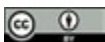


Productivity Commission Review of the National School Reform Agreement

Victorian Government submission

© State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training) 2022



Productivity Commission Review of the National School Reform Agreement: Victorian Government submission is provided under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. You are free to re-use the work under that licence, on the condition that you credit the State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training), indicate if changes were made and comply with the other licence terms, see: [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

The licence does not apply to:

- any images, photographs, trademarks, or branding, including the Victorian Government logo and the DET logo; and
- content supplied by third parties.

Copyright queries may be directed to copyright@education.vic.gov.au

VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION

Overview and summary

The Victorian Government welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Productivity Commission's Review of the National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) in response to its call for submissions.

The Victorian education system enables all Victorians to reach their potential, regardless of their background, postcode, or circumstance, and to develop the knowledge, skills, and attributes they need to participate and thrive in a complex economy and society.

A high achieving, high equity school education system is fundamental to the development of individuals and families and to building a strong society that has better health outcomes, greater social mobility, and strong economic growth, productivity, and employment.

The Victorian Government submission addresses key themes in the Productivity Commission's Issues Paper using the following structure:

- **Section 1** provides an outline of the Victorian school education system and context.
- **Section 2** reflects on the NSRA, including reflections on:
 - the drivers of student outcomes
 - the appropriateness and effectiveness of National Policy Initiatives (NPIs)
 - the National Measurement Framework (NMF) for Schooling in Australia.
- **Section 3** provides a conclusion and summary of areas where the challenges and opportunities of national education could be addressed.

The key points of the submission are that:

- **State-level work** - States and territories, as system managers and majority funders of government schools, are progressing broad and sophisticated reforms outside of the national policy initiatives.
- **Value of national action** - National efforts should focus on the areas where there is clear rationale that collective action is required to achieve outcomes.
- **Harmonisation** - National focus should shift away from nationally consistent policies and projects and focus on collective agreed outcomes, to enable local reforms to be delivered in flexible, relevant, and innovative ways.
- **Nationally agreed principles to select NPIs** - NPIs should be mutually agreed by all Education Ministers, using a framework for the selection of NPIs based on nationally agreed principles.
- **Sharing success** - Sharing state-level innovations and best practice should be enabled by the national school education reform agenda.
- **Educational outcomes** - The NMF should perform a 'whole-of-system' health check on progress against the Education Goals for Young Australians, and should be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure it remains relevant.
- **Performance** - It remains appropriate that Australian Government funding is not conditional on achievement of national performance outcome measures, given that school education systems are complex, the difficulty in isolating the impacts of discrete reforms, and the significant level of reform investment by state and territory governments.

1. Victorian context

The great majority of school education reform and investment is undertaken by the states and territories separate to the NSRA and NPIs. Since coming to office in 2014, the Victorian Government has invested over \$26.0 billion in school education programs and infrastructure to deliver an ambitious reform agenda.

As part of the Education State reform agenda, the Victorian Government is building a modern education system that fosters excellence, equity and wellbeing, and is investing in reforms across early childhood education, schools, and skills and training.

1.1 The Victorian school education system

The Victorian school education system is the second largest school system in Australia. In a system comprising over 2,280 government and non-government schools, implementing reform requires sustained and focused effort, with all school sectors and levels of the system playing their role to achieve shared state-level and national objectives.

The Victorian Government has responsibility for the legislative and regulatory framework that governs all government and non-government schools in Victoria. As both the majority funder and operator of more than 1,500 government schools, the Victorian Government has policy levers which provide it with significant influence on the school improvement efforts of this sector. Many of these levers are not available in relation to the non-government school sector, which is majority funded by the Australian Government.

Victoria delivers its own curriculum, which considers the Victorian context and meets the needs of the Victorian school education systems. The *Victorian Curriculum F–10* incorporates the Australian Curriculum and reflects Victorian priorities and standards. This adaptive approach ensures Victorian students receive a high-quality education that is responsive to the needs of the Victorian economy and society.

1.2 The Education State reform agenda

The Education State reform agenda is building an early childhood, school education and training system that enables excellence and equity for every student. This includes a school education system that is centred on evidence-based teaching and learning; student inclusion, health, and wellbeing; excellence in senior secondary; and modern, and vibrant school facilities. The Education State reforms are being delivered at the state level and are in addition to national efforts, including the 8 NPIs.

Key Victorian school education reforms being implemented as part of the Education State reform agenda are outlined below. These reforms comprise only a subset of the significant investment in school education reform occurring at the state-level in Victoria.

Evidence-based teaching and learning

The Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO) is the continuous improvement framework for all Victorian government schools. Using system, school and classroom level data and evidence, FISO supports school leaders and teachers to understand their practice and the needs of their students. It enables schools to identify areas for focused improvement which are shown to have the greatest impact on student outcomes.

FISO plays a critical role in guiding local school decision making as part of their strategic and annual planning. This includes the allocation of resources, including teaching staff, the identification of appropriate teacher professional learning, the selection of relevant programs and supports, and the use of Equity Funding to meet the additional needs of disadvantaged students.

In 2021, FISO was redesigned to place wellbeing alongside learning as an equal priority for how schools plan, implement and evaluate their improvement strategies. This is in recognition of both the growing evidence that student wellbeing directly impacts student learning outcomes, and of wellbeing as an essential outcome of schooling in its own right.

Significant investments are being made to support teaching and learning to enable students to achieve their potential. For government schools, the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy prioritises literacy and numeracy

across all schools and provides the resources and support to help teachers lift outcomes. The Middle Years Literacy and Numeracy Support provides additional intensive teaching support to government secondary school students at risk of leaving school without the literacy and numeracy skills they need for future work and study.

The Differentiated Support for School Improvement initiative provides targeted support to government schools with complex challenges by tailoring specific, evidence-based interventions to build teacher and leadership capacity. This work facilitates the continuous improvement of all schools, regardless of their starting point.

Student inclusion, health, and wellbeing

Victoria is committed to enabling all students to achieve, engage and be happy, healthy and resilient. Schools play a key role in supporting students to thrive, by providing positive and inclusive learning environments for all students.

Following the Royal Commission into Mental Health, Victoria is facilitating schools to better support students' mental health and wellbeing. Central to this is the newly established Schools Mental Health and Fund and Menu, which provides funding and whole school resources that can be used by teachers to help students to improve their health and wellbeing.

The *Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026* requires all schools to embed Koorie aspirations and outcomes as core business, as well as providing enhanced supports to meet the needs of Koorie students such as the Koorie Literacy and Numeracy program. The Koorie Education Workforce assists schools to improve their cultural inclusion practices to improve the engagement, attendance, wellbeing and achievement of Koorie learners.

Victoria's Disability Inclusion reforms are delivering a new funding and support model in government schools to improve the achievement, participation, and wellbeing of every student with a disability. This includes multi-disciplinary resources and initiatives to strengthen the skills and knowledge of education workforces in inclusive education. The reforms embed inclusive education in all school environments for students with a disability and additional needs.

Victoria is supporting more students to stay in education, with a suite of initiatives to support Victorian students to break the cycle of disadvantage. For example, children and young people in out-of-home care face unique education and training challenges. LOOKOUT Education Support Centres employ education and allied health staff to provide these vulnerable children and young people a better chance of doing well.

Other health and wellbeing supports in place include the Victorian School Nursing Program to improve the health and wellbeing of primary and secondary students, including through referrals to appropriate services. The Doctors in Secondary Schools program provides free primary care in 100 government schools for students most in need.

Student Support Services provide all Victorian government schools with access to multi-disciplinary supports, including psychology, speech pathology and social work, to assist students facing barriers to learning to achieve their educational and developmental potential.

Senior Secondary Pathways Reform

Victoria is reforming senior secondary schooling to expand the opportunities and build the skills of young people in Victoria to set them up for future careers and to meet the needs of the modern economy.

Based on the recommendations from the *Vocational and Applied Learning in Senior Secondary School Review*, Victoria is integrating the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). Next year, a VCE Vocational Major and a Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) will be introduced across government schools, before being fully integrated by 2025. These reforms will provide all Victorian students with flexible, integrated learning opportunities to develop the skills and capabilities needed to succeed in further education, work and life under one certificate.

The new VPC will provide students, who are not able or ready to complete a VCE with a standards-based certificate that can be flexibly completed, to ultimately support them to transition to the VCE Vocational Major, entry-level VCE, or employment.

To achieve the ambition of Victoria's senior secondary pathway reforms, all Victorian students will be provided with universal access to higher quality Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses. All schools will be required to provide a core offering of priority VET certificates aligned to skills growth areas and local industry needs. The senior secondary reforms also expand the number and quality of School-Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs) across more government schools and providers.

Driving workforce excellence

Quality teaching is the most important in-school factor for lifting student outcomes. As part of the Education State reform agenda there has been significant investment in building the supply, calibre and capability of Victoria's teaching workforce.

Victoria's Excellence in Teacher Education Reforms aim to attract the highest achieving candidates to the profession, improve the quality of initial teacher education (ITE), and provide better support and development for teachers early in their careers. These reforms include:

- legislative reform to enhance quality assurance of Victorian ITE programs and extension of quality assurance for entry to ITE to include ITE pathway programs
- a revised Victorian Selection Framework which introduces an ATAR threshold of 70 for school leavers in recognition that academic capability is a strong predictor of teacher quality
- working with ITE providers to fast track high-achieving career changers into classrooms and providing support for existing teachers to upskill, particularly in areas of workforce shortage, such as STEM
- a multi-year communications and recruitment campaign, Teach the Future, to raise the status of teaching and attracting the best to the profession.

Recognising and extending teaching excellence is central to improving the quality of teaching. In 2022, the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership (the Academy) was established. Its purpose is to lift student outcomes by providing high-quality professional learning for teachers and school leaders from all school sectors. Its Teaching Excellence Program enables established exceptional teachers to advance their professional practice, disciplinary knowledge and understanding of the science of learning. The Academy also delivers leadership programs for current and aspiring school leaders including the Victorian Principal Assessment which is used to identify and prepare Victoria's next generation of principals.

In 2017, the Learning Specialist role was created to provide a career pathway for highly skilled teachers who want to stay in the classroom and work with other teachers to improve their practice. Learning Specialists model excellence in teaching and learning and lead collaborative inquiry focused on improving student learning outcomes.

Investment is being delivered to lift the capability of the existing teaching workforce. Professional Learning Communities support teachers to improve their practice by promoting collaboration, peer observation and data literacy. The 2022 Victorian Government School Agreement is supporting quality of teaching by reducing face-to-face teaching hours of all teachers to provide them with more time to focus on quality instruction including differentiated teaching.

Improving system infrastructure

Underpinning investment in teaching and learning, there has been significant new investment in school infrastructure in Victoria.

Between 2019 and 2022, 48 new schools have opened, with a total of 100 new government schools planned to be opened by 2026. In addition, more than 1,600 upgrades to existing government and non-government school buildings have been delivered to transform learning environments into vibrant, flexible learning spaces to facilitate the delivery of modern pedagogy, promote inclusive education and accommodate population growth.

Victoria is also investing in underlying systems. This includes creating new and strengthening existing IT and assessment platforms to provide improved access to data that supports teaching and learning, student safety and wellbeing, and improved school operations.

1.3 Victorian innovation, flexibility, and agility

The Victorian education system is innovative, flexible and agile. This has enabled Victoria to lead the way in key national policy areas to deliver both school-specific and system-wide solutions to rapidly respond to emerging evidence about what works to improve student outcomes or in response to changing circumstances. Many important Victorian initiatives have been adopted and adapted by other states and territories, including the introduction of needs-based school funding models for government and non-government schools.

Victoria has independently made significant progress in key school education reform areas that are being pursued collectively, at the national level, by the states and territories as part of the NSRA and the 8 NPIs. For example:

- **Senior secondary schooling pathways reforms:** While work is continuing to respond to the national *Review of senior secondary pathways* at a national level, Victoria is implementing a suite of new senior secondary pathway reforms (refer to section 1.2). These and other senior secondary reforms have surpassed the national progress in this space.
- **Consent Education:** In Victoria, over 1,950 Victorian government, Catholic and independent schools are participating in Victoria's Respectful Relationships initiative, which supports schools to embed a culture of respect and gender equality across the entire school community. It is mandatory for all Victorian government schools to teach consent in an age-appropriate way. This is well ahead of recent changes to the Australian Curriculum to embed consent education in Health and Physical Education.
- **Mental Health Reforms:** The new Mental Health Fund and Menu is underpinned by an evidence-based menu of programs and initiatives across three tiers of intervention to enable schools to select programs, staff and resources that will meet the diverse needs of their students. This is well ahead of recent request for further work to the Australian Curriculum to embed mental health and wellbeing into the Health and Physical Education curricula.

1.4 The ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on school education

The flexibility and agility of the Victorian school education system has been well demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Against a backdrop of disruption and uncertainty, every level of the Victorian education system, notably schools, demonstrated extraordinary ability to continuously adapt and innovate to ensure the continuous delivery of student learning and wellbeing supports.

Victorian schools experienced more time in remote learning than any other Australian jurisdiction. However, the 2021 NAPLAN results showed Victoria had the highest percentage of students achieving above the national minimum standards. This was accompanied by a reduction in the percentage of students in the bottom two bands, which included students in disadvantaged areas.

In Victoria, additional funding is being utilised to deliver programs to address the learning and wellbeing needs of students impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic response. For instance, targeted teaching to students whose learning has been disrupted by COVID-19 is being delivered as part of the Tutor Learning Initiative, and existing student mental health, wellbeing and inclusion supports have been expanded (as outlined in section 1.2, above).

Victoria has also expanded individual and workplace mental health and wellbeing supports to its school leaders and teachers in recognition of the particular and continuing impacts of COVID-19 on our frontline workforce. Funding has been provided to maintain COVID-Safe settings in all schools, including free rapid

antigen tests, ventilation measures, and for additional staffing in government schools to address short-term workforce shortages to ensure the continuation of student learning in schools.

It should be noted that by the end of 2022, 3 of the first 4 years of the current NSRA will have occurred in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is likely that the direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 on student learning and wellbeing, and the need to mitigate these through additional supports, will continue.

2. The National School Reform Agreement

The current NSRA is a five-year joint-agreement for school education between the Australian Government and the states and territories. It sets out 8 NPIs under 3 national reform directions and includes state-level actions to improve student outcomes which are outlined in state and territory bilateral agreements.

2.1 Drivers of student outcomes

Victoria recognises the importance of working collaboratively with other Australian governments where there is clear evidence that this will deliver improvements in student outcomes that could not otherwise be achieved without national collective action.

In-school factors that positively impact student outcomes are most effectively addressed using the policy levers of state and territory governments. Jurisdictions have a long history of investment, innovation and expertise in improving student outcomes through continuous school and system improvement.

The Victorian Government is continuing significant investment in these areas (refer to section 1.2) including school leadership and governance, teacher practice, workforce quality and capability, school resources (including infrastructure), curriculum and assessment resources, universal and targeted supports, and mental health and wellbeing programs.

Quality teaching is the biggest in-school influence on student outcomes, closely followed by the quality of school leadership. Victoria's investment in workforce calibre and leadership is reflective of this.

At the government-school level in Victoria, FISO 2.0 informs and guides schools to identify priorities, based on evidence, to inform decisions for teaching and learning. It also facilitates the identification of targeted programs and supports to address students' learning and wellbeing needs. Further information can be found at [FISO 2.0](#).

Funding is a critical enabler to improving student outcomes, especially for more disadvantaged or vulnerable students for whom targeted and individualised (and more resource-intensive) learning and wellbeing supports are needed. Since 2016, Equity Funding has been provided to government schools to enable the delivery of additional, more tailored interventions for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Factors such as family socio-economic status, geographic location, student characteristics such as cultural and linguistic diversity or disability, and limited access to high quality early childhood education and care, significantly impact in-school student outcomes. There would be benefit in all jurisdictions collaborating to address negative 'outside the school gate' factors to improve student outcomes, particularly for vulnerable and disadvantaged students.

2.2 Assessing the National Policy Initiatives

The appropriateness of the NPIs

The NSRA represented a significant shift from previous national school funding agreements. It involved major legislative change that had significant ramifications for state and territory funding. For the first time in a national school funding agreement, national policy priorities were legislated by the Australian Government as a condition of recurrent school funding. This has been a significant shift and there is an opportunity to learn and refine our approach to selecting appropriate NPIs to enable them to be most effective.

The premise of the current NSRA is the assumption that a national, standardised approach to implementation of NPIs is necessary to achieve improvement in schools. For larger jurisdictions such as Victoria, the emphasis on achieving national consistency to improve national educational outcomes can slow progress of current reforms, impede innovation and lead to duplication of effort.

The 8 current NPIs have been variable in their progress (as discussed in section 2.1). There is an opportunity to learn from the implementation challenges of the existing NPIs and more effectively identify future NPIs.

The selection of appropriate NPIs could be assisted by developing nationally agreed principles to identify national reforms that can only be achieved through national collective action. As part of the selection process, it is important to be cognisant of each jurisdiction's unique context and starting point, as well as the existing work of respective jurisdictions and how to best leverage areas of shared responsibility. Identifying fewer NPIs could also target resources more effectively.

Selecting NPIs that focus on national problems where it is appropriate and effective to leverage areas of shared responsibility would be more efficient. Such an approach to national reform could also better leverage the expertise of states and territories, as system managers and majority funders, to establish clearer structures and processes for sharing knowledge arising from jurisdictional reforms and foster innovation.

Leveraging the benefits of federalism to select appropriate NPIs and establish clearer structures and processes for sharing knowledge is aligned with the principles of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations. These explicitly recognise the constitutional responsibilities of the states and territories for service delivery, deter financial or other input controls imposed by the Australian Government on service delivery by the states and territories, and promote a shared commitment to genuinely cooperative working arrangements across governments.

The effectiveness of the NPIs

As recognised by the Productivity Commission, many NPIs are in the early stages of development and their effects may not be felt for some time. Several of the NPIs are distant from student learning in the classroom and therefore have a less direct pathway to student outcomes. As the impacts of NPIs cannot be isolated from the significant level of investment by states and territories in their own reforms, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the NPIs against agreed measures of student achievement in the NSRA.

The establishment of AERO, the strengthening of ITE accreditation and the implementation of the Australian Teacher Workforce Data collection have benefits achieved through national collective action. Other national priorities that have delivered benefits include advances in national assessment and the revised Australian Curriculum.

The challenges experienced in progressing some of the NPIs arise from prioritising nationally consistent or standardised approaches to reform that are not responsive to the variation and complexity of Australia's schooling systems. Some NPIs would have been more effective if they did not impose standardised approaches which duplicate or do not integrate with jurisdictions' existing approaches. For example, the Online Formative Assessment Initiative (OFAI) shares many of the features of the Victorian Digital Assessment Library which is mapped to the Victorian curriculum.

There have been opportunity costs for states and territories to resource NPIs, in part owing to the number of NPIs involving large IT platforms and system development requiring a high level of technical expertise. For example, the Unique Student Identifier and OFAI provide limited value to Victoria. Interoperability challenges with different IT platforms have also emerged. The development of these NPIs would have benefitted from having an agreed hierarchy of system architecture that considered a sequenced approach to their development.

There is an administrative burden to progressing initiatives in a consensus forum. This is particularly so for larger states which have the capability and the capacity to achieve the objectives of many of the national initiatives alone. For example, as outlined above in section 1.3, the Review of Senior Secondary Pathways NPI

has been largely superseded in Victoria by the work to implement the recommendations from the Victorian *Review of vocational and applied learning in senior secondary schooling*.

A more effective and efficient approach would recognise state and territory constitutional responsibilities for school education and expertise as system managers, and the differences in school education systems and reforms. There would be value in collectively identifying nationally agreed outcomes and policy priorities as well as enabling states and territories to work autonomous and flexibly to achieve them and collaborating when collective action is needed. Such an approach could encourage sharing of knowledge and innovation among states and territories, which would derive mutual benefits while also supporting smaller jurisdictions that do not have the resources to implement larger reforms alone.

2.3 National Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia

The NMF for Schooling in Australia underpins public reporting to the community on Australian schooling, in accordance with the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration 2009*. It details all national measures for schooling agreed by Education Ministers, including indicators of student achievement, participation, attainment and equity.

The purpose of the National Measurement Framework

The NMF is not intended to be a complete measurement framework for schooling in Australia but is a whole-of-system health check that enables public reporting of high-level outcomes and schooling objectives. The NMF precedes the NSRA and serves a broader purpose than measurement of the NSRA. The NMF is linked to a range of public reporting that captures the high-level outcomes of reforms and investment of all governments. This includes the significant reform investments of the states and territories, including as part of the NSRA and the NPIs.

Performance Indicators

As the Productivity Commission notes, there are variations in the definitions of measures used to track student achievement outcomes between the NSRA and the NMF. For clarity, it might have been preferable that the NSRA did not contain any measures, but instead referenced the NMF.

Appropriately, section 41 of the current NSRA stipulates that Australian Government funding for school education is not conditional on the achievement of the measures outlined in the agreement. This is in recognition of the complexity of school education systems, the difficulty of isolating the impacts of discrete national initiatives, and the significant level of investment and reform driven by state and territory governments.

The principles of the Federation Funding Agreements Framework stipulate agreements that fund ongoing services, such as school education, should provide the states and territories with funding certainty.

Differentiating whole of system and local measures and reporting

The states and territories have in place multiple tiers of reporting on student and system performance using data and evidence relevant to their local context. This includes granular system and student-level data, used to monitor the performance of schooling systems and state-specific reform activities; and to inform school and classroom-level decision-making. The benefits that could be gained from linking data sets nationally are few and there are likely to be significant costs associated with such an objective.

Consideration of new measures should be in keeping with principles used to select the existing NMF measures. These include that the measures be:

- nationally comparable on aspects of schooling performance
- student-centred, focussed on participation, achievement, attainment and equity
- based on sound and reliable practice, including for student assessment
- supportive of valid, consistent and transparent reporting
- relevant and of interest to the public

- cost effective and practical to collect
- take account of the burden and impact of data collection.

Further to these principles, consideration should be given to the discrete policy responsibilities of the states and territories as school system managers, and Education Ministers for school education policy and activities. New national measures should be selected for the specific purpose of informing Education Ministers' decision-making in relation to national reforms.

Reviewing the NMF

The NMF should be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure it continues to capture appropriate and meaningful measures of schooling performance. In reviewing the NMF, consideration of any new measures will need to carefully examine the benefits to all jurisdictions against the costs.

As identified by the Productivity Commission, workforce and student wellbeing are two measures not currently captured in the NMF.

Workforce

Building workforce capability and supporting teacher and educator supply is essential to improving the quality of school education, and vocational education and training. The importance of quality teaching in driving student outcomes has been articulated in sections 1.2 and 2.1 of this submission. To improve workforce quality and supply requires leveraging the respective constitutional responsibilities of the Australian Government, and the states and territories.

The inclusion in the NMF of nationally consistent teacher workforce measures on supply could focus national collective actions on this common challenge. For example, by measuring the supply of Commonwealth Supported Places for ITE programs, or the funding and number of additional scholarships to attract high achieving school leavers with expertise in areas of demand (e.g. STEM, languages and applied learning) to enter ITE programs.

Student Wellbeing

All states and territories collect a range of student wellbeing data which is used to inform system and school-level decision-making. However, there is appropriate variation among jurisdictions in the way wellbeing is measured and how those measures are used.

In Victoria, definitions and measures of wellbeing are embedded in overarching policy and measurement frameworks. These include FISO, the Attitudes to School Survey, the Victorian Student Health and Wellbeing Survey, the Victorian Child Health and Wellbeing Survey, and the Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System.

While there are benefits to sharing knowledge and innovative practice in relation to measuring and improving student wellbeing, the merits of a national measure have not been demonstrated. As measurement of student wellbeing is currently a dynamic research environment the adoption of a nationally consistent wellbeing measure at this time may also be premature.

3.1 Conclusion and summary

The Victorian Government welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively towards building education systems that promote excellence and equity through which all young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community.

As system managers, providers and majority funders of school education, the states and territories have significant and complex school education reforms underway outside of the NSRA. Recognition of each jurisdiction's context and reform priorities is important for identifying where there are gaps or gains. National effort should be focussed where there is a clear rationale for collective action that achieves benefits that could not be realised otherwise.

National agreements should adhere to the principles of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations which provides the states and territories with budget autonomy and flexibility to deliver services most effectively and efficiently.

Many of the challenges and opportunities outlined in this submission could be addressed in the next school funding agreement, through:

- a clearer articulation of the respective constitutional responsibilities, of the Australian Government and the states and territories for school education, to avoid duplication and inefficiencies, and to clarify those reform areas that would benefit from national collaboration or collective effort
- a focus on achieving nationally agreed outcomes, rather than nationally consistent policies and projects, to enable the states and territories to pursue outcomes in innovative, flexible, and relevant ways
- a principles-based approach to determining national policy priorities, including the selection of fewer but integrated evidence-based reform actions and activities, that could not otherwise be achieved without national collective action
- the establishment of structures and processes that enable and incentivise innovation and experimentation of different approaches and increase knowledge transfer across all jurisdictions.