

Choice and Affordability Fund

2023 Annual Report – Association of Independent
Schools of the Northern Territory



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 the Northern Territory 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

Independent Schools Northern Territory (ABN: 95 830 234 9910 is a Company Limited by Guarantee (Trading Name – Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory – AISNT).

Independent Schools Northern Territory is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

Not-for-profit (NFP)

Independent Schools Northern Territory (ACNC) is a Company Limited by Guarantee and is registered with ACNC. ISNT complies with the Not-for-Profit requirements of ASIC and ACNC. ISNT is governed by a Constitution.

Financial viability

Independent Schools Northern Territory's (ISNT) is financially viable. ISNT's income is sufficient to meet current and ongoing costs. Independent Schools Northern Territory has a risk management plan and a Finance and Audit committee that meets twice a year, (with an independent accountant as a member), to oversee the financial management policies and procedures of the organisation; Finance reports and prepared and tabled at each ISNT Board meeting.

Fit and proper person

Independent Schools Northern Territory (ISNT) meets the requirements under subsection 28(2). ISNT Directors and Staff have the relevant skills, knowledge and experience needed to support Independent Schools in the Northern Territory. Staff and Directors undergo a Criminal History Check; Directors sign a Code Conduct; Directors provide details of skills for a Skills Matrix; Directors have a Director Identification Number; ISNT Constitution outlines Director Duties and Interests.

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 NGRB¹:**



Cheryl Salter
Executive Director

Date: 28 June 2024

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

Summary of 2023

In 2023, the Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory (AISNT) served as the representative body for 25 Independent Schools throughout the Northern Territory.

AISNT continued to advance various initiatives and activities supported by the Choice and Affordability Fund.

AISNT remained focused on addressing the four key National Priorities:

- promoting choice and affordability;
- providing transition assistance to schools;
- strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged students; and
- supporting student well-being and welfare.

The majority of initiatives and activities were accessible to all Member Schools with the exception being direct allocations of transition funding to eligible schools.

Priority A – Choice and Affordability

Activity – Focus on Parental Choice

AISNT collaborated with THRIVE Territory to create and administer a parent survey tailored to the Northern Territory (NT). The survey aimed to gather insights into the factors that attract families to specific schools. It should be noted that MATSIS schools were not part of the survey.

The information gathered from the parent survey helped schools understand parental preferences and guided them in refining their business models based on data, aiming to enhance enrolment attraction.

Activity – Informing Effective School Priorities

AISNT remains committed to supporting schools through various initiatives that enhance effective school governance, management and leadership.

Activities and initiatives included:

1. One-day Business Managers Forum exclusively for Business Managers and School Leaders. This forum aimed to provide valuable insights and practical knowledge on school funding; financial compliance and workplace law.
2. Two AISNT Officers attended a comprehensive two-day workshop on ‘School Leaders and the Law’.

Priority B – Transition Assistance Grants

Activity – Transition Assistance

Three Member Schools identified by the Department of Education received Transition Assistance Grants. Two of these schools were eligible for the National Adjustment Assistance Fund (NAAF) under a previous funding arrangement and received a NAAF Grant.

Priority C – Special Circumstances Grants

Activity – Special Circumstances Funding

No applications were received from schools in 2023 for Special Circumstances Funding Grants.

Priority D - Strengthening Outcomes for Independent Schools in the Northern Territory

Activity - Strong Curriculum and Pedagogy Support in Schools

AISNT continued to engage a Teaching and Learning Coordinator in 2023. This Coordinator played a crucial role in providing personalised and centralised support to teachers and support staff. Their support initiatives focused on enhancing student engagement in learning and assisting teachers in delivering literacy and numeracy programs. AISNT remained committed to ensuring that schools' curricula remained responsive to the evolving Australian Curriculum (Version 9).

Activity – Supporting Indigenous Schools

AISNT continued to support Indigenous Schools and held two Indigenous Leaders Forums in 2023.

Activity - INSPIRE – Maximising identification and reporting NCCD

AISNT continued to support the use of the INSPIRE platform in schools. Teachers actively participated in professional learning opportunities to enhance their proficiency in utilising the INSPIRE software.

Activity - Developing Pathways and School Industry Partnerships

In 2023, AISNT established the role of VET and Pathways Officer. The primary responsibility of this officer was to support and assist Independent Schools in exploring, collaborating and implementing VET and Pathways options for secondary students.

Priority E - Supporting Positive Well Being for Independent School Students in the Northern Territory

Activity – Student Well-Being and Support

During 2023, AISNT also organized and delivered professional learning opportunities focused on enhancing well-being for school communities, staff and students.

Risk Management

Risk	How the risk will be managed
Substantial carry-over of transition funds into later years of the program, as expenditure is directly linked to actual funding impacts of CTC policy change.	A carry-over of funds is required, to mitigate future impacts of non-systemic schools in future years as these schools transition to DMI based CTC.
Carry-over of Special Circumstances funding may occur, as expenditure is directly linked.	A carry-over of funds may be required to mitigate the future impacts.
A school that receives Special Circumstances funding is still unable to improve the circumstances they have encountered.	AISNT would monitor the school's use of funds and their progress in addressing the circumstances and provide in kind support as needed.

Activity Report

Activity/Initiative

Priority

Focus on Parental Choice/Informing Effective School Priorities

A – Choice and Affordability

Activity Description

The goals for the Choice and Affordability of Schools priority are as follows:

- To improve and maintain a wide range of schooling choices for families in the Northern Territory, encouraging progress in educational standards and fostering healthy competition within the education system;
- To promote inclusivity and diversity within the schooling landscape by supporting the growth of the Independent Schools Sector in the Northern Territory;
- To offer support and guidance to schools that are adversely impacted by the new funding arrangements, helping them navigate structural changes and plan accordingly.

Parent Survey:

AISNT collaborated with THRIVE Territory to create and administer a parent survey tailored to the Northern Territory (NT). The survey was designed to allow parents of students attending Member Schools to provide insight as to what impacted their decision to enrol at the school and what impacts their decisions around continued enrolment at the school.

- 7 Member Schools participated;
- 526 survey responses;
- 634 students represented; and
- Covered students from Transition to Year 12.
- NB: The 10 MATSIS Schools did not participate in the Parent Survey.

A Parent Choice Report was compiled with an analysis of all parent survey responses and each participating school received a report specific to their parent responses.

The data collected from the parent survey helped schools to gain insights into parental preferences, enabling them to refine their business strategies to attract more enrolments.

Informing Effective School Priorities

AISNT organised a One-day Business Managers Forum exclusively for Business Managers and School Leaders. This forum aimed to provide valuable insights and practical knowledge on school funding; financial compliance and workplace law.

- Neil Leek, an expert in educational funding and governance, delivered an informative presentation during the event. Topics included covered:
 - Understanding Australian Government Funding;
 - Navigating the Northern Territory Government's policies and procedures pertaining to school funding;
 - Applying for Capital Grants through the Northern Territory Block Grant Authority.

- Will Snow from Findlaysons Lawyers conducted a Crash Course in Workplace Law. This session addressed legal aspects relevant to school administration and compliance. Participants gained insights into employment law, workplace safety and compliance.

Two AISNT Officers attended a comprehensive two-day workshop on ‘School Leaders and the Law’. This was facilitated by The Brown Collective and Colin, Biggers and Paisley Lawyers. These workshops covered essential legal considerations for school leaders. Topics included employment contracts, student rights, duty of care and legal responsibilities. The primary objective was to enhance the knowledge base of AISNT Officers, enabling them to provide better support to both principals and business managers with dealing with legal matters pertaining to schools. This initiative aimed to empower AISNT Officers with valuable insights and resources for their roles.

AISNT continues to empower schools with knowledge and resources, ensuring effective governance and informed decision-making.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
AISNT will employ the services of an agency to assist in developing and conducting the parent survey.	THRIVE Territory were engaged by AISNT to develop and conduct the parent survey. THRIVE Territory provided a comprehensive report on the parent survey results.
AISNT aims to have as many of its member schools as possible participate in the parent survey.	47% of eligible schools participated in the parent survey (MATSIS Schools were not included in the survey).
The data from the parent survey will be shared with the NT Independent Schools by AISNT at a Forum.	All schools received a copy of the parent survey report. The parent survey report was uploaded the AISNT website. The parent survey results was presented at an AISNT School Leaders and Business Managers Forum.
AISNT aims to see improved enrolments across the sector.	The Independent School Sector in the Northern Territory has experienced an increase in enrolments in 2022 and 2023.
Business Managers and School Leaders have a thorough understanding of school funding, good financial management practices and good governance.	20% of schools were represented at, and participated in, the Business Managers and School Leaders Forum.

Principals and Business Managers have a thorough understanding of good workplace practices and industrial and workplace law.

20% of schools were represented at, and participated in, the Business Managers and School Leaders Forum.

60% of schools were represented at the two Principal and Business Managers Forums.

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	\$82,946	\$0

Centralised Funding was utilised to:

- Parent Survey Creation and Administration: THRIVE Territory collaborated to create and administer a parent survey.
- Forums and Presenter Engagement: Facilitated the organisation of forums and contract presenters.
- Professional Learning Opportunities: Enable AISNT Officers to attend professional learning opportunities.
- Salary Component: Enable an AISNT Officer to plan, collaborate and engage in the initiatives.

Activity Report

Activity/Initiative	Transition Assistance Grants
Priority	B – Transition Assistance

Activity Description

AISNT maintained its commitment to providing Transition Assistance to the three Member Schools identified by the Department of Education. These schools were recognised as requiring direct financial assistance due to the adverse effects of the new funding arrangements. This assistance aimed to ensure the financial viability of these independent schools during the transition period, as they transition to the new funding arrangements. Two of these schools were eligible for the National Adjustment Assistance Fund (NAAF) under a previous funding arrangement.

The criteria used to identify these schools was:

- An ARIA greater than zero,
- A Direct Measure of Income CTC change of 3 or more points from either the 2011 or 2016 SES CTC score,
- Receive less funding in any year from 2020 to 2029 under the DMI arrangements than under 2019 indexed Schooling Resource Standard
- Have an average fee level of less than \$20,000.

A portion of the allocated funds were quarantined in 2023 for future years, as outlined in the Choice and Affordability Fund Work Plan Expenditure Profile for 2022-2029.

In 2023, Transition Assistance Funds were utilised to provide continued access and professional learning support for the INSPIRE platform, to the three identified member schools. This platform is specifically designed to aid in the identification and documentation of student adjustments for students with disabilities. Teachers in these schools were provided with ongoing professional development opportunities to assist with the use of the platform. The INSPIRE platform contributed to the generation of more precise and consistent data for the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD), enabling schools to optimise funding for students with disabilities and ensuring they receive the necessary support. The implementation of INSPIRE is going well in these schools.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Direct Grants to schools that are eligible under the National Adjustment Assistance Fund (NAAF)	Two schools were eligible to receive a direct grant under the National Adjustment Assistance Fund (NAAF).
Identified schools by DESE as requiring Transition Assistance.	Three schools were eligible to receive a direct Transition Assistance grant

INSPIRE software platform utilised by identified schools to support the identification and recording of student adjustments.	The three identified schools eligible for Transition Assistance utilised the INSPIRE software platform.
All Independent Schools using the INSPIRE software platform will be provided with professional development on its usage.	<p>All schools using the INSPIRE software platform receive professional development upon request.</p> <p>Six schools regularly attend network meetings to support Inclusion Support Coordinators to work with staff.</p> <p>One day formal professional development training was provided conducted at three schools.</p> <p>Support is offered to individual teachers who contact the office for support.</p>

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	\$90,000	\$390,530

Centralised Funding was utilised to:

- INSPIRE Platform: AISNT purchased the INSPIRE platform in bulk for the three schools that received Transition Assistance funds.
- Salary: AISNT Officer coordinated the rollout of the INSPIRE platform and provided support to staff in schools, ensuring effective utilisation of the software

Activity Report

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

Activity Description

The Special Circumstances Grants provide emergency funding for schools who meet the following criteria:

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

In 2020, \$200,000 was set aside for Special Circumstances Grants. A further \$200,000 was set aside in 2021. (\$400,000 in total).

No applications were received from schools in 2023 for Special Circumstances Funding Grants.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
All eligible applications will be considered for Special Circumstances funding.	There were no applications for Special Circumstances funding in 2023.

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	\$0	\$0

Activity Report

Activity/Initiative	Strengthening Outcomes for Independent Schools in the Northern Territory
Priority	D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students

Activity Description

AISNT continued to allocate funding for the role of Teaching and Learning Coordinator in 2023, under the Choice and Affordability Fund. This Coordinator played a crucial role in providing personalised and centralised support to teachers and support staff. Their support initiatives focused on enhancing student engagement in learning and assisting teachers in delivering literacy and numeracy programs.

AISNT remained committed to ensuring that schools' curricula remained responsive to the evolving Australian Curriculum (Version 9). The Teaching and Learning Coordinator actively participated in the National and Territory network meetings, staying informed about new developments and initiatives related to the Australian Curriculum review. To facilitate this, the coordinator offered professional learning opportunities at the individual school level and collaborated with forums across the Independent Schools Sector.

Teachers actively participated in professional learning opportunities to enhance their proficiency in utilising the INSPIRE software. This enabled them to efficiently collect, analyse and maintain accurate, consistent data for the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with a Disability (NCCD). By ensuring reliable data, schools were better equipped to optimise funding allocation for student with disabilities, ensuring that these students received the necessary support and adjustments.

AISNT organised two full day forums for the Indigenous School Leadership Network (one in Darwin and one in Alice Springs). These forums were specifically designed to continue to grow a supportive network among Independent Schools with Indigenous students enrolled. The primary objectives included exchanging ideas, disseminating information of culturally to facilitate the exchange of ideas, disseminate information on culturally responsive innovative practices, and addressing challenges faced by schools in supporting Indigenous students. The forums fostered collaboration, allowing school leaders to learn from each other and collectively work towards educational outcomes for Indigenous students.

The forums encompassed a wide range of topics aimed at addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by Independent Schools with Indigenous students enrolled. Some of the topics covered included:

1. Upskilling Indigenous staff: exploring professional learning/development opportunities and strategies to enhance the skills and knowledge of Indigenous staff.
2. Reconciliation in education: examining the actions and initiatives undertaken by schools in promoting reconciliation, as well as discussing the aspirations and goals of schools in this regard.
3. School sustainability: providing support to Indigenous Schools concerning governance and funding to ensure their long-term viability.

4. School Reporting: discussing effective methods of reporting on Indigenous student outcomes and progress, with a focus on fostering transparency and accountability.
5. Cultural Competency within a School Community: exploring approaches and practices that promote cultural competence within the school community, fostering a culturally responsive and inclusive environment.
6. Cultural Well-being: understanding and discussing various programs and initiatives that contribute to the well-being of Indigenous students within the diverse school settings.

These topics aimed to foster knowledge sharing, collaboration, and the identification of effective strategies to address the unique needs of Indigenous student in Independent Schools in the Northern Territory.

AISNT continued to implement its Reconciliation Action Plan (Reflect RAP).

In 2023, AISNT established the role of VET and Pathways Officer. The primary responsibility of this officer was to support and assist Independent Schools in exploring, collaborating and implementing VET and Pathways options for secondary students. This involved active collaboration and networking with National and Northern Territory working groups.

A VET and Pathways Workshop was organised in Alice Springs for School Leaders. Providers of VET and Pathway opportunities presented their programs.

In 2022, AISNT was invited to be part of the AISNSW Waratah Project. *The Waratah Project supports participating schools to develop and implement strategies that will improve the literacy, numeracy and other academic outcomes of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, including initiatives to support student wellbeing and strengthen relationships with families and communities.*

During late 2022, an AISNT Officer actively engaged in the AISNSW Waratah Project training program. In 2023, staff members from two Independent Schools in the Northern Territory also participated in the Waratah Project with support from the Choice and Affordability Fund. This valuable experience fostered the exchange of innovative ideas and facilitated collaboration among educators.

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
The Teaching and Learning Coordinator will provide teachers and support staff with individualised support through the provision of initiatives to improve engagement of students in their learning and to support teachers in the delivery of strong literacy and numeracy programs to students.	Support and professional development was provided to 9 schools in 2023 (36%). This constitutes a 100% response rate.
The Teaching and Learning Coordinator will respond to all requests from schools to assist with matters relating to teaching and learning.	All requests from schools were met in 2023, ranging from advice to professional development in schools. Information was shared as required from ACARA and other sources as it became available.

The Teaching and Learning Coordinator will provide a minimum of one Collaboration Forum per year.	Collaboration offered online through the Curriculum Coordinators portal.
All Independent Schools are responsive in regard to the changes to the Australian Curriculum.	All Independent Schools in the Northern Territory have commenced the implementation of the Australian Curriculum v 9.0. Monitoring of schools occurs every six months.
All Indigenous Community Schools will be provided with support to provide pathways for their Indigenous staff.	Presentation at March Indigenous Leaders Forum on training pathways for Indigenous staff.
All Indigenous Community Schools will be provided with the opportunity to attend a forum with focus on strengthening relational partnerships with their communities.	Two Indigenous Leadership forums provided each year with a focus on school engagement, student outcomes, community partnerships and strengthening leadership in Indigenous Schools.
All Independent Schools have access to the INSPIRE software platform.	All Independent Schools in the Northern Territory have access to the INSPIRE software platform to assist with the data collection for the NCCD.
All Independent Schools using the INSPIRE software platform will be provided with professional development on its usage.	All schools using the INSPIRE software platform receive professional development upon request. Six schools regularly attend network meetings to support Inclusion Support Coordinators to work with staff. One day formal professional development training was provided conducted at three schools. Support is offered to individual teachers who contact the office for support.
School leadership and staff are aware of VET and Pathway options for secondary students.	8 Independent Schools engaged in this initiative.

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	\$498,759	\$0

Centralised Funding was utilised to:

Strong Curriculum and Pedagogy Support in Schools

- Salary (including on costs): Teaching and Learning Coordinator (0.6 FTE).
- Forums/Meetings/Workshops: Venue and catering.
- Travel and Accommodation: Teaching and Learning Coordinator to provide on site support.

Supporting Indigenous Schools

- Salary (including on costs): AISNT Officer to oversee the initiatives and support Indigenous Schools. (0.2 FTE)
- Travel and Accommodation: AISNT Officer to visit schools to provide on site support and provide travel and accommodation for Waratah Program participants.

INSPIRE – Maximising identification and reporting NCCD

- INSPIRE Platform: AISNT purchased the INSPIRE platform in bulk for the three schools that received Transition Assistance funds (NB: Does not include the Transition Assistance Schools).
- Salary (Including on costs): AISNT Officer to support the rollout (0.2 FTE).

Developing Pathways and School Industry Partnerships

- Salary (Including On Costs): AISNT Pathways Officer (0.4 FTE)
- Forums/Meetings/Workshops: Venue and catering.
- Travel and Accommodation: AISNT Pathways Officer to visit schools to provide on site support.

Activity Report

Activity/Initiative	Supporting Positive Well Being for Independent School Students in the Northern Territory
Priority	E – Student wellbeing and support

Activity Description

In 2023, AISNT continued its commitment to supporting Member Schools in fostering secure and nurturing environments. The Well-Being Network that was established as a platform for collaboration and support amongst educators, continued in 2023, meeting four times throughout the year. This network continued to serve as a valuable resource for exchanging ideas, sharing experiences and discussing best practices relation to promoting and maintaining well-being in schools.

During 2023, AISNT also organized and delivered professional learning opportunities focused on enhancing well-being for school communities, staff and students. These opportunities included the following examples:

- A two day workshop with Professor Lea Waters ‘Bringing out the best in Students – Understanding Trauma’;
- A two day workshop presented by Pauline Neil from MH Training ‘Youth Mental Health First Aid’;
- AISNT Wellbeing Network met four times throughout 2023. Key themes covered included: Trauma Informed Practice; Mental Health First Aid/Literacy; Respectful Relationships; Positive Psychology and Education; Inclusive Practices; Cultural Wellbeing; and Online Safety.
- Principal and School Well-Being Presentation by Brian Morgan (Headspace).

Outcomes Achieved

Outcomes	Indicators of success
AISNT will support schools to create safe and supportive environments.	All Independent Schools have the opportunity to be members of the AISNT Wellbeing Network. 9 Independent Schools are currently active members (36%).
AISNT will provide at least one workshop/forum per year.	Two workshops were held in 2023: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Mental First Aid • Bringing out the Best in Students (Professor Lea Waters).
Current and relevant information provided through the journal and on the AISNT website.	Information distributed via email and available on the AISNT Wellbeing Portal.
All enquiries from schools regarding wellbeing and mental health will have a timely response.	All enquiries responded to within 48 hours.

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	\$137,120	\$0

Centralised Funding was utilised to:

- Salary and On Costs: AISNT Officer (0.2) to support Well-being initiatives.
- Presenter Fees/Travel and Accommodation: Two, two day workshops.
- Travel and Accommodation: AISNT Officer school visits/attendance at workshops/forums.