

Choice and Affordability Fund

2023 Annual Report – Association of Independent
Schools of South Australia



NGRB Ongoing Compliance Declaration

Section 92 of the *Australian Education Act 2013* (the Act) outlines the basic requirements for approval of a non-government representative body for a non-government school.

As such, the Department of Education is seeking confirmation that the Association of Independent Schools of Australia (AISSA) complies with the legislative requirements in relation to monitoring the body's compliance with the Act.

Confirmation you continue to meet basic requirements for approval

Body corporate

The AISSA (ABN: 37 819 228 078) is a registered organisation under the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009* (Cth) and a registered charity under the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* (Cth).

Not-for-profit (NFP)

The AISSA is a registered charity under the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* (Cth) and has a suite of overarching governance and financial policies to ensure its not-for-profit status is maintained. The AISSA Constitution requires all schools which seek membership of the AISSA to not be conducted for profit.

Financial viability

The AISSA has a comprehensive suite of financial and governance policies, including Business Continuity and Risk Management Plans, which ensure the prudent use of government and membership funding and ongoing financial viability. Audited AISSA accounts are provided annually to the AISSA membership along with Fair Work Australia, the Australian Charities and Not-for profits Commission (ACNC) and the State Government as part of financial acquittal processes for management of government funds.

Fit and proper person

The AISSA has in place a range of organisational mechanisms to ensure fitness and propriety of staff, in addition to proven stability and expertise of AISSA staff in project management and management of Australian Government funds. A range of organisational structures, including screening processes and working with children checks, are in place. The AISSA Board provides governance oversight of the AISSA's operations to ensure staffing arrangements remain fit of purpose.

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 off on behalf of the NGRB:**

Bronwyn Donaghey
Acting Chief Executive

Date: 28/06/24

Summary of 2023

The 2023 Choice and Affordability Fund (CAF) Annual Report details initiatives and priorities completed by the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) to progress the national objectives established to support the accessibility of non-government schools for parents, the strengthening of outcomes for schools, provide transition assistance and the building of safe and supportive environments for all. The AISSA represented the interests of 103 schools, being the full cohort of Independent schools across the state.

The activities outlined in this report extend beyond the regular services provided by the AISSA and have only been made possible through this funding. Whilst building on successful activity previously funded through CAF, this report describes a comprehensive approach in support of progressing identified national priority areas. Implementation has been characterised by responsiveness to individual school circumstances and all South Australian Independent schools have been provided with the opportunity to apply for, or be supported through, CAF resourcing. As in previous years, mechanisms for funding distribution have varied across priorities and have included both centralised and distributed expenditure. A specific systemic governance arrangement has continued for Lutheran schools and once again saw the provision of funds to the Approved Authority, Lutheran Education SA, NT and WA (LESNW), across some priorities.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data showed that in 2023, South Australians continued to battle the highest inflation rate in the country, with South Australian families experiencing the biggest increase in the cost of everyday items when compared to the rest of the country. (*South Australian Council of Social Service*). Therefore, the Business Development Planning Program's objective to assist schools to progress business plans to streamline business practices and maintain financial accessibility for families has continued to be of utmost relevance and importance. As in 2022, this activity was separated into separate streams for non-Lutheran and Lutheran schools with five schools supported in the non-Lutheran strand of the program. Two Lutheran schools in outer regional and remote areas received bespoke consultancy support through a grant paid to LESNW. Funded initiatives included long range financial master-planning, structural reviews, financial and administrative reviews, in addition to onsite visits.

The introduction Direct Measure of Income (DMI) has had a significant negative funding impact on a number of South Australian Independent schools which are required to transition down to the Commonwealth 80% share. Similar to families and households, in 2023 schools also faced significantly increased costs for education service delivery compounding the impact of reduced funding. The Transition Assistance activity, which incorporated three priority groups – NAFF Schools, Other and Regional Assistance Schools provided grant funding to enable schools to examine how costs could be objectively assessed to identify areas for long-term cost reduction. Implementing concurrent application processes resulted in the sharing of centralised costs across these programs so that direct funding to schools was maximised. The Transition Assistance priority also included support of four regional schools, as identified by the Australian Government.

Over the lifetime of the CAF program, funding has been provisioned for financial support to schools which meet the Special Circumstances funding criteria for short term emergency assistance. Throughout 2023, AISSA closely monitored the potential for funding utilisation, particularly in response to the River Murray flooding and anticipated extreme bushfire conditions. While internal processes were established to maintain school connectivity and ensure grant funding availability during AISSA Office closures, no special circumstances funding was ultimately necessary for priority areas or natural disasters. One application was received, reviewed and approved as a one-off grant

to assist a school to address its need for short term emergency assistance, and was subsequently supported by an acquittal process to ensure that government funding was used in line with the program requirements.

In implementing the 'Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students' priority, the AISSA workplan has prioritised two pivotal change levers, *Strengthening School Leadership, Excellence and Innovation* to empower leaders to advance strategies that will contribute to whole-of-school priorities to strengthen outcomes, and *Building Teacher Efficacy*, centred on a continued focus to build teacher effectiveness linked to student success and overall educational quality. In 2023 both strands have been open to staff across all South Australian Independent schools. The leadership strand has encompassed excellence and innovation in instructional leadership that centred on the latest research from the field of learning sciences, leading and scaling coaching teams and supporting contextual responsiveness and adaptability to lead curriculum implementation. Throughout 2023, activities that deepened teachers' understandings and applications of effective pedagogical practices included focuses on Australian Curriculum capabilities and cross-curricular priorities, integrating assessment tools to enhance literacy and numeracy skills, equipping teachers with strategies for identifying and supporting gifted students and the building of Cultural capacity. Vocational Education and Training (VET) pathways remained critical for equipping young people with essential skills and career opportunities. Support provided to schools not only bolstered confidence among VET leaders, including those new to the role, but also cultivated a supportive network across different schools, aiming to mitigate the isolation often experienced by leaders from remote or regional areas. Complementing the aims of this priority area was the availability of in-school implementation advice, coaching and support provided by AISSA Senior Educational Consultants, so that new learning could become embedded within the system and structures of the school.

In 2023, a significant milestone achieved saw the June release of the AISSA Wellbeing Toolkit. The purpose of the Toolkit is to assist schools to strengthen practice and pedagogy for whole school wellbeing and practice within their own context and utilise evidence-based resources to best support student and staff wellbeing through a whole school lens. Professor Donna Cross, a key wellbeing specialist, worked alongside schools so they could better understand how to implement the Toolkit processes. This work will continue in 2024 and the AISSA looks forward to sharing case studies of practice. The wellbeing coordinator network remained an important support mechanism for schools and the AISSA website served as a central hub for comprehensive wellbeing resources. Significant efforts resulted in the development of resources for bullying prevention, including policy guidelines and templates. Collaboration with the South Australian Department for Education continued to promote statewide bullying prevention initiatives, and partnerships with external organisations focused on supporting schools in responding to student self-harm, including sessions on mental health strategies, educator wellbeing and access to Youth Mental Health First Aid training.

The comprehensive and intentional support for school education, as outlined in the full report to follow, has facilitated parental choice and the affordability of Independent schools and supported the addressing of educational disadvantage and student success. This activity would not have been possible without the financial assistance of the Australian Government.

Schools' Use of Distributed CAF Funding

The AISSA has met its obligation under section 49 of the CAF Guidelines. All Independent school authorities that received distributed funds have certified that distributed funding has been used for the purposes for which it was provided.

Risk Management

Risk category	Identified risks	Management
Stakeholders	Program design fails to meet stakeholder need. Lack of stakeholder engagement. Lack of access to program information.	The CAF workplan Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been a key point of reference. A range of organisational communication structures and approaches to service delivery have been in place, including formal agenda briefings, electronic newsletters, website updates and stakeholder meeting opportunities in various modes.
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 were in place. Remote and in-situ processes and procedures were implemented that enable continuation of: - the provision of timely advice responsive to schools' needs during complex times - ability to work with schools using online and remote modes. A range of feedback mechanisms 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 were 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 have been in place. 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. Shared knowledge across staff, so that key information is held by more than one person.

Activity Report

Activity/Initiative

Business Development Planning Program

Priority

A – Choice and Affordability

Activity Description

The Business Development Planning Program recognises the longer-term impact on schools of the local, and increasingly global, economic challenges faced by South Australia which have consequent implications on choice and affordability for school families. These challenges include, locally, the closure of large manufacturing industries, with a subsequent impact on employment, ongoing implications from unpredictable weather patterns, including drought, bushfires and flooding and the continuing impacts related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the local challenges, global developments have resulted in unavoidable rising costs for schools and significant pressures placed on families due to increases in the cost of living. There are two strands to the program, with one strand providing support to non-Lutheran schools and a second strand funded for the Lutheran school system through a grant paid to Lutheran Education South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia (LESNW) in recognition of the specific governance arrangements as these apply to systemic schools.

The Business Development Planning Program's primary aim is to enhance choice and affordability for families by assisting schools to progress business development plans to enable them to streamline business practices. The program design for the non-Lutheran strand of the program enables schools to request, as part of the application process, projects within a discreet range of offerings with the choice intended to ensure that funded projects best meet the needs of individual schools. The offerings include long range financial master-planning, structural review, cost review, financial health check and finance and administrative review. A consultant firm, with the requisite skills, knowledge and professional expertise in financial planning and, importantly, the school sector, is directly engaged by the AISSA to undertake the work, with the work including onsite visits to participating schools. Direct engagement by the AISSA has allowed considerable economies of scale in program delivery.

In 2023, centralised expenditure was used to undertake the application and assessment process and to determine eligibility to receive services. In providing evidence of meeting the eligibility criteria, applicants were required to provide a written submission outlining the challenges faced by the school, including external contributing factors, and include a range of supporting demographic and financial data to assist the AISSA in its determination.

Five non-systemic Independent schools were supported under the 2023 program including one school which had received support in the 2021 program. The program design enables schools to receive a second year of funded services where an assessment indicates that this is warranted. The additional year of funded services is not required to be concurrent. Five schools applied in the initial application process. All applicant schools were deemed eligible for service provision. Requested services exceeded the funding quantum, and the AISSA made an assessment, in consultation with consultant firm, as to which funded projects would provide the most value having regard to the information provided. One school withdrew its application after the program had commenced but prior to funded activity formally commencing at the school. The resultant surplus of funds was applied to fund additional projects for one school and to fund a further project in one school which made a late application.

Of the supported schools one was located in an inner regional area, two were located in regional areas and two were located in metropolitan Adelaide. All funded schools were R-12.

Centralised expenditure was used to manage the program including the development of a contract with the consultancy firm, ensuring that consultants met child safety requirements, processing of payments, ongoing monitoring and the assessment of reports.

Feedback was sought from participating schools on their satisfaction with the program with all schools indicating satisfaction with the services provided. An analysis of the program was conducted at the end of 2023, which incorporated the feedback from participating schools and analysis of the reports, the outcomes of which will further focus the strategic directions of the program in 2024.

A separate program was implemented in the Lutheran school system and overseen by the Approved Authority, LESNW. Two Lutheran schools, located in outer regional and remote areas, were supported by external consultants under this part of the program through a grant paid to LESNW to facilitate the work. An agreement signed between the AISSA and LESNW was developed using centralised expenditure and an acquittal process was undertaken to ensure that the funds were used for the stated purpose and which included receipt of relevant reports.

Centralised funding was used to provide a range of professional support to schools to assist all schools in meeting the Choice and Affordability priority. This includes, but is not limited to data analysis, policy support and strategic advice. Professional expertise was provided in the form of specific professional learning focussed on enhancing financial knowledge to support school leaders and school Boards to strategically navigate what are increasingly challenging times. This professional learning is particularly important given the turnover that can occur at the school board level and the different skillsets brought by individual board members.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
- Schools were supported to implement business development plans to enhance long-term financial stability and maintain choice and affordability for South Australian families. - School Boards and leaders were supported to identify key strategic directions to enhance strategic planning.	- Five non-systemic schools were supported in 2023. - Two systemic schools were supported in 2023. - Project was undertaken by the consultant in a timely manner. 100% of schools which provided feedback reported satisfaction with the work undertaken and success in developing business plans. 30 schools were supported to increase their financial knowledge through professional learning.

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	\$98,556	\$20,000

Activity/Initiative**Transition Assistance - NAAF**

Priority

B – Transition Assistance

Activity Description

The Transition Assistance program design is focussed on supporting eligible schools to undertake a systematic analysis of school business operations to assist them to streamline business practices in response to the impact of the introduction of the DMI methodology and the requirement to transition down to an 80% Commonwealth share over the period 2022-2029. A key element of the program is the use of transition assistance grant funding in the engagement of external expertise to enable an objective assessment of school operations to identify the range of areas where costs can be reduced over the long term. An added complexity facing all schools is the increasing cost of delivering education due to factors such as ongoing increases in wages, utility and other costs. Recognising the levels of reduction in funding, for NAAF schools, over the period to 2029, the program design is focussed on supporting schools to make changes to business operations in a cohesive, manageable and sustainable manner.

As in the first year of the quadrennium, analysis of data from the 2021 Q4 Funding Estimation Tool (FET) underpinned the program operation and provided the starting point for activity. The use of this tool as a starting point is designed to ensure consistency and certainty for schools eligible for program support. Along with analysis of the FET to support program delivery, centralised expenditure was used to assess the continued appropriateness of the criteria for eligibility, along with the formula for distributing the direct grants to NAAF schools to ensure it remained fair and equitable. Three primary base criteria continue to determine initial eligibility, these being an increase in DMI, Commonwealth share over 80% and a loss in Australian Government recurrent funding in real terms over the 2022-2025 quadrennium. In addition to the base criteria, NAAF schools were required to demonstrate a need for support, provide underpinning supporting financial and other data and identify how the funding would be used to support the program intent.

All NAAF schools were eligible to apply, subject to meeting the application criteria and provision of the abovementioned supporting documentation. Applications were forwarded to eligible schools in early Term 1. Indicative funding allocations were provided to enable schools to tailor the program of support applied for, with final allocations determined on the completion of the assessment process. The formula for distribution incorporated changes in funding levels over the quadrennium due to the DMI impact, along with a small indexation application. One school was deemed eligible for additional assistance due to the quantum of reduction in funding due to an increase in the school's DMI.

The application process was run concurrently with the Transition Assistance – Other Schools program, with centralised costs shared across the two programs. On completion of the application and assessment process, grants were paid within three weeks of the date of the receipt of the final application. Centralised expenditure was used to develop an application form, assess applications for eligibility, process and pay grants and undertake the acquittal process.

Higher than anticipated indexation in 2023 resulted in an underspend in distributed funding. In 2023, the AISSA submitted an amended workplan to the Australian Government to transfer funding from the Transition Assistance – NAAF program to the Transition Assistance – Other program which enabled additional support to be provided to “Other” schools without negatively impacting NAAF schools.

Centralised expenditure was also used to undertake detailed modelling for individual schools on request through the use of updated Funding Estimation Tools. While primarily focussed on the impacts of potential shifts in DMI, scenario modelling included impacts of projected enrolment changes and other parameter elements. Regular written briefings were provided through meetings

of school principals and reference groups advising any updates on Australian Government recurrent funding parameters. Professional support further assisted schools to plan for the impact of any potential shifts in DMI values and to provide funding and other professional advice.

An acquittal process was undertaken requiring schools to certify that the grant had been used for the funded purpose and identifying how that grant was used to support effective transition to the DMI by 2029. An analysis, utilising centralised expenditure, was undertaken of the acquittal reports to identify key learnings and areas for future professional support outside the Transition Assistance Program. An assessment of the criteria was also undertaken to inform the 2024 Transition Assistance – NAAF program.

This activity is anticipated to be required over the life of the CAF Agreement.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Eligible schools will be supported to adapt current business models to enable them to transition to the DMI funding arrangements by 2029.	- An equitable and fair formula was used to distribute direct grants to eligible schools in 2023. - Grant funding was distributed within three weeks of the return of all application forms. - An acquittal process was undertaken at the end of 2023 requiring schools to certify that they had used the funds for the specified grant purpose and identifying how the grant was used. - Schools reported success in identifying measures that will enable them to transition to the Direct Measure of Income funding arrangements by 2029.

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	\$32,258	\$800,347

Activity/Initiative**Transition Assistance - Other**

Priority

B – Transition Assistance

Activity Description

In addition to the Australian Government identified NAAF schools, the transition to the DMI will have a significant negative long term funding impact on a number of other South Australian Independent schools. In the case of these “other” schools, transition to the 80% share over the 2022-2029 period will be achieved through low growth or no growth in funding leading to a loss of funding in real terms given the significant rise in the cost of delivering education. The rise in delivery costs is compounded by the implications of rising cost of living pressures on school families with consequent impacts on the ability of families to absorb fee increases.

Analysis of data from the 2021 Q4 Funding Estimation Tool (FET) again underpinned the program operation and provided the starting point for program delivery. Centralised expenditure was used to assess the currency of the criteria established in 2022 for eligibility, along with ensuring that a fair and equitable formula continued to underpin the distribution of the direct grants to eligible schools. As in the 2022 program year, eligibility criteria incorporated both an increase in DMI, transition pathway starting point above the 80% share and a loss in funding in real terms due to no growth or low growth in Australian Government recurrent funding over the 2022-2025 quadrennium. The criteria were further reflective of the aforementioned impacts of rising educational costs, in particular as these relate to increases in wages, utility and other costs. Analysis of the FET, in conjunction with national economic data, identified an additional school which would potentially meet eligibility criteria and was invited to apply for funding support.

In addition to meeting the base criteria, schools were required to demonstrate a need for support, provide underpinning financial and other data and identify how the funding would be used. In alignment with the work undertaken as part of the NAAF Transition Assistance activity, centralised expenditure was used to develop an application form, assess applications for eligibility, process and pay grants and undertake the acquittal process.

The Transition Assistance - Other program broadly follows the program design of the Transition Assistance NAAF program with schools eligible for funding supported to undertake a systematic analysis of school business operations to assist in streamlining business practices and supporting the schools to counter cost pressures which may result in higher fees. The focus placed on engaging external expertise is, as in the above Activity, designed to enable an objective assessment of school operations to identify a range of areas where long term cost savings could be made. An indicative funding grant was provided at the time of application to provide clarity to participating schools about initiatives which could be funded in 2023 in support of their transition to the DMI by 2029. Final allocations were determined on the completion of the application assessment process. The small transfer of funds from Transition Assistance – NAAF, as outlined in the amended workplan enabled a small increase in grant amounts and an additional school to receive grant funding.

All schools which met the identified criteria were eligible to apply subject to meeting the application criteria and provision of the abovementioned supporting documentation. Undertaking the application process concurrently with the Transition Assistance – NAAF Schools program resulted in economies of scale with centralised expenditure shared across the two activities. Four non-systemic schools were supported under this part of the program.

On completion of the application and assessment process grants were paid within three weeks of the final application date.

Five schools which sit under one Approved Authority, LESNW, were identified as eligible to receive support having regard to eligibility criteria which further incorporated negative and low funding

growth and the specific impact of transition share on schools which are part of a system authority. Centralised expenditure was used to develop an agreement to govern the use of funding and process the grant payment, which was paid within one week of receipt of the signed agreement.

Centralised expenditure was also used to undertake the acquittal process which required LESNW, as the Approved Authority, to certify that the grant had been used by each funded school, for the intended purpose and to outline how the grant was used by the individual schools to support their effective transition to the DMI by 2029. Centralised expenditure further supported analysis of the acquittal reports to identify key learnings and areas of future professional support outside the Transition Assistance Program. An assessment of the criteria was also undertaken to inform the 2024 Transition Assistance – Other program.

This activity is anticipated to be required over the life of the CAF Agreement.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Eligible schools will be supported to adapt current business models to enable them to transition to the DMI funding arrangements by 2029.	- An equitable and fair formula was used to distribute direct grants to eligible schools in 2023. - Grant funding was distributed within three weeks of the return of all application forms. - An Agreement was developed between the AISSA and an Approved Authority for more than one school and the funding paid within one week of the receipt of this agreement. - An acquittal process was undertaken at the end of 2023 requiring individual non-systemic schools and the Approved Authority to certify that the funding had been used for the specified grant purpose and identifying how the grant was used. - Schools reported success in identifying measures that will enable them to transition to the Direct Measure of Income funding arrangements by 2029.

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	\$20,659	\$168,104

Activity/Initiative	Transition Assistance – Regional Transition Assistance
Priority	B – Transition Assistance

Activity Description

The Australian Government has identified four regional schools as eligible for regional transition assistance. The four schools sit under one Approved Authority, LESNW. Funding was paid directly to LESNW for on-payment to the individual schools.

Centralised expenditure was used to develop the Agreement between LESNW and the AISSA, process the grant and undertake the acquittal process. The acquittal process required confirmation from LESNW that the funding was used by the funded regional schools to assist in transitioning down to the DMI methodology by 2029.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Eligible regional schools will receive direct transition assistance grants to support their transition to the DMI.	- A formal agreement was signed between the AISSA and the Approved Authority for each participating school in 2023. - Funding was processed and paid by the AISSA within one week upon the return of the signed agreement. - An acquittal for the use of funds was provided by the Approved Authority certifying that the funding was used for the specified grant funded purpose.

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	\$3,773	\$154,137

Activity/Initiative

Priority

Special Circumstances Funding

C – Special Circumstances Funding

Activity Description

The 2022-2025 Workplan provisioned \$2,000,000 over the 2022-2025 quadrennium (notionally \$500,000 for each of the years 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025) for the purposes of providing funding for schools which meet the Special Circumstances funding criteria as for short term emergency assistance, as outlined in the CAF Guidelines, and to meet the requirement to provide Special Circumstances funding to schools in response to priority areas or natural disaster, including drought and bushfire, through establishing specific grant programs as required. The Workplan specified that Special Circumstances funding would only be provided on the basis of need and therefore may not be expended in every year.

Throughout 2023, the AISSA closely monitored the need for special circumstances funding with close attention paid in the early part of the year to the ongoing impact of the River Murray flooding event which began in 2022 and had significant potential to severely affect a small number of South Australian Independent schools. Close contact was maintained with affected schools with monitoring also focussed on identifying any funding gaps in the government support which was provided by the South Australian State Government as part of its emergency management response.

Preliminary planning also occurred for the potential need for special circumstances support as a result of the (then) expected extreme bushfire and heatwave conditions for the 2023 bushfire season. Activity included processes being put in place to maintain connectivity with schools, including over the school holiday period and weekends, and to ensure that grant funding could be paid if required over the period of the closure of the AISSA Office.

No special circumstances funding was deemed required in response to priority areas or natural disasters.

All member schools were also regularly advised of the availability of the Special Circumstances funding through a range of mechanisms including written and verbal communications. The Special Circumstances Application form requirements which are in place for the 2022-2025 quadrennium have been developed to ensure consistency and continuity with the previous requirements of the (then) Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE). The application process requires a significant level of information and detail, including financial and demographic data, incorporating historical and projected figures, and a business case to be made through addressing the need for funding against all elements of the special circumstances criteria.

In 2023, one school applied for Special Circumstances assistance for short term emergency support. Centralised expenditure was used to manage the application and assessment process which included the establishment of an expert panel to assess the application. The panel included representatives from member schools, and key AISSA staff, with relevant expertise in school financial operations and school management and was convened within two days of receipt of the application. The full application was provided to panel members prior to the assessment meeting to enable rigorous assessment of the application. The application collection notice facilitated the provision of this information. The meeting of the panel to assess the application was held within nine business days of receipt of the application.

The applicant school was deemed by the panel to meet the criteria for eligibility for funding with the applicant advised on the same day as the panel's determination and funding paid within three business days after the decision was advised. The funding was provided subject to the conditions including that it was a one-off grant to assist the school to address its need for short term

emergency assistance, that the funding was to be used for recurrent purposes only and that the school will ensure that processes are in place to ensure financial stability going forward.

Centralised expenditure was used to undertake an acquittal process to ensure that government funding was used in line with the program requirements.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
- Schools are aware of the availability of special circumstances funding. - Schools which receive funding in response to an identified priority or natural disaster are supported to continue operations. - Schools which apply and are eligible for special circumstances funding will be supported to continue operations and remain financially viable.	- An application and assessment process was in place for schools which meet the Special Circumstances funding criteria for short term emergency assistance as outlined in the CAF Guidelines. - 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. - One school was supported through Special Circumstances funding to continue operations and remain financially viable in a timely manner. - An acquittal process was undertaken requiring the supported school to certify that the funds had been used for the specified grant funding purpose.

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	\$9,987	\$375,000

Another strand of activity saw leaders of mathematics and literacy grow in their capabilities to lead mathematics and literacy initiatives for improvement. Key features of success included the focus on developing knowledge about the revised Australian Curriculum v.9 and the provision of scaffolded time to explore, investigate and model teaching strategies and practices that support teacher planning and student learning. Participants indicated improved impact regarding their leadership of curriculum implementation. Feedback indicated an improved understanding of best practices in leading curriculum implementation as well as heightened understanding of what was working across other school contexts. For example, one participant indicated that they now felt more empowered to pursue the programming of an explicit literacy program and dedicated English lesson in secondary levels.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) pathways continued as essential for equipping young people with the skills and opportunities that provided flexible and inclusive education options that catered to a wide range of interests and abilities. Supporting leadership of this work in schools saw the exploration of key workplace learning requirements and documentation. VET leaders also collaborated to share ideas and strategies to build effective Workplace Learning programs within their schools. Leaders' feedback indicated that they felt more confident in preparing their students for Workplace Learning going forward, with greater clarity about the associated procedures. Networking opportunities included visits to industry partners including the Motor Trade Association, TAFE SA, SA Police Training Academy and the University of South Australia. Specific support was initiated to draw leaders new to VET into a supportive network of peers from other schools. This aimed to mitigate the isolation often experienced by leaders from remote or regional areas.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success						
- School leaders strengthen their knowledge and skills in leading complex communities. - The enhanced skills of distributed leadership teams in schools drive teacher learning and growth. - There will be an increased awareness of high-quality industry partnership opportunities for students. - Schools will be supported to meet their regulatory requirements. - Leaders and leadership teams to explore learning success within contemporary organising frameworks and competencies.	96% of participating leaders and leadership teams have indicated improved understanding of effective strategies and have felt supported to grow in their leadership practice. - The number and geo locations of schools who have engaged in the professional learning from within this initiative are <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Metropolitan</td><td>57</td></tr> <tr> <td>Rural</td><td>17</td></tr> <tr> <td>Remote</td><td>0</td></tr> </table> - Samples of resources, vignettes, learning plans and micro-projects have been shared across schools, in addition to being hosted on the AISSA website.	Metropolitan	57	Rural	17	Remote	0
Metropolitan	57						
Rural	17						
Remote	0						

Initiative B: Building Teacher Efficacy

The key focus of this initiative centred on the building of teacher efficacy, as this is fundamentally linked to student success and overall educational quality. When teachers are confident in their ability to influence student learning positively, they are more able to adopt effective teaching strategies and adapt to new educational challenges. As a result, a range of complementary activities was employed throughout 2023 to enhance teachers' understandings and applications of effective

pedagogical practices. All Independent schools were invited to participate in this initiative, with a significant number of teachers reporting improved understanding and growth in their practice. Centralised expenditure supported the delivery of activities across this initiative and, notwithstanding diligent planning, changes in resourcing and project costs during the year have resulted in minor variances to the initial budget projections.

Activity focused on the Australian Curriculum General Capabilities and Cross Curriculum Priorities aimed to transform classroom practices through fostering shared professional understandings of students' expected literacy and numeracy development. Teachers were guided in identifying the literacy and numeracy knowledge necessary for students to access content across different learning areas, as well as in locating students' current development levels. Better understanding the implementation components of the Brightpath evidence-based formative assessment tool provided teachers with the opportunity to collaborate with peers to improve writing and reading among children and young people. Teachers were equipped with a deeper understanding of the teaching points to progress students' writing abilities and, in addition, participants of this train-the-trainer course later shared their acquired knowledge and resources within their schools, extending the program's impact.

Gifted Education was another focal point within this initiative. The Gifted Education Research, Resource and Information Centre (GERRIC) is part of the School of Education at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. The GERRIC's Mini-Certificate of Gifted Education course provided practical training for educators to support high potential and gifted students. Teachers were equipped with strategies to identify and engage gifted students, differentiate the curriculum, implement ability grouping or acceleration, and understand best practices in gifted education. The course culminated in the development of tailored units of work to meet the needs of differentiated classrooms, benefitting 27 participants from 14 schools.

Building the cultural capacity of teachers has been both a moral and professional imperative. This work focused on creating culturally safe classrooms, supporting First Nations students in their senior secondary years and deepening schools' commitments to Reconciliation. An ongoing partnership with Kurna Elder, Uncle John Lochowiak, saw teachers introduced to the Aboriginal Worldview, Tjukurrpa, and enabled the building of cultural understanding and insight into building inclusive classroom environments. This was supported by insights from other educational leaders who have implemented culturally safe and inclusive environments in their schools. Supporting teachers of First Nations students in their secondary years explored strategies for smooth transitions, cultural knowledge integration, effective student support, and enhancing cultural competence. The workshops highlighted the *8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning* and explored the value in Aboriginal pedagogies for all students. Feedback indicated an increase in every participant's knowledge and understanding of effective strategies, contributing to improved pedagogical practice and cultural knowledge within schools.

The New Thinking: New Possibilities webinar series brought together teachers, researchers, and industry professionals to explore innovative STEM education approaches. Topics included AI in schools, STEM careers, interdisciplinary learning, and STEM in nature play.

Finally, the Instructional Coaching Practitioner program built on the leadership priorities of Initiative A, offering a second year of instructional coaching series for teacher coaches. A comprehensive coaching program supported teacher coaches to grow in instructional coaching practice and Coaching Lab opportunities enabled coaches to develop their skills.

As with Initiative A, complementing the aims of this initiative to build teacher capacity has been the availability of in-school implementation advice, coaching and support provided by AISSA Senior Educational Consultants, so that new learning could be embedded within the system and structures of the school.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success						
- Teachers effectively access and use contemporary evidence to design learning and implement pedagogical practices to increase student engagement and achievement. - Teachers demonstrate a deepened understanding about expectations for learning success, evidence of learning and quality program development. - Communities of practice across schools contribute to the raising of the quality of learning experiences for students. - Schools have access to a range of resources and case studies of best practice.	95% of participating teachers have indicated improved understanding of effective strategies and have felt supported to grow in pedagogical practice. - The number and geo locations of schools who have engaged in the professional learning from within this initiative are <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Metropolitan</td><td>52</td></tr> <tr> <td>Rural</td><td>18</td></tr> <tr> <td>Remote</td><td>1</td></tr> </table> - Samples of resources, workshop presentations and learning plans have been shared across schools, in addition to being hosted on the AISSA website.	Metropolitan	52	Rural	18	Remote	1
Metropolitan	52						
Rural	18						
Remote	1						

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	\$900,639	\$0

Activity/Initiative

Priority

Effective Whole School Approaches to Student Wellbeing

E – Student wellbeing and support

Activity Description

The 2022 CAF Annual Report detailed significant foundational work in the development of a toolkit to further whole of school approaches to wellbeing. In 2023, a significant milestone celebrated was the finalisation and release of the AISSA Wellbeing Toolkit in June. The purpose of the Toolkit is to assist schools to strengthen practice and pedagogy for whole school wellbeing and practice within their own context and utilise evidence-based resources to build staff capacity to best support student and staff wellbeing through a whole school lens.

Professor Donna Cross, a key wellbeing specialist, worked alongside schools to better understand how to implement the processes within the Toolkit. The Toolkit comprises a three-tiered approach to whole-school wellbeing delivery and provides the structure for action at the individual school level through audit, assessment, review, and the subsequent development of the key elements of the school's current and future wellbeing programs. Schools were supported to draft a wellbeing definition for their school, consider strategies to establish and sustain visible wellbeing leadership, as well as explore effectiveness of actions that underpinned school planning and decision making. This work will continue to be built upon in 2024 and the AISSA looks forward to sharing case studies of practice.

Complementing this important work, the wellbeing coordinator network remained as an important priority. The dissemination of a regular newsletter enabled school coordinators to remain abreast of the latest evidence, tools and evidence-based strategies that deepened understanding and built staff capacity in the area of wellbeing.

The AISSA website has been the key repository of wellbeing advice and resources including:

- AISSA Wellbeing Newsletters
- Whole School Approaches to Wellbeing
- Student Wellbeing and Mental Health
- Staff and Leader Wellbeing
- Bullying Prevention
- Respectful Relationships/ Consent Education
- Suicide and Self Harm Prevention and Response.

Another key action saw the development of a suite of resources to support schools with bullying prevention. This included two resources; the [AISSA Policy Guidelines: Bullying Prevention 2023](#) aimed to assist member schools to develop and implement policies and procedures relating to bullying prevention, and the [AISSA Policy Template: Bullying Prevention 2023](#). This Policy Template has been designed to assist member schools to develop their own Bullying Prevention Policy and both documents were based upon the SA Department for Education's document [Bullying Prevention Policy and Plan](#), developed in collaboration with the AISSA and Catholic Education SA as part of the SA Bullying Prevention Coalition.

The AISSA continued to work in partnership with the Department for Education on a statewide approach to bullying prevention. The Department for Education's Bullying prevention and response support tools and resources continue to be available to all South Australian schools and includes professional development around recognising and responding to bullying, policies and procedures, and support around physical environments that support bullying prevention.

Partnership work with external organisations continued as an important priority. headspace Schools and Communities – Be You was a key partnership that ensured schools were supported with a consistent approach to navigating the complexities and responding to student self-harm in a school setting. Primary principals and wellbeing leaders were invited to attend two sessions focusing on responding to primary aged students. During these sessions they explored the Mental Health Continuum, discussed student self-regulation, built understandings of the Notice, Inquire, Provide (NIP) Framework, and discussed the importance of educator wellbeing, boundaries and roles. Schools were also able to access Youth Mental Health First Aid training (YMHFA), a program supporting teachers who work with adolescents.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success						
- Schools will grow in expertise to understand the characteristics and elements of effective whole-of-school approaches to student wellbeing. - Schools will be supported to better examine and implement contextually appropriate approaches and programs. - Whole-of-school approaches to wellbeing will be developed across the sector.	97% of participating schools have indicated a deeper understanding of the characteristics and elements of effective whole-of-school approaches to student wellbeing. - The number and geo locations of schools who have engaged in the professional learning from within this initiative are <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Metropolitan</td><td>11</td></tr> <tr> <td>Rural</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr> <td>Remote</td><td>1</td></tr> </table> - The Wellbeing Toolkit has been launched, with the AISSA website providing a repository for contemporary advice and resources.	Metropolitan	11	Rural	6	Remote	1
Metropolitan	11						
Rural	6						
Remote	1						

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	\$197,477	\$0

AISSA 2023 Financial Report

Financial summary 2023

CAF Funding	\$2,801,922
Expenditure	\$2,836,975
Interest earned	\$64,047
Deferred Funding	\$28,994

Financial summary 2020 to 2023

CAF Funding	\$10,611,339
Expenditure	\$8,434,639
Interest earned	\$84,642
Deferred Funding	\$2,261,342

Accounts 2023

Expenditure	Budgeted Centralised	Budgeted Distributed	Actual Centralised	Actual Distributed
A – Choice and affordability	\$97,996	\$20,000	\$98,556	\$20,000
B – Transition Assistance – Regional	\$3,290	\$152,676	\$3,773	\$154,137
B – Transition Assistance – Former NAAF schools	\$31,410	\$800,347	\$32,258	\$800,347
B – Transition Assistance – Other	\$26,319	\$168,104	\$20,659	\$168,104
C – Special circumstances	\$6,047	\$500,000	\$9,987	\$375,000
D – Student outcomes	\$1,060,182	\$0	\$900,639	\$0
E – Student wellbeing	\$230,832	\$0	\$197,477	\$0
Administrative	NA	NA	\$56,038	NA
All priorities	\$1,456,076	\$1,641,127	\$1,319,387	\$1,517,588

Summary of CAF funding budget

	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
Payments	\$2,522,381	\$2,598,052	\$2,688,984	\$2,801,922	\$2,885,979
Total expenditure	\$1,022,140	\$2,368,101	\$2,207,423	\$2,836,975	\$3,592,211

	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2028 Budget	2029 Budget
Payments	\$2,972,559	\$3,061,735	\$3,153,588	\$3,248,195	\$3,345,641
Total expenditure	\$3,733,363	\$3,187,854	\$3,153,238	\$3,296,098	\$3,966,275

Summary of CAF regional transition budget

	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
Regional allocation	\$139,720	\$143,912	\$148,948	\$155,204	\$162,360
Regional expenditure	\$139,720	\$148,391	\$152,218	\$157,910	\$171,482

	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2028 Budget	2029 Budget
Regional allocation	\$167,879	\$173,586	\$179,489	\$185,592	\$191,901
Regional expenditure	\$164,671	\$170,378	\$176,281	\$182,384	\$188,691