

Victorian Government response to the Legal and Social Issues Committee Inquiry into the state education system in Victoria

April 2025

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Introduction

The Victorian Government (the government) welcomes the report and recommendations from the Legislative Council's Legal and Social Issues Committee's (the Committee) Inquiry into the state education system in Victoria (the Inquiry).

The government thanks all the organisations and individuals who shared their time and expertise by providing submissions and evidence to the Inquiry.

The government is dedicated to delivering on the twin goals of equity and excellence in the Victorian government school system: equity to ensure that all students have as equal an opportunity as is possible to thrive and excellence to ensure all students are supported to achieve the highest levels of learning. More than 650,000 students attend over 1,500 government schools in Victoria, and the department seeks to support every school to deliver the strongest learning and wellbeing outcomes for every individual student.

This responsibility of providing a well-rounded and fulsome education is always approached with the utmost care, and it would not be achievable without the dedication and hard work of our teachers, leaders and all school staff. They bring deep professional expertise and commitment to classrooms across the state and make a difference to student's lives every day.

Victoria is the Education State. Over the past decade we have made nation-leading investments in schools, prioritising student wellbeing educational outcomes. Victorian students are achieving strong results as top performers in the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) assessments. We also have the best overall school attendance rates in the country and the highest rates of young people fully engaged in education, training or work.

The report had 25 findings and made 54 recommendations relating to improving learning outcomes, supporting the education workforce, providing targeted supports for students, supporting student wellbeing and funding state schools, many of which build on the government's priorities and reforms.

In October 2024, the government announced a renewed vision and priorities for the Education State, *The Education State – Excellence in Every Classroom*. The vision and priorities closely align with the Committee's report.

Perhaps most importantly, in the time since the report was published, Victoria has signed the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement – Full and Fair Funding 2025–2034 with the Commonwealth Government¹. This finally provides a pathway to 100% of full and fair funding to Victorian government schools and students.

Overall, 44 of the recommendations from the report are supported by the government. Many of these also already have activities or programs in place or in progress which meet the recommended actions, reflecting the fact that the recommendations made in the Committee's report broadly align with the existing government vision for schools. A detailed response is provided on the following pages.

¹ The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement – Full and Fair Funding 2025–2034 is the next iteration of the National Schools Reform Agreement, which was in place between 2018 and 2024.

Response

The government's full response is provided below. It addresses each recommendation in the report, identifying current government initiatives where appropriate, as well as future priorities and actions that will respond to the Inquiry's recommendations.

It has been developed in accordance with the *Guidelines for Victorian Government Submissions and Responses to Inquiries*. This table explains the 5 types of responses found in this report:

Response type	Explanation
Support in full	All elements of the recommendation are supported
Support in part	Some elements of the recommendation are supported
Support in principle	The Victorian Government generally supports the intent or merit of the policy underlining the recommendation, but does not necessarily support the method for achieving the policy
Under Review	Further analysis is required for the Victorian Government to determine its position
Do not support	The Victorian Government does not support the recommendation

The Victorian Government's Response to recommendations from the Parliamentary Inquiry into the state education system in Victoria

Recommendation	Response	Explanation
Recommendation 1 That the Victorian Government set: a. a long-term target that 90% of students reach proficiency in reading and numeracy, as measured by the proportion of students in the 'strong' or 'exceeding' category in NAPLAN in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 b. a short-term target to an increase of 10 percentage points over the next 10 years, based on NAPLAN performance in 2023, pro-rated for the term of the next National School Reform Agreement (NSRA).	Do not support	<p>The government is embedding evidence-based teaching and learning – responding to the latest evidence by putting explicit teaching in every classroom. This includes best practice teaching of phonics in the early years. These reforms will ensure Victoria continues to lead the nation in education outcomes.</p> <p>Victoria is party to the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement which sets out agreed national targets for NAPLAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">By 2030, in Reading and Numeracy, of Years 3, 5, 7 and 9:<ul style="list-style-type: none">reduce the proportion of all students in the Needs Additional Support proficiency level by 10%increase the proportion of all students in the Strong and Exceeding proficiency levels by 10%

Recommendation	Response	Explanation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ trend upwards in the proportion of priority equity cohort students (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, outer regional, remote and very remote, and parental education (Year 11 or below)) in the Strong and Exceeding proficiency levels.
Recommendation 2 The Victorian Government should ensure that the curriculum is regularly reviewed and updated to reduce duplication and ensure best practice.	Support in full	The Victorian Curriculum will be next reviewed when the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) completes the next national review.
Recommendation 3 That the Victorian Government ensure that practical life skills such as personal budgeting and banking, taxation and civic engagement are taught in schools at pre-VCE levels.	Support in full	The Victorian Curriculum F–10 Version 2.0 includes practical life skills relating to personal budgeting and banking, taxation and civic engagement across Levels 3–10. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Humanities, Economics and Business curriculum for Levels 5–10, through the Economic Literacy and Consumer and Financial Literacy sub-strands, includes key economic and financial knowledge and skills. Students develop key financial skills, such as budgeting, banking, financial choices, taxation, consumer rights, dealing with scams and the world of work and business. This prepares students for financial stability and success. The Civics and Citizenship for Levels 3–10 curriculum teaches students about voting, types of laws, and analysing contemporary issues as part of civic engagement, enabling them to become active and informed citizens who can participate in and sustain Australia's democracy.
Recommendation 4 The Department of Education develop and provide adequate template scoping and sequence mapping, template unit plans, template lessons plans and other supporting material to support teachers develop curriculum in their school.	Support in full	The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) has published curriculum planning resources for Victorian Curriculum F–10 English and Mathematics Version 2.0. These planning resources include templates and examples of curriculum area maps, curriculum area plans, and teaching and learning units. These are supplemented by corresponding assessment examples. These resources will also be made available for all other curriculum areas throughout 2025.

Recommendation	Response	Explanation
		<p>The Department of Education (the department) is currently producing sequenced Victorian Lesson Plans in English (including Phonics), Mathematics, Science, Design and Technologies, Digital Technologies and Foundation Levels A to D to reduce the burden on school planning and support teachers and schools in delivering the curriculum. The department will consider the development of further high-quality materials to support schools to deliver the curriculum.</p> <p>The first Victorian Lesson Plans in Phonics Plus and Mathematics were released in December 2024, with further Lesson Plans to be progressively published throughout 2025.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>That the Department of Education review its whole-school materials and lesson plans for core subjects, such as English, maths and science, to ensure they achieve their aims of reducing the burden on schools' planning and delivering the curriculum</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>The department is currently producing sequenced Victorian Lesson Plans in English (including Phonics), Mathematics, Science, Design and Technologies, Digital Technologies and Foundation Levels A to D to reduce the burden on schools, in relation to planning and delivering the curriculum.</p> <p>The first Victorian Lesson Plans in Phonics Plus and Mathematics were released in December 2024, with further Lesson Plans to be progressively published throughout 2025.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>That the Department of Education where it identifies weaknesses in schools' whole-school planning during the four-year review provide principals and/or school leadership with the necessary professional development to strengthen the whole-school planning.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>The department has established processes to support schools that identify weaknesses in curriculum planning during a school review, with a range of resources and supports available to assist the school to develop a quality whole-school curriculum. Schools are supported by the regional school improvement workforce to address issues via annual improvement planning and other capability building activities.</p> <p>Where a school is found to be non-compliant with any aspect of the Curriculum and Student Learning Minimum Standard, the department institutes a follow-up process to achieve compliance, including referring these schools to professional learning, guidance, information, and resources for whole-school-curriculum planning. See also the response to Recommendations 4, 5 and 8.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Bennett Review was published and made publicly available on 28 March 2024. The VCAA is on track to fully implement the recommendations of the Independent Review of</p>

Recommendation	Response	Explanation
That the Victorian Government report to Parliament on the adoption of the recommendations of the Bennett Review within a 12-month period.		the VCAA's VCE examination-setting policies, processes and procedures.
<p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>That the Department of Education, when devising scoping, sequencing, unit plans and lessons plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. audit the existing curriculum to identify gaps b. develop curriculum support material that is relevant and easy for teachers to use c. ensure assessment rubrics are standardised, consistent, reflect the subject being taught and are included in all assessment tasks that are developed 	Support in principle	The department has produced Victorian Curriculum-aligned resources, such as the Victorian Lesson Plans, that are relevant and easy for teachers to use. These Lesson Plans have been mapped against the Victorian Curriculum F–10 Version 2.0 and have been written by teachers for teachers, ensuring that they are usable and relevant. Victorian Lesson Plans include formative and summative assessments, and the department is also developing classroom resources, such as retrieval resources, to further assist teachers.
<p>Recommendation 9</p> <p>That the Department of Education create an equivalent body to the New South Wales Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation with responsibility for commissioning and publishing research and evaluation on all aspects of Victorian education.</p>	Do not support	<p>The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) is a division within the NSW Education Department. The department's Performance and Evaluation Division performs a similar role to CESE regarding research, evaluation and statistics.</p> <p>In 2019, all Australian jurisdictions supported the creation of the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) through the National School Reform Agreement. AERO's role is to generate high-quality evidence to encourage the adoption and effective implementation of evidence in practice and policy. Victoria is actively engaged with AERO's work, contributing funding and advice on research priorities to support students and schools. Further, ACARA also analyses, evaluates and reports statistical and related information about the educational outcomes of schooling for young Australians.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10</p> <p>That the Department of Education audit and review existing literacy assessment and student diagnostic tools, ceasing those not consistent or complementary with structured-literacy approaches.</p>	Support in full	The department has reviewed the literacy assessment tools currently used in schools to ensure they align with Victoria's approach to teaching reading. Based on this review, Victoria is updating its assessment approach to reflect the latest evidence on how children learn to read and how teachers can quickly identify students who may need extra support.

Recommendation	Response	Explanation
		<p>Starting in 2025, all Victorian government primary and specialist schools will have access to a new assessment, the Year 1 Phonics Check. This assessment will help schools effectively implement Victoria's evidence-based reading approach and will be mandated for use by schools in 2026.</p> <p>The requirement for Victorian government schools to use the English Online Interview with their Foundation and Grade 1 students is now removed, with its use in 2025 optional for government schools.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11</p> <p>That the Department of Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. introduce a 40-word Phonics Check (including 20 pseudo words) in Year 1 in all Victorian Government schools in line with the Commonwealth Phonics Check b. set a target of 90% of students to reach the expected level in phonics checks by the end of Year 2 c. the phonics check should adopt national best practice in line with national phonics checks. 	Support in principle	<p>Starting in 2025, all Victorian government primary and specialist schools will have access to a new assessment, the Year 1 Phonics Check. This assessment consists of 40 words, including 20 pseudo-words, and is aligned with the Commonwealth Phonics Check to reflect national best practice. Further work is required on appropriate, if any, target setting.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 12</p> <p>That the Department of Education look to other states that have mandated phonics testing and structured literacy pedagogies and ensure it offers the same level of support to Victorian teachers, with a view to implementing these updated teaching methods within the next two years.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>Following extensive consultation with other jurisdictions and academics, starting in 2025, all government primary schools will adopt a synthetic structured approach to teaching reading in Foundation to Grade 2. This approach will be fully implemented across all government schools by the beginning of 2027.</p> <p>To support schools in this transition, the department has developed the Phonics Plus program. The Phonics Plus scope and sequence, which outlines the phonics learning progression from Foundation to Grade 2, along with Lesson Plans for Foundation, were published in 2024. Lesson plans for Grade 1 and 2 students will be available in the first half of 2025.</p> <p>The scope and sequence will help schools assess their current phonics practices, while the Lesson Plans will support teachers by reducing workload and ensuring the phonics approach is taught through explicit instruction, in alignment with the new Victorian Teaching and Learning Model.</p> <p>Professional learning sessions for the Phonics Plus program are being delivered in 2025.</p>
<p>Recommendation 13</p> <p>The Victorian Government revise and update the Education State targets to reflect new NAPLAN scale.</p>	<p>Do not support</p>	<p>The Victorian Government already reports detailed results against targets set for the new NAPLAN scale as part of the department's annual Performance Statement in the State Budget Papers.</p> <p>For the purpose of national comparison, detailed NAPLAN results are also published by ACARA annually, along with school-level NAPLAN results on the MySchool website.</p> <p>The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement sets out national targets aligned to Victoria's Education State priorities. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lifting NAPLAN performance • increasing Year 12 or equivalent certification and attainment • returning student attendance rates to 2019 levels • increasing engagement rates in initial teacher education qualifications.

Recommendation	Response	Explanation
		<p>The Victorian Government has reaffirmed its commitment to the Education State agenda with the launch of <i>The Education State – Excellence in Every Classroom</i> in October 2024. This vision builds on the progress made as the Education State over the past 10 years and sets 5 key priorities that will guide work in the coming years.</p>
<p>Recommendation 14</p> <p>The Department of Education resume publishing progress on Education State targets.</p>	<p>Do not support</p>	<p>The Victorian Government already reports detailed results against targets set for the new NAPLAN scale as part of the department's annual Performance Statement in the State Budget Papers.</p> <p>For the purpose of national comparison, detailed NAPLAN results are also published by ACARA annually, along with school-level NAPLAN results on the MySchool website.</p> <p>The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement sets out national targets aligned to Victoria's Education State priorities. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lifting NAPLAN performance • increasing Year 12 or equivalent certification and attainment • returning student attendance rates to 2019 levels • increasing engagement rates in initial teacher education qualifications. <p>The Victorian Government has reaffirmed its commitment to the Education State agenda with the launch of <i>The Education State – Excellence in Every Classroom</i> in October 2024. This vision builds on the progress made as the Education State over the past 10 years and sets 5 key priorities that will guide work in the coming years.</p>
<p>Recommendation 15</p> <p>That the Victorian Government conduct a review into school zoning, with a view to developing a system that promotes safety and inclusion, and as a consequence better learning outcomes.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The government will consider how this recommendation can be actioned as part of the department's broader enrolment-management work, including continuing to regularly review and strengthen school zoning arrangements.</p>
<p>Recommendation 16</p> <p>That the Victorian Government review the criteria for school zoning exemptions to make them more accessible to equity cohorts.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The government will consider how this recommendation can be actioned as part of the department's broader enrolment-management work, including continuing to regularly review and strengthen school zoning arrangements.</p>

Recommendation	Response	Explanation
<p>Recommendation 17</p> <p>That the Victorian Government consider ongoing funding for the Tutor Learning Initiative. This should be accompanied by a regular review process to evaluate the success of the initiative, and the funding should be dependent on the ability of schools to meet the criteria set by the Department.</p>	Under review	The government is continuing its ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the Tutor Learning Initiative (TLI) to refine the model of delivery for tiered learning support.
<p>Recommendation 18</p> <p>That the Department of Education review its advice on the Tutor Learning Initiative to ensure it aligns with best practice on delivering multi-tiered systems of support.</p>	Support in full	The department has updated its guidance to schools for delivery of TLI for 2025 to ensure it aligns with best practice on delivering multi-tiered systems of support.
<p>Recommendation 19</p> <p>That the Department of Education update its guidance on the Tutor Learning Initiative to reflect the latest mandates on phonics and explicit instruction in literacy</p>	Support in full	The department has updated its guidance to schools for delivery of TLI for 2025 to ensure it reflects the latest mandates on phonics and explicit instruction in literacy.
<p>Recommendation 20</p> <p>That the Department of Education collect and analyse data to promote effective practice for different school types and student groups, consistent with the Victorian Auditor-General's Effectiveness of Tutor Learning Initiative Report recommendations.</p>	Support in full	The department has updated its guidance to schools for delivery of TLI for 2025 to ensure it promotes effective practice for different school types and student groups as per the Victorian Auditor-General's Office's (VAGO) Effectiveness of the Tutor Learning Initiative recommendations.
<p>Recommendation 21</p> <p>That the Department of Education set measurable goals for schools' tutoring performance and establish statewide pilots to better understand the benefits and support needs in schools.</p>	Support in principle	<p>Consistent with the department's response to Recommendation 3 from VAGO's report on the Effectiveness of the Tutor Learning Initiative, the department has required government schools to include a goal to decrease the number of students assessed as 'Needs Additional Support' in NAPLAN in their Annual Implementation Plans in 2025.</p> <p>The department will develop guidance to inform the establishment of statewide learning interventions, including the role of pilots in adapting delivery to suit different school types and student groups, and defining expected program benefits and the supports required.</p> <p>Note that the department understands that the 'statewide pilots' mentioned in the</p>

Recommendation	Response	Explanation
		<p>recommendation relates to pilots more broadly (consistent with the VAGO Recommendation 3) rather than requiring a statewide pilot of TLI.</p>
<p>Recommendation 22</p> <p>That the Department of Education work with advocacy groups to devise an outcomes framework for the Disability Inclusion program.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The implementation of Disability Inclusion is monitored through an independent evaluation, which includes analysis of the impact of the reform on student outcomes. The department has committed to sharing findings from the evaluation in response to a recommendation from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee.</p> <p>More broadly, the department is committed to strengthening data and reporting on students with disability. Victoria has accepted in part recommendation 7.9 of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, which recommended enhanced data capture and reporting on students with disability.</p> <p>The department will work with states and territories to progress the response to the recommendation, where relevant, and will also engage with disability peak bodies to seek their input as the work progresses.</p>
<p>Recommendation 23</p> <p>That the Department of Education develop a policy on how Augmentative and Alternative Communication should be delivered in schools.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>The department has existing policy guidance as part of the Students with Disability policy for schools on Augmentative and Alternative Communication in the Policy Advisory Library: Students with Disability: Chapter 3: Complex communication needs education.vic.gov.au. The policy provides a set of resources which schools can use to support students with complex communication needs.</p> <p>The department is currently reviewing and strengthening this guidance.</p>
<p>Recommendation 24</p> <p>That the Department of Education review provision of resources to schools to ensure that exclusionary practices of students with disabilities are phased out, in addition to providing further professional development for school staff to prevent further instances of exclusion practices from occurring in the future.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The government is committed to an inclusive education system where all members of the school community are valued and supported to fully participate, learn, develop and succeed within an inclusive school culture on the same basis as students without disability.</p> <p>Disability Inclusion is introducing initiatives to help build knowledge and skills in inclusive education across the school system.</p>

Recommendation	Response	Explanation
		The government has accepted in principle recommendation 7.2 of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability and continues to work to prevent the inappropriate use of exclusion against students with disability.
Recommendation 25 That the Department of Education review current levels of funding for Local Learning and Employment Networks to ensure they are appropriately funded.	Under review	The department acknowledges the importance of a place-based approach to industry-school engagement that ensures that all young people can engage in quality and meaningful work-based learning. As part of supporting the implementation of significant reforms to senior secondary pathways, the department is considering the place-based school industry engagement model to secure high-quality supports for students.
Recommendation 26 That the Victorian Government implement the recommendations of the 2019 Expert Advisory Panel for Rural and Regional Students.	Support in principle	<p>Since the delivery of the report of the Expert Advisory Panel, the government has engaged with rural and regional stakeholders to develop priorities and directions to improve regional and rural education in Victoria.</p> <p>A number of investments have been made which demonstrate an ongoing commitment to equity and excellence for rural and regional schools and students and deliver on the priorities and recommendations in the Expert Advisory Panel's report. This includes \$182.8 million invested in rural and regional initiatives (in addition to existing, dedicated rural and regional funding already provided to eligible schools through the Student Resource Package).</p>
Recommendation 27 That the Department of Education reassess funding so that schools do not lose funding when their students enrol in Virtual School Victoria.	Do not support	Schools can only be funded for the time fraction a student is in attendance at the school. Where schools have a student enrolled elsewhere this enrolment cannot exceed a full-time equivalent time fraction.
Recommendation 28 That the Victorian Government accept in full all 47 recommendations from the Commission for Children and Young People's Let Us Learn report.	Support in part	The Victorian Government has already responded to the Commission for Children and Young People's <i>Let Us Learn Report</i> , accepting 25 recommendations in full, 19 in principle, 2 in part, and 1 is for further consideration.

Recommendation	Response	Explanation
<p>Recommendation 29</p> <p>The Victorian Government investigate the need for additional appropriate supports for culturally and linguistically diverse students, with a view to establishing a program of Multicultural Support Officers.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The government provides a range of supports for culturally and linguistically diverse students, including via existing workforces such as Multicultural Education Aides (usually funded with schools' English as an Additional Language Index Funding) and Community Liaison Officers (funded via the <i>Victorian African Communities Action Plan</i>).</p> <p>The intent of the recommendation is supported. The government will further consider overlap with existing programs and supports, noting duplication of existing roles should be avoided in any future proposals.</p>
<p>Recommendation 30</p> <p>That the Department of Education commit to funding that ensures the long-term stability of Out-of-School Hours Learning Support Programs.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>Out of School Hours Learning Support Programs (i.e. homework clubs) provide high-quality tuition and learning support to children and young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, and their families.</p> <p>The department directly funds some homework clubs through the Homework Club Grant Initiative funded via the Victorian African Communities Action Plan. The department also funds Centre for Multicultural Youth to provide training, resources and other support to homework clubs through the Learning Beyond the Bell program.</p> <p>Funding for Out of School Hours Learning Support Programs is subject to routine government decision-making processes.</p>
<p>Recommendation 31</p> <p>The Department of Education should thoroughly evaluate its teacher recruitment intervention programmes in addressing expected teacher shortfall.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>The department is currently undertaking a comprehensive strategic evaluation of Victorian school workforce attraction and retention initiatives.</p> <p>The department notes that other public reporting mechanisms, such as the Report on Government Services and the Victorian Teacher Supply and Demand report, are robust mechanisms for monitoring the attraction and retention of teachers.</p>
<p>Recommendation 32</p> <p>That the Victorian Institute of Teaching adjust the employer requirements of the 'permission to teach' category of teacher registration to fast-track the employment of subject matter experts in Victorian schools</p>	<p>Under review</p>	<p>The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) is currently undertaking a review of its Permission to Teach policy and its application. As part of that review, the VIT will consider whether the Permission to Teach policy is fit for purpose and whether the requirements to grant each category of Permission to Teach are clear and appropriate. The VIT's report on the review is due to the Minister for Education by the end of April 2025.</p>

Recommendation	Response	Explanation
<p>Recommendation 33</p> <p>That the Department of Education work with initial teacher education providers to investigate the feasibility of an internship model.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>The department has trialled and invested in several different models of ‘internship-like’ teacher training, which include several postgraduate employment-based teaching degree programs (known as the Teach Today and Teach Tomorrow programs).</p> <p>The department has also recently commissioned 2 providers (Federation University Australia and La Trobe University) to introduce and deliver new undergraduate level employment-based teaching degree programs, which commenced in 2025.</p>
<p>Recommendation 34</p> <p>That the Department of Education conduct a review into the effectiveness of the Targeted Financial Incentives program in achieving the objectives of recruiting new teachers to rural and regional areas.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>The department is currently undertaking an evaluation of the Targeted Financial Incentives program.</p>
<p>Recommendation 35</p> <p>That the Department of Education collect, analyse and regularly publish data at a regional level on the effectiveness of Targeted Financial Incentives, including the aggregated retention rates of teachers who receive a Targeted Financial Incentive payment.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The department is currently undertaking an evaluation of the Targeted Financial Incentives program.</p>
<p>Recommendation 36</p> <p>That the Department of Education review its policy on teacher housing, with a view to considering group housing in regional areas to address housing shortages in areas with high demand for teaching staff but few accommodation options.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The department is supportive of undertaking a review of teacher housing arrangements, acknowledging ongoing efforts to maintain and improve teacher housing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 37</p> <p>That the Victorian Government provide additional funding to cover the new time-in-lieu arrangements undertaken in schools to deliver education and extracurricular activities.</p>	<p>Under review</p>	<p>Time in lieu is an industrial obligation under the current industrial agreement, with negotiations for the new agreement to commence by mid-2025. This recommendation will be considered as part of the negotiations for the enterprise agreement.</p>

Recommendation	Response	Explanation
<p>Recommendation 38</p> <p>That the Department of Education develop a standalone teacher retention policy in order to ease current workforce pressures.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>In recent years, the government has invested in several initiatives to support retention of the workforce including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing teachers with more time for planning and collaboration by reducing maximum face-to-face teaching time • establishing new time in lieu arrangements for staff supervising camps and extracurricular activities • investing in supporting teacher and school leader health and wellbeing • supporting school leaders and classroom teachers to take up flexible working arrangements • investing in the Career Start induction initiative, which aims to retain more graduates in the profession. <p>The department will provide updated information on its website and/or to schools regarding existing investments in retention initiatives.</p>

Recommendation	Response	Explanation
<p>Recommendation 39</p> <p>That the Department of Education ensure that schools are adequately resourced to respond to the needs of students, including their wellbeing.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>Victoria has signed the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement – Full and Fair Funding 2025–2034 with the Commonwealth. This will provide 100% of full and fair funding to government schools and students by the end of the agreement.</p>
<p>Recommendation 40</p> <p>That the Victorian Government provide additional resources related to the delivery of the Mental Health Menu, so that all schools, particularly those in rural and regional areas or with complex communities and students, can access programs that meet the needs of their students.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>The government has invested \$200 million in the Schools Mental Health Fund to provide targeted mental health support for students when and where they need it most.</p> <p>Rural and regional schools were the first to receive full access to the Schools Mental Health Fund and also receive an additional 10% loading to their fund to cover additional expenses associated with delivering programs outside metropolitan areas.</p> <p>In November 2024 a refreshed Menu was released, following an invitation to supply process designed to ensure a suite of programs and services are available that cater specifically for rural and regional students, Koorie students, LGBTIQ+ students, students with disability and culturally and linguistically diverse students.</p> <p>49 (or over 83%) of the 59 of the programs included on the Menu are available statewide.</p> <p>There are also 10 programs offered in specific geographic areas of need, including in the rural and remote department areas of Central Highlands, Wimmera South West, Inner Gippsland, and Outer Gippsland.</p> <p>These investments in the refreshed Menu are already in-place ensuring that students in rural and regional areas and complex communities have the additional resources needed to support their needs.</p>

Recommendation	Response	Explanation
<p>Recommendation 41</p> <p>That the Department of Education increase the number of Koorie Engagement Support Officers to more consistently support Koorie students.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The role of Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESOs) is to build the capacity of schools to support improved outcomes for Koorie learners, rather than provide ongoing direct support to students.</p> <p>The Koorie Education Workforce includes KESOs, Koorie Education Coordinators, and Koorie Education Managers. In addition, there are LOOKOUT Koorie Cultural Advisors, Koorie Education Children's Court Liaison Officers, and Koorie Academy of Excellence Liaison Officers. In addition, 2 new Directors, Koorie Education (located in regions) will commence in 2025. Collectively, these resources along with other targeted initiatives including professional learning, increased employment of Koorie staff by schools, funding to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations provided through new 2024–25 budget investment, and other dedicated initiatives support improved outcomes for Koorie learners.</p> <p>Expansions to the number of Koorie Education Workforce are subject to routine government decision-making processes.</p> <p>Consistent with the principle of self-determination, further discussion is required with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated.</p>
<p>Recommendation 42</p> <p>That the Department of Education introduce a behaviour survey in schools to better understand the extent of classroom disruption, as well as what interventions minimise classroom disruption. The survey should inform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. an update to the Department's behaviour policy in line with contemporary behaviour expectations b. new materials to support teachers to manage classroom behaviour and communicate with student's families about student behaviour. 	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The department has commenced work on surveying the supports and resources available to schools to support student behaviour.</p> <p>The Principal Check-in Survey distributed at points throughout the school year is one source of information that details the experience of schools in relation to classroom disruption and student behaviour.</p>

Recommendation	Response	Explanation
<p>Recommendation 43</p> <p>The Victorian Government implement standards consistent with the National Framework for Reducing the Use of Restrictive Practices, including accountability measures for breaching standards.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The National Framework for Reducing the Use of Restrictive Practices (the National Framework) focuses on the reduction of the use of restrictive practices in disability services. The department welcomes the move towards consistent definitions of restraint and seclusion, however notes that further exploration regarding application of these definitions would be required as the National Framework does not take into account the different contexts between education and disability sectors, and the different legislative requirements for each.</p> <p>The department requires schools to report the use of restraint and seclusion for all students, not just those with disability, and any complaints made to the department about the treatment of students with or without disability are investigated following clear processes and procedures. The department reviews data on the use of restraint and seclusion and publishes data annually.</p>
<p>Recommendation 44</p> <p>That the Department of Education review the resources and direction it provides to schools on restraint and seclusion practices to ensure they are always undertaken according to child-centric best practice.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>The policy and resources are regularly updated, most recently in June 2024.</p> <p>Restraint and seclusion are only permitted where it is necessary to protect a student or another person from danger, there is no less restrictive measure available, and it is proportionate to the risk of harm.</p> <p>The policy requires that when physical restraint and seclusion are used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimal level of force is used to prevent harm • application must be for the minimum duration required and should be stopped once the risk has passed • the student in seclusion is always able to be observed by a staff member and the staff member available to immediately enter the space if necessary • staff take reasonable steps to ensure the immediate safety, health and wellbeing of the student/s and others (including staff).

Recommendation	Response	Explanation
<p>Recommendation 45</p> <p>That the Department of Education conduct ongoing longitudinal evaluations of Respectful Relationships education, including whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. it is achieving its aims b. there is appropriate engagement with all stakeholders, including students and parents or guardians. 	Support in principle	<p>The department supports the intent of this recommendation.</p> <p>The 2024–25 Victorian Budget has invested \$39.1 million over 4 years to continue the Respectful Relationships initiative. This funding will also enable continuing evaluation of the implementation and impact of the initiative.</p> <p>Respectful Relationships is delivered as a whole-school approach, with students, parents and families recognised and engaged as key partners in creating a culture of gender equality and respect to prevent violence.</p> <p>The department also engages with principals and other education and family violence sector stakeholders through its Respectful Relationships Advisory Group and Respectful Relationships evaluation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 46</p> <p>That the Department of Education meet with all principals from flexible learning options schools to determine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the appropriate funding levels b. whether regulations are needed to support the sector c. how to increase community awareness of flexible learning options. 	Support in principle	<p>The department has a range of mechanisms for hearing from school principals, such as the Principal Check-in Survey, which includes principals of government schools that provide Flexible Learning Options.</p> <p>The department conducted a review of complementary settings, including Flexible Learning Options, in 2023 and 2024, which included consultation with a range of leaders from Flexible Learning Options. The department is currently finalising advice for the Minister for Education.</p>
<p>Recommendation 47</p> <p>That the Victorian Government significantly increase its investment in school capital infrastructure funding in government schools.</p>	Support in principle	<p>The government has significantly increased investment in capital infrastructure since 2015, including state budget allocations of more than \$16.9 billion. Funding for school maintenance alone has increased by over 5 times since 2015.</p> <p>Future investment in capital infrastructure is subject to routine government decision-making processes.</p>
<p>Recommendation 48</p> <p>That the Victorian Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government for significantly increased capital investment in government school infrastructure.</p>	Support in full	<p>The Commonwealth Government currently provides ongoing infrastructure funding for non-government schools within the <i>Australian Education Act 2013</i>. This creates an inequity between schooling sectors.</p> <p>Victoria is advocating for long-term Commonwealth funding for school infrastructure, as recommended by the original Gonski review.</p>

Recommendation	Response	Explanation
<p>Recommendation 49</p> <p>That the Victorian Government work with the Commonwealth Government to ensure additional funding is allocated to state schools to address non-student items (such as capital depreciation costs) so that the entirety of funding allocated under the National Schools Reform Agreement is spent on student learning outcomes.</p>	Support in full	<p>Victoria has signed the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement – Full and Fair Funding 2025-2034 with the Commonwealth, which commits the Commonwealth Government to lift its funding from 20% to 25% of the Schooling Resource Standard for government schools.</p> <p>This will provide 100% of full and fair funding to government schools and students by the end of the agreement.</p> <p>As part of this agreement, Victoria will remove the provision that recognises 4% of government school funding for indirect school costs such as capital depreciation. This will be replaced with 4% of recurrent funding on eligible educational expenses.</p>
<p>Recommendation 50</p> <p>That the Victorian Government review English as an Additional Language reference funding with a view to ensuring that every student requiring support is reached.</p>	Under review	<p>The government has undertaken a review of English as an Additional Language funding, which will support consideration of options for enhancements to the funding model to better target student need.</p>
<p>Recommendation 51</p> <p>That the Department of Education implement in full Recommendation 6 of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office's 2020 report, Management of the Student Resource Package.</p>	Support in full	Complete.
<p>Recommendation 52</p> <p>That the Department of Education implement Recommendation 7 of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office's 2020 report, Management of the Student Resource Package.</p>	Support in full	Complete. The department's Policy and Advisory Library has been reviewed and updated.
<p>Recommendation 53</p> <p>That the Department of Education publish a detailed accounting breakdown of how the Student Resource Package is used to calculate each government school's annual budget, including the eligibility, application and calculation of each Student Resource Package reference.</p>	Support in full	<p>Details of the principles and methodology behind each funding line are available through the department's Policy and Advisory Library, providing transparency to schools. Schools can also see these lines as part of their Budget Management Reports.</p>

Recommendation	Response	Explanation
<p>Recommendation 54</p> <p>That the Victorian Government continue to advocate to the Commonwealth Government that the Commonwealth fund the remaining 5% gap in Schooling Resource Standard funding to bridge the gap with non-government schools that have been fully funded.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>Victoria has signed the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement – Full and Fair Funding 2025-2034 with the Commonwealth which commits the Commonwealth Government to lift its funding from 20% to 25% of the Schooling Resource Standard for government schools.</p> <p>This will provide 100% of full and fair funding to government schools and students by the end of the agreement. This agreement follows continued advocacy from Victoria to deliver full and fair funding.</p>