



Australian Government
Department of Education

Choice and Affordability Fund

2021 Annual Report



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The document must be attributed as the Choice and Affordability Fund 2021 Annual Report.

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Executive summary

The 2021 Choice and Affordability Fund (CAF) Annual Report represents the second annual report publication for the CAF. This 2021 CAF Annual Report provides a summary about how the CAF has been used by Non-Government Representative Bodies (NGRBs) over the 2021 school year to achieve the priorities and activities agreed with the Australian Government.

NGRBs reported spending \$62.2 million of the total \$106.0 million CAF allocation for 2021, of which approximately \$52.3 million (or 84%) was distributed directly to schools. Funding has been used to progress the priorities of the CAF and enable non-government schools to continue to support students.

NGRB's reported deferring \$48.6 million of 2021 funding to use in later years. This reflects the greater need for transition support anticipated by schools from 2022 onwards, when the new Capacity to Contribute (CTC) funding arrangements based on the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) are fully implemented.

COVID-19 had an impact on the delivery of CAF activities in 2021. Similar to 2020, some NGRBs spent more than had been budgeted to meet emerging issues and for student wellbeing activities. In other situations, changed delivery mechanisms such as through use of online platforms, meant less funding was needed, and subsequently deferred to future years.

Collectively, NGRBs supported hundreds of schools, and thousands of students and families during 2021, demonstrating the ability to pivot to the needs of member schools and their students.

Introduction

The *Australian Education Regulation 2013* requires Non-Government Representative Bodies (NGRBs) to provide an annual report by 30 June of each year to the Minister for Education in relation to their Choice and Affordability Fund (CAF) activities for the previous year.

Each report outlines how CAF funds have been allocated to help schools and details progress in achieving the agreed priorities and intended outcomes identified in individual CAF agreements, and in CAF workplans where relevant.

The Australian Government Department of Education (the department) reviews each individual CAF annual report submitted by NGRBs to confirm funding has been used in accordance with the CAF Guidelines, agreements and workplans. Approval of each NGRBs CAF annual report is a condition of ongoing CAF funding.

This report provides a consolidated summary of NGRB activities and expenditure under the CAF program to support transparency in Commonwealth school funding arrangements.

More information on the CAF including Guidelines, CAF Funding Agreements and associated workplans is available on the [Department of Education](http://www.education.gov.au/)¹ website.

¹ <http://www.education.gov.au/>

CAF Priorities

Under the CAF arrangements, NGRBs must address the two mandatory national priorities of **Transition assistance** (including transition assistance for regional schools) and **Special circumstances** funding. There are also four non-mandatory CAF priorities that NGRBs can address where these are relevant to the needs of the schools they represent.

CAF priorities are detailed below:

A - Choice and affordability of schools

This priority provides funding for initiatives that facilitate parental choice and opportunity giving parents the ability to choose an affordable school that will best suit their individual child.

B - Transition assistance

This priority provides funding for non-systemic independent schools transitioning to new Commonwealth recurrent funding settings over 2020 to 2029 and for schools transitioning to new capacity to contribute funding arrangements.

C - Special circumstances funding

This priority supports schools and 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.

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

This priority supports initiatives that strengthen outcomes for schools such as helping underperforming schools improve outcomes including through school industry partnerships, and supporting educationally disadvantaged schools and students.

E - Student wellbeing and support

This priority supports schools that require additional assistance to ensure safe, supportive and respectful learning environments.

F - Other priorities identified from time to time

There is scope within the CAF for other priorities to be identified by the Minister from time to time, as specified in any written direction by the Minister issued under the Regulation to the NGRB.

Measuring progress against CAF priorities

In 2021 all NGRBs addressed the mandatory priorities of **Transition Assistance** and **Special Circumstances funding** and many also included the non-mandatory priorities: choice and affordability of schools, strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students, and student wellbeing and support.

Summary of Activity and Progress Delivered in 2021

All NGRBs reported strong progress including on activities delayed in 2020 due to the COVID pandemic. This includes consulting and refining transition paths to the DMI funding arrangements, and support for student wellbeing and quality outcomes.

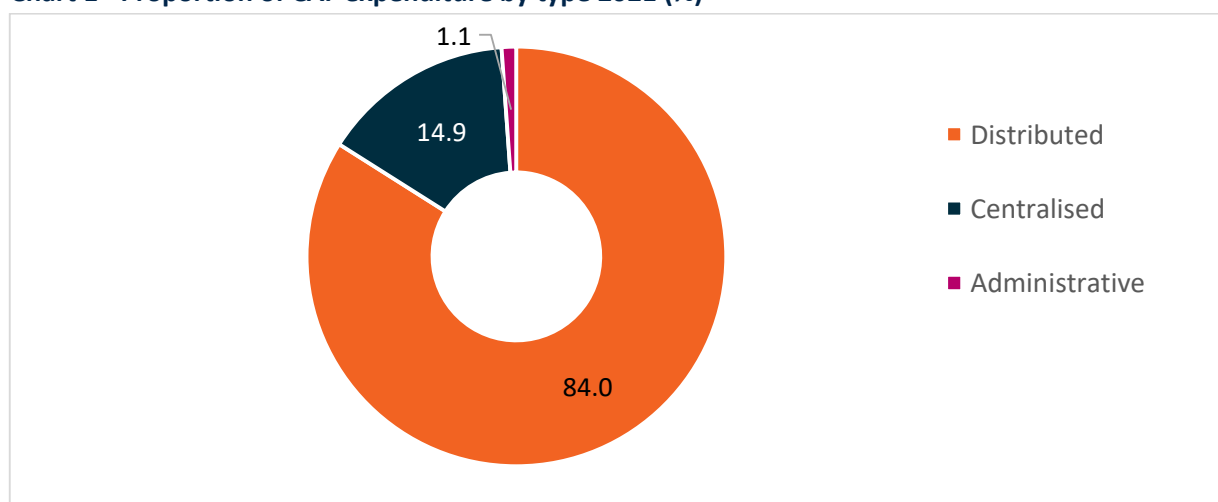
NGRB's were provided \$106.1 million under the CAF in 2021. NGRBs reported spending \$62.2 million in 2021, which includes \$4.7 million of funding deferred from 2020.

NGRB's also reported on the use of funding as either 'distributed' directly to schools to support CAF priorities or expended by the NGRB itself on centralised CAF programs.

Of the total amount expended by NGRBs in 2021, \$52.3m (84.0%) was distributed directly to schools to support CAF priorities and \$9.3m (14.9%) used for centralised programs (see **Chart 1**). NGRBs deferred \$48.6m (45.8%) of the 2021 CAF allocation to support transition in future years.

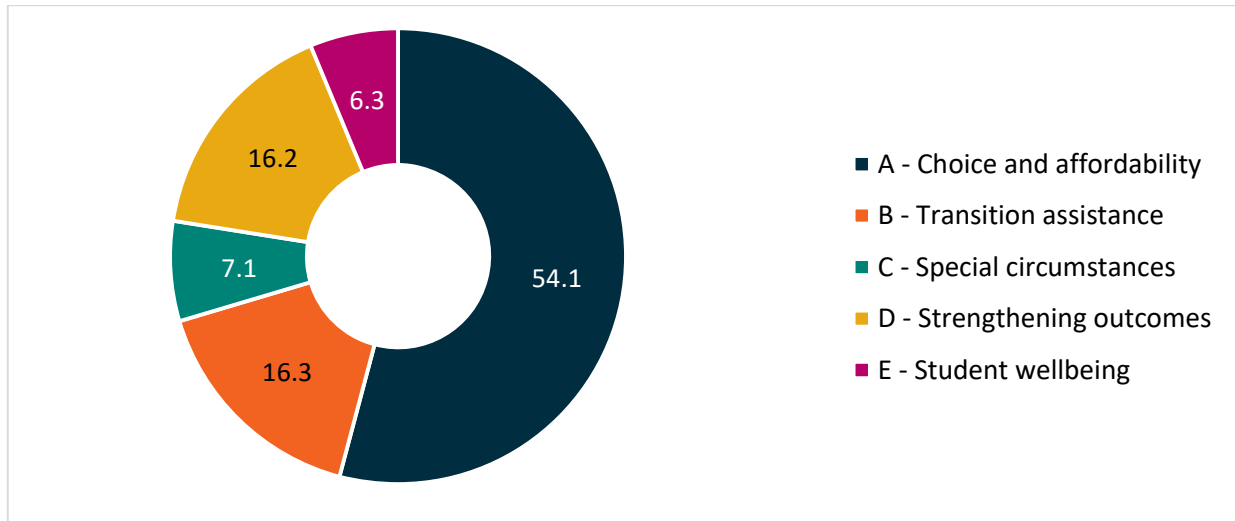
The amount of funding deferred in 2021 aligns with NGRBs plans to manage school transition assistance, recognising the impact of the DMI is more likely to be felt by schools still transitioning to the new funding arrangements after 2022.

Chart 1 - Proportion of CAF expenditure by type 2021 (%)



NGRBs' main focus was on Priority A - Choice and Affordability, comprising 54.1% of total 2021 expenditure. This was followed by Priority B - Transition Assistance at 16.3%, and Priority D – Strengthening Outcomes at 16.3% of total 2021 expenditure (see **Chart 2**).

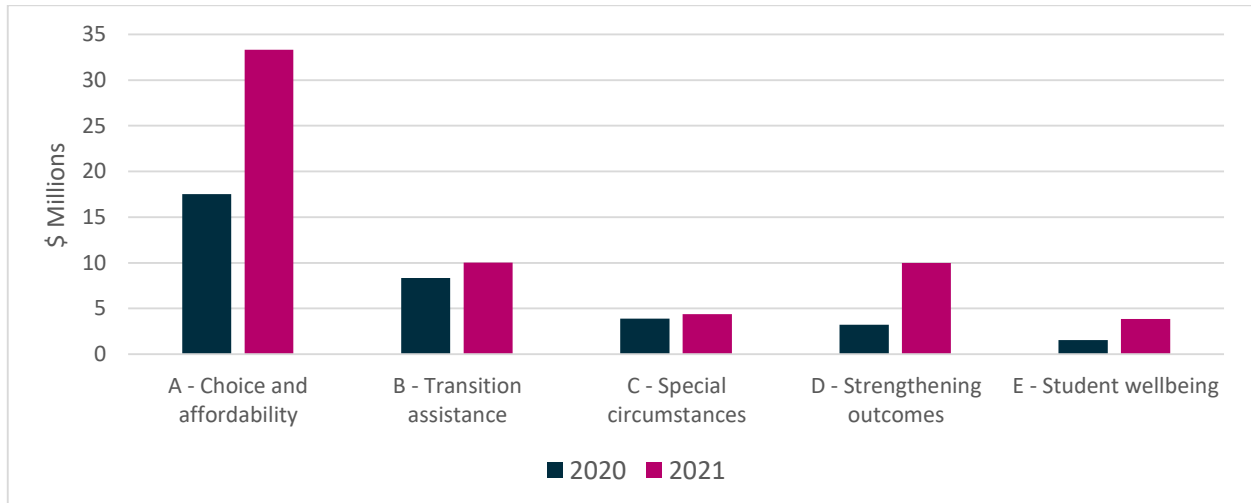
Chart 2 - Expenditure of CAF priority 2021 (%)



Comparison between 2020 and 2021 CAF expenditure

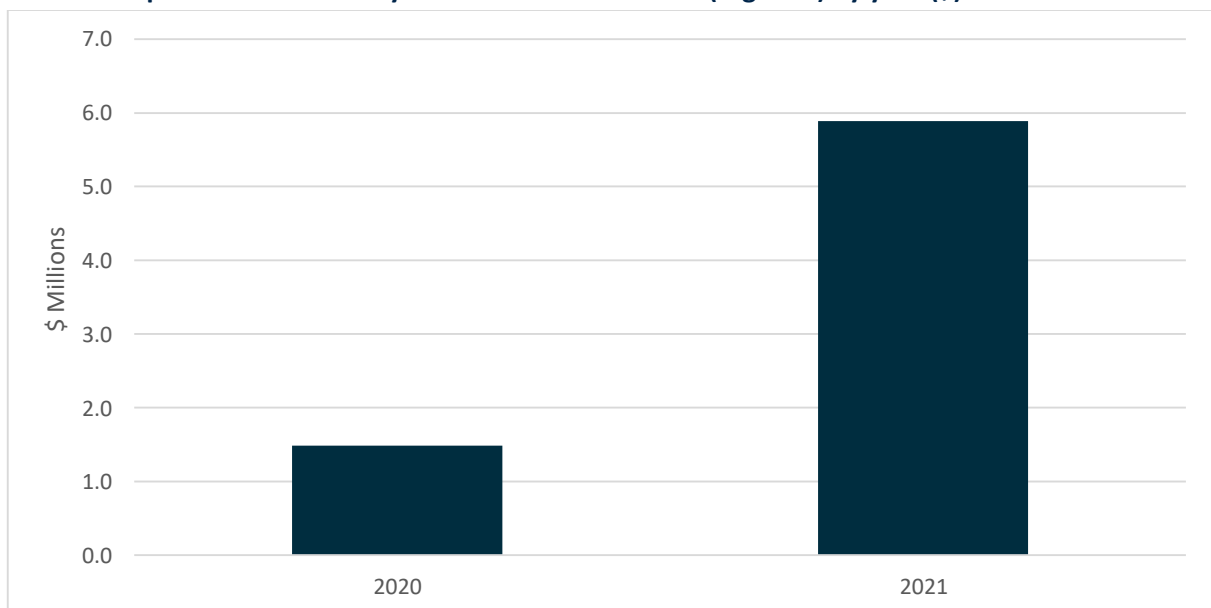
Expenditure between 2020 and 2021 increased substantially across all areas with the level of growth greater for Priority D – Strengthening Outcomes and Priority E - Student Wellbeing. Priority D grew the most with a 210% increase, followed by Priority E at 151% and Priority A - Choice and Affordability at 90% (see **Chart 3**). The increase is in part attributed to the impact of COVID-19 on school outcomes and wellbeing. The change also reflects that 2021 is the first year of implementation for many programs that were developed during 2020, the first year of the CAF.

Chart 3 - Expenditure of CAF priorities by year (\$)



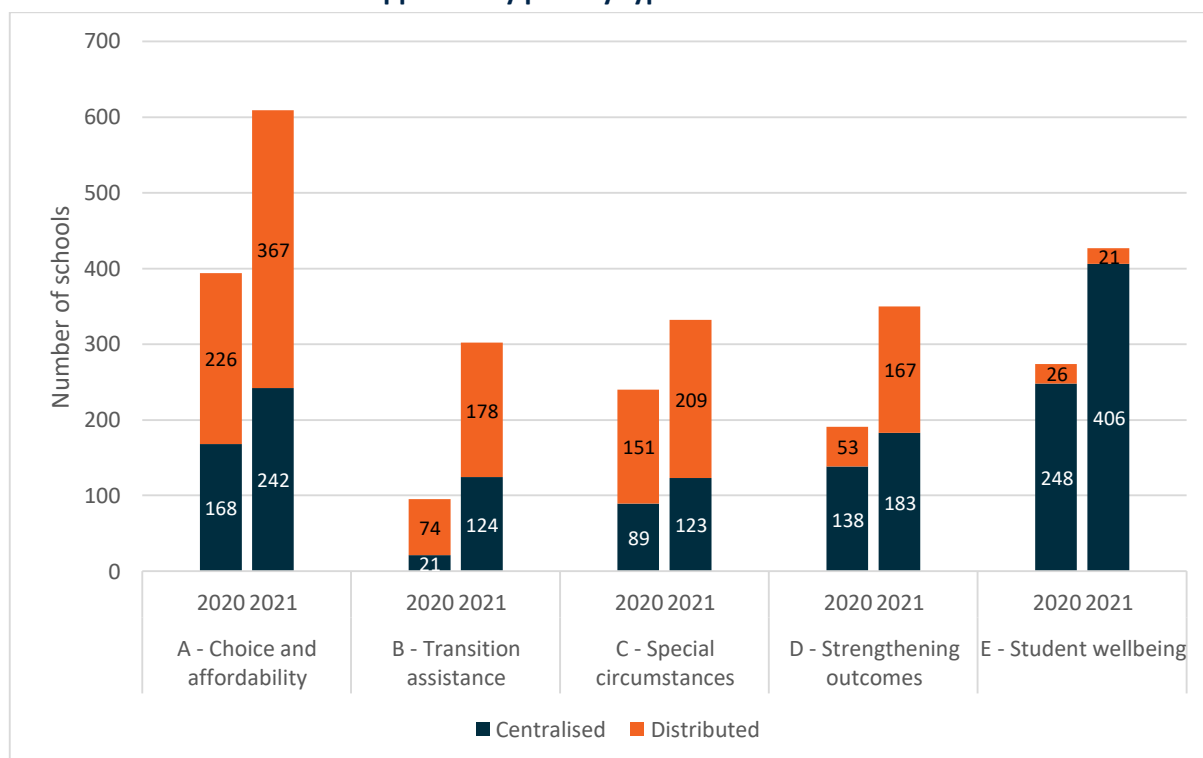
In relation to **regional transition assistance**, NGRBs are continuing to build on 2020 efforts and have effective structures in place to support the distribution to regional schools. Funding expended on regional and remote schools increased by 296% from 2020 (see **Chart 4**).

Chart 4 - Expenditure on Priority B - Transition assistance (regional) by year (\$)



The number of schools supported by each priority increased between 2020 and 2021, with Priority A - Choice and Affordability and Priority B - Transition Assistance experiencing the largest growth in schools supported (215 & 207 extra schools respectively) (see **Chart 5**).

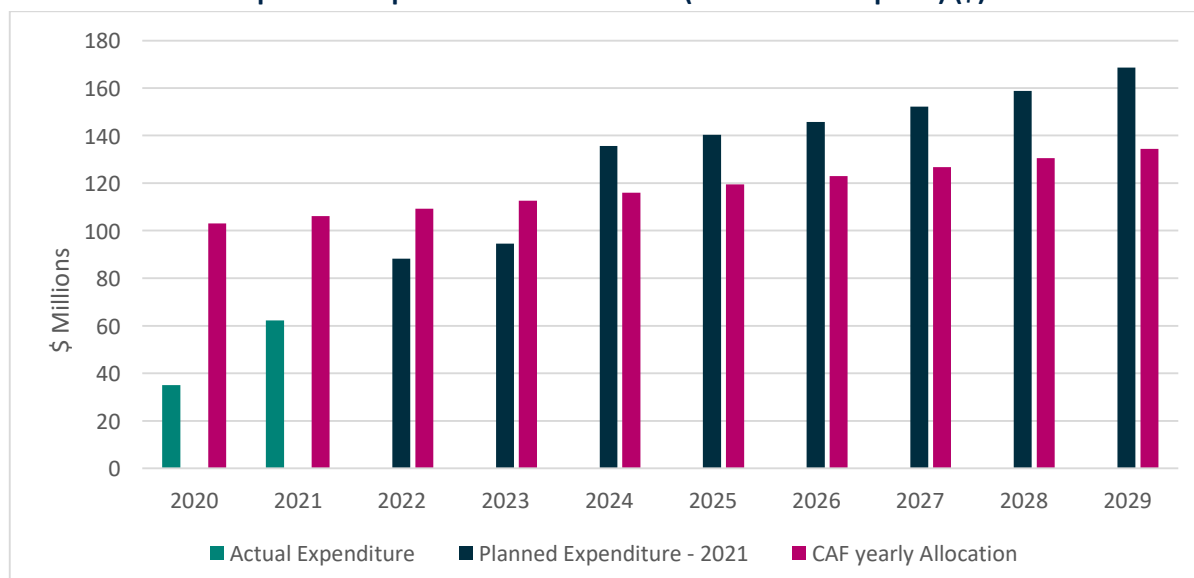
Chart 5 - Number of schools supported by priority type 2020 and 2021.



CAF planned expenditure to 2029

NGRBs have expenditure profiles that guide their annual expenditure as well as their future spending plans up until to 2029. The profile includes any funding that they plan to hold to be expended in later years to meet future needs. This is called deferred expenditure. In 2021 NGRBs continued to refine their expenditure profiles. Current NGRB forecasts show that from 2024 expenditure on CAF priorities will exceed annual funding allocations, meaning that expenditure that had been deferred from earlier years will start to be expended along side the annual allocation. NGRB longer-term forecasts show this trend continuing and the totality of CAF funding expended by the CAF's final year of operation in 2029 (see **Chart 6**). This higher expenditure planned in later years reflects anticipated higher need for transition support for schools who are moving to consistent Commonwealth funding shares by 2029.

Chart 6 - Actual and planned expenditure 2020 to 2029 (2021 annual reports) (\$)



Activities delivered by CAF Priority

The below presents a summary of activities undertaken under each priority. Detailed reports on activities undertaken by each NGRB across 2021 can be found on their respective websites.

A - Choice and affordability of schools

Summary of activities undertaken in 2021.

Activities under this priority have supported choice of affordable education for families, including through fee remission or financial hardship assistance, and other activity which placed downward pressure on school costs. These initiatives have assisted schools and families impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as communities affected by natural disaster events.

Activities being delivered under the CAF national priority—*Choice and Affordability* of schools, include:

- Initiatives to assist principals and business managers from schools with expected changes to their future funding entitlements to identify and implement strategies, policies, and plans to manage the change.
- Supporting schools to access and use expert knowledge.
 - Activities delivered range from engagement of professionals such as chartered accountants and other school finance and school improvement experts to work with schools, to direct assistance to schools to cover their costs of working with experts and support to adjust or streamline business practices to meet long-term financial needs.
 - Work carried out included assessments of school financial health, assisting schools to understand criteria parents use to choose a school for their children, and strategies to increase and retain enrolments and to enable children from disadvantaged families to continue studying at their school of choice.
- Provision of direct grants to special and special assistance schools to allow a greater choice for parents of children who would benefit.
- Direct grants for fee remission for disadvantaged schools or students and/or support for schools that provided fee concessions to families because of the impacts of COVID-19.
- Formal agreements with schools to support initiatives such as fee relief, meeting the CAF objectives to enhance choice and affordability.
- Collecting information on innovative ways of working with technology adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic to deliver education and to meet parental expectations.

Progress and Achievements

- Centrally managed activity delivered to the benefit of 242 schools nationally.
- Direct assistance in the form of distributed CAF funds provided by NGRBs to 367 schools nationally.

B - Transition assistance

Summary of activities undertaken in 2021.

NGRBs shifted their focus from planning and development of support for schools needing transition assistance, to the development of more formal arrangements for 2022 and onwards.

Activities being delivered under the CAF national priority—Transition Assistance, include:

- Continuation professional assistance to help develop and implement transition plans at the school level, supporting schools during their transition to their 2029 recurrent funding levels. These activities have focused on:
 - Financial governance and management;
 - Supporting schools to continue to develop Transition Plans, assisting schools to consider their viability and business model into the future and outline clear transition paths to 2029;
 - Assisting schools with access to expert knowledge to analyse existing business models and financials to inform adaptations that may be needed to support transition and transition planning;
 - Establishment of project teams to lead these work programs.
- In consultation with schools, refinement of, and related communication of funding distribution models, in readiness for implementation from 2022 when the DMI is applied to all schools. NGRBs have developed transparent processes and criteria for assessing school need.
 - This includes support for regional and remote schools with changing funding arrangements and schools that would have been eligible for funding under the former National Adjustment Assistance Fund (NAAF) funding.
- Reviewing data collection for the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) to ensure data collection and reporting appropriately reflects funding entitlements for students who are receiving adjustments.
- Many of these activities continue in 2022 to prepare schools for transition changes through to 2029.

Progress and Achievements

- Centrally managed activity delivered to the benefit of 124 schools nationally.
- Direct assistance in the form of distributed CAF funds provided by NGRBs to 178 schools nationally. Includes:
 - 95 regional schools; and
 - 37 schools that would have been eligible to receive NAAF.

C - Special circumstances funding

Summary of activities undertaken in 2021

Several NGRBs used time in 2021 to settle and formally communicate their mechanisms for schools to apply for special circumstances support. NGRBs also used CAF in 2021 to directly help schools respond to persistent challenges from COVID-19, to ensure school education services continued to be delivered as school communities would expect.

Activities being delivered under the CAF national priority—Special Circumstances, include:

- Drought relief provided for schools in Queensland.
- NGRBs have settled methods for setting aside notional amounts per year, to be drawn down if short term emergency needs arise, or strategies to reallocate funding from other priorities to meet requirements.
 - Some NGRBs established programs and support mechanisms available to schools through either application process or identified as meeting specific criteria by an independent reference group.
 - Another NGRB established a robust governance model to consider applications from schools for support. This included establishment of a Special Circumstances Funding Grants pool.
- Expanded delivery of a student counselling program established in 2020 in response to COVID-19. This program assists with urgent needs in regional areas where limited services are available.
- Direct grants to support schools with increased costs associated with maintaining safe environments for staff and students in relation to COVID-19. For example, schools were supported to meet increased costs from additional safety and hygiene practices including deep cleaning mandated by health authorities in order for campuses to remain open.

Progress and Achievements

- Centrally managed activity delivered to the benefit of 123 schools nationally.
- Direct assistance in the form of distributed CAF funds provided by NGRBs to 209 schools nationally.

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

Summary of activities undertaken in 2021

Initiatives delivered in 2021 continued the work on partnerships between schools and industry to create real-world learning experiences for teachers and students, and projects facilitating professional learning along with access to tutors and a range of mentoring services.

Activities included:

- Continuation of initiatives working with Curriculum and Re-Engagement (CARE) Schools to improve attendance and engagement of disengaged secondary students to improve educational outcomes, and practical interventions to improve student outcomes.
- Continuation of School Industry Partnership Programs established in 2020, where the NGRB facilitated collaboration between teachers and industry experts to help teachers design learning experiences for students that are innovative, engaging and reflect contemporary practices.
- Recruitment of Education Support Officers to provide support for teachers and their support staff by assisting with the identification of educationally disadvantaged students and developing plans to improve school and student outcomes.
- Programs to improve literacy, numeracy, and other academic outcomes of Indigenous students, including initiatives to support student wellbeing and strengthen relationships with families and communities. Projects included support for better outcomes for disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote communities.
- Standardising IT hardware in remote schools to establish reliable network access, improve infrastructure and connectivity, and provide for technicians who can visit schools more regularly.
- Continued engagement of a Curriculum Consultant to work with schools and provide regular, professional learning targeted to each school's context, and education officers to work with schools to assist in the identification of educationally disadvantaged students.
- Initiatives aimed at driving improvements for students in the key areas of Identity, Literacy, Numeracy, Belonging and Relationships, supporting school-based staff to provide a system-wide approach to strengthening student outcomes.
 - Examples include analysis of NAPLAN data to identify schools for intervention and delivering professional learning to increase teachers' capabilities to use data to inform planning for individual students.
- Providing STEM opportunities to students from underrepresented groups to improve practical knowledge, skills and confidence of students using immersive technologies.

Progress and Achievements

- Centrally managed activity delivered to the benefit of 183 schools nationally.
- Direct assistance in the form of distributed CAF funds provided by NGRBs to 167 schools nationally.

E - Student wellbeing and support

Summary of activities undertaken in 2021

Efforts in 2021 have delivered professional learning, preventative strategies, policies, and processes to create safe, supportive, and respectful learning environments. Projects included activities to increase school attendance, support for families to ensure home environments support their child's education, and keeping schools updated in relation to Child Protection information and relevant changes.

Activities delivered under the CAF national priority—Student wellbeing and support, include:

- Continued development and delivery of policies and procedures to help schools provide safe, supportive learning environment and support student mental health.
 - Support for schools to improve knowledge about how educational, psychological, and neuroscientific principles can be used to improve the impact of teaching practices and strategies.
- Implementation of plans to improve school and student outcomes and programs that focus on wrap around services and additional in-school support, particularly for Indigenous students and students in remote areas.
 - One project facilitated workshops and professional learning opportunities, using services, such as Headspace and RUOK, sharing information about existing and emerging practices and developing well-being networks across schools.
- Work to enhance classroom management practices with practical strategies to prevent and reduce problem behaviours while maximising student engagement.
- Resource repositories providing evidence-based wellbeing resources, and curated lists of useful external resources for schools.
- School Support Officers to improve learning opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds under the guidance of teachers.
- Strategies for school leaders to better understand student wellbeing and strategies to minimise bullying.
- Support for schools in relation to mandatory reporting processes and reporting procedures relating to Child Protection.
- Support for schools to embed inclusive practice and wellbeing initiatives, including developing and leading school based professional learning.
 - In one example, an Inclusive Education Consultant supported schools to embed inclusive practices and wellbeing initiatives. In another example, a specialist Wellbeing team was established to further support staff, students and parents.

Progress and Achievements

- Centrally managed activity delivered to the benefit of 406 schools nationally.
- Direct assistance in the form of distributed CAF funds provided by NGRBs to 21 schools nationally.

Summary of the CAF Financial Position

In 2021, \$62.2 million (or 58.7%) of the total 2021 CAF allocation of \$106.1 million was spent, including \$4.7 million of CAF funding deferred from 2020. The remaining balance of \$48.6 million (or 45.8%) has been deferred to later years (see **Table 1** below).

Approximately \$52.3 million (or 84%) of the total expenditure in 2021 has been distributed directly to schools by NGRBs. Overall expenditure by CAF priority saw \$33.3 million expended for Priority A - Choice and Affordability, \$10.0 million for Priority B - Transition Assistance, \$4.4 million for Priority C - Special Circumstances, \$10.0 million for Priority D – Strengthening Outcomes, and \$3.9 million for Priority E – Student Wellbeing.

Table 1 - Breakdown of 2021 CAF expenditure by category for all NGRBs

Area	Expenditure category	2021 expenditure	*Proportion of total 2021 allocation	*Proportion of total 2021 expenditure
Allocation	Total 2021 allocation	\$106,090,000	100.0%	N/A
Expenditure	Total 2021 expenditure	\$62,241,326**	58.7%	100%
Deferred	Deferred to later years (2021 CAF allocation only)	\$48,576,256	45.8%	N/A
	2020 deferred CAF funding used in 2021	\$4,727,582**	N/A	7.6%
By expenditure type	Distributed	\$52,280,168	49.3%	84.0%
	Centralised	\$9,263,980	8.7%	14.9%
	Administrative	\$697,178	0.7%	1.1%
By CAF priority	A - Choice and Affordability	\$33,314,378	31.4%	53.5%
	B - Transition assistance (other)	\$3,300,406	3.1%	5.3%
	B - Transition assistance (regional)	\$5,889,782	5.6%	9.5%
	B - Transition assistance (NAAF)	\$823,957	0.8%	1.3%
	C - Special Circumstances	\$4,365,750	4.1%	7.0%
	D - Student Outcomes	\$9,996,033	9.4%	16.1%
	E - Student Wellbeing	\$3,853,842	3.6%	6.2%

*Please note that there has been some rounding of the underlying data which will affect the total sum of figures in each column.

** Total 2021 expenditure of \$62.2 million includes \$4.7 million of 2020 deferred CAF funding used in 2021

Payments to NGRBs

The total funding allocated to the Catholic and independent sectors was fixed in 2020 based on the number of schools in each sector at that time, recognising that some non-systemic Catholic schools have nominated to be represented by their Catholic NGRB.

The CAF allocations are indexed annually using the SRS indexation factor, which is available in September of the relevant year. Annual allocations must also consider any change to a sector's CAF funding distribution (independent or Catholic) as advised to the Minister in accordance with administrative arrangements.

CAF 2020 funding allocations for Catholic and independent schools are prescribed in the Regulation, and the payments made to NGRBs over 2020 and 2021 are set out in **Table 2 and Table 3** below.

Table 2 - CAF payments to Catholic NGRBs 2020-2021

NGRB by Sector	Total CAF Funding 2020	Total CAF Funding 2021
Catholic Schools New South Wales (CSNSW)	\$16,333,123	\$20,381,026
Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV)	\$15,481,119	\$16,685,428
Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC)	\$10,478,318	\$15,142,914
South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools (SACCS)	\$2,874,850	\$4,147,158
Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA)	\$4,866,025	\$5,637,492
Tasmanian Catholic Education Office (TCEO)	\$1,196,513	\$1,544,842
Catholic Education, Archdiocese Canberra, and Goulburn (CECG)	\$11,395,760	\$999,866
Catholic Education Office Northern Territory (CEONT)	\$697,675	\$684,362

Table 3 - CAF payments to Independent NGRBs 2020-2021

NGRB by Sector	Total CAF Funding 2020	Total CAF Funding 2021
Association of Independent Schools New South Wales (AISNSW)	\$12,585,940	\$12,963,518
Independent Schools Victoria (ISV)	\$8,496,313	\$8,751,202
Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ)	\$8,924,507	\$9,192,242
Association of Independent Schools South Australia (AISSA)	\$2,522,381	\$2,598,052
Association of Independent Schools Western Australia (AISWA)	\$4,322,376	\$4,452,048
Independent Schools Tasmania (IST)	\$1,068,225	\$1,100,272
Association of Independent Schools of the ACT (ACT)	\$413,319	\$425,718
Association of Independent Schools Northern Territory (AISNT)	\$1,343,554	\$1,383,860

Estimated funding allocations for each NGRB are published on the Department's website in October each year and the latest estimates for 2022 onwards (as of October 2021) are set out in **Table 4 and Table 5** (next page).

Table 4 - Estimated CAF allocations to Catholic NGRBs 2022-2029

NGRB Name	2022	2023 ²	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Catholic Schools New South Wales	\$20,992,454	\$21,829,095	\$22,379,007	\$23,050,377	\$23,741,888	\$24,454,144	\$25,187,769	\$25,943,402
Catholic Education Commission of Victoria	\$17,185,990	\$17,870,930	\$18,321,126	\$18,870,760	\$19,436,882	\$20,019,989	\$20,620,588	\$21,239,206
Queensland Catholic Education Commission	\$15,597,200	\$16,218,815	\$16,627,395	\$17,126,217	\$17,640,003	\$18,169,203	\$18,714,279	\$19,275,708
South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools	\$4,271,574	\$4,441,816	\$4,553,711	\$4,690,323	\$4,831,032	\$4,975,963	\$5,125,242	\$5,278,999
Catholic Education Western Australia	\$5,806,616	\$6,038,040	\$6,190,145	\$6,375,849	\$6,567,124	\$6,764,138	\$6,967,062	\$7,176,074
Tasmanian Catholic Education Office	\$1,591,186	\$1,654,602	\$1,696,284	\$1,747,173	\$1,799,588	\$1,853,576	\$1,909,183	\$1,966,458
Catholic Education, Archdiocese Canberra, and Goulburn	\$1,029,862	\$1,070,907	\$1,097,885	\$1,130,821	\$1,164,746	\$1,199,688	\$1,235,679	\$1,272,749
Catholic Education Office Northern Territory	\$704,894	\$732,984	\$751,451	\$773,994	\$797,214	\$821,131	\$845,764	\$871,137

² Includes an additional amount in respect of the 2022, based on the final SRS indexation, that will be paid in 2023.

Table 5 - Estimated CAF allocations to Independent NGRBs 2022-2029

NGRB Name	2022	2023 ³	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Association of Independent Schools New South Wales	\$13,352,422	\$13,884,577	\$14,234,351	\$14,661,382	\$15,101,223	\$15,554,260	\$16,020,888	\$16,501,514
Independent Schools Victoria	\$9,013,738	\$9,372,976	\$9,609,096	\$9,897,369	\$10,194,290	\$10,500,118	\$10,815,122	\$11,139,576
Independent Schools Queensland	\$9,468,010	\$9,845,351	\$10,093,372	\$10,396,173	\$10,708,058	\$11,029,300	\$11,360,179	\$11,700,984
Association of Independent Schools South Australia	\$2,675,994	\$2,782,645	\$2,852,743	\$2,938,326	\$3,026,476	\$3,117,270	\$3,210,788	\$3,307,112
Association of Independent Schools Western Australia	\$4,585,608	\$4,768,367	\$4,888,488	\$5,035,143	\$5,186,198	\$5,341,783	\$5,502,037	\$5,667,098
Independent Schools Tasmania	\$1,133,280	\$1,178,445	\$1,208,133	\$1,244,377	\$1,281,708	\$1,320,160	\$1,359,764	\$1,400,557
Association of Independent Schools of the ACT	\$438,490	\$455,966	\$467,452	\$481,476	\$495,920	\$510,798	\$526,121	\$541,905
Association of Independent Schools Northern Territory	\$1,425,376	\$1,482,189	\$1,519,524	\$1,565,109	\$1,612,063	\$1,660,424	\$1,710,237	\$1,761,544

³ Includes an additional amount in respect of the 2022, based on the final SRS indexation, that will be paid in 2023.