Choice and Affordability Fund

2025 Annual Report – Independent Schools Tasmania



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 Independent Schools Tasmania 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

Independent Schools Tasmania is a registered not for profit incorporated association - Incorporation number 01575C

Independent Schools Tasmania is registered as a charity with the ACNC - ABN No 20 083 450 700

Body corporate

Not-for-profit (NFP)

Independent Schools Tasmania provides services to independent schools in Tasmania and does not operate to make a profit for its members. IST supports independent education for the benefit of students and the wider community. We advocate on behalf of our members and promote the importance of independent education.

IST remains a going concern, maintains an active organisational risk management framework, and has assessed that its current and projected income is sufficient to meet its current and ongoing operating costs in accordance with section 27 of the Australian Education Regulations 2023.

Financial viability

IST's current income is sufficient to meet current and ongoing operating costs in compliance with Section 27 of the Australian Education Regulations 2023.

Fit and proper person

IST has been managing government grants to independent schools for over 20 years. Our staff are experienced in distributing grants both State and Federal. All staff handling government monies and information are fit and proper person under sub section 28(2) of the Australian Education Regulations 2024. IST is independently audited annually

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 AAs NGRB

Simon Matthews

Executive Director



Date: 26 June 2026

Summary of 2025

From 2020 to 2029 Independent Schools Tasmania (IST) is utilising the Choice and Affordability funding to address specific challenges within the Tasmanian non-government school sector. In 2025, IST continued to focus its support around 4 key aspects of the identified priorities. In 2025 based on a review of current practice, monies were allocated as follows:

Project 1: Special circumstances funding.

A share of the Choice and Affordability Fund was allocated to support schools and students impacted by special circumstances or in priority areas such as rural, regional and remote locations and areas affected by drought or other natural disasters. We identified that circumstances that may have caused our schools to require short term emergency assistance should be allocated $100,000 in 2025. $7,000 was allocated from this allowance in 2025, with the details explained below.

Project 2: Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students.

To strengthen outcomes for schools such as helping underperforming schools improve outcomes, and supporting educationally disadvantaged schools and students, two IST Education Consultants worked alongside schools to support them across all aspects of academic development. The Education Consultants worked within schools, as well as providing regular support and guidance via emails and through ongoing professional learning provision. In 2025, the Education Consultants assisted schools to strengthen learning outcomes for the schools and to support educationally disadvantaged students through the provision of regular, relevant professional learning, targeted to each schools' unique context. An amount of $29,831 was allocated from this allowance in 2025, with the details explained below

Project 3: Student wellbeing and support. To enhance student wellbeing and support across Tasmanian Independent Schools throughout 2025, two IST Inclusive Education Consultants provided support to embed inclusive practice and wellbeing initiatives within their schools. This also incorporated the oversight of NCCD provisions and submissions. The Inclusive Education Consultants developed and led school-based and sector wide professional learning. The Inclusive Education Consultants worked in an instructional coaching capacity to support K-12 school and classroom leaders and teachers. For both Projects 2 and 3, management of engagement with schools was further refined through implementing a new Contact Reporting System using Microsoft Loop.

Project 4: Transition assistance. There are no Tasmanian independent schools that would have met the criteria to have access to support through the National Adjustment Assistance Fund. The Choice and Affordability Fund in 2025 provided compulsory regional assistance for five eligible schools to assist their transition to the Direct Measure of Income for capacity to contribute over the period 2022 to 2029.

The Choice and Affordability Fund was also planned to provide support for schools in general to transition to a new capacity to contribute model for recurrent funding although it was anticipated that very few other Tasmanian independent schools would need that support. General Transition Assistance was provided to one eligible school in 2025.

Risk	Mitigation Strategy
Delays in program delivery, changing school priorities, lower-than-expected participation, or workforce changes could result in funding not being fully expended by 30 December 2029.	Independent Schools Tasmania has embedded Choice and Affordability Fund activities within its annual operational planning and budgeting, ensuring they remain a core organisational priority. Progress, expenditure and milestones are reviewed regularly by the Executive Director and Finance Committee to identify and address risks early. Close engagement with member schools provides ongoing insight into demand, allowing programs to be refined, promoted or rescheduled as required. Where participation is lower than anticipated, effort and resources can be redirected to other approved activities that achieve the objectives of the funding agreement. Regular review of staffing capacity, project timelines and expenditure forecasts, together with ongoing communication with the Australian Government Department of Education, provides confidence that all remaining funding will be appropriately managed and fully expended by 30 December 2029.

Conclusion

Through the projects identified above, Independent Schools Tasmania was able to provide levels of support not previously accessible to our independent schools across the state.

Priority	C – Special Circumstances Funding

Activity Description: Short term emergency assistance was made available to all Tasmanian independent schools experiencing unexpected severe financial difficulty that is likely to significantly lower its educational services. A contingency of $100,000 was set aside in 2025 to address such needs but it was not required.

$7,000 was provided to Giant Steps Special Assistance School to deal with unexpected and extreme recovery costs resulting from the national recall for several children's coloured sand products after independent testing detected trace amounts of prohibited asbestos (e.g., tremolite and chrysotile).

Due to the nature of the school (Special Assistance School for students with moderate to severe autism) there were coloured sand products in every classroom. School cleaning equipment, including vacuum cleaners, were used to make an initial clean up of the product. Following this, professional advice was received that strongly recommended to the school that all equipment used in the clean up be appropriately disposed of.

Subsequent environmental assessments showed that high levels of the product were in the carpet of each classroom, with advice being received that this carpet should be replaced.

The grant from IST allowed the school to replace the cleaning equipment and was a small contribution toward the replacement of the carpet in each classroom.

Giant Steps was the only school in Tasmania with this level of impact from that incident and bore a disproportionate amount of cost due to the amount and spread of product throughout the school.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Due to the nature of the product (sand which had spread throughout floorcoverings and in furniture) and the use of it in every classroom in the school, Giant Steps was provided with $7,000 to cover costs of carpet replacement, purchase of new cleaning equipment, and disposal costs for a large amount of recalled product.	• The school still bore a large amount of the cost for clean-up and recovery. • Allocation from this activity enabled the school to manage cash flow sustainably. • The school was able to overcome this short-term financial difficulty and has resumed viable operations.
Funds remaining from special circumstances funding allocations in 2025 will be kept for future special circumstances funding or transferred to other priorities in a future work plan.	• No Tasmanian Independent School closed due to special circumstances. • Schools requiring funding were able to provide a five-year business and recovery plan, if required • Tasmanian Schools Registration Board could confirm that every independent school in Tasmania met the financial registration standard

Risk Management and Key Stakeholders

IST Leadership closely managed the situation for each independent school concerning the unplanned costs for clean-up and recovery following the product recall. It was determined, in consultation with the leadership of Giant Steps, that their unique circumstances warranted an allocation of $7,000.

Additionally, IST identified the unplanned costs to independent schools required to update their decodable resources in order to meet the Tasmanian Government's mandated Minimum Schooling Guarantee qualified for special circumstance funding.

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	$21,855	$7,000

Variations from Agreement / Work Plan

IST had the capacity to distribute $100,000 in grants but only distributed $7,000.

Activity/Initiative	Name
Priority	D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students

Activity Description

The entirety of Tasmania is identified as a regional zone with students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds presenting in schools across all areas of the state. As such, our independent schools are located across a vast area, often operating within quite isolated contexts. In 2025, two Education Consultants worked alongside schools to support them across all aspects of academic development.

Outcomes Achieved

Initiatives undertaken in 2025 for this project included the following activities undertaken by the IST Education Consultants:

- Conducted comprehensive consultation visits in schools, with a specific focus to assist students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Further reviewed school specific assessment data e.g. school-based and teachers' assessments and anecdotal data measuring progress.
- Facilitated professional learning sessions on curriculum planning to improve student

Indicators of success were that the IST Education Consultants:

- Maintained a daily diary of all school visits on request and recorded all communications with schools, demonstrating evidence of ongoing quality support to 100% of the independent schools across Tasmania.
- Made 388 visits to 100% of Tasmanian independent schools, conducting 32 in-school PL sessions, plus mentoring, coaching, planning support and help with specific issues, leading to improved knowledge and skills of teachers, improved teaching practices and improved learning outcomes for students.

outcomes, with a focus around support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Regularly disseminated information promoting best curriculum practice and current research to all IST schools.
- Conducted ongoing visits to individual schools to deliver Professional Learning sessions, reviewed current practice and provided exemplars for future practice.
- Maintained ongoing liaison with ACARA, peak curriculum bodies and external consultants to review current best practice and informed IST schools accordingly.
- Reviewed standardised school data to identify and address trends in student progress over time.
- Coordinated and conducted professional learning and teacher support workshop and webinars to assist with the delivery of teaching/learning programs around use of the achievement standards and learning progressions.
- Provided in-school mentoring and coaching support for teachers to develop teaching programs, assessment tasks and rubrics and other teaching resources for effective roll-out of the revised Australian Curriculum.
- Supported teachers through review and access the resources available from ACARA and other sources in implementing the revised Australian Curriculum and TASC courses.
- Fostered networks of teachers involved in implementing the revised Australian Curriculum and TASC courses.
- Liaised and networked with cross- sectoral representatives for work in Years 9- 12.
- Liaised with other IST consultants and consultants from other sectors to provide coordinated school support across all learning areas and phases of learning.
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- IST paid $29,831 in grants to independent schools who were required to update their decodable resources in order to meet the Tasmanian Government's mandated Minimum Schooling Guarantee. The grants were made to the following schools: St. Michael's Collegiate ($5,831); Tamar Valley Steiner School ($6,000,); Geneva Christian College ($6,000); Indie School, Devonport ($6,000); Calvin Christian School ($6,000)

- Conducted 49 other PL workshops and webinars over the course of the year for independent schools across Tasmania and collated and analysed 100% of feedback forms collected from the 1276 participants. (PL workshops and webinars included support for beginning teachers and for teachers progressing from provisional registration to full registration. Professional learning for teachers and school leaders in 2025 also included a year-long numeracy champions project, differentiation, the Australian Health Curriculum, curriculum aligned planning, NAPLAN and data literacy, Australian Curriculum V.9, Literacy and numeracy general capabilities, science of reading and structured literacy.
- Represented IST in 100% of all specified curriculum committees and events.
- Maintained documented evidence of Tasmanian independent schools' use of the revised Australian Curriculum learning progressions and achievement standards.
- Participated in cross sectoral committees, including those pertaining to work in Years 9-12.
- Maintained representation for independent schools in TASC, ACARA, AITSL, TRB, OER and other nominated related committees/sessions.
- Supported schools to comply with Registration Standards for curriculum, teaching and assessment.
- Retained all (100%) records of attendance at all meetings.
- Represented the Tasmanian independent sector on relevant Cross Sectoral committees, as they arose.

- All schools were able to purchase evidence-based reading resources
- These grants added to the contribution each school was able to make.
- These grants were required as schools had invested strongly in levelled readers prior to the Government's mandate and needed to change their resources in order to meet the Tasmanian mandate.

Risk Management

In 2025 the key risk we need to address was engagement with our Consultants by individual schools.

Risk	How the risk will be managed
Risk 1: Schools do not engage with the support and/or professional learning opportunities provided by the Education Consultant/s.	All contacts with schools are reported daily in the IST Contact Reporting System. The Education Consultants regularly review the reported contacts for schools. These were also regularly reviewed by the IST line manager (Executive Director). Schools not engaging are discussed at Team Meetings, then followed up. If necessary, the Education Consultant is performance managed.
Risk 2: The Education Consultant/s resigns.	The position will be advertised immediately, and a replacement employee found within a 4-month timeframe.

Key stakeholders

Key stakeholders were engaged, as noted below.

Stakeholder & Interest/Impact	Engagement
All Tasmanian Independent Schools stand to benefit in all aspects of academic progress and development from the support provided by the Education Consultants.	All Tasmanian Independent Schools The IST Education Consultants are required to engage with all schools in their geographic area on a regular basis. All interactions with schools and the outcomes were reported and managed. The Executive Director also visited all schools at least once in 2024 to discuss engagement, service needs and satisfaction.

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	$519,407	$29,831

Variations from Agreement / Work Plan

There were no variations.

Activity/Initiative Name	
Priority	E – Student wellbeing and support

Activity Description

To enhance student wellbeing and support across Tasmanian Independent Schools, in 2025 two full-time Inclusive Education Consultants worked with schools across the state.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
The Inclusive Education Consultants: - Conducted a variety of face-to- face consultancies, tailored professional learning sessions, briefings, group presentations, session facilitation and instructional coaching sessions. - Provided responsive, pastoral support to schools about student issues that arose within a school's context - Supported the specific learning needs of identified students at whole-school, whole-class and individual levels within Tasmanian independent schools. - Guided and supported schools in understanding and applying relevant processes associated with the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD). - Supported school executives and teachers in the education of students with identified needs, K-12, providing assistance with appropriate planning practices. - Responded to schools' requests for support regarding student pastoral and wellbeing matters and provided timely, professional guidance in consideration of appropriate evidence-base and legislative context. - Delivered effective professional learning both face-to-face and online for staff within independent schools, on other interrelated topics, as well as developing associated resources. - Represented IST and the independent school sector on committees and in a variety of inclusive education and wellbeing forums.	Indicators of success included that the IST Inclusive Education Consultants: - Maintained a daily diary of visits and communication with all IST schools, demonstrating evidence of ongoing quality support to all (100%) of the independent schools across Tasmania, as requested. - Made **340** visits to 100% of Tasmanian independent schools, conducting **11** in-school PL sessions, plus mentoring, coaching, planning support and help with specific issues, leading to improved knowledge and skills of teachers, improved teaching practices and improved learning outcomes for students. - Facilitated **24** PL sessions for independent schools across Tasmania with completion of feedback forms collated from **356** participants. The professional learning included understanding trauma, trauma informed classroom practices, inclusive education strategies and technologies. - Represented IST in 100% of all specified inclusive education and wellbeing committees and events. Ensured all (100%) of Tasmanian Independent Schools benefitted from access to ongoing, pertinent advice and outsourced PL opportunities. - Recorded evidence of work with Tasmanian independent schools to construct proactive wellbeing and inclusion school planning, with records retained of working with all schools in 2025. - Maintained evidence to support Tasmanian independent schools' to effectively apply NCCD guidelines in school processes.

Risk Management

In 2024 we did not need to address any of the potential risks listed below:

Risk	How the risk will be managed
Risk 1: The Inclusive Education Consultant/s resigns.	The position will be advertised immediately, and a replacement employee found within a 3-month timeframe.
Risk 2: Schools do not engage with the support and/or professional learning opportunities provided by the Inclusive Education Consultant/s.	2. All contacts with schools are reported daily in the IST Contact Reporting System. The Education Consultants regularly review the reported contacts for schools. These are also regularly reviewed by the IST line manager (Executive Director). Schools not engaging are discussed at Team Meetings, then followed up.

Key stakeholders

Key stakeholders were engaged, as noted below.

Stakeholder & Interest/Impact	Engagement
All Tasmanian Independent Schools stand to benefit from the support provided through this project, through the Inclusive Education Consultant. This will enable them to embed inclusive practice and wellbeing initiatives within the schools.	The IST Inclusive Education Consultants are required to engage with all schools in their geographic area on a regular basis. All interactions with schools and the outcomes were reported and managed. The Executive Director visited all schools at least once in 2024 to discuss engagement, service needs and satisfaction.

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	$519,407	$NIL

Variations from Agreement / Work Plan

There were no variations.

Activity/Initiative Name	
Priority	B – Transition Assistance

Activity Description

There are no Tasmanian independent schools that would have met the criteria to have access to support through the National Adjustment Assistance Fund.
The Choice and Affordability Fund was planned to provide compulsory regional assistance for eligible schools during their transition to the Direct Measure of Income for capacity to contribute during the period 2022 to 2029.

The Choice and Affordability Fund will also provide support for schools in general to transition to a new capacity to contribute model for recurrent funding although it is anticipated that only one other Tasmanian independent school will need that support.

Outcomes Achieved

In 2025, Regional Transition Assistance totalling $460,125 was provided to five eligible schools. General transition Assistance of $1,537 was provided to one eligible school.

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Any school assisted will gradually adjust its fees and/or expenditure over the period to 2029 to enable the school to continue viable operations beyond 2029 without further additional financial assistance	Before the 2025 annual payment, the Chair of each school board was required to provide a financial assurance letter stating that: • The Board of (name)school, at its meeting on (date), reviewed a 10-year financial plan for the school that incorporated appropriate assumptions, including per student funding based on the school's current CTC (DMI) score and including CAF transition assistance funding. • In the opinion of the Board, the school will, throughout the 10-year period of the plan: - Be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due and payable. - Meet the requirement under the Australian Education Act to be financially viable; and - Comply with Tasmanian Registration Standard 6 – that the school has sufficient financial resources to provide the education for which it is registered. • The school provides annual financial report for each year from 2022 to 2029 as evidence of achievement of planned progress.

Risk Management

In 2025 IST did not need to address any of the potential risks listed below.

Risk	How the risk will be managed
A school that is being assisted does not demonstrate financial sustainability.	Before each annual payment, the Chair of the school board must provide a financial assurance letter (see above). The school must provide an annual financial report for each year from 2022 to 2029. IST would set up a working group with the school leaders, IST representatives and expert nominees to initiate changes necessary to resume financial sustainability. If not possible to do so, payments will cease.

Key stakeholders

IST engaged with all key stakeholders on the basis noted below in preparation for the first payments in 2022 and continues to engage with them annually regarding the financial assurance letter and the annual payment.

Stakeholder & Interest/Impact	Engagement
Any school being assisted by this activity. The stakeholder's financial plans and strategy for ongoing sustainability will be impacted by this activity.	IST had previously met with schools eligible for Regional Transition Assistance to give full details of the activity and to achieve consensus on the method of allocating the funding between them. On receipt of the Quarter 4 FET, IST calculated for each eligible school the amount by which its Commonwealth funding for the following year under DMI is less than it would have received in SES funding indexed from 2019 (Funding Difference) The percentage share of the Regional Transition Assistance amounts available from IST in 2024 for each school was the same as its Funding Difference percentage share of the total Funding Difference for all eligible schools. The 2024 payment of General Transition Assistance to one eligible school was be based on its Funding Difference to ensure that the payment is in line with the payments to schools from the Regional Transition Assistance amount. IST had communicated to all schools being assisted the procedure for calculating and making annual payments to them and the financial assurance letters to be provided before payments could be made.

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	NIL	$461,662

Variations from Agreement / Work Plan

The only variation was the increase in the number of schools eligible to share the quarantined regional transition assistance amount from 3 to 5 schools.