
Choice and Affordability Fund

Annual Report 2021

**The Association of Independent Schools
of South Australia**

Summary of 2021

The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) has a proven track record in supporting Independent schools to meet their national obligations within a paradigm that reflects each school's independence and autonomy. This report summarises the initiatives undertaken by the AISSA to progress the objectives of the Choice and Affordability Fund in 2021.

In 2021 the AISSA worked strategically with 104 schools across the state. Activity described in this report exceeds usual service provision to Independent schools by the AISSA and would not be possible without this funding commitment. It details a comprehensive sector strategy that was developed in response to the agreed national priorities and the localised needs of member schools and their students.

Implementation has recognised the distinct economic context of South Australia, in particular the significant economic and social challenges that arose from a range of long-term socio-economic factors including the COVID-19 pandemic. Commencement of transition assistance for schools negatively affected by the move to the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) methodology for determining the Capacity to Contribute (CtC), maintaining choice and affordability of schools for families, responding to unique and special circumstances and strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students were of paramount importance.

While cognisant of the overarching national priorities, implementation has been characterised by responsiveness to individual school circumstances. An illustration of this was the flexibility afforded to schools to identify specific review areas that underpinned choice and affordability for individual contexts, in order to implement business development plans to enhance the long-term financial stability of the school. Another theme of program activity across priority areas has been the use of concise and clear eligibility, application and acquittal processes to ensure efficient and judicious use of funds. For a number of priorities, reporting and acquittal documentation will guide future implementation directions and the AISSA's wider support of South Australian Independent schools.

All South Australian Independent schools have been provided with the opportunity to apply for, or be supported through, Choice and Affordability funding. Mechanisms for funding distribution have varied across priorities and have included both centralised and distributed expenditure. As specific systemic governance arrangements are in place for Lutheran schools, in some instances funds were provided directly to the Approved Authority, Lutheran Education SA, NT and WA (LESNW). In support of transparent funding dispersal and use, formal agreements and acquittals were established that governed the use of program funds. Within the Transition Assistance priority, direct grant funding was targeted at schools identified by the Australian Government as eligible for support under the previous National Adjustment Assistance Fund (NAAF), along with other schools which, based on the AISSA's analysis, would require support to successfully transition to the DMI methodology.

A strategic approach to strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students has seen the enactment of a sector strategy that draws from current education research with the objective of supporting schools to enhance student outcomes in a sustained manner. A number of programs will continue into 2022 to foster embeddedness of practice in schools. Activity has included recognition of the role school support officers undertake in schools, through the provision of scholarships to attain a recognised qualification. A range of support, implemented through tailored

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school advice, sector professional learning and networking opportunities, has enabled schools to strengthen industry partnership opportunities for students.

In response to sector consultation, a multi-faceted approach was undertaken to support schools to implement evidence-based wellbeing strategies and to develop whole school bullying prevention approaches.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to present significant challenges for the implementation of priorities and initiatives and as a result, the nuanced way the AISSA responded, communicated, and collaborated changed as well. This provided opportunities to re-imagine how to meet the diverse needs of member schools, enabling programs and bespoke school support to be provided in a cohesive and creative manner throughout the year.

Throughout 2021, the AISSA implemented a range of review structures to ensure that priority areas have been progressed with efficiency and effectiveness. A thorough understanding of both the needs of schools and the aims of the Choice and Affordability Fund will further enable the AISSA to iteratively design and refine activities for future years. Reporting mechanisms and the ensuing analyses will guide future work in the Business Development Planning Program activity. Moreover, ongoing modelling using the Australian Government Funding Estimation Tool will facilitate forward planning of strategies and practices that will assist schools' transition to the DMI funding arrangement, while minimising the impact on school families. Funding has been provisioned for use in response to priority areas or natural disaster, including drought and bushfire and the AISSA will continue to monitor for the need to implement specific grant programs to address priority areas or respond to natural disasters.

So that leaders were kept abreast of planned and future initiatives, funding and program updates have been documented and shared with Principals during scheduled Heads of Schools meetings, diarised for each term. The AISSA electronic *Bulletin* publication has provided regular updates to schools about related CAF activity, with the AISSA website an integral repository for information, resources and artefacts. Consultative mechanisms with schools and the Approved Authority have been central to the effectiveness of initiatives described in this report.

The importance and impact of this funding cannot be overestimated. The AISSA commits to continuing to be responsive to needs of Independent schools in South Australia and the implementation of initiatives and activities to progress national priority areas over the next Choice and Affordability funding quadrennium.

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Overarching Risk Management

In 2021 the AISSA has addressed program management risk as a single work program, to ensure that the CAF Program was delivered efficiently, effectively and with efficacy.

Risk category	Identified risks	Management
Stakeholder	- Program design fails to meet stakeholder need. - Lack of stakeholder engagement. - Lack of access to program information.	A range of organisational communication structures and approaches to service delivery were in place, including formal agenda briefings, electronic newsletters, website updates and stakeholder meeting opportunities.
External catastrophic event / critical incident	- The AISSA and/or schools are involved in a critical incident that disrupts normal operational capability. - The event leads to postponement of activity or the issuing of grants. - School leaders and staff are unable to access AISSA services. - Schools face impediments in participating in CAF Priority activity.	The AISSA Business Continuity Plan and suite of policies and procedures are in place. Remote and in-situ processes and procedures have been established and implemented that enable continuation of: - the provision of timely advice - responsiveness to schools' needs during complex times - ability to work with schools using online and remote modes. A range of feedback mechanisms has facilitated timely organisational responses to schools' identified needs.
Organizational	- Judicious use of funds and validity of program implementation.	Overarching governance oversight has been provided through the AISSA Board . Effective internal and external financial procedures and auditing processes have been in place. Regulated by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). Established stakeholder feedback mechanisms.
Technical	- Increased threat of cyber attack. - Lack of access by regional and remote schools.	Comprehensive organisational security processes and policies exist. Proven ability to work with regional and remote schools using online and remote modes.
Project Management	- Lack of continuity.	Proven stability and expertise of AISSA staff in project management and management of Australian Government funds. Regular contact with external consultants has occurred.

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Stakeholder Engagement Plan

In 2021 the Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been responsive to four broad audiences: Principals; leadership teams and Teachers; cross sector colleagues, and other external stakeholders.

Stakeholder & Interest/Impact	Engagement Strategy
Principals So that - the design within each priority meets the needs of schools, students and stakeholders. - leaders are kept abreast of planned and future initiatives to help strengthen school choice and affordability, leadership capability and build teacher efficacy. - modes of delivery enable equitable access for schools.	The AISSA has ensured - CAF updates and educational reports have been formally documented and shared with school Principals during scheduled Heads of Schools meetings, diarised for each term. - Meeting modes have included face-to-face and video conference meetings to maximise participation. - School Principals have been formally consulted and invited to provide feedback about annual program design, via electronic means, in addition to a specific focus group opportunity, to ensure best-fit initiatives are designed. - The AISSA electronic <i>Bulletin</i> publication has provided regular updates to schools about related CAF activity and updates are housed on the AISSA website.
School Leadership Teams and Teachers So that - Leadership Teams within schools are kept abreast of planned and future initiatives and are supported to critically reflect on current practice. - communities of practice are in place across the sector. - best-practice initiatives and resources are shared. - modes of delivery enable equitable access for schools.	The AISSA has ensured - Reference Group meetings have been scheduled regularly each term for the following key sector stakeholder groups: Business Managers, Curriculum Leaders, VET Leaders in schools. - The AISSA website has been an integral repository for information, resources and artefacts. - Meeting modes have included face-to-face and video conference meetings to maximise participation.
Cross-sector Colleagues So that - initiatives build on state-wide priorities. - senior state education leaders are kept abreast of planned and future initiatives. - potential partnership opportunities can be maximised. - connections with professional associations are maintained and strengthened.	The AISSA has ensured - Formalised cross-sector Senior Officer and Sector Heads meetings have provided the conduit for the sharing of educational initiatives and resources, for the benefit of all South Australian students. - Education initiatives have been shared with professional associations biennially at formalised meetings.
Other External Stakeholders So that - other external stakeholders, such as recognised authorities, parents and the wider community are kept abreast of planned and future initiatives. - open and transparent processes are in place.	The AISSA has ensured - Standing groups, such as those representing sector approved authorities, have been scheduled regularly and have tabled CAF priority information and updates. - The AISSA website has been an integral repository for information, resources and artefacts, including publication of this work plan and annual reports.

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Financial Report

2021 Budgeted Funding and Actual Expenditure

Expenditure for 2021 by activity is outlined in the table below. Expenditure for 2021 by school is outlined in *Attachment A – CAF 2021 School Level Data Report*.

Activities/Initiatives	Expenditure type	Budgeted for 2021	Actual Spend in 2021
<u>A – Choice and Affordability</u>			
<i>Business Development Planning</i>	Centralised	\$206,375	\$227,176
	Distributed	N/A	N/A
<u>B – Transition Assistance</u>			
<i>Business Development and Transition Assistance Program - NAAF</i>	Centralised	\$34,038	\$33,199
	Distributed	\$75,000	\$75,000
<i>Business Development and Transition Assistance Program – Other</i>	Centralised	\$11,346	\$11,066
	Distributed	\$25,000	\$25,000
<i>Regional Transition Assistance</i>	Centralised	\$4,371	\$4,479
	Distributed	\$143,912	\$143,912
Total for Priority B	Centralised	\$49,755	\$48,744
	Distributed	\$243,912	\$243,912
<u>C – Special Circumstances Funding</u>			
COVID-19 Direct Grant Program	Centralised	\$47,810	\$48,110
	Distributed	\$500,000	\$500,000
<u>D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students</u>			
Deep Learning and Teaching: Generating Energy and Pathways for Sustained Improvement	Centralised	\$241,498	\$227,563
	Distributed	N/A	N/A
Virtual World Builders Project	Centralised	\$152,937	\$143,146
	Distributed	N/A	N/A
AISSA Educational Leaders STEM Conference 2021	Centralised	\$270,775	\$260,230
	Distributed	N/A	N/A
Learning and Accreditation through a Learner Profile	Centralised	\$179,775	\$179,439
	Distributed	N/A	N/A
Science: New Australian Curriculum Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early/ Primary/ Secondary Elaborations Workshop Series 2021	Centralised	\$24,303	\$24,627
	Distributed	N/A	N/A
Science of Understanding How We Learn	Centralised	\$70,405	\$67,985
	Distributed	N/A	N/A
Certificate IV in Education Support	Centralised	\$104,620	\$102,375
	Distributed	N/A	N/A
School Industry Partnership Program	Centralised	\$97,331	\$102,325
	Distributed	N/A	N/A
Total for Priority D	Centralised	\$1,141,644	\$1,107,690
	Distributed	N/A	N/A
<u>E – Student wellbeing and support</u>			
Effective Whole School Approaches to Student Wellbeing	Centralised	\$126,900	\$140,508
	Distributed	N/A	N/A

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Activities/Initiatives	Expenditure type	Budgeted for 2021	Actual Spend in 2021
	Administrative costs	\$51,961	\$51,961
	Total expenditure	\$2,368,357	\$2,368,101
	Deferred funding	N/A	N/A

Other funding sources in 2021

Activities/Initiatives	Other funding source	Budgeted for 2021	Actual Spend in 2021
N/A			

Schools' Use of Distributed CAF Funding

The AISSA required Independent schools, and the Approved Authority (LESNW) which received distributed funds, to certify that the funding was used for the purposes it was provided for meeting the AISSA's obligation under section 49 of the CAF Guidelines.

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Expenditure Profile for 2022–2029

This table reflects the NGRB's planned expenditure over 2022 to 2029 consistent with its CAF Agreement and, where applicable, its CAF Work Plan, with any variations outlined below.

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026*	2027*	2028*	2029*
NGRB's total estimated funding allocation as advised by the department	\$2,675,994	\$2,756,274	\$2,838,962	\$2,924,132	\$3,011,856	\$3,102,210	\$3,195,278	\$3,291,134
NGRB's estimated Regional Transition Assistance funding allocation as advised by the department	\$148,228	\$152,676	\$157,256	\$161,974	\$166,834	\$171,838	\$176,994	\$182,302
Accrued deferred funding from 2020 and 2021 to be carried forward to 2022	\$1,730,192							
Accrued interest earned on funds held in 2020 and 2021 to be carried forward to 2022	N/A							
NGRB's planned expenditure for the relevant year	\$2,705,090	\$3,152,327	\$3,341,935	\$3,482,395	\$3,186,856	\$3,152,210	\$3,214,085	\$3,291,134
NGRB's planned regional transition assistance expenditure for the relevant year	\$148,228	\$152,676	\$157,256	\$161,974	\$166,834	\$171,838	\$176,994	\$182,302
NGRB's planned deferred funding for the relevant year to be spent in a future year	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Accrued deferred funding from the relevant year and previous years to be spent in a future year	1,701,096	1,305,043	802,070	243,807	68,807	18,807	N/A	

*Funding over 2026 to 2029 is indicative and will finalised through the 2026-2029 Work Plan to be settled in 2025.

Reason for variations to Expenditure Profile

There is a small variance in the 2021 Annual Report Expenditure Profile for 2022-2029 compared to the same profile provided in the 2022-2025 Work Plan for the following two reasons:

1. the total expenditure in 2021 was slightly lower than included in the 2021 Work Plan, so this difference is available to be utilised in a future year; and
2. the actual interest earned in 2021 was contributed to CAF related activities in 2021 rather than accrued to be used in 2022. This impacts on the Expenditure Profile by the small difference in the amount of interest budgeted versus the actual amount.

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Activity Report

Activity/Initiative	Business Development Planning
Priority	A – Choice and Affordability

Activity Description

In recognition of the challenges experienced by South Australian Independent schools in maintaining choice and affordability for South Australian families in the face of the significant economic and social challenges impacting South Australia due to a range of long-term socio-economic factors and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021 CAF funding was used to fund a Business Development Planning program designed to support eligible schools to implement business development plans to enhance the long-term financial stability of the school.

Building on the work undertaken in 2020, which identified Mr Paul Campey, Partner, Resolve Consulting, as having the requisite skill set necessary to undertake the work, centralised expenditure was used to undertake the formal engagement of Mr Campey and Resolve Consulting and to develop and undertake a formal application and an assessment process to identify eligible schools. Applicants were provided with the flexibility to select from a small range of identified review areas deemed as key contributors to maintaining financial stability and consequently underpinning choice and affordability. Centralised expenditure was also used to monitor the progress of the program and undertake an assessment of program outcomes. All non-Lutheran schools were eligible to apply for support. The application process required schools to demonstrate the context specific challenges they faced impacting on choice and affordability and required the provision of a range of financial and statistical data to support their application. Each application was assessed to determine eligibility and ensure the judicious use of funds. Eight schools located in metropolitan, outer metropolitan and regional areas were supported in 2021 with support for one school ceased during the program due to the identification of significant financial circumstances beyond the program's scope.

Initially incorporating a considerable component of in-school face-to-face engagement, border closures and lockdowns, resulting from government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, limited the opportunity for onsite visits necessitating the greater use of remote delivery solutions and the delay of finalisation of two projects until late Term 4 2021.

A condition of the program was that formal reports were provided by the consultant to both participating non-systemic schools and the AISSA. Following completion of the 2021 program the AISSA undertook an assessment of all reports received as part of the project. An analysis of the reports was undertaken and will guide future work in the Business Development Planning Program activity as outlined in the 2022-2025 workplan and the AISSA's wider support of South Australian Independent schools.

Concurrently, program funding was provided to the Approved Authority (LESNW) to undertake a business development planning program in the South Australian Lutheran education school system in recognition of specific governance arrangements of South Australian Lutheran systemic schools in the system. Centralised expenditure was used to develop a formal agreement to govern the use of program funds and to ensure that funds were used to meet the Business Development Planning program objectives to enhance choice and affordability. Under the agreement the Approved Authority (LESNW) was required to identify the schools which would be supported and the rationale for requiring this support with the approved authority required to monitor the program and ensure appropriate use of funding. Six South Australian Lutheran schools located in metropolitan and regional areas were supported by this funding. Funding was paid in two tranches and the AISSA undertook an acquittal process requiring the certification that funds were used as per the Agreement and program objectives. A separate program for the South Australian Lutheran school sector will be offered in each year of the 2022-2025 workplan.

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Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Schools have been supported to implement business development plans to enhance long-term financial stability.	Application and assessment process was developed and undertaken which ensured that schools met the eligibility criteria.
School Boards and leaders were supported.	Formal engagement of consultant and the establishment of key parameters ensured the activity met the program intent.
	100% success in implementing business development planning was reported with 85% reporting very high success.
	Reports were provided to participating schools which enabled school Boards and leaders to assess key findings and recommendations.
	An agreement was developed and signed between the AISSA and the Approved Authority (LESNW).
	Funding was provided to the Approved Authority (LESNW) to undertake work in the Lutheran school system, with six schools supported in 2021.
	An acquittal process was undertaken with the Approved Authority (LESNW).

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Activity/Initiative	Business Development and Transition Assistance Program - NAAF
Priority	B – Transition Assistance

Activity Description

Six South Australian Independent schools have been identified by the Australian Government as eligible for transition assistance, resulting from the full implementation of the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) funding arrangements, under the previous National Adjustment Assistance Fund (NAAF) over the period 2022-2028 with a further school identified as meeting the criteria in 2028.

Due to the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school operations, a revised workplan was submitted to the Australian Government deferring the original 2020 provisioned funding to 2021. Underpinning this determination was the recognition that a six-month time frame for expenditure of 2020 funds, at a time where schools faced significant workload and operational pressures affecting all areas of school operations, would prohibit funding effectiveness.

A total of \$75,000 was available for direct grants to the six identified NAAF schools, subject to meeting eligibility criteria. Building on the planning work undertaken in 2020, centralised expenditure was used to determine final eligibility criteria, assess all applications, process grants and to undertake an acquittal process for the 2021 funding.

Six NAAF schools received funding support in 2021. In 2021 grants of \$12,500 were provided to NAAF schools which met the eligibility criteria to commence a process of identifying cost saving and other measures which would support their transition to the DMI model of funding. Schools were required to certify that the funding had been used to support the grant funded purpose.

Centralised expenditure was used to undertake further analysis of the impact of the introduction of the DMI from 2022 on the identified NAAF schools which in each of the cases will experience an increase in DMI. Modelling was undertaken utilising the Australian Government Funding Estimation Tool (FET) underpinned both by the most up to date data inputs and also a range of DMI settings for forward planning purposes in recognition that putting in place strategies and practices to enable transition to the DMI while minimising the impact on school families would be an iterative process over the transition period.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Eligible schools have been supported to adapt current business models to enable them to transition to the DMI funding arrangements by 2029.	Criteria were developed to determine eligibility for the business development and transition assistance program. An application and assessment process was undertaken to determine that funding would be used for activity that would support adaption of current business models to facilitate transition. Grants were paid in a timely manner. An acquittal process was undertaken requiring schools to certify that the grant was used for the grant funded purpose as per the application. Modelling was undertaken to support future transition assistance to NAAF schools.

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Activity/Initiative	Business Development and Transition Assistance Program - Other
Priority	B – Transition Assistance

Activity Description

In addition to the schools identified by the Australian Government as meeting the eligibility criteria under the previous NAAF, analysis undertaken by the AISSA identified a small number of non-NAAF schools which would require support to transition to the DMI funding arrangements. As outlined in the previous activity report due to the significant impact of COVID-19 on school operations, funding originally provisioned in 2020 was deferred to 2021 to ensure targeted and prudent use of funding.

Building on the planning work undertaken in 2020, centralised expenditure was used to determine final eligibility criteria, assess all applications, process grants and to undertake an acquittal process for the 2021 funding. Having regard to the eligibility criteria two schools were deemed to meet the requirements for support in 2021, each eligible for a grant of \$12,500. The grant was to be used to commence a process of identifying cost savings and other measures which would support their transition to the DMI model of funding. One school sat under the Approved Authority (LESNW) and an agreement was developed and signed between the AISSA and the Approved Authority (LESNW) to govern the use of funding. An acquittal process was undertaken for both grants requiring certification

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Eligible schools have been supported to adapt current business models to enable them to transition to the DMI funding arrangements by 2029.	Criteria were developed to determine eligibility for the business development and transition assistance program. An application and assessment process was undertaken to determine that funding would be used for activity that would support adaption of current business models to facilitate transition. Grants were paid in a timely manner. An acquittal process was undertaken requiring certification that the grant was used for the grant funded purpose as per the application. Modelling was undertaken to support future transition assistance to negative and low growth other schools.

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Activity/Initiative	Regional Transition Assistance
Priority	B – Transition Assistance

Activity Description

Four South Australian regional schools have been identified by the Australian Government as eligible for regional transition assistance, each of which sit under one Approved System Authority. In accordance with the AISSA 2020-2021 workplan, and in light of the quantum of funding and the unique circumstances of each school, funding for 2021 was processed and paid by the AISSA to the Approved Authority (LESNW), for onward payment to each school. The Approved Authority (LESNW) was able to determine the allocation for each eligible school, as per the agreed national criteria, with the funding fully expended in grants to the four schools. Centralised expenditure was used to develop a formal agreement and an accountability process to ensure that funds were used in accordance with the Australian Government requirements and to process the grant distribution.

The nationally agreed criteria will continue to be used as a threshold for eligibility in 2022-2025.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Eligible regional schools received direct grants to support transition to the DMI.	The 2021 round of grant funds was distributed to participating schools in 2021 through a formal agreement between the AISSA and the Approved Authority for each participating school. An acquittal process was undertaken and the acquittal received from the Approved Authority confirmed that all grant funds were paid to the eligible schools and used for the grant funded purpose.

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Activity/Initiative	COVID-19 Direct Grant Program
Priority	C – Special Circumstances Funding

Activity Description

In 2021, a small grant program was made available under the Special Circumstances priority to South Australian Independent schools experiencing financial stress directly as a result of COVID-19. The grants were intended to assist schools meet the increased costs of maintaining a COVID-19 safe and hygienic environment for staff and students and offered in two funding rounds. Increased cleaning of indoor and outdoor school surfaces and playground equipment was identified by the South Australian Department of Health as one of the key risk mitigation strategies against the spread of COVID-19 in schools, and mask wearing. These strategies, along with other operational arrangements, were put in place to enable schools to remain open for face-to-face learning throughout the pandemic, however, they had significant cost implications for schools.

Building on the work in 2020, centralised expenditure was used to refine the eligibility criteria, in light of the grant program being now in its second year. An application process and an assessment process were undertaken for each funding round. Using centralised expenditure, an equitable and fair formula for distributing the grants to eligible schools was developed along with the processing of grant payments. The application form required a declaration to be signed by the Principal of the school, and witnessed, that the grant would be used toward the increased costs of maintaining a safe and hygienic environment for staff and students in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Eighty Independent schools, across metropolitan, regional and rural areas, applied to access the grants and all were deemed to meet the eligibility criteria. The formula developed to allocate grants to schools was based on school enrolment at the 2021 census and the quantum increase in cleaning costs directly resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. An acquittal process required schools to declare that they had fully acquitted the funding and that the grant funding was used toward the increased costs of maintaining a safe and hygienic environment for staff and students in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Any unacquitted funds were required to be returned to AISSA.

The second grant round was offered to assist schools in meeting the ongoing significant funding pressures in maintaining a COVID safe environment which were magnified due to changes in outbreak management. Sixty-three schools applied for funding in the second round and were assessed as meeting the eligibility criteria based on additional costs in supplying masks to staff and students. Schools receiving funding were required to certify that grant funding was used toward the costs of maintaining a COVID safe environment through supply of masks to staff and students. A formula was developed based on school size and actual costs. The grants provided were in all cases less than the costs which had been incurred.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Schools were supported to meet increased costs as a result of the ongoing requirement to increase safety and hygiene practices to mitigate the risk of spread	Criteria were developed to determine eligibility for Round 1 and Round 2 of the COVID-19 Direct Grant Program. An application and assessment process was undertaken to determine that funding would be used for the intended grant purpose. First round of grants paid in August. Second round of grants paid in early December. Certification processes were in place to ensure that funding was used for the grant funded purpose. Certifications were required to be witnessed.

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Activity/Initiative	Special Circumstances Funding
Priority	C – Special Circumstances Funding

Activity Description

An application and assessment process has been put in place for schools which meet the Special Circumstances funding criteria as for short term emergency assistance as outlined in the Choice and Affordability Guidelines as follows:

- Unexpected - Could not have been reasonably foreseen.
- Causing severe financial difficulty - Where a school faces a real prospect of having to cease a large part of its educational activities or significantly lower its educational services.
- Short term - Schools should be able to overcome their financial difficulty and resume operations and must provide a five-year business and recovery plan.
- A special need - Schools have exhausted all other options to remedy the financial situation of the school.

South Australian Independent schools were regularly advised of the presence of this fund and the eligibility criteria for accessing the fund. Nil schools sought support.

Contingency has been provisioned for use in response to priority areas or natural disaster, including drought and bushfire, through establishing specific grant programs as required. Nil support was required to be provided outside of the COVID-19 Direct Grant Program.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Schools requiring short term emergency assistance will be supported. Schools requiring support in response to priority areas or natural disaster, including drought and bushfire, through establishing specific grant programs as required have been supported.	An application and assessment process is in place for schools which meet the Special Circumstances funding criteria for short term emergency assistance as outlined in the Choice and Affordability Guidelines as follows. The AISSA continued to monitor for the need to implement specific grant programs to address priority areas or natural disaster. Schools were advised of the availability of this funding through regular communications.

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Activity/Initiative	Deep Learning and Teaching: Generating Energy and Pathways for Sustained Improvement
Priority	D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students

Activity Description

This two-year action inquiry project formally commenced in 2021. Professor Michael Anderson, Academic Leader and Dr Miranda Jefferson, Practice Leader; co-founders of 4C Transformative Learning worked with participating schools to examine and assess individual school contexts, to plan and then implement holistic change initiatives using the 4C school transformation framework of collaboration, critical reflection, communication and creativity.

Schools were supported by face to face and online professional learning, school visits, communities of practice engagements and virtual coaching sessions. School leaders from a diverse range of educational contexts engaged deeply in the Learning Disposition Wheel and its three interrelated domains: cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal. This provided a common language for professional dialogue and acted as a 'lever' for trialling and implementing strategies for transformational change. One school indicated that "Each of the activities that we have been involved in during our workshops with the 4C Team have really made me think about ways to keep developing critical and creative thinking and encourage a culture of learning in the classroom". "I have felt very motivated by the sessions in terms of being challenged to 'break, bend and blend' ideas to try to incorporate them into learning across different curriculum areas and notice the impact changes have made or not made."

Coaching sessions with individual school leadership teams enabled reflection on current contexts, open discussion and explored how new learning might be implemented within individual school contexts. One participant indicated that involvement in this program has provided staff with "A common language and vision that I know is also being used in all of the other sub-schools. It has given me confidence and clarity as I communicate with my colleagues and staff". This project will continue in 2022.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
The use of the 4C transformation framework has underpinned successful improvement initiatives in each school and has supported school leadership teams to have a clear theory of action to lead, embed and sustain change in their communities.	All participants have indicated clarity about their role in this work. 83% indicated this program has enabled them to reflect on the current ways of working in their school.
Identified change initiatives have been contextually scaled through teacher practice in schools. Each participating school established a drive team who engaged with colleagues to discuss and reflect on new learning and possibilities related to the project within their school.	91% indicated that this program has built their capacity to design contextual professional learning for their colleagues. 75% have trialled and implemented project strategies with colleagues.

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Activity/Initiative	Virtual World Builders Project
Priority	D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students

Activity Description

The *Virtual World Builders Project* aims to engage and empower South Australian junior high school girls and students from disadvantaged backgrounds in STEM learning and careers. In 2020 the project required significant re-scoping and rescheduling of activities and saw COVID-19 Virtual Reality (VR) hygiene protocols developed to ensure students could safely use project hardware without the danger of cross contamination. This required a hardware/student ratio of 1:1 for the duration of the project and necessitated a reduction in the overall number of schools and classes involved.

A pilot study was undertaken during Terms 2 and 3, connecting pilot schools with VR technology and the educative support of internationally recognised academic Dr. Erica Southgate, Associate Professor of Emerging Technologies for Education at the University of Newcastle (Australia). The study used a mixed methodology, participatory research approach to explore learning outcomes for students and investigated the efficacy of 360° VR technology for deeper learning in schools, as well as the opportunity for the building of student agency in their learning. Year 8 Science students used VR technology to create a scene that demonstrated content knowledge related to a unit of work on Energy from the Australian Science Curriculum, with the secondary purpose of designing a learning resource for Year 6 students.

A [peer reviewed conference paper](#) was accepted for publication at [2022 IEEE](#) international conference. The VR pilot was also shared at the 2021 AISSA STEM Conference and an additional school requested to join the project as a result of this conference presentation. This project will continue in 2022.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
This activity has increased STEM participation by students from underrepresented groups. Both students and teachers indicated increased practical knowledge, skills and confidence in using immersive technologies.	The pilot study used a mixed methodology, participatory research approach to explore learning outcomes for students. The pilot study suggested that providing opportunities for secondary students to use a type of accessible 'no code create' VR platform can create positive learning experiences, especially for girls who are under-represented in STEM subjects. Further investigations on gender and learning with different types of VR is required as using new technologies creatively may be part of the solution to attracting girls to school technology subjects which show male gender bias, nationally and internationally. In the next stage of the research, the team will work to integrate criteria for creativity when developing STEM rubrics to complement the assessment of content mastery. This work may progress thinking about what underpins such gender dynamics.

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Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA)

Activity/Initiative	AISSA Educational Leaders STEM Conference 2021
Priority	D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students

Activity Description

In August the AISSA Educational Leaders STEM Conference brought together educators from the three education sectors - Early Years to Year 12, researchers and industry. The theme for the conference was New Thinking: New Possibilities.

Emeritus Professor Louise McWhinnie, Associate Professor Jane Hunter, Associate Professor Erica Southgate and Professor David Cropley motivated delegates to explore and develop new ideas and thinking about the future of STEM Education. Key note presentations explored: Educating Beyond our Present; High Possibility STEM Classrooms; Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies in Schools; and Creativity and the Future of Work: Developing the Next Generation of STEM Women. Participants were also able to attend breakout sessions, with the day concluding with a panel of experts and a closing plenary from Professor Caroline McMillen, Chief Scientist for South Australia.

The AISSA Educational Leaders STEM Conference had originally been planned for 2020. Due to constraints arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020 this conference was replaced by a series of webinars. These were well attended and the AISSA continued to offer STEM related webinars in the lead up to the 2021 conference.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
This opportunity provided school leaders and practitioners with clear directions and provocations to strengthen knowledge and understanding of best practice STEM approaches.	A post conference survey was sent to all participants. 87% of survey respondents reported that the conference improved their understanding of current and emerging issues in STEM.
Conference learning was complemented by a 2021 webinar series that addressed both contemporary research and practical classroom implementation.	"The conference raised some important questions and encouraged me to reflect on my practice, as well as look towards some new innovations or things to consider in my planning and teaching."
Regular newsletters to schools provided information and advice relating to current events, recommended reading and complementary resources.	"The first keynote speaker made clear the concepts that need to drive STEM: connectivity, ethics, hybrid thinking and agility."
The AISSA website was a key repository for all STEM resources.	

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Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA)

Activity/Initiative	Learning and Accreditation through a Learner Profile
Priority	D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students

Activity Description

The Learning and Accreditation through a Learner Profile project sought to evaluate ways to recognise a broader range of student knowledge, skills and capacities in support of students from a range of backgrounds. This work was a cross-sector collaboration between the AISSA, Catholic Education South Australia, the South Australian Secondary Principals Association and the University of Melbourne's Assessment Research Centre.

Schools participated in a series of face to face and online learning events. Cross-school networking facilitated deepened knowledge and insight, with participants developing prototypes of a Learner Profile unique to each school context. The professional learning workshops provided time and expertise for schools to explore their prototypes, develop their progression statements and consider their use as part of the school's assessment and reporting functions.

Each participating school developed a contextual learner profile, which included the validation of an assessment framework suite. A strength of this work was the sharing of frameworks across schools, so that, while remaining contextually bespoke for each school, these could be refined and strengthened.

School prototypes and completed profiles were shared and subsequently presented at a Showcase Symposium event in December 2020, in partnership with Catholic and government schools. The symposium concluded with a panel featuring the three education sector heads and the Chief Executive of the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) Board. The panel reflected on the impact of these models for schools and the broader educational community.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
This activity explored the development of Learner Profiles and validated assessment frameworks to recognise broader strengths of students such as critical thinking, self-regulation. To do this, individual schools developed expertise and understanding in the key elements required for the credentialling process. Whilst the success of this work at the school level was recognised, the validity of scaling such profiles beyond individual schools requires further interrogation and caution, as challenges for unintended consequences around student equity and teacher workload have begun to emerge.	100% of participating schools developed a contextualised learning progression for capabilities that recognised broader strengths of their students, such as critical thinking, self-regulation. Schools grew in their knowledge and application of the complexities of learning continuums and progressions to cater for student needs from a range of backgrounds. Participants indicated that their creation of a prototype broadened thinking about their school's assessment processes, as well as communication of success for students.

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Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA)

Activity/Initiative	Science: New Australian Curriculum Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early/ Primary/ Secondary Elaborations Workshop Series 2021
Priority	D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students

Activity Description

This three-workshop series provided teachers with an overview of the Australian Curriculum Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Elaborations.

Staff from the AISSA, together with Kurna Elder, Uncle Tamaru, supported teachers to use an action research model to plan and implement a unit of work that embedded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into the learning of Science.

All participating teachers were invited to share their learning at a South Australian Science conference, with a number accepting this invitation and sharing their action research. One teacher indicated that “It highlighted the rich source of learning that is available to everyone in respect to Aboriginal People’s scientific knowledge, both from the teaching presentations and from Uncle Tamaru’s teaching of science in terms of firestick, farming and kinship.”

The AISSA was invited by the South Australian Science Teachers Association (SASTA) to co-author an article for their journal with the teacher presenters. Teacher presenters from the three schools, supported by the AISSA, contributed to the article which was published by SASTA in December 2021.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Teachers have grown in knowledge about and the application of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives to design quality learning experiences in Science for students.	100% of teacher participants indicated increased knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and how these concepts can be broadened and deepened for students by incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scientific knowledge.
In partnership with an Aboriginal Elder, participants have deepened understandings of how to embed perspectives from our First Australians with scientific concepts.	A sub group of teachers developed learning design artefacts and have shared their plans and student work artefacts with both a broader audience, through participation in a conference and the publication of an article for the South Australian Science Teachers Association journal.
Teachers have gained a deeper understanding of the Australian Curriculum Science elaborations, as well as connections between the core science concepts and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, to better design rich, scientific learning experiences.	Teachers provided evidence of student engagement and learning in science through images, student comments, videos and student artefacts. Evidence was shared that demonstrated students significantly improved in their ability to connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives with scientific concepts.

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Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA)

Activity/Initiative	Science of Understanding How We Learn
Priority	D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students

Activity Description

The Science of Understanding How We Learn (SOUL) program has supported teachers to improve their knowledge about the use of educational, psychological and neuroscientific principles to improve the impact of teaching practices. This two-year project commenced in 2021 and was open to all schools across the sector.

Throughout the year, leading educational neuroscientist and research partner Dr Jared Cooney Horvath presented teachers with the latest research and key insights into the science that underpins understanding how students best learn. Learning was presented both as face-to-face learning and via online modes. It addressed key evidence-based principles of learning, drawing on research from psychology, education and neuroscience and included the PEN principles, foundations of thinking and the learning trajectory.

To support successful translation of learning into classroom practice, teachers used the vehicle of a micro-project - explicit and specific learning projects that supported them to identify techniques and skills that impacted student learning. One participant indicated “We have loved the use of the micro projects and the immediate feedback we can see from our classrooms”. AISSA Educational Consultants supported teachers with micro-project plans and the analysis of results with broader school teams. This project will continue in 2022.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Schools have improved their knowledge about how educational, psychological and neuroscientific principles can be used to improve the impact of teaching practices.	100% of participants reported significant improvement of their knowledge about how educational, psychological and neuroscientific principles can be used to improve the impact of teaching practices.
Teachers and school teams have used this learning to consider and refine approaches to teaching. They have been supported to gain clarity around their identified learning goal, develop and plan for implementation and to consider evidence of the impact of their teaching strategies.	Over 90% of teachers undertook micro projects in their classrooms and considered their impact as school teams.

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Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA)

Activity/Initiative	Certificate IV in Education Support
Priority	D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students

Activity Description

School Support Officers (SSOs) play an important role in supporting students by applying a range of teaching and learning strategies under the direction of the classroom teacher. In 2021 SSOs have been supported to undertake further education by completing the Certificate IV in Education Support qualification.

The Certificate IV in Education Support qualification training course successfully commenced in July 2021 and afforded 24 School Support Officers the opportunity to grow in understanding about the foundational research, techniques and skills required to effectively contribute to students' learning and development. Participants have worked on course material and assessments relating to working with children and young people with diverse needs, and have been equipped with knowledge, understanding and skills to better support these students within their own school setting. A particular focus has been on developing inclusive practices and how this can best occur whilst adhering to school policies and procedures.

As a result of this training opportunity, participants are now better equipped to understand evidenced based research and how to successfully apply this to enhance the outcomes of children and young people with diverse needs. This project will continue in 2022.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
The provision of the Certificate IV in Education Support qualification training has enabled School Support Officers to provide improved learning opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds and a range of classroom settings, under the guidance of a teacher.	24 students initially enrolled in the training commencing in July 2021. At the end of the year, 23 participants remained active. Course lecturers have reported that the quality of this cohort of students, their level of commitment to learning and reflection to ensure best practice for themselves and their students, was high. Feedback from the students regarding the course material and delivery has also been very positive.

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Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA)

Activity/Initiative	School Industry Partnership Program
Priority	D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students

Activity Description

Recognising that Vocational Education and Training (VET) provides an essential pathway for a significant number of South Australian students, the AISSA employed a part-time School Industry Partnership and VET Consultant. This consultant has supported schools with the establishment of new programs and the enhancement of current programs, to best engage students from diverse backgrounds into a range of industry opportunities.

Schools have been connected with industry partners, including through training programs for students such as school-based apprenticeships and traineeships. Opportunities were also provided for VET staff in schools to explore further partnership opportunities with registered training organisations that provided skills training and employment opportunities for non-government funded and government funded courses. Schools were provided with direct support and advice about new programs in addition to exploring existing opportunities, to best enable schools to provide vocational education responses tailored to address a range of student need.

To complement this strategic approach, a range of workshop and networking opportunities were facilitated for school VET coordinators, both within and across the non-government sectors. One school-based VET coordinator indicated “Networking in the small groups created by geographical location was really good. Being new to my role this year, it was particularly helpful to network with schools in my area. We sometimes are accessing the same VET programs and can advise who might be running other courses. This was particularly helpful”.

This multi-dimensional approach has facilitated the further consolidation of offerings for students across the range of school contexts across the Independent sector. This project will continue in 2022.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
A range of support, undertaken through tailored school advice and whole of sector professional learning and networking opportunities, has enabled schools to both strengthen industry partnership opportunities for students and be assisted in meeting their regulatory requirements.	Survey data and ongoing qualitative data has shown that schools have been successful in connecting students with industry partnerships and VET offerings. 78% of VET staff have indicated strong engagement and satisfaction. The networking opportunities and information provided through the VET consultant has led to increased access for students to key industries.

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Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA)

Activity/Initiative	Effective Whole School Approaches to Student Wellbeing
Priority	E – Student wellbeing and support

Activity Description

In 2021, a strategic approach was designed to support schools implement evidence-based wellbeing strategies and develop whole school bullying prevention approaches. Consultation with schools in 2020 indicated that school leaders were seeking support and advice for professional learning about whole-school wellbeing and mental health approaches through both preventative and intervention lenses; student and staff wellbeing, resilience, and mental health; strategies, tools and evidence-based programs. In response, AISSA Educational Consultants implemented a range of initiatives that promoted proactive and responsive student and staff wellbeing approaches.

This included the successful establishment of a wellbeing coordinator network, in addition to a regular newsletter that kept schools informed of relevant research, tools, resources, and professional learning opportunities. To further the implementation of evidence-based wellbeing strategies, Youth Mental Health First Aid training opportunities were held.

Professor Donna Cross presented to school leaders and teachers, addressing key research findings about the impacts of COVID -19 on young people, educators and families. Her research focussed on the impacts on mental health and wellbeing and provided schools with practical, evidenced based strategies to best support student and staff wellbeing.

The AISSA continued to collaborate with cross sector Department for Education and Catholic Education colleagues to both provide feedback about and disseminate key bullying prevention resources as part of a state-wide bullying prevention strategy. This project will continue in 2022.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
In 2020, School Boards were supported to better understand student wellbeing and whole school strategies that minimise bullying.	70% of participating Board members report a deeper understanding about the importance of student wellbeing and the impact of bullying.
In response to sector consultation in 2020, a strategic approach was undertaken to support schools to implement evidence-based wellbeing strategies and to develop whole school bullying prevention approaches.	A wellbeing coordinator network has been established for schools across the sector.
The AISSA website was a key repository for essential resources, holding information about whole school approaches to wellbeing; student wellbeing; bullying prevention; suicide prevention and response; staff wellbeing; and AISSA Wellbeing newsletters.	25 schools have been supported with Youth Mental Health First Aid Training.
	83% of participants indicated that Donna Cross' workshop deepened understandings about the prevalence and importance of wellbeing in schools during COVID.
	100% of member schools received the newsletters. Staff responded positively to this initiative with comments including "This is a great initiative."; "Thank you so much for this wonderful information, it is greatly appreciated." "Thanks Wellbeing Team, a great newsletter with some excellent resources."

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Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA)

NGRB Annual Report Sign Off

This annual report is submitted in fulfillment of the annual report requirements in sections 50, 51 and 52 of the CAF Guidelines.



Name and Position of the person signing Carolyn Grantskalns
off on behalf of the NGRB¹: Chief Executive Office

Date: 30 June 2022

¹ Name and position of the person within the NGRB with authority to sign off.