



## **Australian Government**

Australian Government response to the  
Senate Education and Employment References Committee  
Interim and Final reports:

*The issue of increasing disruption in Australian school classrooms*

MAY 2026

## Overview

The Australian Government thanks the Senate Education and Employment References Committee for its work on the inquiry into the issue of increasing disruption in Australian school classrooms.

The Government is committed to ensuring that every Australian child enjoys the benefits of a quality education. The Committee's inquiry draws attention to matters that were also raised in [Improving Outcomes for All: The Report of the Independent Expert Panel's Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System](#) (Improving Outcomes for All).<sup>1</sup> Classroom disruption not only affects learning, it affects the health and wellbeing of students, teachers, and school leaders.

This is why the Australian Government has made 'wellbeing for learning and engagement' one of the three objectives in the [Better and Fairer Schools Agreements](#) (BFSA)<sup>2</sup>. Under the agreements, parties have agreed that 'schools [will] take a structured approach to wellbeing for learning in a way which reflects their school and learning environment, and students have a sense of belonging, safety and engagement with their learning' (65(b)). The estimated \$16.5 billion over ten years (2025–26 to 2034–35) to deliver the BFSA will bring all schools in Australia to 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) (when contributions from the Commonwealth and state and territory governments are counted) and represents the biggest new investment in public schools by an Australian Government ever. This funding is tied to real, practical reforms.

To support approaches being taken by states and territories and non-government school education authorities, which are responsible for the day-to-day running of schools, the Government has taken steps to ensure that teachers and school leaders have resources and professional development to effectively manage classroom behaviour. This includes the Engaged Classrooms initiative, which has funded the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) to develop evidence-based guidance materials and tools to help teachers to create safe and supportive environments focused on learning. The Government has also contracted the University of Adelaide to develop and deliver free online evidence-based microcredentials to help teachers upskill in a fast, practical way in three priority areas, including classroom management.

As the evidence to the Committee has shown, it is also important to address non-school factors that contribute to disruptive and violent behaviour in schools, such as mobile phone use and vaping. Education Ministers have taken a strong stance on these issues, with all states and territories now banning or restricting students' personal use of mobile phones and other personal electronic devices in government schools. Recent data indicates that students are less distracted in the classroom.

The Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee heard from the Australian Secondary Principal's Association (ASPA) on the direct link between vaping and classroom disruption, with the ASPA President describing how vaping 'manifests in kids behaviour, it's the same way that withdrawal symptoms from cigarettes would—agitation, irritation, irritability and a tendency to engage more readily in conflict cycles with other kids and with teachers.'<sup>3</sup> Together with Health Ministers, Education Ministers are continuing to work to address vaping in schools. This includes placing strong controls on the accessibility

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<sup>1</sup> O'Brien L, Paul L, Anderson D, Hunter J, Lamb S and P Sahlberg (2023) [Improving Outcomes for All: The Report of the Independent Expert Panel's Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System](#), report to Education Ministers, Australian Government, accessed 25 August 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Government, Department of Education (2025) [The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement \(2025–2034\)](#), accessed 23 October 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Australian Senate, Community Affairs Legislation Committee (2024) [Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment \(Vaping Reforms\) Bill 2024 \[Provisions\]](#), 2.14, accessed 25 August 2025.

of vaping goods by banning the importation, manufacture, supply and commercial possession of disposable single use and non-therapeutic vapes and restricting access and supply strictly for therapeutic purposes for smoking cessation and nicotine dependence within a pharmacy setting. In addition, the Government has launched a national campaign to educate young people on the harms of e-cigarettes, and rolled out the national *OurFutures Vaping Prevention Program*. By 30 June 2028, this evidence-based program aims to provide one million Year 7 and 8 students with increased understanding of the risks and health harms of vaping, and practical refusal skills.

The Government is committed to ensuring students feel safe, respected and supported at school. On 17 October 2025, Education Ministers agreed to the recommendations of the [Final Report](#) from the Anti-Bullying Rapid Review, which included establishing a National Standard on Bullying in Australian schools. The recommendations aim to ensure that every school is a safe, inclusive and respectful learning environment where bullying and other harmful behaviours are not accepted. Education departments are working together to develop an implementation plan for the Review recommendations, to be considered by Education Ministers in 2026.

There is robust and growing evidence suggesting that social media is exposing young Australians to a range of harms, many stemming from the addictive features of platforms. For example, research by the eSafety Commissioner found that 7 in 10 children surveyed said they had encountered harmful content, including exposure to sexist, misogynistic or hateful material, dangerous online challenges, violent fight videos and content promoting disordered eating.<sup>4</sup> The *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024* introduces a minimum age of 16 years to have an account on age-restricted social media platforms, protecting young Australians at a critical stage of their development. Implemented from 10 December 2025, the social media minimum age law is giving Australians under 16 years of age three more years to build community, identity and resilience in the real world. The eSafety Commissioner is undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of this law and the impact it is having on children through the linking of survey data to administrative datasets, including the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), the Medicare Benefits Scheme (MBS) and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

School attendance and engagement are key drivers of Target 5 of the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#), Year 12 attainment. The Commonwealth is committed to working in partnership with First Nations people and organisations to improve outcomes of First Nations students. By placing culture at the forefront, a stronger sense of belonging and identity is fostered for First Nations students. Keeping young people engaged in learning and completing their education creates pathways to a wealth of opportunities for First Nations people to reach their full potential.<sup>5</sup>

The Government is committed to ensuring equitable, inclusive education for all children and students with disability. [Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031](#) includes a policy priority to build capability in the delivery of inclusive education to improve educational outcomes for school students with disability. When children and young people have positive educational experiences, they are more likely to remain engaged in learning.

All schools in Australia are required under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) to provide reasonable adjustments for students with disability so they can

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<sup>4</sup> eSafety Commissioner (2025) [Digital Use and Risk: Online Platform Engagement among Children aged 10 to 15](#), Australian Government, accessed 8 September 2025, p 29.

<sup>5</sup> NIAA (2025) [Commonwealth Closing the Gap 2024 Annual Report and 2025 Implementation Plan](#), Australian Government, accessed 26 August 2025.

access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability. The Government has published resources to help students with disability and their families understand and exercise their rights. It has also commissioned new resources for teachers and school leaders to strengthen their knowledge and capability to better meet their obligations under the Standards.<sup>6</sup>

The response to the Committee's recommendations has been coordinated by the Department of Education, in consultation with the following agencies:

- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
- Department of Health, Disability and Ageing
- Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts
- Department of Social Services
- National Indigenous Australians Agency
- Treasury.

The Government thanks those individuals who shared their expertise, personal experiences, and reflections with the Committee, and welcomes the opportunity to respond to the reports.

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<sup>6</sup> Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) [Supporting Students with Disability](#), accessed 26 August 2025; Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) [Disability Standards for Education Resources](#), accessed 26 August 2025.

## **Final Report Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1**

**The committee recommends that the Senate refer an inquiry into declining academic standards in Australian schools to the Education and Employment References Committee.**

**The terms of reference should include:**

- **students' proficiency in literacy and numeracy**
- **the experience of principals, teachers and parents in meeting the challenge of raising academic standards**
- **the extent to which the experience of other countries with high or markedly high academic standards can inform Australian schools**
- **what support could be provided to teachers and what improvements could be made to the Australian Curriculum to raise academic standards in Australian schools.**

*Noted.*

The Government notes that the [Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System](#) considered—among other things—the targets and reforms that should be included in the next National School Reform Agreement to drive real improvements in student outcomes. The final report of the review, [Improving Outcomes for All](#), was published in December 2023. Further, the Government notes that Version 9.0 of the Australian Curriculum was agreed by Education Ministers on 1 April 2022 and is in the process of being implemented nationally.

The Government has reached agreements with all jurisdictions to implement new school reform and funding arrangements through the Better and Fairer Schools Agreements (BFSA). The BFSA identifies three priority areas for improvement: equity and excellence, wellbeing for learning and engagement, and a strong and sustainable workforce. Funding is tied to reforms needed to lift education standards, including more individualised support for students, evidence-based teaching practices, and more mental health support in schools. The estimated \$16.5 billion over ten years (2025–26 to 2034–35) to deliver the BFSA will bring all schools in Australia to 100 per cent of the SRS (when contributions from the Commonwealth and state and territory governments are counted), and represents the biggest ever new investment in public schools by an Australian Government.

Reforms include:

- Year 1 phonics and early years of schooling numeracy checks to identify students in the early years of school who need additional help
- evidence-based teaching and targeted and intensive supports such as small-group or catch-up tutoring to help students who fall behind
- initiatives that support wellbeing for learning and engagement, including through greater student participation, attendance and inclusion
- access to high-quality and evidence-based professional learning
- initiatives that improve the attraction and retention of teachers.

In addition to these reforms, the BFSA have targets to lift student outcomes and provide more support to teachers, including:

- reducing the proportion of students in the NAPLAN 'Needs Additional Support' proficiency level for reading and numeracy by 10 per cent by 2030

- increasing the proportion of students in the 'Strong' and 'Exceeding' proficiency levels for reading and numeracy by 10 per cent by 2030 and an upwards trend for priority equity cohorts in the 'Strong' and 'Exceeding' proficiency levels
- increasing the Student Attendance Rate, nationally, to 91.4 per cent (2019 level) by 2030
- increasing the engagement rate (completed or still enrolled) of initial teacher education students by 10 percentage points to 69.7 per cent by 2035.

On 21 March 2024, Senator Wendy Askew, Chief Opposition Whip in the Senate, moved that the following matter be referred to the Education and Employment References Committee for inquiry and report by 12 September 2024:

The issue of declining academic standards in Australian schools, with specific reference to:

- (a) students' proficiency in literacy and numeracy
- (b) the experience of principals, teachers and parents in meeting the challenge of raising academic standards
- (c) the extent to which the experience of other countries with high or markedly high academic standards can inform Australian schools
- (d) what support could be provided to teachers and what improvements could be made to the Australian Curriculum to raise academic standards in Australian schools
- (e) any other related matters.

The motion was denied with a majority of 3 noes.

## **Interim Report Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1**

**The committee recommends that Education Ministers fast-track implementation of the recommendations from the Teacher Education Expert Panel, encompassed in:**

**Priority Reform 1: Strengthening Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Programs to Deliver Effective Beginning Teachers**

**Priority Reform 3: Improving the Quality of Practical Experience in Teaching.**

*Agreed.*

Education Ministers have fast-tracked the implementation of recommendations in [Strong Beginnings: Report of the Teacher Education Expert Panel](#) (Strong Beginnings),<sup>7</sup> including the priority reform 1 requirement that all ITE programs adhere to new content requirements by the end of 2025. Embedding core content in all ITE programs will ensure that ITE graduates are better prepared to enter the classroom and equipped with vital classroom management skills and expertise around establishing rules and routines, proactive practices such as goal setting, and managing behaviour through pre-planning and calm, consistent, proportional responses. This will ensure that ITE students are provided training in practices that foster positive learning environments.<sup>8</sup>

The Government has invested \$7.1 million in a new Strong Beginnings Fund (Recommendations 6 & 7 of Strong Beginnings). The Transition Fund (\$4.2 million) is supporting higher education providers to implement the core content into their ITE programs by December 2025, with providers able to receive \$15,000 per eligible ITE course they deliver. In 2024, Transition Funding was paid to all 46 eligible ITE providers. The Excellence Fund (\$2.9 million in 2025–26 and 2026–27 and \$1 million per year after that) will recognise ITE providers promoting best practice in ITE delivery and a culture of continuous improvement in the sector. A competitive grant round will be run annually from 2025–26.

In December 2023, Education Ministers agreed to establish the [Initial Teacher Education Quality Assurance Oversight Board](#), which will work to improve the national consistency and quality of ITE. This actions Recommendation 3 of Strong Beginnings. The composition and Terms of Reference for the Board were agreed by Education Ministers in April 2024. The Board will take a national view on:

- whether ITE programs are providing evidence of embedding evidence-based practices in meeting Accreditation Standards and Procedures, and undertaking periodic reviews of the core content to ensure that the core content remains up to date with the latest research and adheres to the best evidence-based practices (Recommendation 2 of Strong Beginnings)
- consistency of the assessment of ITE students against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Graduate Level Standards) through cross-institutional moderation of Teaching Performance Assessments
- improvement in ITE outcomes by reviewing ITE programs against a set of nationally consistent, transparent indicators (Recommendation 5 of Strong Beginnings).

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<sup>7</sup> Teacher Education Expert Panel (2023) [Strong Beginnings: Report of the Teacher Education Expert Panel](#), final report the Department of Education, Australian Government, accessed 26 August 2025.

<sup>8</sup> AITSL (2023) [Addendum to the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures](#), accessed 26 August 2025.

The Board's initial priorities are outlined in the [Strategic Work Program Summary 2024–25](#). The Board will provide its first report to Education Ministers later in 2025, outlining key achievements to date.

In relation to Priority Reform 3, Education Ministers tasked the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) with developing new national [Australian Professional Experience Guidelines](#) in 2023. The guidelines were launched in November 2024 following extensive consultation with the sector in early 2024. By building on existing practical experience resources already in use in some jurisdictions, the national guidelines provide clear expectations and advice for consistent, high-quality practical experience delivery.

The Government and states and territories are undertaking additional activities to implement other practical experience related recommendations made by the Teacher Education Expert Panel, including establishing system-wide coordination of practical experience delivery, increasing systemic investment in practical experience and ensuring professional recognition for mentor teachers. Examples of activities being implemented by jurisdictions include scholarships and programs to help incentivise professional experience, recognition of mentoring hours as professional learning, encouraging or requiring mentoring of ITE students to attain Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) status, and mentoring training for experienced teachers.

Through the 2024–25 Budget, the Government announced a Commonwealth Prac Payment for targeted cohorts of tertiary students undertaking mandatory placements. As of 1 July 2025, eligible domestic students are able to receive a weekly payment of \$331.65 (benchmarked to the single Austudy rate) while they are undertaking mandatory placements as part of a Bachelor or Masters degree in nursing, midwifery, teaching or social work delivered through higher education providers delivering Commonwealth Supported Places. This action responds to Recommendation 14 of the Universities Accord, and gives effect to Recommendation 10 of Strong Beginnings as it increases systemic investment in practical experience.

## **Recommendation 2**

**The committee recommends that the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority strengthen the focus on behaviour within the Australian Curriculum by specifically introducing a 'Behaviour Curriculum'.**

*Agreed in principle.*

The Government agrees there is a need for structured, whole-school approaches to establishing and maintaining expected behaviours—sometimes referred to as a behaviour curriculum. As the Committee heard, collaboration between teachers and leaders, and students and their families is crucial for setting behaviour norms. This involves explicitly teaching clear rules, routines, and expected conduct, applying consequences for not meeting those norms, and implementing mechanisms to help students meet behaviour expectations. The selection of resources to support this is a matter for jurisdictions, sectors and individual schools, in collaboration with their school community, and in response to local needs.

The Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 was agreed by Education Ministers on 1 April 2022. It includes subject learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities. In its evidence to the Committee, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority also highlighted the opportunity for expected behaviours to be addressed through the translation of the Australian Curriculum in learning contexts such as Civics and Citizenship, Health and Physical Education, and through the general capabilities.

By implementing the Australian Curriculum – including the general capabilities of Personal and social capability, Intercultural understanding, and Ethical understanding – schools can develop and implement whole-school behaviour programs. It is important that these practices complement the Australian Curriculum, so that they ease – rather than increase – workload pressure for teachers.

As AERO has noted, most Australian schools have developed comprehensive student behaviour plans and policies that articulate expectations, their alignment with the school’s values, and what the school can do to provide additional support to students when required; as well as how they track student attendance and disciplinary matters.<sup>9</sup> Most schools also teach, model and encourage appropriate behaviour through the embedding of school community values in the wider life and culture of the school. In many schools, mission and vision statements and school values are the foundation for a whole school behaviour plan. They also provide the basis for schools to teach, acknowledge and champion common values and characteristics, which help to create positive, safe and inclusive school environments for all students.

At the national level, the Government has supported teachers, school leaders and systems to manage classrooms and create safe, supportive learning environments by funding the development of resources and professional learning. A \$3.5 million investment has enabled AERO to develop evidence-based guidance and tools including a foundational classroom management guide to support early career teachers, classroom practice videos, a facilitation guide to support implementing a whole-school approach to classroom management, and practice guides on supporting students’ diverse needs, with more resources to follow. All resources have been developed in consultation with teachers, subject matter experts, and government and non-government education authorities.<sup>10</sup>

Complementing AERO’s information resources, the Government has invested in new professional learning to upskill teachers. The evidence-based Microcredential in Classroom Management, developed and delivered by the University of Adelaide, was released in July 2024. It offers Australian educators four 12-hour modules covering creating a safe and orderly classroom, addressing frequent interruptions to learning, building positive and inclusive practices, and managing escalations in behaviour. This is one of three microcredentials which are available to Australian educators at no cost until December 2026 as part of the Government’s \$5 million investment in microcredentials for teacher professional development.<sup>11</sup>

### **Recommendation 3**

**The committee recommends that government and non-government education authorities are required to invest in the professional development of teachers, so that they are supported by the latest evidence-based teaching skills to manage classroom behaviour.**

*Agreed in principle.*

The Australian Government supports investment in the professional development of teachers and is working with state and territory governments to improve access through the BFSAs. The Australian Government is investing an additional estimated \$16.5 billion into public schools over the next decade

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<sup>9</sup> AERO (2023) [Effectively Managing Classrooms to Create Safe and Supportive Learning Environments](#), accessed 9 September 2025.

<sup>10</sup> Australian Government, Department of Education (2024) [Engaged Classrooms: Supporting All Students to Achieve](#), accessed 26 August 2025.

<sup>11</sup> Australian Government, Department of Education (2024) [Free Course to Help Teachers Manage Classrooms](#), accessed 26 August 2025.

(2025–26 to 2034–35) through the BFSA, with funding tied to the implementation of evidence-based reforms in priority areas including a strong and sustainable workforce.

The BFSA includes a National Reform Direction focussed on providing teachers and school leaders with greater access to high-quality and evidence-based professional learning. Specific reforms are outlined in state and territory bilateral agreements and are already being implemented in some jurisdictions.

Effective teachers renew and extend their knowledge and skills to meet the changing and expanding demands of the profession. All teachers, supported by school systems, need access to high-quality professional learning focused on improving student outcomes and aligned to the [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#) (Teacher Standards).

State and territory governments and non-government education authorities have primary responsibility for determining the professional learning needs of their teacher workforces, and work with teacher regulatory authorities, schools, school leaders and teaching staff to determine professional learning priorities.

Under the Teacher Standards, all teachers are expected to manage challenging classroom behaviour by establishing and negotiating clear expectations with students, and addressing discipline issues promptly, fairly and respectfully. Teachers are also expected to support student participation by establishing and implementing inclusive and positive interactions to engage and support all students in classroom activities.

As part of their ongoing actions to support the teacher workforce nationally, in October 2025, Education Minister asked the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) to scope a review of the Teacher Standards and the Australian Professional Standard for Principals (Principal Standard).<sup>12</sup>

Some Australian Government agencies provide professional learning opportunities for teachers on topics of national significance. For example, the [eSafety Commissioner](#) provides online professional learning for teachers on online safety. The [Student Wellbeing Hub](#) also provides professional learning modules for teachers to support student wellbeing and safe learning environments.

As noted under Interim Report Recommendation 1, AITSL has developed [Australian Professional Experience Guidelines](#) to help ensure that ITE students receive high quality experience in the classroom before graduating. The guidelines are intended to clarify roles and responsibilities, improve consistency, and reduce administrative burden for ITE providers, education systems, schools, early childhood settings and teacher regulatory authorities.

As noted under Interim Report Recommendation 2, the Government has also invested in new Engaged Classrooms resources and a microcredential in classroom management to support teachers to undertake professional development in effectively managing classroom behaviour. Government and non-government education authorities provided valuable input to both projects, and are encouraging teachers and schools to take advantage of these free resources.

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<sup>12</sup> Australian Government, Department of Education (2025) [Education Ministers Meeting Communiqué - October 2025](#), accessed 1 December 2025.

The Australian Government funds the [Positive Partnerships](#) program which aims to build partnerships between schools and families to improve the educational experiences of Autistic students. This includes free online resources, workshops and information sessions for educators at all Australian schools.

The Government is also funding a new autism specific microcredential to help teachers and other school staff better understand and support Autistic students in the classroom. An Open Tender is currently underway for this initiative and an announcement on the successful supplier will be made in due course.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**The committee recommends that Education Ministers, as part of the next National School Reform Agreement, require evidence-based instructional models, such as explicit instruction; formative assessment; mastery learning; and spacing and retrieval, which have been proven effective at creating a learning climate that manages disruptive behaviour in classrooms and provides the best possible learning conditions, to be implemented.**

*Agreed.*

Under the BFSA, parties have agreed that ‘schools and education systems are equipped to provide all students with highly effective evidence-based teaching and equitable learning opportunities and support them to maximise their learning’ (65(a)), and every state and territory has embedded a commitment to evidence-based teaching in their bilateral agreement. These evidence-based models include:

- whole of system and/or whole of school approaches that identify student learning needs early and provide tiered and targeted, intensive supports, in line with evidence-based teaching and a ‘multi-tiered systems of support’ approach (84(a)(i))
- a Year 1 phonics check and early years of schooling numeracy check being made available to schools in Australia to support teachers and school leaders to identify student learning needs early (84(a)(ii))
- access to high-quality and evidenced-based professional learning for teachers and school leaders and the provision of quality-assured curriculum resources that have been developed in partnership with the teaching profession (84(c)(ii)).

On 27 June 2025 Education Ministers agreed, with the exception of Western Australian public schools, to bring forward the piloting or implementation of Year 1 numeracy checks to 2026. Ministers welcomed confirmation from the National Catholic Education Commission that it will also pilot numeracy checks in 2026. Officials will work with the independent school sector to promote similar arrangements. Western Australia noted that it operates a mandatory on-entry assessment in pre-primary that includes a numeracy component. A numeracy check is one of the five National Enabling Initiatives set out in the BFSA.<sup>13</sup>

The BFSA also includes a commitment by the Commonwealth to develop a new First Nations Education Policy. This will articulate the national priorities and objectives to create an education sector where First Nations students thrive and reach their full potential in school and beyond.

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<sup>13</sup> Copies of the bilateral agreements are available from the Department of Education website: Australian Government, Department of Education (2025) [The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement \(2025–2034\)](#), accessed 23 October 2025.

## Recommendation 5

**The committee notes the lead taken by the NSW Minister for Education and recommends that future school buildings are funded and constructed on the basis that they will deliver the best learning environments for students, such as traditional classrooms, as opposed to open-plan classrooms.**

*Noted.*

State and territory governments and non-government school authorities are responsible for decisions about design of school infrastructure to meet the specific needs of their students.

The Government acknowledges there is a growing body of evidence on the links between school building design and students' learning outcomes. This includes a 2023 University of Melbourne study that found many children in open-plan classrooms have slower reading development and spend more time disengaged from educational activities.<sup>14</sup>

In 2022, a NSW parliamentary inquiry into school infrastructure noted that 'Open plan, flexible learning spaces struggle to foster student concentration and are particularly detrimental for hearing-impaired students'. It also noted that the traditional classroom design is more likely to encourage teachers to recognise the benefits of explicit teaching.<sup>15</sup>

Projects funded under the Government's Capital Grants Program for non-government schools are required to be consistent with sound educational planning.

## Recommendation 6

**The committee recommends that state and territory governments explore more effective integration between education and healthcare services so schools can have timely access to student support services, including psychologists, social workers, and behaviour specialists, to help identify and manage disruptive behaviour.**

*Agreed in principle.*

Students would benefit from more effective integration between state and territory education and health care services. [Improving Outcomes for All](#) highlighted the successes of full-service school models in strengthening the integration between schools and broader services, including health and community services, to support the wellbeing and engagement of students more effectively.

The BFSA includes National Reform Directions that promote wellbeing for learning and engagement of students. These include:

- initiatives that support connections between schools and other non-school services to support students to come to school ready to learn, for example through full-service school models where appropriate (84(b)(i))

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<sup>14</sup> Rance G, Dowell R and D Tomlin (2023) 'The Effect of Classroom Environment on Literacy Development', *npj Science of Learning*, 8, 9: 1–10, [doi:10.1038/s41539-023-00157-y](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41539-023-00157-y), accessed 26 August 2025.

<sup>15</sup> NSW Parliament, Legislative Council (2022) [Building better schools: Improvements to NSW school infrastructure. Report of the inquiry into the planning and delivery of school infrastructure in New South Wales](#), Portfolio Committee No. 3 – Education, report 47, accessed 26 August 2025.

- structured initiatives that support wellbeing for learning and engagement, for example in-school wellbeing coordinators or access to school counsellors, psychologists, mental health workers and/or youth health nurses (84(b)(ii)).

One notable example of BFSA funding being delivered to deliver more effective integration of services is the Western Australian Connected Community School trial which ‘aims to ensure families can easily access community health and social services, while improving students' educational and wellbeing outcomes beyond the classroom’.<sup>16</sup>

At the national level, the Government is providing \$61.4 million per year to states and territories to deliver the National Student Wellbeing Program, giving schools the option to hire a qualified Student Wellbeing Officer or Chaplain to work in collaboration with school communities to support the wellbeing of students.

The Government has also provided \$192 million through the Student Wellbeing Boost initiative to support schools to respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and successive lockdowns on the mental health and wellbeing of students. This initiative provided one-off funding that schools could use for wellbeing initiatives that met local needs. This included, for example, additional school mental health professionals (such as psychologists and school counsellors), school camps, excursions, sporting and social activities targeted at improving students’ wellbeing, and proven student wellbeing and mental health initiatives. Funding was provided to states and territories in 2022–23.

In addition, the Government funds the [Student Wellbeing Hub](#), which provides information and resources for educators, students and parents to assist them in creating and maintaining safe and supportive school environments, and supports [Bullying No Way](#), a website that includes resources for schools, parents and students to better understand, respond to and prevent bullying in schools.

### **Recommendation 7**

**The committee recommends that Education Ministers commission an annual national survey of students and staff on behaviour in schools, including school learning climate, behavioural culture and policies, and the frequency and impact of classroom disruption and schools' responses.**

*Noted.*

All Education Ministers are committed to addressing disruptive behaviour in schools. The Government is working in partnership with states and territories within the existing Education Ministers Meeting architecture to explore opportunities to improve classroom disruption issues, including progressing work through existing national education policy forums and intergovernmental architecture.

### **Recommendation 8**

**The committee recommends that the National School Reform Agreement Ministerial Reference Group consider including strategies for addressing disruptive classroom behaviour as one of the priorities for the next National School Reform Agreement.**

*Noted.*

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<sup>16</sup> Government of Western Australia (2005) [New Connected Community School trial to commence in 2026](#) (Accessed 1 December 2025)

The BFSA includes National Reform Directions relating to wellbeing for learning and engagement. These include:

- initiatives that support connections between schools and other non-school services to support students to come to school ready to learn, for example through full-service school models where appropriate (84(b)(i))
- structured initiatives that support wellbeing for learning and engagement, for example in-school wellbeing coordinators or access to school counsellors, psychologists, mental health workers and/or youth health nurses (84(b)(ii))
- initiatives that support student engagement in learning, for example through greater student participation, attendance, inclusion and/or enhanced school-family engagement (84(b)(iii)).

Implementation of these reform directions and associated reform activities is detailed in each jurisdiction's bilateral agreement.

The BFSA also outlines key National Enabling Initiatives that directly support student wellbeing and engagement. The states and territories have agreed to undertake collective work to better understand and provide advice to Education Ministers on:

- socioeconomic diversity, its impact on schools and student learning and approaches to addressing these impacts (88(c)(i))
- school attendance, its impact on learning and mechanisms to advance evidence-based approaches to addressing non-attendance, including school refusal (88(c)(ii)).

Final reports on this work are due to Education Ministers in 2027.

## **Recommendation 9**

**The committee urges the National School Reform Agreement Ministerial Reference Group to fast-track the implementation of the National Unique Student Identifier for school students, an initiative of the current National School Reform Agreement.**

*Agreed in principle.*

The implementation of the Unique Student Identifier (USI) for school students is one of the five National Enabling Initiatives included in the BFSA.

The Government is working closely with state and territory jurisdictions, as well as the non-government sector, to implement the USI initiative. This work involves careful consideration of several factors including information privacy, data management and technical and operational readiness. Jurisdictional and national planning documents are scheduled for submission to Education Ministers in 2025. The final milestone is for all school students to have a USI by the end of 2027.

## **Australian Greens Dissenting Report to Final Report**

### **Recommendation 1 (same as Interim Report)**

**The Australian Government deliver 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) to all public schools at the beginning of the next National School Reform Agreement in 2025.**

*Noted.*

The Government has reached agreement with every state and territory to put all government schools on pathway to 100 per cent of the SRS through the BFSAs. The estimated \$16.5 billion over ten years (2025–26 to 2034–35) to deliver the BFSAs will bring all schools in Australia to 100 per cent of the SRS (when contributions from the Commonwealth and state and territory governments are counted) and represents the biggest new investment in public schools by an Australian Government ever.

These agreements set a decade-long vision for improving education outcomes and put all government schools on a pathway to full and fair funding. They lift the Government's contribution from 20 per cent of the SRS to 25 per cent (40 per cent in the case of the Northern Territory) over the life of the BFSAs.

### **Recommendation 2**

**The Australian Government commit to ending segregated education within the decade, with an initial \$10 million to co-design a National Inclusive Education Transition Plan.**

*Noted.*

The Government recognises the ongoing role of specialist settings in service provision for students with disability and providing choice for students with disability and their families. State and territory governments continue to be responsible for making decisions about registration of schools in their jurisdictions, with the intent to strengthen inclusive education over time.

Several recent major reviews have implications for school students with disability, including the [Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability](#). The Disability Royal Commissioners were divided in their recommendations on the future of special schools, and there is not a unified view from people with disability and their families.

All governments support the Disability Royal Commission's vision for more accessible and inclusive education for students with disability and that children with disability have a right to a high-quality education, delivered by well-supported teachers, to meet their needs and aspirations. Discussions to support the development of policy responses have commenced and regular officials-level meetings are ongoing.

The [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) (the Standards) require all education providers make reasonable adjustments to allow students with disability to access and participate on the same basis as students without disability. The Standards are required by legislation to be reviewed every five years to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the Standards in achieving their objects, including a consideration of whether any amendments are desirable. The [2025 Review](#) opened for consultation on 26 September 2025 and closed on 21 November 2025.

### **Recommendation 3**

**The Australian Government immediately implements in full the recommendations of the inquiry into the National Trend of School Refusal.**

*Noted.*

The Government tabled its response to the inquiry into the national trend of school refusal on 11 April 2024.<sup>17</sup>

Work is continuing with states and territories under the BFSAs. Governments will undertake collective work to better understand and provide advice to Education Ministers on school attendance, its impact on learning and mechanisms to advance evidence-based approaches to addressing non-attendance, including school refusal.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**The Australian Government commit to substantial further investment in public, social and genuinely affordable housing in the 2024–25 Federal budget, including specific funding for youth and First Nations housing.**

*Noted.*

The Government has an over \$45 billion Homes for Australia Plan to build more homes and make it easier for Australians to buy or rent a home. The National Housing Accord is a key component of the Homes for Australia Plan, and brings together all levels of government, institutional investors and the construction sector to unlock housing – including a target to deliver 1.2 million new, well-located homes over 5 years.

The Government is investing in a range of programs to support an additional 55,000 social and affordable homes from 2024 to 2029. This includes the following initiatives:

- *Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF) – Social and Affordable*
  - The \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF) is the single biggest investment to support social and affordable rental housing in over a decade.
  - The HAFF will support 30,000 new social and affordable rental homes, as well as a range of acute housing needs, including repair and maintenance in remote Indigenous communities, crisis and transitional accommodation for women and children, and housing support for veterans who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
  - The *Housing Australia Future Fund Social and Affordable – Senior Debt* has supported over 22,200 new and existing homes by approving \$5.3 billion in loans to 48 community housing providers.
- The *National Housing Accord* which will support the delivery of 10,000 new affordable dwellings.
- *National Housing Infrastructure Facility – Social and Affordable Housing stream* for new social and affordable housing and to attract more institutional capital to the sector.

The Government is also investing in other initiatives to support more social and affordable housing:

- \$2 billion to states and territories under the *Social Housing Accelerator Payment* to deliver around 4,000 new and refurbished social homes across Australia from 2023 to 2028. This includes more than 400 social housing dwellings specifically targeted to First Nations people and their families, of which 181 had been completed as of 30 June 2025.
- The *Housing Australia Critical Infrastructure* to finance critical housing enabling infrastructure.

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<sup>17</sup> Australian Government (2024) [Response to the Senate Standing Committees on Education and Employment report: The National Trend of School Refusal and Related Matters](#), Department of Education, accessed 26 August 2025.

- An additional \$1 billion under the *Housing Australia Future Fund – Crisis and Transitional* for women and children experiencing family domestic violence and youth experiencing, or at particular risk of, homelessness.
- \$2 billion, matched by the Northern Territory (NT) government, over 10 years from 2024–25 to deliver housing in remote NT communities, by delivering up to 2,700 houses, and a property and tenancy management program to ensure houses are appropriately maintained and aims to halve overcrowding by mid-2034.

Other relevant measures include:

- \$9.3 billion through the *National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness*, which supports the operation of Australia’s social housing and homelessness services sectors from 2024 to 2029.
- Affordability standards for the build to rent tax incentives to help ensure the supply of affordable tenancies and provide greater security and stability for these renters.
- \$1.5 billion through the *Housing Support Program (HSP)* for initiatives to accelerate housing supply including connecting essential services or building planning capability. States and territories have allocated approximately \$205 million of HSP funding to deliver 605 new social and affordable dwellings across Australia.
- \$220 million over 5 years from 2022–23 under the *Restoring Funding to NT Homelands Agreement* to deliver urgent repairs and maintenance to existing housing and essential infrastructure on NT Homelands.
- \$200 million over 5 years from 2024–25 from the *Housing Australia Future Fund* for the repairs, maintenance and improvements of housing in remote Indigenous communities in Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and the NT.

On 30 January 2026, Round 3 of the HAFF opened to deliver more than 21,000 social and affordable homes across Australia. Round 3 will include funding streams that:

- encourage new delivery partnerships with industry led by Community Housing Providers and other eligible funding recipients
- offer expanded co-investment opportunities for states and territories
- deliver more homes across regional, rural and remote Australia and improve housing outcomes for priority cohorts.

HAFF Round 3 will also include a dedicated First Nations package to drive improved First Nations housing outcomes. The package comprises:

- \$600 million in dedicated funding and access to additional concessional loans for projects delivered by or in genuine partnership with First Nations housing organisations
- a 10 per cent First Nations tenancy target across all social housing, delivered under HAFF Round 3
- a new First Nations concierge function within Housing Australia to support providers through the application and delivery process and help build the long-term capacity of the First Nations housing sector
- updates to the Housing Australia Investment Mandate to embed Closing the Gap priorities.

The Reconnect program provides \$91.7 million investment into youth homelessness prevention services over 3 years to 30 June 2026. The Government has agreed to extend grant arrangements for an additional year to June 2027, providing an additional approximately \$32.9 million to Reconnect providers.

- Reconnect is a community-based early intervention and prevention program for young people aged 12 to 18 years (or 12 to 21 years for youth newly arrived to Australia) who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, and their families.
- Reconnect aims to prevent youth homelessness by stabilising and improving a young person's housing situation and their engagement with family, education, training, employment and local community.
- Reconnect is delivered by 70 organisations across 101 services nationally and helps over 8,400 at-risk young people and their families each year.

The Government is also supporting specific outcomes under the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) aimed at improving housing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

- The Government entered a Partnership Agreement in June 2024 that embeds shared decision-making and the voices of Aboriginal organisations and communities into long-term NT housing funding arrangements.
- The partnership agreement is between the members of the Joint Steering Committee for Remote Housing NT and includes representatives from the Australian and NT Governments, Aboriginal Housing NT and each NT Land Council.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**The Australian Government coordinates with the states and territories to freeze rental increases for two years, followed by a limit on rental increases of two per cent every two years.**

*The Government does not support this recommendation.*

The Government acknowledges that renters are facing significant challenges. The most effective way to sustainably improve rental affordability is to increase housing supply.

The Government has an over \$45 billion Homes for Australia Plan to build more homes and make it easier for Australians to buy or rent a home.

The Government is also helping around 1.4 million social security recipient households with the cost of rent through Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA). In 2025 and 2026, the Government expects to spend around \$6.7 billion on CRA. It has delivered the first back-to-back increases to CRA in more than 30 years. CRA maximum rates increased by 15 per cent on 20 September 2023 and further increased by 10 per cent on 20 September 2024. Combined with indexation, the Government has increased CRA maximum rates by almost 50 per cent since March 2022.

Under the Constitution, regulation of residential tenancies, including rental agreements and pricing, is the responsibility of state and territory governments.

In August 2023 National Cabinet agreed to *A Better Deal for Renters*, which includes developing a nationally consistent policy to implement a requirement for genuine reasonable grounds for eviction, moving towards limiting rent increases to once a year and phasing in minimum rental standards. While coordinated by the Commonwealth Government, implementation is led by the state and territory

governments. Jurisdictions have made considerable progress in implementing the reforms, although it may take some time for these impacts to flow on to renters.

Freezing rent increases for two years then limiting rental increases to two per cent every two years would likely produce a range of negative unintended consequences for the private rental market. The Productivity Commission has argued against rent control, highlighting that while these kinds of rent freezes and fixed percentage caps may have some benefits for existing tenants, they are not an effective way to improve affordability for renters.<sup>18</sup> Such controls can impact rental market supply, reduce landlord incentives to maintain their properties and lead to a range of other market inefficiencies.

Internationally, these forms of rent regulation are largely being phased out.<sup>19</sup> Although rent freezes may have merit in exceptional circumstances (such as when they were used during COVID-19 lockdowns), applying them as an ongoing measure to effect sector-wide rent stabilisation may reduce the economic viability of the private rental sector. Applying jurisdiction-wide fixed rent caps to the private rental sector is problematic for similar reasons, particularly where they fall below market rates.

### **Recommendation 6**

**The Australian Government immediately lift the base rate of all income support payments to \$88 a day, regardless of age.**

*Noted.*

The Government has taken action to increase income support payments.

In the 2024–25 Budget, the Government provided around \$2 billion to provide increased support in the social safety net. The Government:

- increased maximum rates of CRA by a further 10 per cent to help relieve rental cost pressures for recipient households. This represents an investment of \$1.9 billion over five years from 2023–24 and builds on the Government’s 15 per cent increase to CRA maximum rates in the 2023–24 Budget. These are the first back-to-back increases in rent assistance in over 30 years.
- extended the higher rate of JobSeeker Payment and Energy Supplement to single recipients with an assessed partial capacity to work of less than 15 hours per week. Along with indexation increases, this means that those with barriers to employment who have limited or no capacity to work due to their condition are receiving an additional \$87.90 a fortnight from 20 September 2025.

The 2024–25 Budget income support measures built on the 2023–24 Budget measures, which included increases to working age and student payments by \$40 per fortnight, increases to CRA maximum rates by 15 per cent, and the expansion of eligibility to Parenting Payment Single to single parents with a youngest child under 14 years.

Together, the 2024-25 and 2023-24 Budget income support measures represent an additional \$11.5 billion being provided in the social safety net.

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<sup>18</sup> Productivity Commission (2022) [In Need of Repair: The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement](#), Australian Government, accessed 8 September 2025, p. 313.

<sup>19</sup> A Sisson and P Bowyer-Pont (2023) [Regulating Rents: International Examples & Experience](#), Shelter NSW and Tenants Union of NSW, accessed 8 September 2025.

## **Recommendation 7**

**The Australian Government make a national commitment to end child poverty.**

*Supported in principle.*

The Government invests in a range of early intervention and place-based initiatives that seek to address child poverty. Poverty is a complex issue and the Government is focused on addressing the complicated mix of factors that can push people into disadvantage, including children.

The income support system is an important component of this policy response. From 20 September 2023, the Parenting Payment Single was expanded to enable single parents and principal carers to access this payment until their youngest qualifying child turns 14 years (previously 8 years). As at December 2025, there were around 106,000 Parenting Payment (Single) recipients with a youngest child aged 8 to 13 years benefiting from this measure.

The Government also helps families with the costs of raising dependent children through the Family Tax Benefit, a payment consisting of 2 parts: Part A and Part B. This is targeted through income testing to ensure that payments help provide an adequate level of support, particularly for children in low-income families. Families receiving Family Tax Benefit Part A may also be eligible for a range of other payments to help with specific costs, including Rent Assistance, Multiple Birth Allowance and Newborn Supplement. As at December 2025, around 1.2 million families were receiving Family Tax Benefit, supporting around 2.4 million children.

## **Recommendation 8**

**The Australian Government undertake a review of the Parenting Payment (Single), with a view to increasing the allowance and improving eligibility to better support single-parent families and children, particularly those experiencing domestic and family violence; and expand coverage of the Parenting Payment (Single), so that eligible single parents remain eligible for the payment until their youngest child's 16th birthday.**

*Noted.*

From 20 September 2023, the Parenting Payment Single was expanded to enable single parents and principal carers to access this payment until their youngest qualifying child turns 14 years (previously 8 years). As at December 2025, there were around 106,000 Parenting Payment (Single) recipients with a youngest child aged 8 to 13 years benefiting from this measure.

The Government has committed to considering the rates of income support payments at every Budget. It has also established the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee to provide advice ahead of every Budget on economic inclusion, including policy settings, systems and structures, and the adequacy, effectiveness and sustainability of income support payment.