Choice and Affordability Fund

2023 Annual Report
Independent Schools Victoria



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 Victoria 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 Victoria Limited is a not for profit entity registered with the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission (ACNC)

ABN 44 711 074 857

Charity reporting is up to date

Not-for-profit (NFP)

Independent Schools Victoria is a registered not-for-profit organisation that complies with ACNC ongoing obligations to remain registered.

Financial viability

Independent Schools Victoria has income levels required to meet current and ongoing operation costs. Independent Schools Victoria has the management structure required to manage the ongoing operation costs of the current year and has strategic plans and budgets in place.

Audited Annual Financial Statements are lodged with ACNC annually, with the most recent annual report for December 2023, whereby ISV's auditors have provided an unmodified audit opinion.

Fit and proper person

Independent Schools Victoria employs staff with the relevant skills, knowledge, experience and expertise to support non-government schools in Victoria. All staff must hold a current working with children check. Staff and Directors also sign off on a Code of Conduct Policy and declare any Conflict of 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.

Poonam Anand

Chief Financial Officer and Company Secretary

Date: 30 June 2024

Summary of 2023

Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) continued to progress and refine the various initiatives and activities under the Choice and Affordability Fund (CAF). Whilst Victoria no longer experienced COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions in 2023, there continued to be challenges for schools with staff/skill shortages emerging as an overarching theme, along with the fatigue from dealing with the previous three years of pandemic.

In some areas external expertise involved in progressing activities became unavailable. As a result, several initiatives didn't progress as much as expected e.g., Vision and Values. The objectives of this program are being reevaluated for possible incorporation into StrategyStory during 2024. The Deep Dive Professional Learning is one of the projects impacted by teacher shortages resulting in some reluctance by Principals to have teachers out of the classroom.

Centrally funded initiatives and activities have been made available for all Victorian Independent schools represented by ISV. These activities are necessary to support Victorian Independent Schools address the national priorities of the fund. All schools represented by the ISV Non-Government Representative Body can contribute to pilot projects to ensure school context is reflected in content as it is being developed and trialled and partake in established initiatives. These initiatives include:

- Data-informed assessments for school sustainability
- Assessing financial risk and safeguarding your school's future (Composite Financial Index)
- innovationXdesign
- StrategyStory for Schools
- Governance, Compliance and Employment Relations Training
- Employment Relations Service Provision
- Deep Dive Professional Learning
- What Really Matters
- Student Wellbeing and Support Initiative
- Special Circumstances Support.

In our 2022-2025 work plan, we referred to ISV working with nominated Regional Transition (RTA) Assistance schools eligible to receive direct allocation of transition funding to develop a Sustainability Plan. This planning provides a process and regular schedule for each school to consider its viability and business model into the future. This work continued in early 2023 with plans being reviewed and appraised for the third consecutive year. This will be an ongoing activity for the duration of the CAF program.

ISV also assists other Victorian Independent schools. These are schools that either experienced reduced funding because of the move to the DMI funding methodology compared to the former SES funding methodology (transition schools) or are eligible under the former National Adjustment Assistance Fund (NAAF). Like RTA schools, transition and NAAF schools are required to submit to ISV an annual Sustainability Plan.

In 2023 no applications were received for Special Circumstances funding. However, schools were reminded of the application process if in need of timely support in the event of an emergency and application details remain on the ISV website.

Activity Report

Activity/Initiative	Helping schools understand what really matters to them.
Priority	A – Choice and Affordability
, none	B – Transition Assistance
	C – Special Circumstances Funding
	D – Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students
	E – Student wellbeing and support

Activity Description – What Really Matters

In our 2022-25 work plan, we referred to the development of a tool that will help principals in Independent schools determine what really matters to families when enrolling in their school. This tool will enable principals to have the right conversations with families when they enrol and to assist them to make the correct choice in relation to their decision. The methodology used will result in a school's philosophy being aligned with the needs and wants of existing and prospective parents.

There are three separate components to this initiative:

- What Really Matters
- Vision and Values
- Leading Learning that Matters (LLtM) Masters and Mentoring

Research shows that the societal attitudes, beliefs and perceptions that have shaped parental experiences around schooling and school choice in the past is changing.¹ At the same time, our understanding around why people make decisions and how certain behaviours can be leveraged to influence these decisions has increased due to the work of behavioural economists such as Daniel Kahneman and Richard Thaler.

This project aims to apply a behavioural science lens to the issue of school choice to explore how parents make their initial decisions and continue to evaluate school choice along their child's education journey. It seeks to gain a more nuanced understanding of what really matters to parents when they choose a school for their children, what they expect from a school and what influences their decision making.

Developing a greater understanding of school choice among both parents and school leaders will assist parents in making the right decisions about a school that will best suit their individual child.

The initial phase of the project involved the scoping of a detailed research study to determine the factors that matter for parents when choosing an Independent school. Building from the initial work required to design the study, we have completed and published a research report related to the

¹ Pearson, D., & De lure, R. (2022). NAB Education Insight Report Part 1. National Australia Bank. https://business.nab.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/NAB-Private-Schools-Survey-2022-Part-1-1.pdf

issue of school choice titled: Drivers of School Choice: The Role of Behavioural Science in Parental Decision Making. This report is available on ISV's website to all parents, school leaders and the public.

We have used the results of this paper to revise the project methodology to align with the Jobs To Be Done Framework (JTBD) a behavioural science technique based on the idea that whenever customers 'hire' (i.e., use) a product, they do it for a specific 'job' (i.e., to achieve a desired outcome). If it does an unsatisfactory job, we 'fire' it and look for an alternative.

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Developed a framework based on the JTBD methodology specifically related to school choice to help schools understand parental choice in their community.	The JTBD framework successfully tested and rolled out for use in the data collection interviews with parents. • Parent interviews completed • Collated results produced • An increase in the number and range of materials concerning parental choice
Published a research report related to the issue of school choice titled: <i>Drivers of School Choice:</i> The Role of Behavioural Science in Parental Decision Making.	This report remains available on ISV's website to all member schools, all parents at member schools and the public. A second report based on research interviews with parents will be distributed to all member schools over the coming phases of the project. https://is.vic.edu.au/drivers

Risk	How the risk will be managed
Active and positive participation of parents in research project.	There are two possibilities we are monitoring in relation to this risk:
	Identified schools not wanting to engage with the research component of this study: To mitigate against this we liaised directly with schools to determine their interest in participating and creating documentation that outlines the rationale for the study and the benefits of participating for schools.
	Ethical concerns of participants: To mitigate this risk we have gone through an internal ethics process to ensure that we are as transparent as possible to prospective parents and that we are safeguarding their safety, both physically and psychologically, while they participate in the program. This includes having multiple research project members present during interviews, collecting active consent from parents and explaining the benefits of their participation in the research.
The study delivers results that are unable to be applied to schools.	To mitigate against this outcome, we have developed supplementary materials such as the <i>Drivers of School Choice</i> publication to ensure that the research and ideas driving this project can provide benefit to all Independent member schools.

Stakeholder	Engagement Work
Participating schools and their parents.	The project team developed an expression of interest form for potential parents who will participate in the study and a series of documents that address ethical concerns.
	The project team includes former principals who have engaged with target schools to determine their interest in the project.
	Relevant materials will be published for parents and school leaders via the ISV website.

Activity Description – Vision and Values

ISV has worked with schools to help them define what they stand for as a school and the best ways to articulate who they are within their school community. This has been through a collaborative incubator model where schools have collected data and insights from their school community to define their vision and values that are reflected at the school.

The model of discovering and telling the school story through various design thinking tools enables schools to determine what really matters to their students and parents.

While the incubator model was quite successful, a series of meetings took place with the external provider and member school Principals throughout the first half of 2023 to discuss the possibility of delivering the program as a blended model consisting of various online modules, on-site meetings, and workshops at ISV.

The aim was to move towards a more agile methodology to be trialed, in the first instance with one or two pilot schools before being offered to all member schools. It was anticipated that three to four schools would participate concurrently with sessions held at ISV so that they could contribute to each other's learning. Delivery options would then be more flexible, with multiple generations providing insights into their community's vision and values.

In late 2023 it was determined that the intentions of this activity be reviewed due to school's becoming increasingly time poor, owing to staff shortages, impacting participation and external resources no longer being available to develop and deliver the program.

In view of the challenges, StrategyStory is being considered as a strong alternative for 2024. This approach provides 90-minute online sessions where participants learn to identify and communicate the core values, achievements and distinctive qualities that set their school apart. Techniques for engaging storytelling to help connect with their community, ensuring messages resonate with potential and current families and staff are explored.

Further planned iterations of the project in 2023 did not attract the interest anticipated. In addition, external resources became unavailable to support the initiative. This activity is being re-evaluated with a view to meeting the objectives of the program via the StrategyStory program. Three schools participated in the initial values project, and all renewed their values and redefined their school vision, reporting increased and positive engagement with their school community and a desire to continually review their school's vision and values.

Risk	How the risk will be managed
Ongoing participation of schools in these activities.	ISV Coaches were engaged with schools and conducted school check-ins with their project teams. This interaction was both online and on school site to avoid travel for schools and to keep CRT needs to a minimum.
Availability of external resources.	Evaluation of this project relative to other activities e.g., StrategyStory.

Stakeholder	Engagement Work
Participating schools and their stakeholders The Vision and Values work will involve school leadership teams engaging with their staff, students, and parents to collect evidence and data of their current values	The ISV project team is in regular contact with participating schools to ensure they are on track and compiling data to inform their change initiatives.
and interactions to guide and improve their future work.	The ISV project team will be in regular contact with participating schools of this or replacement project going forward.
Participating principals The activities will be developed by ISV in consultation with participating principals, and they will be free to choose whatever is appropriate for their needs.	The ISV project team consists of experienced former principals, and they will maintain regular contact with participating principals.

Activity Description – Leading Learning that Matters

This project aims to support Principals across four different areas:

- Using existing ISV Professional Learning Programs such as the Principals' Executive Network, the Emerging Principals' Program and the Principals' Leadership Academy.
- Developing targeted ISV Professional Learning, including financial management, VRQA audit training and curriculum auditing.
- Tailored mentoring programs for individual schools.
- Ambassadorial consulting in areas of need for each school.

Principals of the participating schools were supported in 2023 through a range of measures. These included:

- Principals attending a range of ISV Professional Learning Sessions designed to enhance their leadership skills.
- Individual conversations on specific issues with ISV Ambassadors (experienced former principals)
- Ambassadorial and leadership consulting in areas of need.

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Principals from 5 schools attended leadership programs.	Improved capacity and confidence of principals to lead their schools as measured by opinion surveys of participating principals
Individual conversations on specific issues were held with 8 schools.	(these surveys will be completed early 2024).
Leadership consulting in areas of need has been provided to one school.	

Risk	How the risk will be managed
Participation of principals in Leading Learning that Matters Masters and Mentoring	Extensively use ISV's connections with principals to ensure enough participants.

Stakeholder	Engagement Work
The activities will be developed by ISV in consultation with participating principals, and they will be free to choose whatever is appropriate for their needs.	The ISV project team consists of highly experienced former principals, and they will maintain regular contact with participating principals.

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	\$654,423	\$0

Activity/Initiative

A transition plan for schools to the Direct Measure of Income funding arrangements in the wake of COVID-19

Priority

A - Choice and Affordability

B – Transition Assistance

- C Special Circumstances Funding
- D Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students
- E Student wellbeing and support

Activity Description – Transition Assistance for Former National Adjustment Assistance Fund

ISV provided distributed funding transition assistance to schools that would have been eligible under the former National Adjustment Assistance Fund (NAAF). These schools were required to submit a Sustainability Plan in 2023.

While each school received a direct grant, they were able to use the CAF funds to access specialised assistance programs, projects and tools delivered by ISV or by other organisations. Plans aligned with the CAF funding priorities, including how the plan:

- benefits students and the school community
- demonstrates effectiveness and efficiency for taxpayer funding.
- helps the school to transition by 2029 to its new funding entitlement under the DMI.

These schools were also able to access other ISV initiatives supported by the CAF. The development and implementation of these initiatives has been supported by centralised expenditure of the CAF. These initiatives are explained in other parts of this report.

Outcomes	Indicators of success
A Sustainability Plan for each identified school and support for these schools through the transition process	Each identified school is working with ISV to implement and review their Sustainability Plan annually. The plans indicate that schools will remain financially viable.
	Grant allocations distributed to eligible schools within 20 business days of Sustainability Plan being received and accepted.

Risk	How the risk will be managed
On-going changes in school's DMI scores threaten the efficacy of their Sustainability Plans.	ISV to work with schools in undertaking sensitivity analysis that provides sufficient flexibility to adapt to changing funding circumstances.
Nominated schools do not provide an adequate Sustainability Plan and put their allocated funding at risk.	ISV to work closely with each school to ensure that their plans meet the requirements of the CAF.

Stakeholder & Interest/Impact	Engagement Strategy
The activity assists these schools to develop and implement a Sustainability Plan that considers their viability and business model into the future, particularly as they transition to the Direct Measure of Income arrangements.	ISV will maintain regular and ongoing contact with these schools to ensure that they are aware of the various projects and initiatives available to them as they develop and implement their Sustainability Plans.
System authorities may be responsible for schools that are eligible to receive funding under this element of the CAF.	ISV will maintain regular and ongoing contact with system authorities to ensure that they are aware of which of their member schools are eligible to receive funding, and why, and the supports available to support those schools.

Schools Supported

AGEID	School Name
2428	Brighton Grammar School
4217	Firbank Grammar School
2176	Ivanhoe Grammar School
828	Kilvington Grammar School
837	Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School
29056	Melbourne Grammar School
857	Mentone Grammar School
860	Methodist Ladies' College
872	Mount Scopus Memorial College
912	Penleigh & Essendon Grammar School
1113	St Leonard's College

Activity Description – Transition Assistance to Nominated Regional Assistance Schools

ISV provided distributed transition assistance to nominated Regional Transition Assistance (RTA) schools. These schools were required to submit a Sustainability Plan in 2023.

The RTA funding was used by schools to assist with the transition to a new funding entitlement under Direct Measure of Income (DMI). ISV has been working with each school to develop and implement their Sustainability Plan. While each school received a direct grant, they were able to access specialised assistance programs, projects and tools delivered by ISV or by other organisations. Plans aligned with the CAF funding priorities, including how the plan:

- benefits students and the school community
- demonstrates effectiveness and efficiency for taxpayer funding.
- helps the school to transition by 2029 to its new funding entitlement under the DMI.

These schools were also able to access other ISV initiatives supported by the Choice and Affordability (CAF). The development and implementation of these initiatives will be supported by centralised expenditure of the CAF. These initiatives are explained in other parts of this report.

Outcomes	Indicators of success
A Sustainability Plan for each identified school and support for these schools through the transition process	Each identified school is working with ISV to implement their Sustainability Plan and the plans indicate that schools will remain financially viable.
	Grant allocations distributed to eligible schools within 20 business days of Sustainability Plan being received and accepted.

Risk	How the risk will be managed
On-going changes in school's DMI scores threaten the efficacy of their Sustainability Plans.	ISV to work with schools in undertaking sensitivity analysis that provides sufficient flexibility to adapt to changing funding circumstances.
Nominated schools do not provide an adequate Sustainability Plan and put their allocated funding at risk	ISV to work closely with each school to ensure that their plans meet the requirements of the CAF.

Stakeholder & Interest/Impact	Engagement Strategy
The activity assists these schools to develop and implement a Sustainability Plan that considers their viability and business model into the future, particularly as they transition to the DMI arrangements.	ISV will maintain regular and ongoing contact with these schools to ensure that they are aware of the various projects and initiatives available to them as they develop and implement their Sustainability Plans.
System authorities may be responsible for schools that are eligible to receive funding under this element of the CAF.	ISV will maintain regular and ongoing contact with system authorities to ensure that they are aware of which of their member schools are eligible to receive funding, and why, and the supports available to support those schools.

Schools Supported

AGEID	School Name
16351	Ballarat Clarendon College
16352	Ballarat Grammar
16354	Braemar College
17709	Geelong Baptist College
16353	Gippsland Grammar
14225	Girton Grammar School
16355	Goulburn Valley Grammar School
15826	Kardinia International College
15836	Newhaven College
4012	St Paul's Anglican Grammar School
16712	The Hamilton and Alexandra College

Activity Description – Transition Assistance for Other Schools

ISV provided distributed transition assistance to other schools that experienced reduced funding because of the move to the DMI funding methodology compared to the former SES funding methodology. These schools were required to submit a Sustainability Plan in 2023.

While each school received a direct grant, they were able to use the CAF funds to access specialised assistance programs, projects and tools delivered by ISV or by other organisations. Plans aligned with the CAF funding priorities, including how the plan:

- benefits students and the school community
- demonstrates effectiveness and efficiency for taxpayer funding.
- helps the school to transition by 2029 to its new funding entitlement under the DMI.

These schools were also able to access other ISV initiatives supported by the CAF. The development and implementation of these initiatives will be supported by centralised expenditure of the CAF. These initiatives are explained in other parts of this report.

Outcomes	Indicators of success
A Sustainability Plan for each identified school and support for these schools through the transition process	Each identified school is working with ISV to implement their Sustainability Plan and the plans indicate that schools will remain financially viable.
	Grant allocations distributed to eligible schools within 20 business days of Sustainability Plan being received and accepted.

Risk	How the risk will be managed
On-going changes in school's DMI scores threaten the efficacy of their Sustainability Plans.	ISV to work with schools in undertaking sensitivity analysis that provides sufficient flexibility to adapt to changing funding circumstances.
Nominated schools do not provide an adequate Sustainability Plan and put their allocated funding at risk	ISV to work closely with each school to ensure that their plans meet the requirements of the CAF

Stakeholder & Interest/Impact	Engagement Strategy
The activity assists these schools to develop and implement a Sustainability Plan that considers their viability and business model into the future, particularly as they transition to the Direct Measure of Income arrangements.	ISV will maintain regular and ongoing contact with these schools to ensure that they are aware of the various projects and initiatives available to them as they develop and implement their Sustainability plans.
System authorities may be responsible for schools that are eligible to receive funding under this element of the CAF.	ISV will maintain regular and ongoing contact with system authorities to ensure that they are aware of which of their member schools are eligible to receive funding, and why, and the supports available to support those schools.

Schools Supported

AGEID	School Name
821	Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School
1281	Melbourne Girls' Grammar School
856	Mentone Girls' Grammar School
17867	The Geelong College
16713	Westbourne Grammar School
16324	Aitken College
15834	Bayview College
3419	Beaconhills College
2482	Billanook College
758	Carey Baptist Grammar School
15837	Casey Grammar School
29729	Cornish College
2179	Eltham College
4219	Flinders Christian Community College
29065	Geelong Grammar School
17293	OneSchool Global
5517	Overnewton Anglican Community College
1126	St Margaret's School
1183	St Michael's Grammar School
1275	Strathcona Baptist Girls' Grammar School
1286	Toorak College
1288	Trinity Grammar School
15317	Trinity Lutheran College
28672	Woodleigh School

Activity Description – Data-informed Assessments for School Sustainability

This project will bring together data from across ISV to develop and provide an indication of school sustainability.

The application will provide a series of indicators across four quadrants – Educational, Economic, Social and Cultural – to provide an overall picture of the school's sustainability using a wide variety of measures that go above traditional financial indicators. These metrics will enable schools to determine where they may face pressure to their short and long-term sustainability by conducting periodic organisational health checks.

Much of the work completed in 2023 relates to three areas:

- The design of the application and the metrics that will populate the Data-Informed School Assessment Tool
- The procurement of technological tools to deliver the application and the development of back-end services, infrastructure and processes to deliver the service to schools.
- The collation and cleaning of various data sets required to produce the relevant metrics that sit behind the application.

Over the reporting period we have completed the following activities:

- Completed the process of collecting and cleaning the numerous data sets required to develop the metrics to support the application.
- Commenced building the backend infrastructure required to deliver on the project, including cloud resourcing and the building and testing of data acquisition pipelines.

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Data collected and cleaned. Technological tools purchased. System build commenced.	Identified outcomes and deliverables from this project will begin from 2023/2024, once the relevant development and testing has occurred.

Risk	How the risk will be managed
ISV's projects are not utilised by schools.	We are liaising with school leaders through our technical team processes at regular intervals to discuss their challenges and issues and to talk through our solutions to assist them in maintaining the financial viability and overall sustainability of their schools.

Stakeholder	Engagement Work
No external stakeholders were engaged during 2023 as the work was focused on internal development of the application.	We will liaise directly with school leaders at regular intervals.
Once the tool is ready for use, individual schools will be the stakeholders.	

Activity Description – Assessing Financial Risk and Safeguarding your School's Future (Composite Financial Index)

The Composite Financial Index (CFI) helps provide schools with a detailed understanding of their financial position and susceptibility to the kind of external risks that COVID-19 imposed upon schools. It will be employed as a simple way to consistently measure the financial viability of the school.

This online tool will provide schools with a series of financial ratios across key indicators to determine a school's relative financial strength and exposure to risk. A report providing guidance and suggestions around the results will help schools by providing a simple way to assess their financial risks and to assess the key strategic financial priorities for the school, given its risk profile.

Over the reporting period we completed the following activities to deliver the Composite Financial Index to schools:

- Developed the complete end-to-end functionality of the CFI application.
- Completed internal testing of the CFI application.
- Commenced development of a second application to assist schools in determining their financial position to be used in conjunction with the CFI that forecasts a school's potential funding.

Testing with target schools occurred in the second half of 2023. This was delayed due to the long service leave of a key project team member.

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Completed end-to-end functionality.	Identified outcomes and deliverables from this project will begin from 2023/2024, once the relevant development and testing has occurred.
Internal testing completed.	
Commenced development of a second application.	

Risk	How the risk will be managed
ISV's projects are not utilised by schools.	We are liaising with school leaders through our technical team processes at regular intervals to discuss their challenges and issues and to talk through our solutions to assist them in maintaining the financial viability and overall sustainability of their schools.

Stakeholder	Engagement Work
No external stakeholders were engaged during 2023 as the work was focused on internal development of the application.	We will liaise directly with school leaders at regular intervals.
Once the application is ready for use, individual schools will be the stakeholders.	

Activity Description – innovationXdesign

ISV has developed a coherent and adaptive approach to innovation, known as innovationXdesign. It brings together world class processes, strategies and tools that have been created and adapted to the context of Victorian independent schools.

innovationXdesign evolves best practice approaches from the world of design thinking. It leverages routines that help make thinking visible and uses our growing understanding of building sustainable change in an organisational context. It has been designed to help educators understand more about innovation practice, and to unpack the necessary mindsets, skillsets, and toolsets to explore and find solutions to everyday challenges – both in and out of the classroom.

Overall summary of the project's progress:

- The program was adapted to include world leaders in education, Dr Heidi Hayes Jacobs, and Dr Marie Hubley Alcock, and transformed into The Lab 2023
- Resources have been created and updated specifically for use by Victorian independent schools and will be used for future iterations.
- Five schools/organisations participated in the 2023 iteration, and the program is available for all Victorian independent schools.

Outcomes	Indicators of success
World leaders included in projects.	Measures of success are likely to include:
Resources created specifically for Victorian Independent schools. 5 schools participated in 2023.	 The number of schools willing to participate. Continued interest from schools – we will look for a minimum of three schools per iteration. Schools implementing the innovationXdesign process in a variety of contexts after participation.

Risk	How the risk will be managed
Participation of schools in these activities, particularly due to impact of staff/skills shortage.	Regular and close communication with participating schools to ensure they are willing and able to maintain participation and exploring options of completing course asynchronously if necessary.
Schools not being able to dedicate a team of 4 to 6 members for this program due to staff/skill shortages.	Flexibility will be provided for the school to choose the number of team members.

Stakeholder	Engagement Work
Participating schools and Principals	The ISV project team is in regular contact
The activities will be developed by ISV in consultation with participating schools and principals.	with participating schools and Principals to ensure they are on track with their projects.

Activity Description – StrategyStory

StrategyStory for Schools creates powerful and engaging strategies tailored to the distinct needs of independent schools. It does so by weaving together the intellectual focus of strategic logic with the emotional power of 21st century storytelling.

Schools are guided, step-by-step, through a process of strategy development. Schools can set the scale and pace of strategic change harnessing the creativity and skills of staff and students.

This innovative approach to strategy and transformation equips schools with new capabilities in strategic management and storytelling.

The schools involved in StrategyStory for Schools were invited to take part through self-nomination. CAF funding supported some of the cost of participation. All Victorian independent schools were eligible to participate.

Feedback from schools involved in the pilot StrategyStory for Schools program was hugely positive. The Principal of Waverley Christian College participated with ISV and the StrategyStory team in a podcast, reflecting on the impact of the program in supporting the school's future direction. The experiences from the pilot program also helped inform the design and delivery of a differentiated future program to enable more schools to access and gain the benefits of developing strategy to their point of need.

In the future the program will provide a suite of different programs designed to cater for the diverse needs of schools.

For schools looking for rapid results, the programs will include:

- Rapid strategy to overcome challenges designed to drive action and develop rapid strategy over a two-month program.
- **Get your school story straight to drive results** designed to enhance school marketing and promotion strategies through structured thinking frameworks.
- Managing strategy in your school community designed to support schools in transforming an existing strategic plan into a compelling narrative to inspire action.

Schools wishing to explore deeper strategy and craft a long-term vision for the school will have the option of enrolling in the 6-month **StrategyStory for Schools** program or 12-month **Steering your School's Future** engagement. Both programs will involve in-depth sessions and site visits.

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Endorsed positive feedback from participating school.	Articulated success, via podcast, on the programs impact on a school's future direction by principal.
Pilot program has informed the design and delivery of future programs.	Pilot program clearly signposted the way forward for the design and delivery of a differentiated future program to enable more schools to access and gain the benefits of developing strategy to their point of need.
Increased strategic planning capabilities for school leaders.	Increased numbers of schools working with ISV on their strategic plans.
New capabilities in strategy, strategic management, and storytelling.	Development of a school strategy that everyone in the school is aware of and owns.
Development of strategy and storytelling skills for school leadership teams and staff.	Increased strategic capability of schools.

Risk	How the risk will be managed
ISV's projects are not utilised by schools.	Regular and close communication with participating schools to ensure they are willing and able to maintain participation.

Engagement Work
The ISV project team is in regular contact with
participating schools and Principals to ensure they are on track with their projects.

Activity Description – Governance, Compliance and Employment Relations Training

ISV in collaboration with Willis Australia Limited developed a series of interactive self-paced online learning modules on occupational health and safety.

Two online learning courses are available. The first course is designed primarily for teaching staff who want to develop greater awareness of occupational health and safety. It is a foundational or beginner's course, aimed at providing an overview of the core legal concepts and skills required when it comes to managing occupational health and safety in the independent school sector.

The second course is designed for staff who have responsibility for, and experience in, managing occupational health and safety. This is an advanced course, targeting school business managers, risk and compliance managers, property managers and members of the school leadership team. This course provides detailed information about managing occupational health and safety and risk management.

Both courses are online and can be completed by users at their own pace.

27 people have enrolled in and completed the beginner course and 62 people have enrolled in and completed the advanced course.

In 2023, these courses were updated to reflect new legislative and policy changes.

In 2023, work commenced on the next series of online learning courses, considering the feedback received from participating schools about the occupational health and safety modules. Based on that feedback, and on an increasing number of enquiries in this space, we identified privacy, archiving and recordkeeping as the topics for our next online learning course. Privacy and recordkeeping are complex areas for many independent schools, and existing information on this topic generally fails to target the independent school sector.

Throughout 2023 development and implementation of these online learning modules took place. This included developing a communications and marketing plan and cost proposal for members. We also planned the structure of these online learning modules and considered the categories of information which will be discussed in each module. The target audience has been identified as senior leaders (e.g., principal, business manager, human resource manager or head of school) as well as database administrators and ICT staff.

Content writing for these online learning modules was temporarily paused in late 2023, pending major reforms to the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and recruitment of a new content course designer.

Outcomes	Indicators of success
27 participants at beginner's course.	Enrolments in the online learning modules on occupational health and safety.
62 participants at advanced course.	Positive feedback received from participants through surveys.
Development of next series of online learning modules commenced.	Increased enrolments at ISV learning events on related occupational health and safety topics.
Increased awareness, knowledge and confidence in this specialised topic area gained through training materials in key areas of reform (i.e., governance, compliance and employment relations).	

Risk	How the risk will be managed
Project is not utilised by schools.	ISV is providing ongoing communications to schools to demonstrate the value of the project so that enough participants enrol in the online learning modules.

Stakeholder	Engagement Work
Staff and leaders in Victorian Independent schools.	ISV will maintain regular and ongoing contact with these schools to ensure that they are aware of the various training modules available to them.

Activity Description – Employment Relations Service Provision

This project aims to supplement the resources and advice that the Employment Relations Team already provides in workplace change. It is proposed that ISV provides a more comprehensive advisory service that can assist and guide schools on the approaches and requirements associated with restructuring, prior to commencing, rather than after business decisions have been made. The aim is to ensure that schools can obtain advice and support on a range of options and approaches to ensure a comprehensive and planned approach to reviewing services.

In March 2023, the Employment Relations Team ran a session for new Business Managers in the independent sector focusing on the process surrounding major workplace change. This session examined the risks associated with such a process and the best practice approach which should be undertaken. The attendees were targeted as people within the school environment that have responsibility for the management of the school's budget, mindful that approximately 70% of a school's budget relates to staff costs.

During 2023, the Employment Relations Team reviewed all documentation relating to managing workplace change to ensure that Member Schools had access to current and contemporaneous resources to support their processes.

In April and June of 2023, the Employment Relations Team presented seminars to aspiring principals and the Principals Executive Network on the essential elements of employment relations, including but not limited to major workplace change.

In the past, the Employment Relations Team would have provided advice regarding the consultation obligations which are triggered where a school has decided to introduce major workplace change, but we would not have been involved in the strategic planning which precedes the implementation of this kind of change. Involvement at this early stage is seen as a significant benefit of expanding our employment relations advisory service to schools during times of change.

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Imparting knowledge to key members of the executive regarding their obligations and the importance of managing these issues both from a fiscal and moral perspective.	Positive feedback from participants that they felt confident to engage in such processes and were acutely aware of further assistance that could be sought when necessary.

Risk	How the Risk will be managed
Project is underutilised by schools.	ISV is providing ongoing communications to schools to demonstrate the value of the project.

Stakeholder	Engagement Work
Schools negatively impacted by transition to the DMI methodology. This activity assists schools who wish to undertake a strategic review of their operations. It is assumed that where a school is considering a restructure, an underlying concern will be reviewing the school's operations to ensure that it remains financially viable.	We will maintain regular contact with these schools to ensure that they are aware of the enhanced Employment Relations services, helping schools wanting to undertake a strategic review of their operations or a potential restructure.

Activity Description – Deep Dive Professional Learning

This project focusses on improving classroom practice through a strategic approach to school improvement where staff professional learning plays a key role. Often in schools there is no coordinated approach to staff development. Individual teachers might attend one-off single day seminars, conferences, and programs without consideration of the school's Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plans. Consequently, the important next step of sharing learnings is lost.

A coordinated whole school approach to professional learning can lead to numerous benefits for the whole school, have a positive impact on classroom practice, staff and student wellbeing, enrolments and the perception of the school in the broader community by:

- Building teacher practice and personal growth through customisation and differentiation to meet the needs of individual staff
- Providing opportunities to collaborate and share ideas, analyse data and prepare teaching and learning programs
- Improving student's social and emotional development
- Improving student's academic performance.

Progress continued in the 'Deep Dive Professional Learning' project during 2023 despite the staffing challenges schools were experiencing. The impacts of the current teacher shortage, especially the dearth of Casual Relief Teachers meant it was difficult for teachers to be released from class to participate in meetings, interviews and focus groups. While such meetings were important, it was still possible to continue the project via alternative approaches that did not involve staff missing class such as online meetings scheduled after school.

A survey tool was developed and utilised in one of the pilot schools. Staff responded to questions about their professional learning experiences and opportunities. The school's project leader analysed the data and prepared a report that was discussed with the Principal and presented to staff and ISV's project team. It was agreed the findings would help steer the development of discussions that followed and highlighted the need for a Professional Learning Plan that would guide a program for staff growth and development over the next 5 years.

The ISV project team were not able to continue working with the second pilot school throughout 2023 due to a change of Principal.

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Observed examples of principals and their leaders taking a strategic approach to staff professional learning, linked to their school's Strategic Plan.	Principals of pilot schools understand the benefits of a clearly articulated, differentiated and strategic whole school approach to professional learning.
Discussions with principals and their school leaders that focus on their school's values and	School principals and Boards have reviewed and developed a new Strategic Plan.
School leaders in pilot schools are more aware of the professional learning priorities of their staff.	Report compiled using data from one school's survey results and effective follow up discussions.

Risk	How the risk will be managed
Schools planned for staff professional learning but concerns over staff wellbeing and a shortage of short-term replacement teachers meant they were reluctant to release teachers.	Online meetings and interviews have been conducted with Principals, school leaders and their staff.
Schools commence the project and then	This mode of delivery can be used more in the future.
withdraw due to a perceived additional workload for staff when they are already struggling with their workload.	Arrange a conversation with the Principal to attempt to modify the school's involvement e.g., just one section of larger schools participate.
Even if the 'pilot projects' are considered successful, the project is then not utilised by other schools.	ISV will communicate the benefits of the project on a regular basis via its Communications/Marketing Team and the School Improvement Team in their work with schools.

Stakeholder	Engagement Work
The key stakeholders initially were two pilot schools that were keen to develop a more strategic approach to their professional learning. They agreed to provide feedback during and after the implementation of the	After the principals of both schools met initially with the project leader to discuss the benefits and purpose of the project, further opportunities for discussion were arranged with their whole leadership teams.
project.	Numerous face-to-face and online meetings with leaders in both schools as well as phone conversations.
Key stakeholders are the Principals and their senior leaders in the schools, especially those with a role connected to developing a more strategic approach to professional learning.	There have been regular conversations throughout the year with the project leader as well as communication via email.

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	\$238,528	\$3,211,222

Activity/Initiative Priority

Special Circumstances Funding

- A Choice and Affordability
- B Transition Assistance

C – Special Circumstances Funding

- D Strengthening outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students
- E Student wellbeing and support

Activity Description - Special Circumstances Funding

This project provides access to funding support where schools and their students are affected by special circumstances and in areas affected by pandemics, drought or other natural disasters.

In 2023 no applications were received for this funding.

An application form and assessment rubric remain available to Victorian Independent schools in the event of need to make a future application. Full details and application forms are published on the ISV web site.

Outcomes	Indicators of success
On-going application process established for future applications by schools. Schools advised of this process.	Application process readily available and understood by schools in case of need.

Risk	How the risk will be managed	
Risk that schools receive Special Circumstances funding support do not require external assistance.	The financial impact of their special circumstances is an explicit element of the application and assessment rubric.	
Risk that demands for Special Circumstances funding does not match the funding available, either because of many applications, or a lack of need from schools.	ISV has developed contingency plans to ensure that we can, as far as possible, respond to need as it arises.	
	ISV will assess all applications to ensure that all aspects are eligible for funding support and continue to remind schools of the eligibility criteria.	
Schools use funding for ineligible purposes (including capital).	In addition to the original advice to schools about the funding, ISV has placed the application form on our website. We will also	
Schools are unaware of Special Circumstances applications.	pro-actively contact schools where we hear of events that may render them eligible to access support.	
The process for schools to access funding is slow and cumbersome.	ISV has designed the application process explicitly with this in mind. We will also assess metrics of how long it takes schools to complete the online process.	
Ineligible schools may apply for funding through ISV.	As this risk has already eventuated, ISV will ensure that future communications will specify clearly that Catholic schools that are members of ISV are not eligible to access CAF funding through ISV.	

Stakeholder	Engagement Work
Victorian Independent schools This project provides access to funding support where schools and their students are impacted by exceptional circumstances and in areas affected by drought or other natural disasters.	ISV informed all Victorian Independent schools of the ongoing application process and will continue to provide information to them in a timely manner.
System Authorities Systems may be responsible for schools that are eligible to receive funding.	ISV has informed systemic authorities at the same time as we provide information to schools.
Victorian Department of Education and Training Vic DET provides financial support for Victorian Independent schools that may cross-over with elements of the CAF.	ISV ensured that funding provided did not clash with any Victorian Government funding initiatives.

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	\$68,134	\$0

Activity/Initiative

How can we have a positive impact on student wellbeing and equip students to creatively face the challenges of the future?

Priority

- A Choice and Affordability
- B Transition Assistance
- C Special Circumstances Funding
- $\mathsf{D}-\mathsf{Strengthening}$ outcomes for schools and educationally disadvantaged schools and students

E – Student wellbeing and support

Activity Description – Endeavour

The Endeavour Initiative addresses student wellbeing issues. By helping to develop core capabilities, the project contributes to the skills growth of educationally disadvantaged students, improve school retention and educational attainment levels, and gives young people the tools and abilities to navigate the future. While a focus on various arts and the relationship to arts-learning on broader student outcomes is the preferred priority, ISV will also bring to bear any potential program, product or service that may be needed, and which will provide the assistance the schools require.

During 2023, the team reoffered several options for schools to use that would allow for wider implementation. The options developed are:

The Big Chalk

Students create chalk murals on a designated school area to raise awareness for social or cultural causes. With no limits on participation, schools set guidelines and submit photos to our project team. These murals spark classroom discussions and be featured on social media, websites, or community news.

Scribble Stones

This project integrates reading and art using 'Scribble Stones'. With 10–15-minute activities and detailed instructions, it promotes acceptance and diversity. Teachers can lead or coach, incorporating the project into reading time, allowing children to create and colour their own stones.

Wayfinder Essentials

This tool helps educators support student mental health in Years 7-12 with the Waypoints Assessment Tool and Wayfinder Activity Library. Students complete weekly surveys on adaptability, agency, collaboration, empathy, purpose, and self-awareness. Data guides educators to choose activities, requiring minimal training and not needing the full Wayfinder program.

Fostering a Supportive School Climate

Using a specific rubric, schools collaboratively develop norms to create a climate of respect, support, and engagement for all. This process involves leaders, teachers, students, and the wider community, ensuring the development of a respectful and supportive environment.

Visual Thinking Strategies

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) uses art to enhance communication and critical thinking skills through short, 20–30-minute sessions. ISV-trained facilitators offer coaching, and the program includes a written component to support literacy. VTS integrates easily into schedules and can incorporate visual materials from other learning areas.

The Friendship Mandala

This engaging activity for primary students and whole school events focuses on sustainability and collaboration. Inspired by Mandalas, students use recycled materials to create transient, beautiful art, reflecting on change and the flow of time. ISV provides all materials needed for this project.

Stories

Students create stories about their experiences, reflecting on local disasters or COVID-19 impacts, are submitted to ISV's Story Machines and are showcased at the ISV Arts Festival. ISV offers coaching to assist with these projects.

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Developed a flexible 'pick and mix' approach utilising key components of existing programs for	Options taken up by more schools.
schools to meet diverse needs.	Pilot schools continue with offerings.

Risk	How the risk will be managed
Inability of schools to utilise products and services offered through our project.	Continue to assess needs of Member Schools and seek methods to assist them.
	Implement and track the newly implemented programs to ensure success.
	Identify and offer support schools who meet the criteria for the project plan

Stakeholder	Engagement Work
Participating schools	Communication via phone calls, emails and in person meetings have occurred since the last annual report, to discuss the needs of the schools, their ability to move forward and to assess and implement product offerings through the project.

Variations from Agreement/Work Plan

In our previous report we discussed the difficulty of implementation at our pilot schools. Ongoing challenges hampered our efforts to implement at these sites and other chosen schools. Therefore, in 2023 a member of the team launched the Wellbeing Leader Network, a network of wellbeing leaders created to learn about new initiatives and strengthen relationships between Member Schools of Independent Schools Victoria. Options developed by the team were offered to all members of the Wellbeing Leaders Network and their schools.

Activity Description – Wayfinder

In 2016, Wayfinder was established at Stanford University's d.school to tackle the increasing occurrence of mental health crises among students. The COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented disruptions to the Australian education system. Even before the pandemic, the mental health of young people had been rapidly declining, as studies have indicated an increase in anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts among teenagers.

Wayfinder aims to support F-12 students with social emotional development by engaging staff in a 'teacher as mentor' training model, designed for educators to experience the Purpose and Belonging learning journey for themselves before guiding their students.

Wayfinder's platform and research-backed curriculum provides lessons and activities with little to no preparation and classroom materials. Students who are taught Wayfinder curriculum demonstrate statistically significant improvement across three key measures: engagement, purpose, and social awareness, leading them to success both in and out of school in addition to supporting a positive school culture grounded in relationship-building and improved staff well-being.

- Wayfinder Comprehensive Curriculum (includes developmentally appropriate, year-long Core Curriculum, Activity Library with thousands of additional skill-building activities, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (Tiers 2 + 3) curriculum, timely topic-based Collections, Waypoints assessment suite, kick-off training, and staff and adult Social Emotional Learning (SEL) resources.
- Wayfinder Essentials (includes 40 developmentally appropriate, scoped and sequenced activities for each year)
- Professional Learning (implementation training and support) adult SEL, standalone professional learning offerings based on school interest and need.

Outcomes	Indicators of success
Australia-wide research project undertaken throughout 2023.	Preliminary findings show growth in understanding of and attitudes towards
	purpose and belonging.
75+ educators trained.	Interest in educator wellbeing is growing and
Three ISV staff fully trained to deliver Wayfinder.	we're responding at the point of need.
Wayfinder delivered to 5,000 students.	More programs delivered at different
Offered Adult SEL program for the first time.	touchpoints allows for greater impact.
Expanded student facing offering to include training and access to Collections.	
Online training for school groups was delivered to five schools.	
In-school training delivered to five schools.	

Risk	How the risk will be managed
Program is not utilised by schools.	ISV is providing ongoing communication to schools to demonstrate the value of the project so that enough enrolments occur. We have also provided schools with the option to trial the program before committing.
Participation in this program is delayed due to timetable limitations.	Regular and close communication with participating schools to ensure they are willing and able to maintain participation. Provide schools with multiple implementation and delivery options.

Stakeholder	Engagement work	
Participating schools.	The ISV project team is in regular contact with participating schools to ensure they are on track.	

Activity Description – Transformative Repair

During the 2023 ISV continued to connect with the pilot group to monitor implementation of Transformative Repair (TR) in their school communities. The data collected has been used to revise the framework and materials creating an enhanced offering incorporating the feedback from educators and their students.

From the pilot school network, Carey Baptist Grammar school is currently in its third year of delivering of Transformative Repair as a program for the entire year 7 cohort. It is now integrated into mid-term scheduling rather than added end of term as an extra program. Christian College Geelong has gone through substantial staffing changes, however, ongoing interest in the project as an opportunity for evolving school culture has been carried forward by staff in attendance at earlier TR presentations. The Knox School has trialed activities with senior secondary students and plans are in place to include whole staff in presentation of materials and framework. Our network continues to grow with a successful presentation to whole school staff at Bayview College, Portland and with interest expressed by a further eight schools in regional Victoria and metro Melbourne.

With TR entering its final year of development, the evolution of the framework and materials has resulted in the creation of a flexible and highly responsive set of classroom ready resources. TR will be officially launched at the National Gallery of Victoria on Wednesday 22 May 2024, with principals, directors of curriculum and educators from all learning areas in attendance.

Outcomes

Continued data collection and feedback from pilot schools has resulted in the development of a sustainable program for teachers to satisfy the dynamic and wide-ranging applications required in contemporary education. The development of the conceptual framework and revised materials will provide teachers with a structure and activities to support student engagement with damage and the challenges that this creates for their emerging world view.

Indicators of success

School visits to Carey Baptist Grammar, The Knox School, Christian College Geelong, and Youth 2 Industry College enabled further data gathering through the following mechanisms:

- teacher discussion
- student conversations
- photography of TR project work

The feedback and data gathered have informed the further refinement of the TR framework and materials to ensure authenticity and flexibility for a wide range of school communities and learning contexts. As a culminating event to celebrate TR and the work of our pilot schools, the project launch will be held at the National Gallery of Victoria on Wednesday 22 May 2024.

Risk	How the risk will be managed
Risks are associated with growing workload and accountability of teachers and school leaders for social and emotional learning as well as academic and curriculum focused programs.	Transformative Repair is designed as a set of ready to use activities and supporting framework which can be integrated into any learning area and an extensive range of year level cohorts. The activities can be delivered in short bursts to support existing curriculum content or can be built into extended units of work depending on teacher priorities. As TR creates conditions for students to develop expansive thinking and empathy, the activities

can be foundational to wellbeing programs.

Stakeholder **Engagement Work** As TR is now ready for rollout to wider Conversations with stakeholders and schools with education networks, we have been speaking who have expressed interest will continue to help with several interested schools who are looking assist the development of pathways for to implement TR in 2024. We have also been implementation to best suit education and speaking with other education providers and community priorities. The launch of TR will statutory authorities who are interested in the generate further interest and we look forward to opportunities TR can offer through curriculum gathering further stories from TR schools and development and museum education continue to be available to support in an advisory programs. capacity.

Activity Expenditure

	Centralised (Reporting Year Only)	Distributed (Reporting Year Only)
Expenditure	\$549,057	\$0