



Department of
Education

Shaping the future

Submission to the Review of the National School Reform Agreement

Government of Western Australia

Contents

Overview	3
Western Australian context.....	4
Developments since the NSRA was signed	9
Investment by the State Government	12
Effectiveness and Appropriateness of the National Policy Initiatives	13
National Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia	16
Conclusion.....	16

Overview

Western Australia welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Productivity Commission's Review of the National School Reform Agreement (NSRA).

This submission addresses the 2 key foci of the Review, using the following structure:

- Information about school education in Western Australia, including geographical and demographic context, the state's key strategic education priorities and key developments since the NSRA was signed in 2018 that influence school education in Western Australia.
- The effectiveness and appropriateness of the National Policy Initiatives of the NSRA.
- The appropriateness of the National Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia in measuring progress towards achieving the outcomes of the NSRA.

Key points covered in this submission include the following:

- Western Australia's unique context, including the considerable diversity between schools in the communities they serve, means educational reforms need to focus on equipping, empowering and supporting schools to adapt to and cater for the specific needs of their students and communities. 'One-size-fits-all' approaches do not work.
- Students and teachers are at the centre of the state's school education improvement efforts, underpinned by a strong focus on improvement drivers such as:
 - providing every student with a pathway to a successful future
 - strengthening support for teaching and learning excellence in every classroom
 - building the capability of our principals, our teachers and our allied professionals
 - school autonomy within a connected and unified public school system
 - partnering with families, communities and agencies
 - using evidence to drive decision-making at all levels of the education system.
- Western Australia has a long and proud history of collaborating nationally on education initiatives and reforms. Such national collaboration is most effective when it:
 - is mutually beneficial
 - is evidence-informed
 - focuses on key drivers and enablers of improvement in educational outcomes
 - allows for jurisdictional and sectoral flexibility in implementation
 - is realistically achievable with respect to scope and stakeholder support
 - is cost-effective and efficient
 - considers impacts on workloads of teachers and school leaders
 - leverages and articulates with existing systems, processes, 'infrastructure' and commitments
 - forms a coherent reform package or strategy.

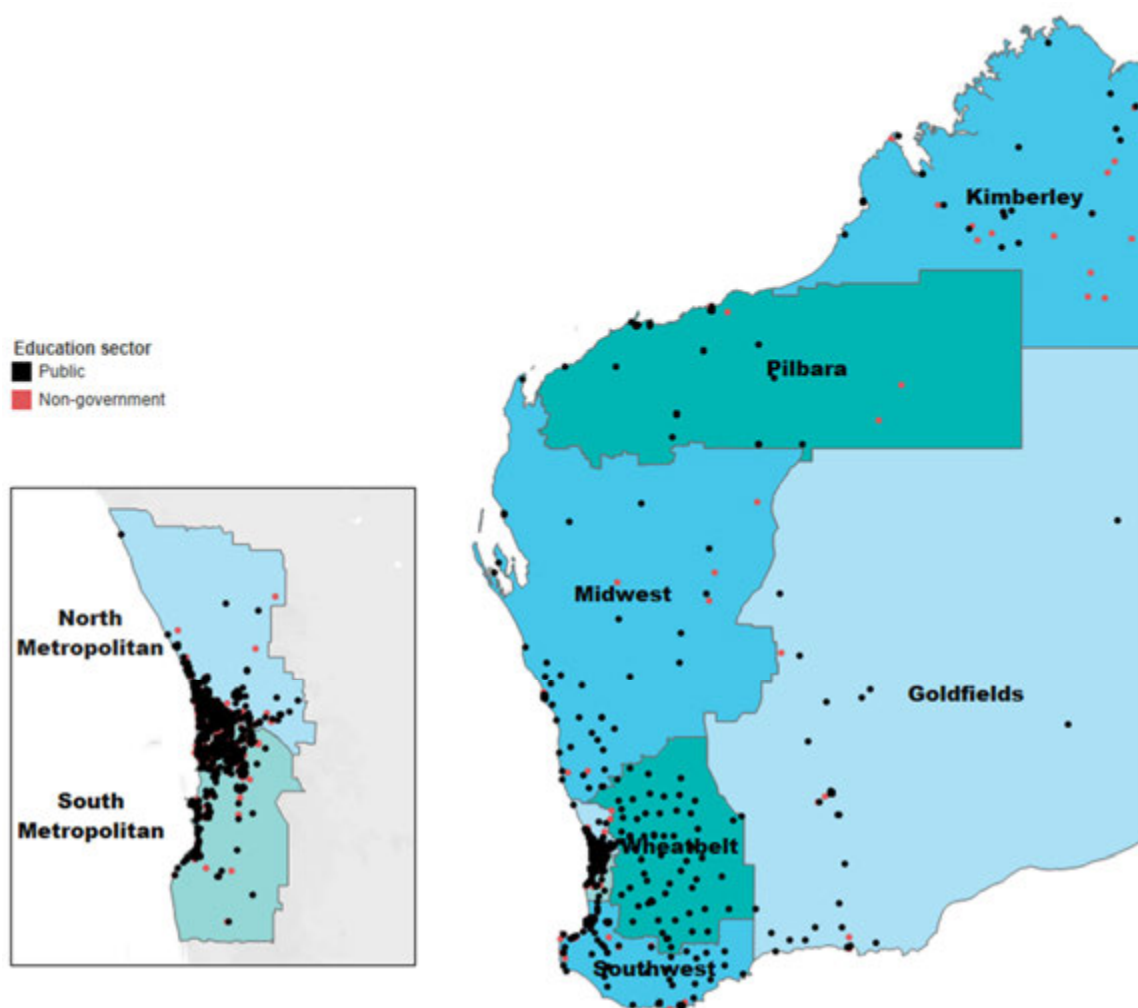
Western Australian context

The State Government is committed to ensuring all Western Australian children receive a high quality school education, no matter where they live or their background.

Whether directly through the public schools, or indirectly through regulation and funding of Catholic and Independent schools, our aim is to equip and inspire all Western Australian students to achieve their best and become lifelong learners who actively contribute to their communities and society.

Western Australia's geographic size and isolation coupled with its low population density provides unique challenges in the context of delivering education.

Figure 1 – Locations of Western Australia's public schools and non-government schools.



In Semester 1 2022, there are 476,196 students enrolled in 1,139 Western Australian schools, including 318,332 (67%) students in 826 public schools and 157,864 (33%) across 313 Catholic and Independent schools.

Over a quarter (27%) of Western Australia's schools are in outer regional, remote and very remote areas, as shown in Table 1. Such schools tend to be relatively small, educating 12% of the state's school students (compared to 10% in such schools nationally). However, they educate 45% of the state's 33,928 Aboriginal students.

Table 1 - Western Australian schools and students by remoteness¹

Remoteness	Schools		Students			Aboriginal students	
	#	%	#	%	Aust %	#	%
Metropolitan	713	63%	376,820	79%	72%	16,149	48%
Inner regional	116	10%	39,284	8%	18%	2,576	8%
Outer regional	138	12%	33,096	7%	8%	4,914	14%
Remote	83	7%	16,535	3%	1%	4,274	13%
Very Remote	89	8%	10,461	2%	1%	6,015	18%
Grand Total	1,139	100%	476,196	100%	100%	33,928	100%

Remoteness as per Australian Statistical Geography Standard. Major Cities reported here as Metropolitan. Percentages may sum to more than 100% due to rounding.

The percentages of Western Australian public schools and students in outer regional, remote and very remote areas are even higher, at 30% and 14% respectively. The vast majority (82%) of Western Australia's Aboriginal students attend a public school.

The uniqueness of Western Australia's context creates an environment that is not conducive to the delivery of education within a 'one-size-fits-all' approach.

The state comprises 8 education regions. Two regions cover the Perth metropolitan area and educate 79% of students, while 2 regions (Kimberley and Pilbara) comprise only remote and very remote schools. The Midwest and Goldfields education regions have outer regional, remote or very remote schools, and the Southwest and Wheatbelt education regions have inner regional, outer regional and remote schools.

Yet even within these regions, there is considerable diversity within and between schools in the communities they serve. For this reason, it is imperative that schools continue to be equipped, empowered and supported to adapt to and cater for the specific needs of their students and communities. Remote communities in particular frequently face multiple and complex health, social and economic challenges that need to be acknowledged and addressed in order for students to truly achieve their potential.

Western Australia has a diverse range of schools that cater for students' and local communities' needs – from primary schools and senior secondary schools, Kindergarten to Year 12 schools, district high schools (Kindergarten to Year 10), Agricultural colleges, senior colleges (Years 11 and 12), education support schools and centres, the School of Isolated and Distance Education, schools of the air, School of Special Educational Needs: Sensory and School of Special Educational Needs: Behaviour and Engagement.

These schools are in turn supported by a range of supplementary student-focused support services delivered through facilities such as the School of Special Educational Needs: Medical and Mental Health, School of Special Educational Needs: Disability, School of Alternative Learning Settings and 9 residential colleges.

¹ Western Australian Department of Education: 2022 Semester 1 student census, including kindergarten students.
Australian data: Australian Bureau of Statistics: Schools, Australia 2021, Table 46

Key state legislation underpinning school education in Western Australia is the *School Education Act 1999*, the *School Curriculum and Standards Authority Act 1997* and the *Teacher Registration Act 2012* and associated regulations. Schools in Western Australia deliver the Western Australian curriculum, which is adopted and adapted from the Australian Curriculum, to meet the needs and context of Western Australia's students.

In Western Australia, preschool for children who turn 4 in the year before compulsory full-time school is normalised in the schooling sector as Kindergarten, with participation rates exceeding 97 per cent. Kindergarten provides access for all age-eligible children to 600 hours of early childhood education per year, conducted by a qualified teacher, and in the public school system, free of compulsory charges. There is almost universal participation in Kindergarten in Western Australia, even amongst children in remote and socio-economically disadvantaged communities.²

The State Government delivers public school education, and regulates and funds Catholic and Independent schools, through the Department of Education. Below are other key State Government funded entities involved in education:

- The School Curriculum and Standards Authority is an independent statutory authority responsible for
 - setting standards of student achievement and for the assessment and certification of student achievement according to those standards
 - developing an outline of curriculum and assessment in schools that sets out the knowledge, understanding, skills, values and attitudes that students are expected to acquire and guidelines for the assessment of student achievement
 - developing and accrediting courses for schools
 - maintaining data on students' participation during their school years in education, training or employment and achievement and assessment records during those years.
- The Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia is the teacher regulatory authority in Western Australia. It is responsible for registering teachers, including renewing teacher registration, and administering the teacher disciplinary and impairment review processes. The Board is also responsible for accrediting initial teacher education programs delivered by Western Australian higher education providers.
- The Department of Training and Workforce Development manages Western Australia's investment in vocational education and training (VET), including state-funded VET delivered to school students in conjunction with the Department of Education and the Catholic and independent school sectors. It works closely with employers, business and industry and training providers to build a skilled workforce for the future.
- The Training Accreditation Council is the state's VET regulator, responsible for the quality assurance and recognition of VET services in Western Australia including training received by students while at school.

Under the *School Education Act 1999*, school-aged students in Western Australia are required to participate in full-time school, VET, an approved form of employment or a combination, until they reach 18 years of age, achieve the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) or reach the end of the year in which they would have completed Year 12.

² Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2022, Part B, Section 3 - Early childhood education and care

This contributes to Western Australia's high rate of participation in education, with 99.3% of the state's 15 to 17 year old population participating in school, VET, university or a combination.

Most students finish school well prepared for further education, training or work, with a high proportion of public school Year 12 students achieving a nationally accredited VET qualification at Certificate II or higher while at school, and over 80% achieving a WACE.³

Since the release of Western Australia's *Classroom First* strategy over a decade ago, the focus for public schools has quite rightly been on high quality teaching and student learning in classrooms. *Building on Strength* and *Every student, every classroom, every day* reaffirm the need for students and teachers to be at the centre of educational reform efforts, setting clear aspirations for every public school student and focusing on improvement drivers across the 6 pillars outlined below.^{4,5}

1. Provide every student with a pathway to a successful future.

Key foci include the following:

- A strong focus on the early years of a student's schooling, particularly those children who are at risk of not succeeding.
- Supporting students to not only develop the crucial foundational competencies in literacy and numeracy they need to succeed at school and beyond, but also contemporary and emerging work capabilities that are becoming increasingly important in modern work such as being able to work well in teams, think critically and creatively, innovate and be entrepreneurial.
- Student mental health and emotional wellbeing, particularly the promotion of resilience, optimism, confidence and self-efficacy, and ensuring every student feels a strong sense of connection and belonging where they are valued and acknowledged for their contribution to the school community.
- Creating culturally responsive classrooms that build on the strengths of Aboriginal students, engage them in learning and enable them to thrive academically and socially.

2. Strengthen support for teaching and learning excellence in every classroom.

Key foci include the following:

- Implementing a public schools' Leadership Strategy to support and develop outstanding leaders in every school who are student-centred, establish goals and high expectations, use resources strategically, drive high quality teaching, ensure a safe and orderly environment, and partner with their community.
- Enhancing support for schools through collegiate principals.
- Supporting public schools to be more culturally responsive to Aboriginal students and to build stronger partnerships between families and the school, through the Department of Education's *Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework*.⁶
- Creating the conditions that enable school leaders and their staff to be successful, and focusing resources into those areas where schools are most in need of support.

³ Western Australian Department of Education Annual Report 2020–21: <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/dl/o2x10mv>

⁴ Building on Strength: Future directions for the Western Australian public school system:

<https://www.education.wa.edu.au/dl/oelpev>

⁵ Every student, every classroom, every day: Strategic directions for public schools 2020–2024:

<https://www.education.wa.edu.au/dl/qe03re>

⁶ <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/dl/jjpzned>

3. Build the capability of our principals, our teachers and our allied professionals.

Key foci include a strong focus on quality teaching and school cultures that support the professional growth of teachers through collaboration, clear expectations and feedback for teachers about their classroom performance based on evidence. Professional support is to be available in areas teachers need, and a focus on understanding and using student achievement data to examine the impact of different teaching strategies on student progress.

4. School autonomy within a connected and unified public school system

For over a decade, a key aspect of Western Australia's public school improvement strategy has been the move to increased school autonomy that equips and empowers principals and their staff to act with greater authority and responsibility for the success of their school, based on the needs of their students and local community.

Balancing this is the need for school staff to have a collective purpose and responsibility, and to be and feel supported in the common pursuit of delivering a high quality education to every Western Australian child enrolled in a public school.

5. Partner with families, communities and agencies to support the educational engagement of every student

Parents and families are key partners in their children's learning at school. Teachers and other school staff have long recognised the importance of engaging with families to better understand the interests, personalities and needs of students.

Culturally responsive schools, for example, draw on the diversity and strengths of local communities to create opportunities to work collaboratively to better meet students' educational and other needs.

Many schools also partner with businesses, local industries, VET training providers, not-for-profit organisations and local arts, cultural and sporting organisations to provide exciting educational and future training and employment opportunities for students.

Schools also work in close partnership with other government agencies and community support services, to assist students and their families to receive support from a range of specialist services that schools themselves cannot provide.

6. Use evidence to drive decision making at all levels of the system

Key foci include supporting school leaders to build collaborative cultures in their school where teachers work together in teams using evidence to examine the impact of their teaching strategies and to share strategies that have the most impact on student achievement. In the schools where this happens, teachers hold each other accountable and take collective responsibility for student progress.

The foundations for these strategies are already in place, and such strategies and approaches are already evident in many schools across the state. They are the keys to driving further educational success and improvement into the future and will require ongoing focus to further embed and ensure their sustainability in the years ahead.

More broadly, the Western Australian Government has put skills and workforce development at the centre of its plans to grow and diversify the economy for the benefit of all Western Australians as evidenced through key whole-of-government strategies such as:

- *WA Labor Plan for Jobs* - sets out the Government's 2021 election commitments for jobs, skills and the economy⁷
- *DiversifyWA* - the state's economic development framework identifies training and skills as a strategic lever to achieve a more diversified economy⁸
- *Future jobs, Future skills - Driving STEM Skills in Western Australia* - the state's strategy to prepare the workforce for the future world of work, technological advancement and automation through increasing science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills.⁹

Developments since the NSRA was signed

In addition to the priorities above, there have been several key developments since the NSRA was signed in 2018 that have shaped and continue to influence school education in Western Australia.

- ***The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*** was agreed by Education Ministers in December 2019, setting out the national vision for education and the commitment of Australian governments to improving educational outcomes. It built upon and superseded the *Melbourne Declaration* that was in place when the NSRA was signed.
- Through the ***National Agreement on Closing the Gap***, the Australian and all state and territory governments committed in July 2020 to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal people to overcome the inequality they experience and achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians.

Western Australia's Closing the Gap Implementation Plan outlines how the state Government will drive whole-of-government reform and action to Close the Gap and empower Aboriginal people in Western Australia.¹⁰

The plan is closely aligned with the State Government's *Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy 2021 – 2029*, which sets the Western Australian Government's high level strategic approach for working with Aboriginal people towards empowerment and better outcomes.¹¹

Regarding school education specifically, the State Government is committed as part of its Closing the Gap Implementation Plan to:

- creating culturally responsive classrooms in public schools, that build on the strengths of Aboriginal students, engage them in learning and enable them to thrive academically and socially
- providing educational opportunities that match the aspirations of Aboriginal families and communities

⁷[https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/publications/tailedpapers.nsf/displaypaper/3914776c5d11d8c77eecb0714825804c0005d229/\\$file/tp-4776.pdf](https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/publications/tailedpapers.nsf/displaypaper/3914776c5d11d8c77eecb0714825804c0005d229/$file/tp-4776.pdf)

⁸https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2021-10/2108-083_Diversify_WA-Web.pdf

⁹<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/future-jobs-future-skills#:~:text=The%20STEM%20skills%20strategy%20aims,million%20to%20kick%2Dstart%20initiatives>

¹⁰<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/closing-the-gap-was-implementation-plan>

¹¹<https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments/premier-and-cabinet/aboriginal-empowerment-strategy-western-australia-2021-2029>

- strengthening the wellbeing, engagement and achievement of Aboriginal students in public schools through the Western Australian Department of Education's *Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework*.

In addition, the State Government's 2020 *Report on the Review of Skills, Training and Workforce Development* includes recommendations for improving employment and training outcomes for Aboriginal people, particularly young people.¹²

It is important national efforts to address issues of equity and educational achievement, particularly with respect to Aboriginal students, continue to complement and support jurisdictions' Closing the Gap commitments.

- **School workforce support challenges**

Attracting teachers with the right skills to the right areas at the right time remains a challenge and a priority for the state, particularly in secondary schools and areas of specialised skill. The Western Australian Government continues to implement a range of strategies to address this need, including recruitment campaigns, retraining programs and providing incentives to staff choosing to work in regional and remote areas of the state.

- **Strengthened public school improvement, support and accountability processes**

Five important, complementary system-level initiatives in recent years support greater school improvement and accountability in Western Australian public schools:

- The establishment of Regional Director of Education roles created a subtle but significant shift in the focus and responsibilities of the Department of Education's senior regional leaders. They influence student attendance, achievement and progress through their work with principals, understand the challenges in their regions, and channel system support resources to where they are needed most.
- 16 exemplary principals have been appointed to the new role of collegiate principal to support principals across the state to lead school improvement and enhance connectedness across our system.
- A Statement of Expectations all public school principals receive from the Director General of the Department:
 - makes clear the expectations and responsibilities of the school and the Department in regard to student achievement and progress
 - sets out the expectations of principals in relation to the delivery of our strategic directions
 - underpins each school's strategic planning and self-assessment, and reflects the expectation on school improvement to ensure every student is successful.
- The Public School Review process, which applies to all Western Australian public schools, has been strengthened through the use of 'The Standard' which defines the expected level of school performance, an external validation process by an expert principal review team and a differentiated timeframe of return (one, 3 or 5 years) based on the review and the best interests of the school community. The Public School Review gives assurance to the local community, the Minister for Education and Training and the Director General about the performance of public schools in delivering high quality education to students.
- The Department of Education's Statewide Services division has been reconfigured to provide more accessible, targeted and responsive support to schools.

¹² <https://www.jobsandskills.wa.gov.au/trainingreview>

- **Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic**

The State Government's strong and safe management of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that the Western Australian community experienced short periods of lockdown in some areas in 2020 and 2021 and was able to continue largely restriction-free, in contrast to experiences elsewhere in Australia and overseas.

Schools were, and remain, a critical consideration of the state's COVID-19 management plan, with a strong focus on keeping schools open for face-to-face learning as a priority.

There were only 2 occasions across 2020 and 2021 when face-to-face classes ceased for a number of Western Australia's schools:

- Week 10, Term 1, 2020 (4 days) – all schools in Western Australia were open only for children of essential workers for one week to allow teachers to prepare for remote learning to commence at the start of Term 2. The suppression of cases meant this was not necessary and all schools welcomed back all students.
- Week 1, Term 1, 2021 (5 days) – all schools in the Perth metropolitan area, and the Peel and Southwest regions opened a week late for the year. Remote learning was not implemented due to the timing.

In addition, a very small number of schools were temporarily closed for between one day and a week under the direction of the Department of Health, because they were identified as public exposure sites (in 2021), or because they were in remote Aboriginal communities that were locked down temporarily following signs of COVID-19 emerging locally (in 2022).

Under the direction and advice of Western Australia's Chief Health Officer, schools across the state have implemented a range of measures and necessary precautions to limit the transmission of COVID-19 and ensure the safety of students, staff and the broader community.

COVID-19 also required teachers and other school staff, parents and students to rapidly prepare for and adjust to alternative, flexible and remote modes of teaching and learning where necessary.

To support readiness for remote learning, more teaching and learning resources were developed for teachers, including for students with special educational needs. This was in addition to the Department of Education's Learning from Home website, which provided resources, activities and information to support schools and parents with children and young people learning from home. The website also provided resources to support mental health and wellbeing.

Medically vulnerable students were supported to learn from home by their school, the School of Special Educational Needs: Medical and Mental Health and the School of Isolated and Distance Education. Additional support arrangements were also put in place for students and staff at residential colleges.

The state's school teachers, principals and other staff all stepped up when called upon, putting the needs of their students and communities first, responding to a range of measures and often going to extraordinary lengths to support students educationally and emotionally, even when facing their own fears and concerns.

During Term 1 and especially Term 2 of 2022, Western Australian schools were particularly challenged by student and staff absences, as the Omicron variant swept through the Western Australian community.

The challenge of managing and responding to COVID-19 is not over. Schools will likely continue to be affected by COVID-19 through ongoing staff and student absences, remaining vigilant to the need to encourage hygiene practices amongst students and staff, ensuring good ventilation in classrooms and being prepared for potential future outbreaks.

There are also preliminary signs that disruptions related to COVID-19 may have had indirect and disproportionately greater impacts on some students' educational experiences and outcomes than others. For example, questions remain about the extent to which the pandemic has exacerbated the mental health and wellbeing, learning and other education-related challenges experienced by some students; and school attendance rates in some remote areas have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, raising concern about the prospect of long-term educational and societal disadvantage being further compounded. These are matters of national significance and warrant continued, concerted national attention and effort to address.

Investment by the State Government

- **Additional support for students' mental health and wellbeing**

The State Government is committed to supporting students' mental health and wellbeing, investing an extra \$104 million over four years from 2021-22 to:

- employ more school psychologists to provide support for students and promote positive mental health, with a proportionate funding increase to non-government schools to purchase psychology services
- expand the Alternative Learning Settings program across Western Australia for students who have committed violent acts, to provide separate learning environments where students are taught self-regulation skills to cease these behaviours
- provide additional funding for public schools to purchase chaplaincy services, if they wish, to support the social and emotional wellbeing of students and staff.

In 2020, the State Government made a *Commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing*, aimed at reducing the rate of suicide and enhancing the wellbeing of young Aboriginal people.¹³ It was in response to the State Coroner's recommendations on the deaths of 13 children and young people in the Kimberley, and the 2016 Parliamentary Inquiry into Aboriginal youth suicide, *Learnings from the Message Stick*. It represents a long-term commitment to Aboriginal children and young people, not just in the Kimberley, but across the state, delivered in partnership with the Aboriginal community.

The Western Australian Government announced a \$266 million package in 2020 to support Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing

- **Additional support for students with disability and additional needs**, such as
 - an expansion of Western Australia's in-demand Specialist Learning Programs for students with autism spectrum disorder
 - the Students with Disabilities and Complex Behaviour Framework, which supports schools to better support the needs of students with disability
 - expansion of public schools' Educational Adjustment Allocation from 2022-23, to help more students with additional learning needs develop their literacy and numeracy skills through explicit instruction

¹³ <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments/departments-of-the-premier-and-cabinet/aboriginal-youth-wellbeing>

- providing free access to Abilities Based Learning Education Western Australia (ABLEWA) curriculum materials and assessment tools for all public and non-government schools in the state, enhancing the resources available to teachers to support the teaching and learning of students with disability and additional learning needs.¹⁴
- **Year 1 phonics initiative**
From 2023, all Western Australian public schools will assess Year 1 students' phonics skills and have access to evidence-based phonics programs to support those students requiring extra help learning to read.¹⁵
- **Strengthening VET and career counselling opportunities in schools**, including
 - extra VET places for Year 11 and 12 students in schools
 - a new VET career taster program for Year 9 students
 - qualified career counsellors in 70 public secondary schools, to embed career learning and work exposure opportunities for students and facilitate opportunities between students, parents and local training providers, employers and industries.

Through its *Lower Fees, Local Skills* initiative, the State Government is also providing more targeted training opportunities for Western Australians by keeping TAFE fees low and annual fees capped across 210 high priority courses.¹⁶

- **Addressing violence in schools**
In December 2018, the State Government released *Let's take a stand together*, a 10-point action plan to address violence in schools.¹⁷ The plan provides clear expectations with respect to managing student behaviour and violence in schools, professional learning programs to support school staff to provide a safer workplace for our teachers and other school staff, and the establishment of Alternative Learning Settings.

Effectiveness and Appropriateness of the National Policy Initiatives

Western Australia has demonstrated a long-term commitment to collaborating nationally on education initiatives and reforms. Some of these reforms in recent years have been through the NSRA National Policy Initiatives (NPIs); others have been through mechanisms outside of the NSRA such as Education Ministers Meeting and its subcommittees, or working closely with the Australian Government, other states and territories or national education Ministerial companies on specific initiatives and reforms.

With regard to the NPIs, work continues to progress nationally on NPIs A(i), A(ii) and C(i) – the development and progressive implementation of national learning progressions, opt-in online formative assessments and a national school unique student identifier (USI). The latter 2 NPIs in particular require careful consideration of a complex array of matters spanning potential federal and state legislative amendments, privacy, information and communications technology platforms, data governance and use, stakeholder engagement and acceptance, upfront and ongoing costs, and interfaces with existing school and system-level procedures.

¹⁴ <https://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/home/resources/ablewa>

¹⁵ <https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2022/05/McGowan-Government-invests-in-better-outcomes-for-WA-students.aspx>

¹⁶ <https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2021/06/Lower-Fees-Local-Skills-delivers-TAFE-and-training-surge.aspx>

¹⁷ <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/dl/69okxe>

Successful implementation will hinge on how well these initiatives leverage and articulate with jurisdictions' existing school education systems, processes and 'infrastructure'.

The review of senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training under NPI A(iii) has been completed, with the Australian Government and jurisdictions considering its findings ahead of reaching agreement on an implementation plan for agreed recommendations as appropriate.

Many of the review's findings will inform and/or complement initiatives already being implemented or progressed in Western Australia. These include strengthened VET, career education and work exploration opportunities in schools; the minimum literacy and numeracy requirements that are built into the WACE to ensure Year 12 students have the foundation skills they require for success beyond school; a stronger focus on developing and micro-credentialling students' contemporary work employability, creativity and entrepreneurial skills, including those demonstrated outside of school; and recent changes to introduce a new, third pathway for achieving the WACE, in addition to the more traditional Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) and VET pathways, to give Year 12 students since 2021 more choice and flexibility in their final school years and better equip them for their preferred post-school pursuits.¹⁸

Work to review teacher workforce needs of the future to attract and retain the best and brightest to the teaching profession and attract teachers to areas of need, under NPI B(i), has been completed. The national teacher workforce strategy comprises *Teaching Futures: A National Teacher Workforce Strategy for Australia* and *National Initiatives to Support Teaching and School Leadership*, providing guidance on how to respond to teacher workforce needs of the future and supporting decision making of teacher employers and initial teacher education (ITE) providers.

The research evidence is clear - quality teaching has the greatest impact on student learning and is underpinned by well-trained, highly skilled teachers.¹⁹ Ensuring adequate supply and development of such teachers, particularly in the areas where they are needed most, remains an ongoing challenge and priority, nationally and for Western Australia. For this reason, Western Australia welcomes an ongoing national focus on quality teaching and workforce supply initiatives that build on and extend the work commenced under NPI B(i).

Similarly, NPI B(ii) - strengthening the ITE accreditation system – has been completed, with accredited ITE programs now requiring pre-service teachers to have successfully completed an endorsed final-year teaching performance assessment prior to graduation. Western Australia notes the Australian Government's recently released *Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review*.²⁰ As a key stakeholder - as both the main employer of newly graduated teachers and the regulator of ITE programs in Western Australia - the State Government retains a very active interest in any developments arising from the outcomes of this review.

NPI C(ii) - the establishment of an independent national evidence institute to inform teacher practice, system improvement and policy development - has been completed with the creation and commencement of the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) in 2021.

¹⁸ <https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2019/05/Schooling-reforms-to-give-every-student-an-opportunity-for-a-better-future.aspx>

¹⁹ <https://www.des.gov.au/download/4175/through-growth-achievement-report-review-achieve-educational-excellence-australian-schools/18692/document/pdf/en>; <https://www.des.gov.au/download/4132/independent-review-regional-rural-and-remote-education-final-report/6116/document/pdf/en>

²⁰ <https://www.des.gov.au/download/13191/next-steps-report-quality-initial-teacher-education-review/26524/next-steps-report-quality-initial-teacher-education-review/pdf/en>

Western Australia continues to support AERO to deliver on its important charter of creating a high-quality research evidence base and practical resources for school teachers, leaders, systems and jurisdictions that are explicitly focused on achieving excellence and equity in Australian school students' educational outcomes.

There has also been considerable progress made towards improving national data quality, consistency and collection to improve the national evidence base and inform policy development, under NPI C(iii), with a number of national projects spanning school readiness, student wellbeing, and post-school destinations being undertaken. These projects will inform future deliberations in Western Australia regarding opportunities to further improve students' preparation for and transition into post-school destinations, potential approaches for the design and implementation of a new national preschool outcomes measure as required under the recently signed Preschool Reform Agreement, and approaches to measuring student wellbeing.

Outside of the NSRA, there has been quality national collaboration in areas such as:

- the recent revision to refine, reduce and better align the Australian Curriculum, with further work now required to progressively adopt, adapt and implement it locally through Western Australia's school curriculum over coming years
- successfully transitioning to online National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) assessments nationally from 2022
- recently announced improvements to the National Assessment Program, including conducting NAPLAN tests earlier in the year from 2023 to enable faster return of results to parents and teachers, to better inform their teaching and learning programs
- annual national data collections through the Australian Bureau of Statistics, such as the National School Statistics Collection, National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection, Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability, and school financial and attendance reporting through the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
- work to combat bullying and cyberbullying, including through the annual National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence
- progressing national implementation of recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
- supporting the collection and sharing of data regarding teaching workforce characteristics and supply and demand trends, such as through the Australian Teaching Workforce Database initiative coordinated by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
- national reforms in the Preschool Reform Agreement.

Many of these reforms and initiatives require further, continued national collaborative effort because the challenges they are seeking to address remain ongoing, and to ensure the progress and achievements made to date are sustained and built upon into the future.

National collaborative reform efforts, either as part of or outside the NSRA, are most effective when they are underpinned by the following key principles:

- Mutually beneficial - leveraging areas of shared responsibility, with a clear rationale for why national collaboration will lead to better efficiency or outcomes than acting alone.
- Evidence-informed.
- Focused on key drivers and enablers of improvement in educational outcomes – and are clearly within the education sector's remit and locus of control.
- Jurisdictional and sectoral flexibility.
- Realistically achievable with regard to scope and stakeholder support.
- Cost-effectiveness and efficiency.
- Consider impacts on workloads of teachers and school leaders.

- Leverage and articulate with existing systems, processes, ‘infrastructure’ and commitments.
- Form a coherent reform package or strategy, rather than fragmented initiatives.

Western Australia supports consideration being given to principles such as these continuing to inform national collaborative reform efforts.

National Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia

The National Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia (NMF) provides the basis for Australia’s Education Ministers to report to the community on the performance of schooling, in line with the Education Goals for Young Australians as expressed in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration.

Although the NMF’s key performance measures correspond with some of the targets and sub-outcomes specified in the NSRA, the NMF contains a wider array of nationally agreed key performance measures for school education than the NSRA.

Some of the NMF’s key performance measures reflect ‘intermediary’ factors, such as school attendance, that are precursors to quality educational outcomes. Such measures provide early indications of likely improvements or declines in performance outcomes that take longer to manifest such as NAPLAN results, Year 12 achievement and Australia’s performance on international assessments.

The key performance measures in the NMF are intentionally:

- strategic measures that provide nationally comparable data on aspects of performance critical to achieving the Education Goals for Young Australians and monitoring progress against the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration
- student centred, focusing on student 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, practical to collect, and take account of the burden and impact that data collection may place on students, schools and schooling systems.

Western Australia supports that the principles that underpin the key performance measures in the NMF continue to guide any potential new measures that may be considered into the future.

Conclusion

Western Australia welcomes opportunities to continue contributing to national collaborative reforms that are in the best interests of the state’s students, families and schools.

Western Australia looks forward to the Productivity Commission’s interim and final reports, and continuing to work with the Australian Government and other states and territories to promote excellence and equity in our schools and support all students to imagine, discover and unlock their potential.