learning needs of Deputy Principals, strengthen the leadership pipeline for future principals, enhance support for regional schools, and deepen participants' sense of connection to the broader educational community.

School leaders from regional NSW will be supported to access Sydney based training and professional learning events through travel subsidies.

Eligible schools

All independent schools represented by the AISNSW NGRB are eligible to participate.

Timeframes

Strengthening School Leadership will be delivered in 2026 and 2027.

Outcomes

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
Increase leadership capacity and the broader wellbeing of school leadership teams.	By the end of 2027, at least 100 school leaders from NSW Independent schools have participated in reflective practice workshops/sessions.
Strengthen leadership capability and confidence, particularly in reflective practice, across participating leaders to reduce attrition and building a future-ready leadership pipeline.	At least 80% of participants report increased confidence in their leadership capability in the area of reflective practice.
Strengthen professional networks and peer collaboration across schools.	80% of participants report stronger professional connections and peer collaboration during program duration. - Evidence of sustained participation in reflective practice workshops/sessions (attendance >80%).
Participants of <i>Insights and Connections</i> will build knowledge and capability through expert input to foster strong networks and enhanced collaboration among Deputy Principals.	- At least 80% of participants report greater confidence about acting in the role of Principal. - At least 80% of participants say that their knowledge about key leadership issues has increased. - At least 80% of participants report connections with their leadership colleagues have been strengthened.
Barriers to accessing Sydney based training will be eased for regional schools otherwise unable to attend.	By the end of 2027, at least 20 school leaders from regional schools receive travel support grants to attend face to face workshops/sessions in Sydney.

Key stakeholders

The primary stakeholders for the *Reflective Practice for Leaders* initiative are principals, senior leaders, and middle leaders within NSW Independent schools. The primary stakeholders for the *Insights and Connections* initiative are deputy principals, or equivalent roles with a responsibility to

act in the role of principal as needed. This includes leaders from both metropolitan and regional Independent schools, including representation across diverse school contexts.

Behaviour Support, Student Engagement & Anti-bullying

Activity/Initiative	Behaviour Support, Student Engagement & Anti-bullying
Priority	E – Student wellbeing and support

Description

Supporting schools to address student behaviour and respond effectively to bullying is critical to ensuring safe, respectful, and engaging learning environments. When schools are equipped with the right strategies, they can reduce risks of harm, strengthen student engagement, and foster positive relationships.

To support schools in this area, AISNSW will deliver a suite of three interconnected initiatives using a train-the-trainer model. This approach ensures that school leaders and experienced teaching staff are equipped to bring high quality professional learning, evidence-based strategies, and resources back to their schools to build the capability of teachers and staff. The initiatives are:

- **Classroom Practices** – Supporting teachers to implement proactive, evidence based classroom practices that encourage positive behaviour and engagement.
- **Challenging Behaviour** – Providing teachers with strategies to support student self regulation and manage escalating behaviour, as well as guidance on appropriate planning processes.
- **Anti-bullying** – Assisting school leaders to strengthen tier-two responses when incidents are identified, including refining policies, procedures, and referral pathways, engaging families effectively, and drawing on expert and legal advice.

This leadership focused, train-the-trainer model is designed to be sustainable and adaptable. By training leaders and experienced teachers within schools, professional learning, resources and strategies can be embedded and adapted to suit each school's context and needs.

AISNSW Consultants with expertise in behaviour, wellbeing and inclusion will develop resources, deliver professional learning, and provide ongoing school-based support to work alongside leaders as they embed practices across the school. AISNSW will also engage external experts, including legal advisors, who will ensure policies and procedures are both practical and compliant and ensure schools receive accurate and practical guidance.

Schools will have the flexibility to engage with the level of support most relevant to their needs and context, while contributing to the broader CAF priority of ensuring safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments for all students.

Eligible schools

All AISNSW NGRB-represented schools are eligible to access the activities.

Timeframes

Behaviour Support, Student Engagement and Anti-bullying will be delivered in 2026 and 2027.

In the first year of the work plan, AISNSW will focus on the design and development of the key assets for each of the three initiatives to ensure they are relevant, effective, and meet the needs of schools. Schools will also receive direct implementation support during this stage to assist with embedding

the initiatives. In the second year of the workplan, AISNSW will continue to build on this foundation by developing additional resources, refining existing materials based on school feedback and emerging needs, and providing ongoing implementation support to ensure the initiatives are effectively sustained and adapted across schools.

Outcomes

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
- Strengthen knowledge of proactive, evidence-based classroom practices, creating greater consistency in behaviour and engagement approaches in schools. - Increase capacity and confidence in the application of strategies that foster positive learning environments, resulting in improved student engagement and fewer low-level disruptions.	- By the end of 2027, at least 150 school leaders and teachers will participate in professional learning on evidence-based classroom practices. ✓ At least 80% of participants report increased confidence in using proactive strategies that promote student engagement and positive behaviour.
- Contribute to a shared understanding of effective, evidence-based responses to challenging behaviours, enhancing consistency and collaboration across the school. - Improve the accuracy and effectiveness of Behaviour Support Plans, leading to more successful support for students with complex needs.	- By the end of 2027, at least 150 school leaders and teachers will participate in professional learning on evidence-based strategies for responding to challenging and problematic behaviours. ✓ At least 80% of participants report increased confidence in developing Behaviour Support Plans and applying evidence-based strategies for responding to challenging behaviours.
Increased awareness and application of evidence-based resources to support student behaviour and engagement.	At least 250 downloads of a suite of resources to support student behaviour and engagement.
- Strengthen leadership knowledge and capacity to respond consistently and effectively to bullying incidents, reinforcing safe and supportive school cultures. - Demonstrate more effective tier-two responses, including improved policies, procedures, and referral pathways, resulting in more timely interventions and stronger engagement with students and families.	- By the end of 2027, at least 70 school leaders will participate in professional learning focused on strengthening tier-two responses to bullying. ✓ At least 80% of participants will report increased confidence and capability in implementing tier-two anti-bullying actions.

Key stakeholders

The key stakeholders engaged to support the sustainable implementation of this initiative are school leaders and experienced teaching staff who can influence practice and support teachers within NSW Independent schools. This includes leaders from both metropolitan and regional schools.

Whole-school Wellbeing

Activity/Initiative	Whole-school Wellbeing
Priority	E – Student wellbeing and support

Description

The growing focus on wellbeing in schools reflects an increasing understanding that student learning and staff engagement flourish in environments where safety, belonging, and resilience are prioritised. Schools are increasingly seeking evidence-based, practical strategies to embed wellbeing at both a whole-school and individual level, ensuring that their communities are supported to thrive.

Whole-school Wellbeing will continue to be offered in 2026 and 2027, with expansion through the introduction of three new initiatives that build on and complement existing initiatives, providing four interconnected services as a broader suite of supports designed to strengthen wellbeing for students, staff, and the wider school community. The four services include:

- Whole-school Wellbeing
- Whole-school Wellbeing 2.0
- Whole-school Wellbeing Audit Tool
- Trauma Informed Practice.

Together, these four services provide a cohesive, evidence-based suite of supports that enable schools to embed and sustain wellbeing practices at multiple levels. By strengthening the capacity of staff, leaders, and school communities, the initiatives will contribute directly to the CAF priority of ensuring safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments that enhance student engagement, belonging, and resilience.

The **Whole-school Wellbeing** program will continue to build on its demonstrated success from 2022-2025. The program supports schools through an 18-month rolling structured cohort model to develop, review, and strengthen whole-school wellbeing across their communities. Participating schools will work alongside AISNSW staff to build the capacity needed for a sustainable, whole-school approach to student wellbeing, where schools will:

- articulate a wellbeing vision, approach, and framework
- embed processes for implementation, review, and evaluation
- improve access to evidence-based wellbeing resources for staff, students, and families, and
- strengthen staff capability to lead a sustainable, whole-school approach.

The rolling cohort model enables new schools to enter the initiative and ensures each cohort has sufficient time to develop, embed, and review their wellbeing framework.

Support is provided through AISNSW wellbeing consultants, targeted professional learning, cohort network days, and access to an online wellbeing resource portal.

The **Whole-school Wellbeing 2.0** program builds on the foundations of the initial initiative offering schools two extension pathways designed to embed, sustain, and strengthen their wellbeing practice:

- *Embedding and Sustaining a Whole-school Approach to Wellbeing* pathway provides tailored consultancy support to help schools refine and sustain their wellbeing framework. Many schools identify specific areas of focus following the first initiative, and this pathway ensures continued growth and adaptation. Tailored consultancy support provided by AISNSW Consultants with expertise in wellbeing will be individualised to address identified needs and include targeted professional learning for leaders and staff with practical tools and resources to strengthen wellbeing approaches.
- *High Impact Wellbeing Practices* pathway supports schools to adopt and embed evidence-based practices shown to have measurable impact on student wellbeing. Delivered through a train-the-trainer model facilitated by AISNSW Consultants with expertise in wellbeing, school leaders and wellbeing coordinators receive hands-on professional learning, instructional vignettes and classroom ready resources to support classroom and whole-school implementation.

To ensure equity of access, regional schools will receive travel support grants.

The **Whole-school Wellbeing Audit Tool** is a new resource designed to enable schools to conduct a structured analysis of their wellbeing practices. The audit highlights strengths and areas for improvement, such as the development of a scope and sequence or refinement of referral pathways. Schools can then access consultancy and professional learning targeted to their identified needs.

AISNSW Consultants with expertise in wellbeing will support implementation of the tool in each school by providing a gap analysis across key wellbeing domains with customised recommendations for improvement and consultancy support tailored to the audit results.

Trauma-Informed Practice is a tailored service designed to support schools in adopting trauma-informed approaches aligned to their context and values. This service will combine professional learning, consultancy, and practical resources to strengthen teacher capability and embed trauma-informed strategies into everyday teaching and student support.

Schools accessing this service will be supported by AISNSW mental health professionals through professional learning on the principles of trauma-informed practice, with resources and strategies to embed trauma aware teaching and support practices as well as consultancy support to align approaches with the school's need.

The **Whole-school Wellbeing 2.0**, the **Wellbeing Audit Tool**, and **Trauma-Informed Practice** will be available through a rolling intake model each year. This flexible model enables AISNSW to respond to schools' readiness, demand, and emerging needs, ensuring that schools can access support at a time that best suits their context and priorities.

This combination of structured program delivery and flexible access points ensures that wellbeing initiatives are responsive, sustainable, and inclusive, enabling schools to engage meaningfully while contributing to the broader CAF priority of creating safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments.

Eligible schools

All schools represented by the AISNSW NGRB will have the opportunity to participate in each of the four wellbeing initiatives. Participation will be guided by a panel of wellbeing experts, including AISNSW staff, who will assess each school's readiness and context. Factors considered in the selection process will include demonstrated need for additional wellbeing support, alignment between the school's goals and the broad outcomes of the initiative, the school's readiness and

capacity to commit to the initiative, and representation of the diversity of the independent school sector, ensuring inclusion of both metropolitan and regional schools.

Schools not directly involved in the initiatives will also benefit from the broader activity through access to wellbeing-focused professional learning, subsidised registration for annual wellbeing and school counsellor conferences, no-cost professional learning workshops delivered across regional and metropolitan locations, and access to the AISNSW Wellbeing Literature Review, including the executive summary and key factor infographics.

This approach ensures that while targeted schools receive intensive support, all AISNSW NGRB schools gain access to valuable resources, professional learning, and sector-wide benefits that strengthen wellbeing practices.

Timeframes

Whole-school Wellbeing will be delivered in 2026 and 2027 through a combination of structured and rolling intake models to ensure broad access and sustained impact across the sector.

As many of the initiatives involve the establishment of new services, dedicated time will be allocated in the first year to their design and development to ensure they are practical, impactful, and responsive to school needs.

Outcomes

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
- School leadership teams establish structures to embed a sustainable whole-school wellbeing framework. - Improved staff capability and confidence to implement whole-school wellbeing actions.	- By the end of 2027, at least 20 schools will participate in the Whole-school Wellbeing initiative. ✓ At least 80% of schools report increased staff capability and confidence in applying practical wellbeing strategies.
Consolidate and strengthen existing wellbeing frameworks by embedding practices, ensuring long-term sustainability and impact on student outcomes.	By the end of 2027, at least 10 schools will engage in the Embedding and Sustaining pathway and demonstrate refinement and continued implementation of their wellbeing frameworks through updated documentation of practices and evidence of ongoing implementation.
Apply and embed high-impact, evidence informed wellbeing practices that enhance relationships, belonging and self-efficacy.	At least 80% of participants in the High Impact Wellbeing Practices pathway will report increased confidence and capability to embed strategies in their school contexts.
Strengthen school capacity to identify areas for improvement using the Whole-school Wellbeing Audit Tool and implement targeted, evidence informed strategies.	At least 90% of schools report increased clarity and direction in their wellbeing planning following use of the audit tool and follow-up support.

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
- Strengthen school capacity to implement trauma informed approaches that reflect their unique contexts. - Improved teacher skillsets in identifying and responding to students impacted by trauma.	- At least 30 schools will participate in professional learning initiatives and access AISNSW developed resources. ✓ At least 80% of participants report increased confidence and capability in implementing trauma-informed approaches.

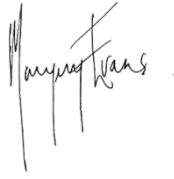
Key stakeholders

A diverse range of stakeholders will be engaged to support the development, implementation, and sustainability of the Whole-school Wellbeing across NSW independent schools. Key stakeholders include school leadership teams and wellbeing coordinators, external partners such as Universities, whose research informs resources, cohort networks, and school-based wellbeing committees.

2026-27 CAF Workplan NGRB Sign Off

This 2026-27 CAF Workplan is submitted in fulfillment of the workplan requirement in part 4 of the CAF Agreement and I understand that, once approved, the work plan forms Attachment A to the CAF Agreement.

Margery Evans
Chief Executive, AISNSW:



Date: 14/11/2025