

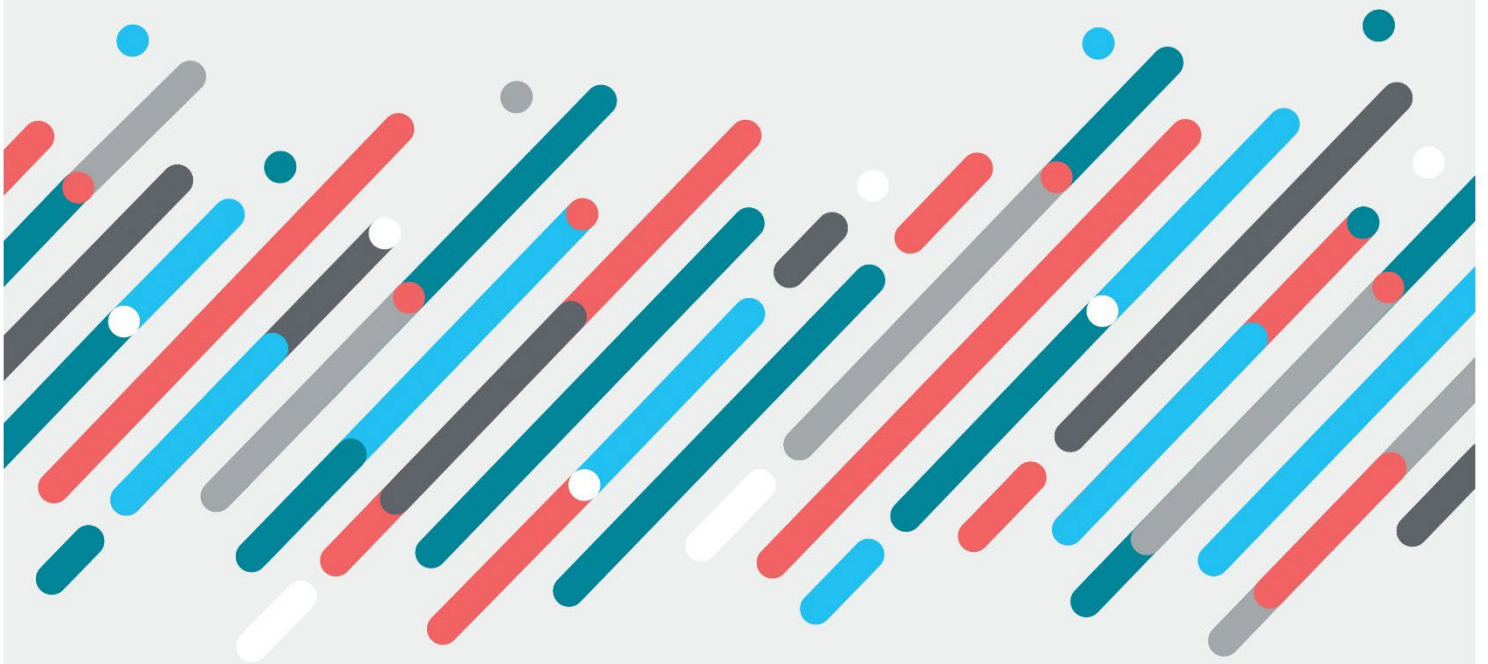


Australian Government
Department of Education

Choice and Affordability Fund Work Plan 2026-27

Association of Independent Schools of the
Northern Territory (AISNT)

Date agreed – 21 November 2025





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The document must be attributed as the Choice and Affordability Fund Workplan 2026-27 for Association of independent Schools of the Northern Territory (AISNT)

Summary of Work Plan 2026–2027

The AISNT CAF Work Plan for 2026–2027 presents a targeted and integrated suite of initiatives designed to strengthen parental choice, affordability, and sector sustainability across Independent Schools in the Northern Territory. Building on the achievements of the 2022–2025 Work Plan, including the successful implementation of the AISNT Parental Survey, the INSPIRE inclusion platform, and Transition Assistance grants, this plan continues to address the distinct challenges faced by schools operating in regional, remote, and very remote contexts.

All AISNT member schools will have the opportunity to access or benefit from the proposed activities, ensuring equitable support in accordance with paragraph 4 of the Choice and Affordability Fund Agreement. The initiatives go beyond standard service provision by delivering centralised tools, strategic planning support, and shared service models that reduce duplication, improve efficiency, and build school capacity in key areas such as compliance, procurement, inclusion, and leadership. AISNT will also continue its sustainable approach to deferred funding by progressively allocating quarantined Transition Assistance reserves through to 2029, supporting long-term financial stability for eligible schools.

The overarching theme of the 2026–2027 Work Plan is sector resilience, delivered through collaboration, data-informed decision-making, and targeted investment in school capability and community engagement.

Under Priority A – Choice and Affordability, AISNT will implement a biennial Parent Survey and Market Insights initiative to deepen understanding of parental expectations, affordability perceptions, and school choice trends across diverse communities. Under this priority, there will also be two major system-level projects: the development of a Compliance and Risk Management Portal to streamline regulatory reporting and reduce administrative burden, and a Group Procurement and Shared Services Strategy to achieve cost efficiencies across high-expense categories such as insurance, utilities, ICT, and staff housing.

Priority B – Transition Assistance will continue to support schools affected by the implementation of the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) methodology. Through direct grants, financial planning support, and strategic engagement, AISNT will assist schools—particularly small and remote campuses—to sustain operations and minimise fee impacts on families.

Under Priority C – Special Circumstances Assistance, AISNT will maintain a contingency reserve to support schools facing unexpected hardship or disruption, including natural disasters, sudden enrolment declines, or emergency infrastructure needs. This ensures continuity of education and community stability in the face of unforeseen events.

Priority D – Strengthening Outcomes for Schools and Educationally Disadvantaged Students will focus on building leadership capability through the Leadership Collective and Middle Leaders

Network. These programs will support succession planning and strengthen governance, teaching, and learning outcomes, with dedicated support for Indigenous and remote school leaders.

Finally, Priority E – Student Wellbeing and Support will maintain sector-wide access to the INSPIRE inclusion platform, enabling consistent and effective documentation of adjustments for students with disability and additional learning needs. Professional learning for inclusion staff and wellbeing coordinators will continue to promote evidence-based, whole-school approaches to student wellbeing, engagement, and inclusive practice.

Through this cohesive program of work, AISNT will continue to advance the objectives of the Choice and Affordability Fund, ensuring that every family, regardless of location or circumstance, can access a sustainable, high-quality Independent schooling option that best suits their child's needs.

Overarching Risk Management

AISNT will manage risk across the 2026–2027 CAF Work Plan as an integrated program, ensuring that all initiatives are delivered efficiently, equitably, and with sustained impact. The following table outlines key risks and AISNT's mitigation strategies:

Risk	Treatment: How the risk will be managed
Low visibility of initiatives or limited stakeholder involvement may hinder schools' ability to access and benefit from planned activities.	AISNT will ensure schools are well-informed and engaged by leveraging established communication channels, including direct correspondence with Principals and Business Managers, and network meetings. To strengthen visibility and encourage active participation, AISNT will also initiate targeted engagement where appropriate, such as working groups, stakeholder forums, or individual consultations—particularly when school input can shape project design or delivery. This approach aims to maximise awareness and ensure that all member schools can access and benefit from planned initiatives.
Schools may not fully engage with or access the support provided, limiting the reach and impact of the initiatives.	AISNT will design activities that directly respond to the needs of member schools, informed by ongoing consultation and feedback. Participation and engagement will be actively monitored, and where uptake is lower than anticipated, AISNT will adapt delivery approaches or offer targeted support to ensure initiatives remain accessible, relevant, and impactful across diverse school contexts.

Project milestones may be impacted if third-party suppliers experience delays or fail to meet delivery expectations.

AISNT will engage external providers for specialist services as needed, applying rigorous due diligence and ongoing performance monitoring to ensure delivery expectations are met. Where appropriate, a phased engagement model will be adopted to allow for mid-project review and course correction. To safeguard against potential delays or disruptions, AISNT will maintain contingency plans, including the identification of alternate providers, to ensure continuity and minimise impact on project timelines.

Significant external events, such as cyclones, flooding, cultural obligations, or community unrest, may temporarily divert school focus and capacity away from engagement planned activities.

AISNT will maintain adaptable project timelines and remote delivery options to accommodate disruptions arising from natural events, cultural obligations, or community challenges. School readiness will be monitored through ongoing feedback mechanisms, allowing AISNT to adjust implementation schedules and delivery formats as needed. This flexible approach ensures that schools can continue to access support, even when local circumstances temporarily limit on-site engagement or operational capacity.

Budget for 2026–2027

Priority	Activities/Initiatives	2026		2027	
		Centralised	Distributed	Centralised	Distributed
A – Choice and Affordability	Empowering Schools and Families Through Insight and Efficiency	\$85,000	\$0	\$90,000	\$0
B – Transition Assistance	Transition Assistance Grants (including NAAF Schools)	\$100,000	\$1,383,000	\$100,000	\$1,376,888
D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students	Regional Assistance Support – Advancing Inclusive Education Across the Northern Territory with INSPIRE	\$80,000	\$0	\$80,000	\$0
D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students	Strengthening Outcomes for Independent Schools in the Northern Territory – School Leadership	\$190,000	\$0	\$197,500	\$0
D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students	Strengthening Outcomes for Independent Schools in the Northern Territory – Indigenous Schools	\$110,000	\$0	\$116,000	\$0
E – Student wellbeing and support	Supporting Positive Wellbeing for Independent Schools Students in the Northern Territory	\$68,749	\$0	\$70,257	\$0
Administrative costs		\$32,965.52		\$29,537.76	
Total		\$666,714.52	\$1,383,000	\$683,294.76	\$1,376,888

Activity/Initiative	Empowering Schools and Families Through Insight and Efficiency
Priority	A – Choice and Affordability

Description

AISNT will deliver a suite of centralised activities aimed to support Independent Schools across the Northern Territory in managing operational costs and deepening their understanding of school communities and local markets. These initiatives are designed to enhance the affordability and long-term sustainability of Independent schooling, particularly for families in remote and disadvantaged areas, thereby preserving meaningful parental choice throughout the Territory.

AISNT represents 26 schools, all located in regional, remote, or very remote settings, with approximately half classified as MATSIS schools. These schools operate within complex environments, facing distinctive cost structures, workforce constraints, and regulatory demands that can challenge their viability. The proposed activities will directly respond to these pressures by improving financial sustainability and operational efficiency at a sector level, while reducing duplication and administrative burden at the school level.

The following activities have been developed in alignment with the Choice and Affordability Fund Guidelines, with a strategic focus on:

- Supporting schools to manage operational costs efficiently and sustainably;
- Enabling schools to better understand and plan for their market context;
- Preserving affordability and parental choice across diverse communities; and
- Strengthening educational opportunities for families throughout the Northern Territory.

Parent Survey and Market Insight

This initiative builds on the AISNT Parental Survey first implemented in 2023. Designed as a biennial data collection tool, the survey provides longitudinal insights to support strategic planning, marketing, enrolment management, and fee-setting across the sector. Continued investment in this work will deepen understanding of parental priorities and strengthen the evidence base for sector-wide decision-making. It also supports schools in tailoring their offerings to meet the needs of diverse communities, including remote Indigenous families and boarding households.

Activities:

- Conduct the AISNT Parental Survey in 2026, including data collection, analysis, and reporting.
- Develop and implement targeted sub-surveys and focus groups for remote Indigenous families and boarding parents.
- Produce school-specific insights and sector-level trend reports.
- Disseminate findings to schools with guidance on applying data to marketing, enrolment planning, and fee-setting strategies.

AISNT Compliance and Risk Management Portal

This initiative aims to reduce administrative burden and enhance compliance consistency across Independent Schools in the Northern Territory through the development of a centralised, cloud-based compliance management platform.

Compliance obligations place a disproportionate strain on small and remote schools, particularly MATSIS schools with limited administrative capacity. These schools must meet a wide range of regulatory requirements, including registration standards, child protection, workplace safety, and disability reporting, often without dedicated compliance staff. A centralised AISNT portal will streamline reporting, reduce duplication, and strengthen governance oversight, enabling schools to focus resources on educational delivery and affordability.

Activities

- Develop or procure a scalable AISNT Compliance and Risk Management Portal with secure cloud-based access.
- Embed NT-specific regulatory requirements, including NTBOS, TRBNT, NCCD, child protection, and WHS obligations.

AISNT Group Procurement and Shared Services Strategy

This initiative aims to deliver cost savings and operational efficiencies for Independent Schools in the Northern Territory through coordinated procurement arrangements and shared service solutions.

Many Independent schools in the Northern Territory operate in geographic and operational isolation, limiting their purchasing power and increasing administrative burden. A sector-wide procurement strategy will enable schools to access competitive pricing, reduce duplication of effort, and streamline procurement processes, particularly in high-cost categories such as insurance, ICT, utilities, and staff housing. By leveraging collective scale and partnering with other AIS bodies where feasible, AISNT can deliver tangible financial benefits and free up school resources for core educational priorities.

Activities

- Conduct a sector-wide needs assessment to identify priority procurement categories and service gaps.
- Develop and implement the AISNT Procurement and Shared Services Strategy, including standing offer arrangements in key categories (e.g., insurance, ICT, utilities, staff housing, grounds maintenance, security, telecommunications).
- Explore strategic partnerships with other AIS bodies (e.g., AISWA, AISSA) to maximise scale and supplier leverage.
- Provide schools with implementation guidance, procurement templates, and onboarding support to ensure uptake and impact.

Eligible schools

All AISNT member schools will have the opportunity to access or benefit from these activities.

Timeframes

- Parent Survey and Market Insight (2026-2027)
- AISNT Compliance and Risk Management Portal (2026-2027)
- AISNT Group Procurement and Shared Services Strategy (2026-2027)

Outcomes

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
A stronger evidence base on parental choice, satisfaction and affordability perceptions.	Completion and analysis of the 2026 AISNT Parental Survey with $\geq 70\%$ school participation. Inclusion of longitudinal comparisons with 2023 survey data. Publication of sector-level trend report distributed to all member schools. Number of schools using survey data in strategic planning or board reporting. Positive feedback from schools on the relevance and usability of insights.
Improved understanding of barriers to access for remote and disadvantaged families.	Completion of targeted sub-surveys and focus groups with Indigenous and boarding families. Identification of ≥ 5 key affordability or access barriers across surveyed communities. Integration of findings into sector advocacy or funding submissions. Evidence of schools adapting enrolment, transport, or fee policies in response to findings. Engagement of community representatives in feedback or co-design processes.
Actionable data to support school-level business planning and sector-wide communications.	Delivery of tailored school-specific reports to all participating schools. Number of schools reporting use of data in marketing, enrolment planning, or fee-setting. Inclusion of insights in AISNT sector messaging or public communications. Uptake of data-informed strategies in school improvement plans or annual reports. Requests from schools for follow-up support or deeper data analysis.
Reduced time and cost associated with compliance administration.	Reduction in duplicated policy development or manual record-keeping across schools. Decrease in external consultancy costs for compliance support among member schools. Positive feedback from Business Managers and Principals on administrative efficiency gains.
Increased capacity for small and remote schools to meet regulatory obligations.	Portal usage by $\geq 90\%$ of MATSIS schools within the first year. Reduction in compliance-related errors or missed obligations among small schools. Requests for fewer external supports due to increased internal capability. Evidence of improved documentation and reporting in areas such as WHS, child protection, and NCCD.

Increased access to favourable supplier terms and pricing.

Positive supplier feedback on engagement with AISNT as a collective client.

Number of schools reporting improved service quality or value from contracted suppliers.

Key stakeholders

Parent Survey and Market Insight

- **Parents and caregivers** (including remote Indigenous and boarding families) – primary data sources and beneficiaries;
- **School Principals and Business Managers** – users of insights for planning and fee-setting;
- **School marketing and enrolment staff** – applying insights to refine engagement strategies.

AISNT Compliance and Risk Management Portal

- **School Principals and Business Managers** – primary users of the portal for compliance reporting;
- **School administrative and governance staff** – responsible for regulatory documentation and oversight;
- **Regulatory bodies** (e.g., NTBOS, TRBNT, NCCD, WHS regulators) – whose requirements are embedded in the portal;
- **IT vendors or platform developers** – responsible for building and maintaining the portal;
- **School boards and governing bodies** – beneficiaries of improved compliance transparency and risk oversight.

AISNT Group Procurement and Shared Services Strategy

- **School Business Managers and Finance Officers** – key participants in needs assessments and implementation;
- **School Principals and governing bodies** – decision-makers on procurement participation;
- **External suppliers and service providers** – engaged through standing offer arrangements;
- **Partner AIS bodies** (e.g., AISWA, AISSA) – potential collaborators for cross-jurisdictional procurement leverage;
- **School communities and families** – indirect beneficiaries through improved affordability and resource allocation.

Activity/Initiative	Transition Assistance Grants (including NAAF Schools)
Priority	B – Transition Assistance

Description

Grants for Transition Assistance and for Prior NAAF-Qualifying Schools (2026–2027)

AISNT will continue to allocate targeted Transition Assistance grants in alignment with the priorities and mechanisms established under the 2022–2025 Work Plan. These grants respond to the significant funding reductions experienced by select Independent schools following the full implementation of the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) funding arrangements in 2022. The schools eligible for this support have been identified by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) as requiring Transition Assistance, including those previously entitled to support under the National Adjustment Assistance Fund (NAAF).

The 2026–2027 allocation period will maintain and extend AISNT’s commitment to financial stability and equity for affected schools through the following measures:

1. **Continuation of Direct Grants:** AISNT will provide direct financial grants to eligible NAAF-qualifying schools and schools impacted by the implementation of the DMI methodology, consistent with the framework initiated in 2022. These grants are designed to mitigate the adverse impact of DMI implementation and support schools in maintaining operational viability during the transition period.
2. **Strategic Distribution of Deferred Funds:** A portion of Transition Assistance funding was quarantined during the 2020–2021 period and throughout the 2022–2025 Work Plan. These deferred funds were first accessed and distributed in 2025, and AISNT will continue to allocate them progressively through to 2029. This long-term distribution strategy ensures sustainable support and allows schools to plan and implement transitional measures with greater certainty.
3. **Direct Engagement and Planning Support:** AISNT will maintain proactive communication with all schools eligible for Transition Assistance. This engagement will include tailored guidance, financial planning support, and collaborative review of funding needs to ensure optimal use and impact of the transition grants. AISNT’s approach prioritises transparency, responsiveness, and strategic alignment with each school’s unique context.

Through these measures, AISNT reaffirms its commitment to supporting schools most affected by funding reforms, ensuring that no eligible school is left without the opportunity to stabilise and adapt. The Transition Assistance program remains a cornerstone of AISNT’s broader strategy to uphold choice, affordability, and sector resilience across the Northern Territory’s Independent school landscape.

Eligible schools

These schools were identified using the following criteria:

- a Direct Measure of Income CTC change of 3 or more points from either the 2011 or 2016 SES CTC score,
- having a growth rate of less than 3% during the period 2022 through 2029
- have an average fee level of less than \$20,000.

Transition Assistance Support – Advancing Inclusive Education Across the Northern Territory with INSPIRE

AISNT will continue to provide eligible Transition Assistance and former NAAF schools with access to the INSPIRE software platform to support the identification, documentation, and management of student adjustments. Purpose-

built to align with the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD), INSPIRE enables schools to generate consistent, evidence-based data that enhances compliance and funding outcomes. Targeted professional development will be delivered to teaching staff to build confidence and capability in using the platform effectively. This initiative will strengthen data accuracy and consistency, ensuring students with disability receive timely, well-documented support and schools are appropriately resourced to meet their needs.

Schools falling into this category are initially:

- 13297 Haileybury Rendall School
- 13453 The Essington School Darwin
- 15711 Good Shepherd Lutheran School

Timeframes

Grant applications available to schools at the commencement of the school year in subsequent years.

Outcomes

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
Transition assistance funding enables schools to maintain operational continuity while minimising fee increases that would otherwise be necessary due to low or negative funding growth.	School fee adjustments remain aligned with sector-wide trends, reflecting financial stability and affordability. Enrolment levels are sustained or show positive growth, indicating continuing community confidence and demand for school offerings.
Schools remain financially sustainable and continue to deliver quality education to their communities without disruption.	Schools maintain operational continuity, ensuring families retain access to diverse and meaningful educational choice for their children.

Key stakeholders

- **AISNT Member Schools currently identified as fulfilling criteria** for Transition Assistance (including NAAF Schools);
- **Other AISNT Member Schools meeting DMI impact criteria** These schools are the direct recipients of financial support and strategic planning assistance. They are responsible for applying the grants to maintain operational viability and affordability;
- **Principals and Business Managers** – lead financial planning and implementation of grant-supported measures
- **School Boards and Governing Bodies** – oversee strategic use of funds and ensure alignment with long-term sustainability goals

Activity/Initiative	Special Circumstances Grants
Priority	C- Special Circumstances Grants

Description

To support schools facing exceptional and unforeseen challenges, AISNT established the Special Circumstances Assistance priority in 2020, with an initial allocation of \$200,000. This funding stream remains available on an as-needed basis and is governed by a formal application process developed by AISNT to ensure equitable and transparent access.

Schools experiencing acute financial stress due to events beyond their control may apply for assistance under this priority. To be eligible, applicants must demonstrate that their situation meets the following criteria:

- **Unexpected** – The circumstance could not have been reasonably foreseen or planned for.
- **Severe Financial Difficulty** – The school is at risk of significantly reducing its educational services or ceasing a substantial portion of its operations.
- **Short-Term Impact** – The financial difficulty is temporary, and the school is expected to recover. A five-year business and recovery plan must be submitted to demonstrate a pathway to sustainability.
- **Special Need** – The school has exhausted all other avenues of financial support and requires assistance to maintain educational continuity.

The nature of support provided will vary depending on the specific circumstances. Schools may experience financial distress due to a range of factors, including natural disasters (eg: bushfires, cyclones, floods, etc), sudden and significant enrolment declines, etc. Where the eligibility criteria are met, AISNT may provide direct financial assistance and offer strategic support to assist the school reassess its business model and adjust its financial planning in response to a changed context.

A school is considered to have successfully accessed this priority when it responds to an unforeseen challenge, secures assistance through the established process, and demonstrates recovery from the financial stress incurred. This ensure that schools can continue to operate effectively and provide quality education to their communities, even in the face of significant disruption.

Eligible schools

All Member schools eligible to be supported through the Choice and Affordability Fund are able to apply to access this fund.

Timeframes

Schools are informed annually of the availability of this fund. Timeframes are determined by the circumstance, and when it occurs.

Outcomes

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
Schools experiencing special circumstances access targeted financial assistance through a formal application process, enabling timely support where eligibility is confirmed.	Schools experiencing unforeseen hardship are able to access Special Circumstances Assistance and demonstrate recovery from the resulting financial stress, maintaining continuity of educational provision.

Key stakeholders

- **School Principals and Business Managers** – lead the application process, prepare recovery plans, and implement financial adjustments.

- **Schools Boards and Governing Bodies** – oversee strategic decisions, endorse applications, and monitor recovery outcomes.
- **School Staff and Leadership Teams** – indirectly impacted through operational continuity and resource stability.
- **Students and Families** – primary beneficiaries of sustained educational services during periods of disruption.

Activity/Initiative	Regional Assistance Support – Advancing Inclusive Education Across the Northern Territory with INSPIRE
Priority	D – Strengthening Outcomes

Description

All Independent Schools in the Northern Territory are classified as regional, remote or very remote. Accordingly, all Members Schools are eligible for Regional Assistance under the Choice and Affordability Fund. As part of this ongoing priority, AISNT will continue to provide all Member Schools with access to the INSPIRE software platform – an initiative first introduced in 2020 and continuously expanded to meet evolving sector needs.

INSPIRE is a purpose-built digital tool designed to support educators in the identification, documentation, and management of student adjustments, particularly for students with disability and additional learning needs. By aligning with the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) collection, INSPIRE enables schools to generate consistent, evidence-based data that enhances both compliance and funding outcomes. This ensures that students with disability receive appropriate, timely, and well-documented support.

The priority improves educational outcomes for students with disability through targeted professional learning, data-driven planning and inclusive practice coaching. It builds staff capacity to implement effective pedagogical practices and curriculum adjustments, ensuring that students with disability access the curriculum on the same basis as their peers.

Through this priority, AISNT reinforces its commitment to equity, inclusive education, and sector-wide capability building, ensuring that every Independent School in the Northern Territory is equipped to support the learning needs of all students.

Key initiatives include:

- **Inclusion Coordinator Professional Learning Network (2026-2027):** Regular professional learning and collaboration for inclusion leaders to improve practice and ensure high-quality NCCD data collection.
- **Teacher Assistant Professional Learning Workshops (2026):** Two workshops (Darwin and Alice Springs) to strengthen classroom support, differentiation, and behaviour management.
- **INSPIRE Data Platform Access and expansion (2026-2027):** Continued provision of INSPIRE licences and support to identify and monitor students with disability, improving the accuracy of NCCD data and ensuring schools receive appropriate funding to meet student needs.

Centralised expenditure will fund:

- An AISNT officer, responsible for coordination, professional delivery learning, and expert facilitation.
- INSPIRE software licences (group purchase under AISNT) for all Member Schools, including system maintenance, user support, and data analysis.
- Development of inclusion resources and training materials for staff in member Schools.

Eligible schools

All members Schools are eligible for this priority.

Priority for:

- Member Schools with high enrolments of students with disability or additional learning needs.
- MATSIS schools with complex inclusion and data reporting needs.
- Schools with limited access to inclusion specialists or NCCD moderation experience.

Timeframes

- 2026-2027: Inclusion Coordinator Network Meetings (quarterly).
- 2026: Teacher Assistant Workshops (Darwin and Alice Springs).
- 2026-2027: Ongoing INSPIRE software access, training and support.
- 2027: Review and evaluation of inclusion outcomes and data quality.

Outcomes

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
Improved teacher and staff capability in inclusive education.	Schools participate in Inclusion or Teacher Assistant professional learning. Participants report improved ability to differentiate and make adjustments. Case studies demonstrate improved inclusion practices.
Strengthened identification, documentation, and data reporting for student with disability.	100% of schools have access to INSPIRE by 2027. Verified improvement in NCCD data accuracy and compliance. Inclusion Coordinators report increased confidence using data for planning.
Improved access to curriculum and learning outcomes for students with disability.	Documented adjustments in all participating schools. Improved literacy, numeracy, and engagement outcomes for identified students. Positive feedback from families and students.
Enhanced inclusion and wellbeing culture across the sector.	Inclusion Coordinators report improved capacity to support social-emotional needs. Collected data indicates improved engagement and attendance. Reduced behavioural incidents recorded.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

AISNT will monitor and evaluate this priority through:

- Attendance and participation tracking across all professional learning events.
- Pre and post training participant surveys and reflection tools.
- Annual analysis of INSPIRE and NCCD data accuracy.
- Case studies demonstrating student learning and wellbeing impact.

Key stakeholders

All AISNT Member Schools are classified as regional, remote or very remote.

- **School Principals and Leadership Teams** – responsible for strategic implementation of inclusive practices and use of INSPIRE data for planning and compliance;
- **Inclusion Coordinators** – lead NCCD data collection, inclusive practice coaching, and participate in the professional learning network;
- **Teacher Assistants and Support Staff** – direct beneficiaries of professional learning workshops focused on differentiation and behaviour support;

- **Classroom Teachers** – users of INSPIRE data and inclusion resources to adjust pedagogy and curriculum delivery;
- **School Governance Bodies** – oversee inclusion strategies and ensure alignment with school improvement plans.

Activity/Initiative	Strengthening Outcomes for Independent Schools in the Northern Territory – School Leadership
Priority	D – Strengthening Outcomes

Description

This priority aims to strengthen school leadership capacity across Independent Schools in the Northern Territory, through the provision of targeted coaching and professional learning in education leadership, innovation and excellence.

The initiative will focus on developing Middle Leaders as a critical leadership layer within schools to improve teaching quality, student outcomes, staff retention, and community engagement. Given the high turnover of Principals and the limited leadership pipeline across the Northern Territory, succession planning and middle leadership development are key to sustaining effective school improvement.

The Leadership Collective Program (2026-2027) will provide principals and aspiring leaders with access to coaching, reflective practice, and collaborative learning aligned to the AITSL Australian Professional Standards for Principals.

The middle Leaders Network and Workshops (2026-2027) will develop practical leadership and management skills to support teaching, learning, well-being and family engagement.

Centralised spending will fund delivery of these programs, including expert facilitators, leadership coaching, professional learning design, and coordination by AISNT.

Eligible schools

All Member Schools are eligible and will have access to leadership programs, with priority support for:

- Schools experiencing leadership transition or succession risk.
- Remote and very remote schools with limited access to professional learning.
- Schools with a high proportion of early-career leaders or middle managers.

Timeframes

- **Leadership Collective Program:** 2026 - 2027 (two-year cycle, delivered in partnership with The Brown Collective).
- **Middle Leaders Workshop and Network:** 2026 & 2027 (two annual events plus ongoing virtual coaching).
- **The Brown Collective Leadership Workshops:** 2026-2027 (two annual events)

Outcomes

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
Increased leadership capability and confidence across Independent Schools in the Northern Territory.	School leaders participate annually in leadership programs. Participants report improved confidence in leadership and communication skills. Qualitative feedback evidences improved instructional leadership practices.
Strengthened middle leadership to support school improvement, staff development, and student outcomes.	Middle Leaders participate in workshops and ongoing coaching each year. Middle Leaders report improved ability to lead teams and manage change. Observable improvements in teaching collaboration and feedback culture.
Improved leadership succession planning and reduced leadership instability in Independent Schools in the Northern Territory.	Schools establish formal leadership development or mentoring frameworks by 2027. School Leadership vacancies decrease or are filled internally.
Strengthened connections between leadership and wellbeing, family and community engagement.	Participants report improved strategies for staff and student well-being and community partnership building. Case studies document positive impact on school culture and community trust.

Monitoring and Evaluation

AISNT will collect both qualitative and quantitative data through:

- Attendance and participation tracking;
- Pre and post program leadership confidence surveys;
- Annual participant evaluations and case studies;
- Feedback from school boards on leadership succession and retention impact.
- Results will be reported in the AISNT CAF Annual Report and used to refine future leadership development programs.

Key stakeholders

- **Principals and School Leaders** – primary participants in Leadership Collective Program; responsible for strategic school improvement and succession planning.
- **Middle Leaders** – core participants in the Middle Leaders Network and Workshops; critical to driving teaching quality, staff development, and community engagement.
- **Aspiring Leaders and Early Career Educators** – potential beneficiaries of leadership coaching and professional learning pathways.
- **School Boards and Governing Bodies** – oversee leadership succession and endorse participation in development program.
- **Teaching Staff** – indirect beneficiaries through improved instructional leadership and school culture.

Activity/Initiative	Strengthening Outcomes for Independent Schools in the Northern Territory – Indigenous Schools
Priority	D – Strengthening Outcomes

Description

This priority aims to strengthen governance, leadership capability, regulatory compliance, and cultural responsiveness across Independent Schools in the Northern Territory, with a particular focus on supporting Indigenous Schools located in remote and very remote communities and homelands. This initiative is designed to build operational resilience and strategic capacity of schools boards, and leadership teams, enhance alignment with Northern Territory Non-Government Schools Registration Standards, and embed inclusive, culturally safe practices within school governance and operations.

Program Delivery

Centralised funding will support AISNT personnel to deliver a suite of professional learning and strategic development activities. These include:

- Governance and Leadership workshops tailored to the NT context;
- Individualised coaching and mentoring for school leaders and boards;
- Development and dissemination of governance resources and policy templates;
- Establishment of an Indigenous Advisory Committee to strengthen community voice; and
- Development of a sector-wide Reconciliation Commitment Plan.

Targeted remote expenditure will enable on-site mentoring, travel support, and locally delivered training for schools in remote and very remote areas, ensuring equitable access to capacity building opportunities.

Eligible schools

- All Member Schools are eligible for governance, compliance and leadership support;
- Priority support will be provided to remote, very remote and Indigenous Governed schools, including MATSIS and those with high numbers of Indigenous enrolments; and
- Schools with new or inexperienced governing bodies, or in leadership transition, will be prioritised.

Timeframes

Delivery period: 2026 – 2027

- Governance and Compliance Training: Quarterly regional sessions each year.
- Cultural Competence and Reconciliation Plan: Develop 2026; implement 2027.
- Aboriginal Parent Advisory Committee: Established early 2026; two meetings per year.
- Policy and Procedure Support: Continuous engagement, with updated policies completed by end of 2027.

Outcomes

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
Improved governance capability of Indigenous School Boards.	Indigenous Governing Bodies receive governance training annually. Participants report higher confidence in roles and responsibilities. Documented improvement in board meeting records and attendance.
Enhanced compliance with Northern Territory Non-Government Schools Registration Standards.	All supported schools maintain registration compliance. Schools use AISNT compliance templates. Annual compliance workshops in Darwin, Alice Springs and remote hubs.
Increased policy and procedure consistency.	Participating schools adopt updated policies. All Indigenous Schools align policies with cultural and legislative standards. Policy templates are shared via AISNT network.
Strengthened leadership and succession planning.	School leaders participate in coaching or networking opportunities. School leaders report improved leadership confidence. Two School Leadership Forums held annually – Darwin and Alice Springs.
Improved cultural competence and safety.	All AISNT staff complete cultural awareness training by mid-2026. Indigenous Advisory Group operational by 2026. Reconciliation Plan endorsed by Reconciliation Australia by end of 2027. Schools undertake cultural safety reviews.
Stronger parent and community voice.	Indigenous Parent Advisory Committee meets twice annually. Annual report of recommendations completed. Increased parent engagement in AISNT events.
Improved school operations and vocational alignment.	Remote and very remote schools receive tailored operational support. Improved alignment between school programs and local employment needs.

Key stakeholders

- **School Boards and Governing Bodies** – primary recipients of governance workshops, coaching, and policy resources; responsible for strategic oversight and compliance.
- **Principals and Leadership Teams** – participants in leadership development and mentoring; responsible for embedding inclusive and culturally safe practices.
- **Indigenous School Leaders and Staff** – key participants and informants in culturally responsive governance and leadership activities.
- **School Compliance Officers or Administrators** – responsible for aligning school operations with NT Non-Government Schools Registration Standards.

- **Teachers and Support Staff** – indirect beneficiaries through improved leadership, governance, and inclusive school culture.
- **Indigenous students and families in remote and very remote communities** – primary beneficiaries of culturally safe governance and inclusive education practices.
- **Community Elders and Cultural Advisors** – inform governance practices and contribute to the Indigenous Advisory Committee.
- **Parents and caregivers** – stakeholders in school-community engagement and inclusive decision-making.

Activity/Initiative	Supporting Positive Wellbeing for Independent Schools Students in the Northern Territory
Priority	E – Student Well-Being and Support

Description

This priority provides professional learning and student development initiatives designed to strengthen wellbeing, inclusion, and student voice across Independent Schools in the Northern Territory.

The focus is equipping staff with the knowledge and tools to embed inclusive practices and wellbeing frameworks, ensuring all students learn in a safe, supportive, and respectful environments.

This priority has two components:

Learning for School staff:

Support for schools to embed inclusive practices and wellbeing initiatives through professional learning in the area of student wellbeing to ensure safe, supportive and respectful learning environments.

- **Child Mental Health First Aid Workshops (Darwin and Alice Springs) – 2026**
A two-day accredited training program for educators and support staff focused on recognising and responding to mental health challenges in children aged 5–12. Participants will learn practical strategies to support students and connect families with appropriate services.
- **Youth Mental Health First Aid Workshops (Darwin and Alice Springs) – 2027**
Designed for staff working with adolescents, this workshop builds capacity to identify early signs of mental health issues, provide initial support, and guide young people toward professional help. It supports safer, more responsive secondary school environments.
- **Anti-bullying Professional Development for School Staff (Darwin) – 2026**
A targeted training session exploring evidence-based approaches to bullying prevention, intervention, and whole-school culture change. Staff will gain tools to foster respectful relationships and respond effectively to incidents of peer aggression.

Student Development:

The following projects will contribute to the skills growth of students and provides students with the tools and abilities to navigate the future.

- **Student Enrichment Day – 2026-2027**
A sector-wide event offering students from diverse NT Independent schools the opportunity to engage in creative, academic, and wellbeing-focused workshops. The day promotes personal growth, peer connection, and exposure to new ideas and pathways.
- **Student Leadership Development – 2026-2027**
A structured program supporting emerging student leaders through workshops, mentoring, and collaborative projects. The initiative fosters leadership skills, civic engagement, and inclusive peer representation across NT Independent schools

Eligible schools

All Member schools eligible to access activities under this priority.

Timeframes

- Child Mental Health First Aid Workshops (Darwin and Alice Springs) - 2026
- Youth Mental Health First Aid Workshops (Darwin and Alice Springs) – 2027

- Anti-bullying Professional Development for School Staff (Darwin) – 2026
- Student Enrichment Day – 2026-2027
- Student Leadership Development – 2026-2027

Outcomes

Objectives/expected outcomes	Indicators of success
Positive feedback from participants on relevance and applicability of training.	≥85% of participants rate the training as ‘useful’ or ‘highly useful’ in post-workshop evaluations; qualitative feedback highlights practical application in school settings.
Increased staff confidence in identifying and responding to student wellbeing concerns.	≥80% of participants report increased confidence in recognising and responding to mental health or bullying-related issues; follow-up surveys show sustained confidence after 3 months.
Integration of wellbeing strategies into school policies and practices.	≥60% of participating schools incorporate workshop content into wellbeing frameworks, staff induction, or behaviour policies within 6 months of training.
Improved consistency in school responses to student wellbeing and inclusion needs.	Evidence of shared language and practices across schools; reduction in variation of response protocols; increased use of AISNT-provided tools and resources.
Broader staff participation across NT Independent schools.	≥75% of member schools represented across all professional learning activities; participation includes remote and MATSIS schools.

Key stakeholders

- **School Principals and Leadership Teams**
Oversee implementation of wellbeing frameworks and staff participation in professional learning.
- **Teachers and Support Staff**
Primary participants in Mental Health First Aid and anti-bullying workshops; responsible for embedding inclusive practices in classrooms.
- **Wellbeing Coordinators and Inclusion Leads**
Key drivers of school-wide wellbeing strategies and student support systems.
- **Student Leaders and Participants**
Direct beneficiaries of enrichment and leadership programs; contribute to student voice and peer engagement.
- **School Boards and Governance Bodies**
Support strategic alignment of wellbeing and inclusion priorities with school improvement plans.
- **Students across NT Independent Schools**
Beneficiaries of safer, more inclusive learning environments and personal development opportunities.
- **Parents and Caregivers**
Indirect stakeholders through improved student wellbeing, engagement, and school-family relationships.

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.

**Name and Position of the person
signing off on behalf of the NGRB:**



Cheryl Salter – Executive Director
Association of Independent Schools of
the Northern Territory (AISNT)

Date: 29 October 2025