Evaluation of the More Support for Students with Disabilities Initiative 2012-2014

Final Report

June 2015
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Executive summary

The More Support for Students with Disabilities (MSSD) initiative (2012-2014) provided additional funding to government, independent and Catholic education authorities in each state and territory through a National Partnership and aligned Funding Agreements. Under those agreements, education authorities had flexibility to select from a menu of activities targeted at the needs of students with disability in each jurisdiction enabling the authorities to focus resources on areas with the greatest opportunity to effect positive change in schools.

As a modest, short-term investment the MSSD initiative achieved its major objective to build the skills of teachers and increase school capacity to better meet the educational needs of students with disability. There was general agreement across the jurisdictions that the MSSD initiative was a significant catalyst for change. The initiative provided opportunities for authorities to get planned activities underway, or more broadly distributed, and to develop or refine innovative approaches.

The initiative was successful on a number of levels. Some sectors referred to the support the initiative provided for broader strategic changes related to workforce capacity building and the introduction of new approaches to classroom teaching. Authorities saw the extension of the MSSD initiative as an opportunity to enhance programmes with promise and to expand their reach. For the 24 government and non-government authorities and associations: it generated or complemented systemic changes and in turn shifted policy and practice as the new approaches to took effect. Most if not all authorities report that MSSD led to or dramatically accelerated change, for example:

- The approaches of participating schools and agencies were in many instances transformed through strong leadership fully engaged in the implementation of inclusive practices.
- Authorities and schools report changes in the attitudes of classroom teachers and support staff, they were encouraged to try something new, seed an idea and take responsibility for initiating approaches to solve problems.
- Teachers involved in MSSD initiatives shifted their focus to learning outcomes for all students in the classroom. Almost half of all Australian schools involving 47,821 teachers undertook training over 2012-2014 related to assessing and adapting curriculum to support the needs of students with disability. Expert advice and training to support teachers in developing and modifying lesson plans was provided for 12,752 teachers across 2,646 schools.
- Health and allied health specialists along with experts from special schools reframed their roles to work alongside classroom teachers as professional partners seeking the best possible ways of supporting students with disability. Health and allied health professionals provided support as expert guides and mentors to support teacher and paraprofessional learning on site in 1,389 schools with more than 4000 teachers.
- As a direct result of MSSD parents and carers are increasingly working more closely in partnership with schools to shape the individual learning plans of their child and their educational outcomes. Although it was not expected that the short-term initiative
would have a major impact on large numbers of individual students, many examples were reported of students who benefited along with their parents and carers. With the emerging changes from the activities schools appear to be on the threshold of a new era of partnerships with families to enhance the educational outcomes of students with disability.

MSSD was particularly influential in stimulating or accelerating major improvements in regional and remote areas particularly where speech pathologists were involved.

In highlighting the successes of the initiative it is important to emphasise that the MSSD initiative was not intended to achieve universal coverage across all Australian schools: indeed, some authorities chose to target a small proportion of schools in their jurisdictions with the goal of providing models of good practice to stimulate and support broader system reforms in the longer term. However, as shown in the figure below, the proportion of schools participating in MSSD activities nationally turned out to be much larger than anticipated. Well over half of all schools felt the impact of the MSSD initiative on inclusive teaching skills, particularly in response to the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (DSE 2005) and Nationally Consistent Collection of Data for Students with Disability (NCCD) activities, including supporting school principals and leadership teams to strengthen teachers’ ability to assist students with disability.

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<td>78.1%</td>
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<td>School leadership (7)</td>
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<td>DSE 2005 training (6)</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
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<td>Adapting curriculum (8)</td>
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<td>Special education training (5)</td>
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<td>Technology training (2)</td>
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<td>Paraprofessionals (11)</td>
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<td>Health/allied health (4)</td>
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<td>Student transition (12)</td>
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Proportion of Australian schools supported per output

The evaluation found a high level of demand from practitioners to engage with colleagues across sectors and a strong desire to establish effective broader communities of practice. Principals, leadership teams and teachers highlighted the increasingly collaborative nature of much of the work aimed at improving the educational experiences of students with disability including the changing nature of the professional relationship between classroom teachers, specialists, allied health professionals and school support staff. There was clear evidence of
considerably closer alignment of classroom activities and specialist service providers and increased mutual respect for the contributions teachers and specialist professionals bring to bear on improving practice.

Much of the success of these changes can be attributed to the targeted approach of authorities to building the capacity of school principals and leadership teams. Almost 6000 schools were supported by MSSD to enable principals and leadership teams to strengthen teacher capability (Output 7). This represents 63 percent of Australian schools over the three years of the initiative.

Most authorities required school leaders to complete DSE 2005 training modules online prior to introducing the modules to school staff. Completion of the University of Canberra DSE 2005 eLearning modules is a mandatory prerequisite for all leadership teams in Queensland government schools and DSE 2005 training also forms part of the prerequisite training for all South Australian government schools implementing the NCCD. Almost 80,000 teachers were trained in the DSE 2005 (Output 6) covering 5,264 schools (56%) with much of this training conducted through online modules commissioned by ten authorities using MSSD funds and developed and delivered by the University of Canberra.

The evaluation also identified a major shift from deficit models of disability towards more inclusive approaches across all sectors over the life of the MSSD initiative. Generally prompted or accelerated by the MSSD initiatives, this occurred most obviously where schools had a strong leadership team responsible for designing and implementing systematic whole of school change. Participating schools saw this as a prerequisite for changing from managing individuals to engaging them in mainstream learning experiences. They also noted a growing level of awareness of accountability that came from an increased and shared understanding of professional responsibilities around legislative obligations.

Many examples of good practice and lessons learned emerged for the education authorities with respect to sustainable change. Chief amongst these are the importance of:

- aligning initiatives with the current or planned strategic directions
- embedding and normalising of assistive technologies in the classroom
- developing system level innovative tools and resources
- initiating cross-sector collaborative arrangements
- building a critical mass of accessible expertise in sectors and regions with limited capacity and resources, especially those in rural and remote areas of Australia.

Almost all sectors actively engaged in providing practitioners with opportunities for more targeted and intensified professional learning experiences. This was driven in part by a sense of urgency to provide teachers and support staff with the competence and confidence to address the increasing diversity of students in classrooms and the growing complexity of their needs.

A range of unanticipated benefits emerged from the initiative. Amongst other notable changes of broader significance it triggered a more focused approach to the introduction of learning technologies and increased the critical mass of teachers and support staff with the
technological and pedagogical competence and confidence to engage with personal learning devices in the classroom. For many teaching and support staff the MSSD initiative also provided their first and most significant engagement with online professional learning and stimulated a major surge of interest in gaining further formal qualifications.

Similarly, the importance of drawing on external expert advice to inform approaches to assessing and monitoring student progress for those with disability, appeared to influence the thinking of teachers about their classroom organisation more generally.

By the halfway mark the MSSD initiative had evolved to the point of making a positive and potentially sustainable impact, especially on school leadership and classroom practice. The extension of the initiative to 2014 had a cumulative and compounding effect of the initiative across all jurisdictions. It provided a timely opportunity for authorities to rethink their approaches, consolidate and expand successful activities, and venture into new approaches on the basis of experience and evidence from the first two years of the initiative.

Although it is clearly too early to make definitive assessments of the long-term outcomes from the MSSD initiative, the signs are very positive. It was widely noted that embracing whole school use of specific initiatives meant that schools are more likely to continue using these strategies and that embedding structures will allow for ongoing development.

It is also highly likely that the collegial networks developed in some jurisdictions will become self-sustaining, including cross-sectoral collaborations and the sharing of information across jurisdictions through the online MSSD Network — Scootle Community. This will be further strengthened by the rapidly growing evidence-base of effective practice initiated and supported by the jurisdictions.

Overall, the MSSD initiative provided the foundations for substantial and sustainable changes from the three years of trial and experimentation. On the evidence gathered for this evaluation we are confident that the MSSD stimulus has had the intended effect of generating a range of innovations and an attitude of experimentation that may not otherwise have occurred, or certainly not as rapidly nor with the breadth and depth of impact achieved over the life of the initiative.
Acknowledgements

PhillipsKPA appreciates the cooperation and support of the government education authorities, the Catholic education authorities and the independent schools associations across Australia for the evaluation project. We also appreciate their generous assistance in hosting the 30 MSSD information seminars conducted across the jurisdictions.

We particularly valued the contribution and insights provided by principals, teachers and support staff from the case study schools and related organisations. The time, effort and enthusiasm of the school staff, parents and students who shared their examples of good practice at the information seminars added considerable value to the evaluation process.

The evaluation over the extended time frame covering all 24 education authorities would not have been possible without the input and insights of our associates on the ground: Tony Misich (WA), Geoff Noblett (NSW and SA), Margaret Johnston (NT), Neil Pryor and David Smith (Vic).

We especially thank the officers from the Australian Government Department of Education and Training for their constructive advice and collaborative approach to the management of the project.

_Craig McInnis_
_(Director PhillipsKPA and Project Leader)_
PART A: OVERVIEW

Part A provides an overview of the MSSD initiative design and implementation including the role of the evaluation. It also includes an analysis of the authority priorities and approaches, the patterns of funding allocation, and approaches to implementing the outputs.

Chapter 4 looks at the impact of the MSSD initiative on schools and teachers with respect to six immediate outcomes shared by all jurisdictions.

Chapter 5 discusses the major factors supporting the implementation of the initiative and identifies some of the key elements and conditions that promoted changes to better provide support for students with disability.

The final chapters of Part A include summaries of the sustainable effects of the initiative, lessons for future initiatives, and a summary of findings.
1 Introduction

1.1 Origins and purpose of the initiative

The More Support for Students with Disabilities (MSSD) initiative provided $300 million funding to government, Catholic and independent (non-government) education authorities in each state and territory through a National Partnership and aligned Funding Agreements over the 2012-2014 school years. MSSD was established as a limited term initiative, initially for two years, to strengthen the capacity and expertise of Australian schools and teachers to provide additional support to students with disability.

The initiative explicitly encouraged the trialing of innovative strategies to achieve the objective with the purpose of stimulating new approaches to inform future developments. It was not established as a source of funds for individual students, nor did it aim to cover all schools or to produce measurable outcomes with respect to student achievement in the limited time frame.

The primary objective of the initiative set out in the agreements was to encourage new approaches so that:

- *Australian schools and teachers are better able to support students with disabilities, contributing to improved student learning experiences, educational outcomes and transitions to further education or work.*

Education authorities had flexibility to select areas of focus from a menu of activities based on the needs of students with disability in their jurisdiction. Implementation plans were developed with detailed approaches and achievement targets which were then submitted to the Australian Government for agreement.

The objective aligned with a number of related national agreements and strategy objectives to improve social inclusion and educational outcomes for people with disability. MSSD had a focus on addressing the needs of all students with disability, regardless of ethnicity. Through participation in the MSSD initiative all authorities acknowledged the importance of the Closing the Gap targets and addressing the fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians experience rates of disability substantially higher than other Australians.

MSSD had a clear agenda to foster change and transform the way in which schools deliver education for students with disability through enhancing the capabilities of teachers. It was intended to provide authorities with opportunities to reframe and enhance the approaches of

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1 The term ‘education authority’ used in this report covers the authority role of government and Catholic education bodies in each jurisdiction as well as the eight member bodies of the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) which represent the interests of independent schools but do not have authority over their constituent membership.
schools, principals, teachers and a wide range of school and agency personnel working towards the following long-term outcomes:

- Students with disabilities have improved learning experiences and educational outcomes.
- Schools are better able to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities, in collaboration with parents, carers and students.
- Schools become more inclusive environments, in accordance with the Disability Standards for Education 2005, recognising the diversity students with disabilities bring to the school.
- Principals and school leaders are better able to support teachers and teachers are more capable of identifying and addressing the educational needs of students with disabilities.
- Teachers of students with disabilities have better access to expert support.

It was not expected that these outcomes would be achieved over the life of the initiative but that the outputs and innovations would stimulate change and provide substantial foundations for ongoing improvement.

1.2 This report

This is the final evaluation report to the Department of Education and Training. It covers the major activities and outcomes of the education authorities and brings together observations from five progress reports provided from 2012 to 2014, including the reporting period from October 2014 to the receipt of authority progress reports in February/March 2015. The 38 case study reports are provided as a companion document.
Table 1-1: Output descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – Assistive technology provision</td>
<td>Providing assistive technology (e.g. computer software, low vision aids, communication tools) to support the teaching and participation of students with disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – Assistive technology training</td>
<td>Providing training for teachers to strengthen their skills in the use of assistive technology in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – Support centres</td>
<td>Developing support centres which serve as a centre of expertise in the educational needs of students with disability and provide expert support to a group of other schools that may not have this expertise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – Health/allied health</td>
<td>Schools coordinating with health/allied health or other professionals to strengthen schools’ support for students with disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – Special education training</td>
<td>Providing training for pre-service and/or practicing teachers to build their skills in special education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – DSE 2005 training</td>
<td>Providing training for all school staff to improve understanding of their obligations under the Disability Standards for Education 2005 and how to meet those obligations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 – School leadership</td>
<td>Supporting school principals and/or school leadership teams to strengthen teachers’ ability to assist students with disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 – Adapting curriculum</td>
<td>Supporting school staff to assess the current learning level of students with disability, adapt the teaching curriculum to suit their current level of ability and report on student progress against adapted curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 – Modifying lesson plans</td>
<td>Supporting teachers to develop or modify lesson plans to suit the needs of students with disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – Team teaching</td>
<td>Supporting teachers to meet the needs of students with disability through collaborative teaching practices (aka team teaching).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – Paraprofessionals</td>
<td>Engaging paraprofessionals (aka teacher’s aides) to strengthen their skills in supporting students with disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 – Student transitions</td>
<td>Providing additional support for students with disability to transition effectively between stages of schooling and/or from school into further education, training or employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 – Supporting NCCD</td>
<td>Supporting schools with the implementation of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data for Students with Disability.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2 Initiative design and implementation

2.1 Initiative design

The National Partnership identified key areas for capability and capacity building in schools setting out 12 specific outputs with associated performance indicators. Education authorities then selected the outputs most relevant to their identified needs and developed implementation plans to guide activity in each area. With the extension of the MSSD initiative to 2014 an additional output (Output 13) was established to include support for the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data for Students with Disability (NCCD) (Appendix A: Table 1).

2.1.1 Funding the initiative

Funding was provided to authorities to establish capacity building activity across their preferred number of outputs: they were also encouraged to collaborate on some of the outputs, across the education sectors and between states and territories in order to provide value for money and achieve the best results. In line with the importance attached to flexibility in the initiative design, the agreements with the Commonwealth also allowed for proposals to implement an output not included in Table 2-1 that aligned with the MSSD objective and at least one of five major outcomes.

Table 2-1: Total MSSD funding by jurisdiction and sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gov</th>
<th>Cath</th>
<th>Ind</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>$72,081,723</td>
<td>$17,131,412</td>
<td>$5,794,758</td>
<td>$95,007,893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>$55,690,021</td>
<td>$12,498,018</td>
<td>$3,955,451</td>
<td>$72,143,490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>$49,657,157</td>
<td>$7,986,609</td>
<td>$4,113,728</td>
<td>$61,757,494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>$23,074,906</td>
<td>$5,680,501</td>
<td>$1,769,701</td>
<td>$30,525,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>$17,977,885</td>
<td>$2,096,941</td>
<td>$1,767,830</td>
<td>$21,842,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>$5,841,184</td>
<td>$595,184</td>
<td>$505,402</td>
<td>$6,941,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>$4,031,752</td>
<td>$799,055</td>
<td>$288,608</td>
<td>$5,119,415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>$2,942,202</td>
<td>$238,356</td>
<td>$150,232</td>
<td>$3,330,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$231,296,830</td>
<td>$47,026,076</td>
<td>$18,345,710</td>
<td>$296,668,616</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The initial distribution of the overall budget of $200 million allocated over two years (2012-2013) was based on:

- the number of full time equivalent (FTE) school students in each state and territory
- the allocation to government, Catholic and independent sectors according to their proportion of students with disability in that state/territory.

In May 2013 the Government announced that the MSSD initiative would be funded for an additional $100 million for the 2014 school year following the same formula:
This extra investment will support students and teachers while work is underway to build a national data set which will be the basis of a funding loading for students with disability (to) be phased in from 2015.

Table 2-1 above shows the total funding for the initiative by jurisdiction and sector.

2.1.2 Options for the extension year

The extension provided a number of options for each sector to respond to the experience gained in 2012-2013 and adjust outputs accordingly, including the opportunity to:

- consolidate activities to build on the emerging critical mass of expertise and new relationships
- extend projects to provide more time for experimentation to show impact
- commence new activities on the basis of needs emerging in the first years of the MSSD initiative
- review activities or initiatives to assess whether or not they should continue.

Output 13, supporting schools with the implementation of the NCCD, was added to the original 12 outputs for the 2014 extension phase. This was an invitation to all sectors to consider ways of building on the work they were already doing to support schools during the implementation phase of the NCCD.

2.1.3 Implementation plans

All education authorities submitted an implementation plan in early 2012 that was the basis for the National Partnership and aligned Funding Agreements. The implementation plans included the rationale for their implementation strategy, timelines, proposed delivery of the selected outputs, payment weightings, performance indicators and benchmarks. The implementation plans included details of:

- an environmental scan and needs analysis of students with disability and related authority plans
- a description of each output and the delivery strategy including how the activities would meet the main MSSD objective, and contribute to the five identified outcomes.

It is noteworthy that authorities were required to confirm that the strategies for delivering on outputs were new or that they would enhance and expand on strategies already occurring in schools. Where applicable, authorities described how each strategy might potentially build on or complement strategies already occurring in schools. The implementation plans also identified the potential positive impact of the strategies on the outcomes of students with disability with characteristics that might result in additional need (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, language background other than English, rural and remote), and provided evidence of consultation with peak parent representatives, disability organisations and teacher representatives in relation to the selection of outputs. A list of every school involved in each of the selected outputs was also required.
Following the announcement of the MSSD extension each authority submitted a revised implementation plan with their strategies for 2014 including modified or new benchmarks. Most authorities reduced the number and range of outputs to concentrate their efforts and resources for the final year with all but one adding Output 13 to the list.

2.1.4 Reporting

Government education authorities were required to provide an annual progress report on their achievements (2012, 2013, 2014) as well as a final report at the beginning of 2015 (four progress reports). Non-government authorities were required to provide two half-yearly progress reports on their achievements in 2012, one in the first half of 2013, one in 2014 as well as a final report at the beginning of 2015 (five progress reports). Each progress report included a summary of developments in the reporting period and details of achievements for each output against benchmarks nominated by the authorities in their implementation plans using the performance indicators agreed with the Department (Appendix A: Table 1).

2.2 Evaluation of the initiative

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the MSSD initiative in achieving its objective and outcomes, and to inform future practice and opportunities for longer-term reforms. The main tasks of the evaluation were to:

- examine the efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness of the MSSD initiative in meeting its objective
- recommend how findings of the initiative can be drawn on for other reforms and activities of the Australian, state and territory government and non-government education authorities
- identify successful strategies and approaches for supporting the education of students with disability
- support information sharing between the education authorities regarding successful strategies
- showcase strategies that are effective in supporting students with disability
- identify and collate information on effective outputs and strategies to be made available online to all members of the community including parents, families, teachers, schools and other education practitioners
- recommend strategies to ensure the lessons learned from the initiative informed future activities and longer-term reforms to support students with disability.

Importantly, the evaluation was expected to contribute to two specified outcomes of the MSSD initiative as a formative element, that is:

- Through the evaluation of the initiative, educational policy makers are informed of effective practice under this initiative and long-term policy development occurs in an environment well informed about what works to improve the educational outcomes of students with disabilities.
• Through the evaluation of the initiative, parents, carers, school leaders, school administrators, teachers and the wider community are better informed about effective practices and strategies that benefit the educational achievement of students with disabilities.

The initial short timeframe of two years for the initiative meant that the outputs were taken as indicators or proxies for potential outcomes. However, the extension to 2014 provided an opportunity to evaluate the impact of an additional year of activity across the outputs. As activities were consolidated on the basis of lessons from the initial experience of two years there were in fact clear early outcomes achieved from some activities.

2.2.1 Main elements of the evaluation

Consultations with the authorities

The evaluation team analysed progress reports from all 24 sectors at regular intervals. This included general observations on the developments, opportunities and challenges in each sector as well as progress in relation to agreed benchmarks. Insights gained through that exercise were summarised in a draft report provided to each education authority prior to the preparation of each of the evaluation progress reports, as well as this final report.

Case studies

The evaluation team conducted 38 case studies, some of which were longitudinal and extended as part of the additional year of the evaluation (Appendix B and C). They cover a broad and representative range of outputs, jurisdictions and sectors and were a critical component of the evaluation methodology in that they served two key purposes:

• Information sharing — providing a narrative of what was being achieved as a result of the MSSD initiative and the context in which it was occurring across each of the MSSD outputs

• Evaluative — giving insights into the systems, processes and resources deployed by education authorities to facilitate the rollout of the MSSD initiative in these settings.

The extension phase gave the evaluation team an opportunity to extend targeted case studies to provide more substantial evidence of effects over a three-year period and to select additional examples of good practice. It also identified examples of approaches and activities that had not achieved the short and mid-term outcomes planned.

The case study reports are provided in the MSSD Companion Document and a selection can be accessed on the Department website at: http://education.gov.au/more-support-students-disabilities-case-studies. In addition, 26 two page snapshots of the case studies were prepared for the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) website (http://www.aitsl.edu.au).
Information seminars

In 2013 PhillipsKPA conducted 15 information sharing seminars around Australia for principals, teachers, paraprofessionals and other interested parties (such as allied health professionals, parents and education authority personnel) in one metropolitan and one non-metropolitan location in each state and territory. In response to the positive feedback from the 2013 participants, a second round of information seminars was conducted in May and June 2014. A total of 30 information seminars was conducted over 2013 - 2014 involving more than 800 participants (Appendix D).

The purpose of the seminars was to share information about the lessons learned from MSSD activities in each jurisdiction, and also to provide feedback to the evaluation team concerning the progress and direction of the MSSD initiative. The 2014 seminars also incorporated a stakeholder feedback session on the implementation of the MSSD including:

- the impact of MSSD on approaches of schools, teachers and families
- new and emerging challenges for schools
- likely sustainable effects of the MSSD activities.

MSSD resources

PhillipsKPA prepared a list of MSSD online resources developed by the education authorities in response to the MSSD initiative as a companion document to the mid-term evaluation report. The appendices in this final report include a selection of MSSD activities that will be continued or consolidated in 2015 and beyond and some that were extended or expanded from MSSD activities (Appendix E), and a list of activities with potential for adoption or adaptation in other settings (Appendix F). We have also prepared a summary of some key tools and resources designed by the authorities for use beyond the life of the MSSD initiative (Appendix G).

The evaluation team also established an online MSSD Network within the national Scootle Communities platform to stimulate discussion and support ongoing information sharing for educators interested in exchanging ideas, experiences, activities, and opportunities, to support students with disability (Appendix H).

Evaluation progress reports

The evaluation included five progress reports and the final report (Appendix I):

- Progress Report 1 (August 2012)
- Progress Report 2 (January 2013)
- Mid-Term Progress Report 3 (October 2013)
- Progress Report 4 (June 2014)
- Progress Report 5 (October 2014)
- Final report (June 2015).
3 Authority priorities and approaches

3.1 Patterns of funding allocation

Almost 60 percent ($194m) of the total MSSD funds over 2012-2014 was allocated to the first four outputs shown in Figure 3-1: $51.8m was allocated to activities supporting school principals and school leadership teams to strengthen teachers’ ability to assist students with disability; $45m towards developing support centres as centres of expertise; $41.4m supporting school staff to assess learning levels and adapt the curriculum; and $36m on training for teachers to build their skills in special education.

Figure 3-1: Proportion of total MSSD funds per output (2012-2014)

The patterns of funding allocation essentially reflect the priorities of the larger states and the government sector in particular. They also reflect the relative cost of specific types of initiatives. In Victoria for example, all three authorities spent a combined total of 49 percent of their allocated funding on leadership development alone: this typically involved substantial staff time on professional development programmes and supported participation in award-bearing courses. Likewise, the enhancement or development of support centres, almost exclusively by government authorities in the larger states, required significant funds particularly where new centres of expertise were created.

Activities aimed directly at enhancing teacher skills to provide inclusive learning experiences in the classroom were allocated $95,720,875 over the life of the initiative, which represents just over 32 percent of the total funds. These activities include $36m for special education training (Output 5) and $41.5m on methods of assessing learning and adapting the curriculum for students with disability (Output 8), and $18m on supporting teachers to develop and modify lesson plans (Output 9). They were complemented by other outputs that reinforced skill
development, for example DSE 2005 training and working alongside health and allied health specialists and team teaching.

3.1.1 Variations in priorities and emphasis

The patterns of funding allocation across jurisdictions and sectors show some important differences in priorities and emphasis and also reflect efforts to maximise the value of the available funding, particularly in the case of smaller sectors. Authorities applied three main approaches in the allocation of funding:

- **concentration** — where funding distribution was concentrated on one key output
- **clustering** — where around three to five outputs received a greater share of funding than others
- **even distribution** — where small proportions of funding (typically around 10 percent) were distributed across most outputs.

The distribution of funds to each output across the sectors (Appendix A Table 3) points to some notable differences in the priorities identified by schools and teachers at the commencement of the MSSD initiative, for example:

- Almost two-thirds of government sector funds were focused on support centres (18.7%), school leadership (17.0%), special education training (13.0%), and adapting the curriculum (14.8%).
- The largest single allocations in Catholic sector funding concerned school leadership capacity building (17.0%) followed by projects to adapt the curriculum (15.3%), and DSE 2005 training (10.1%). Otherwise the funding was fairly evenly spread across the remaining outputs.
- Almost 70 percent of the funding in the independent sector went to supporting the NCCD (20.6%), DSE 2005 training (18.2%), special education training (16.5%), and leadership capacity building (14.2%).

For some of the authorities these allocations met needs not typically within their capacity given they have relatively few if any central support services. For example, the Catholic and independent sectors allocated considerably more to DSE 2005 training and supporting the NCCD than the government authorities, most of which had already committed funds to meeting these obligations prior to the MSSD and therefore focused funds primarily on new and innovative initiatives.

Similarly, the least emphasised areas did not necessarily indicate a lack of interest in the outputs, rather they may reflect the organisational arrangements in each jurisdiction or the fact that the areas were already covered sufficiently well by established programmes. For example: none of the independent sector associations allocated funds for outputs concerned with adapting curriculum, team teaching or student transitions; the Catholic sector authorities allocated only a small proportion of funds to team teaching (1.8%) and paraprofessional engagement (2.1%); and government education authorities directed only 1 percent of funds towards supporting student transitions (Output 12).
3.1.2 Changes in response to the extension of the initiative

The extension of the MSSD initiative into 2014 ($100m) provided a major opportunity for authorities to rethink their approaches. The shift in proportion of funds allocated to the outputs in 2014 is shown in Table 3-1.

In broad terms, the changes in emphasis allowed by the one year extension included major increases in activities for NCCD (22.5% of 2014 funds) which was added as Output 13 in 2014 and DSE 2005 training (8.7%). Together these outputs accounted for 12.3 percent of all MSSD funds. Five of the outputs maintained similar proportions of funding over the three years while five declined in the extension phase. The increased share of the NCCD and DSE 2005 came largely from a dramatic drop in funding for work on modifying lesson plans from 9 percent ($17m) to only 0.5 percent ($464,020) most of which occurred in NSW ($15m) where all sectors discontinued Output 9 activities.

Table 3-1: Proportion of funding allocated to outputs at each phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Extension</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - Assistive technology</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - Training in technology</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - Support centres</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - Allied health</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - Skills training</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - DSE 2005 training</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - Leadership</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 - Adapting curriculum</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - Modifying lesson plans</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - Team teaching</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - Paraprofessionals</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 - Transition</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 - NCCD</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These broad shifts in funding allocation do not of course indicate changes in approach within the outputs that occurred in the sectors: for most the extension was an opportunity to refine, change direction and emphasis rather than provide more of the same. For example, assistive technology accounted for 4.3 percent of funds in the initial phase (i.e. $8.4m of $196m), which reduced to 1.8 percent ($1.7m) of the extension funds ($100m) in 2014. That was accompanied by a similar decline in funds allocated to training around new technologies. This reflects the view of most authorities that believed they had covered the bulk of schools targeted. It also highlights the point that the rapid increase in the use of personal devices in the classroom more generally had overtaken the MSSD focused initiatives. The details of funding allocated for each output are provided in Appendix A: Table 2.
3.2 Approaches to implementing the outputs

The ways in which education authorities conceptualised and implemented the MSSD initiative varied according to systemic and contextual factors such as the size of the jurisdiction, governance and organisational arrangements, current frameworks supporting innovations, and the extent to which MSSD aligned with existing policy and programme initiatives. Part C of this report provides details of the diverse approaches of the authorities.

3.2.1 Identifying needs and setting priorities

Implementation plans were generally based on information involving three or four main elements as in the case of the Association of Independent Schools South Australia (AISSA), which included an environmental scan, stakeholder consultations, consideration of relevant research and its own strategic plan. The depth and breadth of stakeholder consultations varied in part as a result of the extent of initiatives underway prior to MSSD. For example, Queensland DET conducted consultations to identify the issues and needs that might be addressed by the MSSD outputs with a roundtable attended by key education stakeholders from the disability sector — including unions, principals’ associations and parent groups — which identified the following issues that helped shape the DET implementation plan:

- There is an increasing need to support students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and learning disabilities.
- Strong leadership is critical in developing an inclusive schooling ethos.
- Students with disability want better accessibility and adjustments to both work activities and assignments in classrooms.
- There should be recognition of the value of foundation levels proposed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) for the national curriculum, and specialist help to adjust the existing curriculum.
- The importance of differentiated instruction, enhanced resources and support for teachers to make adjustments so that students with disability access education and the mainstream curriculum on the same basis as other students.
- There is a need for more effective support for, and use of, teacher aides in supporting students with disability.
- The importance of using assistive technology for students with a disability in rural and remote areas.

3.2.2 Diversity in implementation strategies

Four main approaches to implementing MSSD emerged in the initial implementation plans. These were relatively distinct but by no means limiting: most authorities adopted approaches to programme design that were flexible enough to respond to changing conditions, as occurred in the revised implementation plans for 2014. Most also aligned MSSD outputs with existing strategic plans that provided a reference point for adapting and integrating MSSD activities as the initiative evolved and all approaches had in common goals and processes that would
encourage innovations supporting new approaches to meeting the needs of students with disability.

**Aligning MSSD with system level reform**

Four authorities incorporated MSSD activities into an established or planned strategic reform framework. In these instances MSSD outputs did not drive the changes but were shaped to complement and support new directions. In the case of New South Wales Department of Education and Communities (DEC) the systemic context was central to the implementation strategy. The policy reform initiative, Every Student, Every School supported a range of activities to establish a learning and support framework in all public schools across New South Wales.

Similarly, in Victoria the Department of Education and Training (DET) MSSD strategy was set in the context of system-wide reforms based on environment scans, data collection and analysis which identified trends and challenges in the school population: these translated into seven key opportunities to address the needs of students with disability in the mainstream classroom setting. Alignment with system-level reform also guided the Western Australia Department of Education (DoE) approach that coincided with a systemic shift to greater school empowerment and a period of whole of government resourcing policy constraints. The revised strategy aimed to maximise MSSD access statewide in accordance with policy directives and favoured a networking model, with identified Distinctive Schools as key service centres that generated support for a range of projects and strategies, along with other DoE initiatives.

Likewise, the Catholic Education Commission Victoria (CECV) strategy reflected system wide changes underpinned by a clear philosophical position in relation to assisting students with disability—that all children learn differently and at different rates—and worked within the broader framework of the CECV workforce reform agenda addressing the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) guidelines.

**Building on existing programmes**

Six authorities adopted a centrally driven selection of outputs on the basis of established knowledge of needs to enhance existing activities while at the same time encouraging new initiatives aimed at improving support services. Examples of these responses include the Western Australia Catholic Education Office (CEO) approach which strengthened established initiatives such as the introduction of iPads as communication tools (Outputs 1 and 2) and the Transition to Life Programme to increase post school opportunities (Output 12) as well as starting up new programmes to meet other challenges particularly those specific to regional and remote schools.

Building on existing programmes generally meant multiple approaches to achieving each output with clearly complementary objectives tied closely to existing authority strategic plans. The choices of outputs for the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office (CEO) were made primarily on the basis of alignment with the CEO strategic plan. CEO then identified existing and new projects that would potentially make a maximum and sustained impact on the knowledge base in relation to students with disability across schools. In other authorities administrative
Restructuring presented opportunities for change, for example the Northern Territory Department of Education (DoE) which designed a new service model for support for students with disability.

**Coordinated frameworks to meet identified needs**

Following stakeholder consultations and assessments of needs some authorities developed a coordinated approach to assist regions and schools in developing their activities. These were generally less tied to major reforms and were added to ongoing processes.

Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET) provided an example of a comprehensive approach led by an MSSD Management Group representing schools, regions and central office areas. Following extensive consultation with key stakeholder groups DET identified four key strategies and individual projects to be undertaken coordinated by seven MSSD regional implementation teams. The consultations narrowed down the focus to five major DET strategies arranged around five MSSD outputs. DET drew its strategy together with a detailed matrix involving an overarching set of the four key strategies, that is, building workforce capacity; better teaching support; customised curriculum resources; and focused training.

In a few authorities output selection and implementation was devolved to the local level although generally within agreed system-wide priorities and a guiding framework. The New South Wales Catholic Education Commission (CEC) for example took a relatively open-ended approach to implementing the initiative. Each Diocese consulted widely with schools and other stakeholders and completed scans of need in order to design and establish projects. This resulted in a diverse approach to implementation with over 50 projects of varying size and scope across most of the 11 MSSD outputs.

**Maximising the impact of available funds**

Small authorities tended to focus on a limited number of outputs to address the most pressing needs and to maximise the impact of activities, generally with an eye to making a sustainable difference beyond MSSD. One of the clearest examples of this focused strategy was that of Independent Schools Tasmania (IST) which, aware of its limited capacity to manage the outputs, targeted the MSSD resources on selected clusters of schools. IST invested financial resources, time and energy into building the collective strength and calibre of project officers responsible for the activities at the school and network level.

For the Association of Independent Schools New South Wales (AISNSW) the MSSD initiative was seen as a means to build on existing practices related to the consulting services it provided to schools, as well as to introduce specific project activity to build capabilities and capacity in two cohorts of targeted schools. Likewise, the Association of Independent Schools Northern Territory (AISNT) considered both the limits on its capacity to deliver support, which led to a decision to target professional learning, with a view to equity and access to the MSSD initiative across the Northern Territory.
3.2.3 Areas of emphasis in output development

A synthesis of the main areas of output activity that evolved as education authorities implemented the outputs is provided in Part B of this report. These have been grouped around seven key themes outlined briefly in this section to provide some context for the discussion in the chapters that follow, including the impact of the MSSD, the factors that led to successful practices, lessons learned and the findings of the evaluation.

Theme 1: Building leadership capacity

The focus on leadership development (Output 7) varied across the sectors and while the divides across the outputs are somewhat artificial, the examples provided in Part B illustrate the diverse and typically systemically integrated approaches taken. They also highlight the central role of leadership development in MSSD strategies for these authorities.

Activities to build leadership capacity were generally designed to provide principals and leadership teams with knowledge and understanding of the needs of students with disability, and the ways in which leaders might assist teachers to best meet these needs. The process of distributing leadership aimed to empower school support teams to analyse, evaluate and take action in support of the overall directions of the school.

Theme 2: Responding to obligations under DSE 2005

Authorities identified training in the obligations under DSE 2005 (Output 6) as a prerequisite in guiding staff to make professional judgements about the students requiring support and the adjustments that should be provided: a number of authorities had already committed funds to this work prior to the MSSD. To facilitate and expand the development of a series of online learning resources available to schools a group of education authorities used some of their MSSD resources to support the design and delivery of modules by the University of Canberra the DSE 2005 eLearning initiative. Fourteen authorities used these resources to provide professional development to their staff on the DSE under a licence agreement.

The introduction of additional support for the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13) in the extension phase of the MSSD initiative gave additional weight to the obligations and responsibilities of schools and teachers and enabled some sectors, particularly the independent schools, to provide further opportunities for training school staff.

Theme 3: Building skills in special education

Building skills in special education under Output 5 was a major theme for 18 of the education authorities. The approaches included a series of online learning modules developed for teachers and support staff in the United Kingdom by OnlineTraining Ltd (OLT), which were significantly revised and customised for Australian schools. The original seven modules focused on specific areas of need such as, Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorders, Understanding Speech, Language and Communication needs, and Understanding Hearing Loss. Thirteen authorities used OLT as the major source of professional learning to build skills in special education.
Five authorities developed alternative strategies to build teacher skills in special education including: providing scholarships for postgraduate studies in special education; working with speech pathologists on an oral language project; providing access to nationally accredited training via links with a school-based Registered Training Organisation; or providing professional learning programmes facilitated in schools or online.

**Theme 4: Strategies for inclusive learning**

Outputs 8 and 9 were the focus of professional development and activities specifically targeted at making mainstream classrooms more inclusive learning environments. Under Output 8 authorities provided a range of projects to assist teachers to assess the individual learning levels of students with disability, make adaptations to the curriculum, and introduce appropriate reporting processes. These included significant system-wide innovations as well as regional and local initiatives.

The theme of inclusive learning was also central to Output 9 which focused on supporting teachers to develop or modify lesson plans to suit the needs of students with disability. Most local authorities used external consultants and their own personnel for workshops and mentoring sessions to support teachers in making adjustment or modifying programmes. They also shared best practice, resources and assessment tools, and provided support to increase teacher confidence in implementing inclusive strategies and adjustments in curriculum and pedagogy.

**Theme 5: Changing approaches to working with specialists and support staff**

Four MSSD outputs (4, 10, 11, and 12) involved rethinking the roles of specialists and school support staff and the ways they could most effectively work with classroom teachers to improve the educational outcomes of students. Activities under this heading overlap with other outputs but the focus was primarily on teachers as the person responsible for the education of students with disability in the classroom, with support from specialists such as speech pathologists, psychologists, occupational therapists, and behaviour support specialists. This meant shifting school approaches from models of individual student deficit, management and remediation to inclusive models of teaching and learning. It also involved team teaching: getting specialists, support staff, parents and other stakeholders into the classroom alongside teachers to work directly with individual students.

The theme of engaging specialists and support staff as partners in the classroom setting included a high level of support from authorities for reframing the roles of paraprofessionals, covering a range of position titles including teacher aides, teacher support staff, learning support officers and teaching assistants. In the same way the task of managing transitions for students with disability was the focus of more coordinated approaches from multiple stakeholders to ensure that students, parents and carers were able to successfully negotiate the often complex arrangements involved in moving across different school levels, and from school to work or further study.
Theme 6: New directions for special schools and support centres

Developing special education schools and support centres as centres of excellence (Output 3), was a major focus of attention for eight authorities. The centres were diverse in their origins and emphasis with the most common approach providing expert support from specialists through expanded and more effective partnerships and networks with differences in emphasis according to local needs.

For some authorities new and innovative arrangements were devised to draw more effectively on the expertise of existing organisations since special schools have deep knowledge and understanding of students with additional learning and support needs. The approaches included professional learning, support for teachers and support staff, and growing the capacity of schools by increasing the capabilities of school learning and support teams.

Theme 7: Inclusive learning technologies

Most of the authorities that selected activities to providing assistive technology (Output 1) and training (Output 2) implemented them as a combined strategy. This involved the purchase of new technologies for students with disability in the classroom, with associated training in the use of the hardware and related software to enhance students’ learning. iPads were the most popular communication tool used aimed at improving curriculum engagement and participation for students with disability. The benefits included increased ability to follow classroom routines, greater independence, and improved opportunities for students to express needs and to make choices related to their learning.

For some authorities partnering with specialist centres of expertise enabled them to get targeted assistance with assistive technology for students with vision or hearing impairment. These included devices and software for blind and vision-impaired students in the mainstream classroom such as screen reading and magnification software, BrailleNote computers and Braille Writers, iPads and electronic dictionaries, and speech-to-text captioning technology.
4 Impact of MSSD on schools and teachers

4.1 Introduction

Education authorities have been highly successful in using the MSSD initiative to make significant changes in the way participating schools and teachers contribute to improved student learning experiences for students with disability. The specific areas of impact identified in this chapter were largely the result of a conjunction of three elements: the commitment of school principals, the emphasis on whole of school responsibility, and the focus on student learning outcomes.

4.2 Increased school leadership involvement

Increasing the involvement and commitment of school principals and school leadership teams was central to the impact of all MSSD outputs. This was the biggest area of investment in terms of funds and activity and, for participating schools, resulted in principals and leadership groups putting inclusive learning firmly on the agenda of school policy and practice.

By putting MSSD initiatives into the bigger picture as well as the school context, clear leadership from the principal and executive teachers ensured the involvement and subsequent empowerment of all staff to make changes in their classrooms. Case studies, focus groups and authority reports consistently highlighted strong school leadership as an essential element underpinning the changed approaches of their schools to meeting the needs of students with disability. Actively involving the leadership of the school in the implementation of change was significant at every point from identifying student needs, to evaluating strategies, and identifying areas requiring further development.

Without leadership commitment and hands on sponsorship, the impact of school-based MSSD activities would most probably have been confined largely to those traditionally with direct responsibilities for students with disability. Informed leadership was seen across all sectors as the driver of changing attitudes and change in the approach of schools, particularly raised principal awareness of their professional obligations under DDA/DSE 2005 which had a direct flow-on effect to leadership teams. In the case study schools there was an expectation that priorities needed to be set systematically from school leadership and that schools would need to be creative in determining how to continue meeting needs with designated people in leadership teams taking specific responsibility for inclusivity which produced cascading effects across all staff.

“"The MSSD intervention was needed to accelerate and extend the reach of the changes by building a critical mass of more highly accomplished leaders.""

4.3 Increased school ownership and accountability

School leadership supporting the professional judgement of teachers was part of a general move towards greater school and teacher ownership of obligations for addressing the needs of
students with disability. Focus groups referred to the overall direction as ‘building understanding of our responsibilities’ that made teachers more accountable for their students with disability: noting that the motive was more about compelling responsibilities rather than compliance driven accountability. While the many professional learning activities offered in every jurisdiction on meeting school obligations under DSA/DSE obviously sharpened focus, this perhaps understates and distracts from the impact more broadly of the wide range of activities shaping school responses.

Effective leadership also had the effect of shifting schools from models of intervention around managing individual needs to a whole school approach. In practical terms it meant ensuring the values of inclusiveness were clearly evident in the school vision and embedded in school planning, reflecting the belief that ‘every child in our school is everyone’s responsibility’ which was typically a central theme in schools that made significant changes to teaching practice. These activities typically included the involvement of the whole school and community meeting to consider the student cohort, providing release time to document and develop Individual Education Plans, and increasing the opportunities to engage parent/carers during this process: as reported by one teacher, ‘... it promoted great conversations about students and fantastic curriculum and adjustment discussion.’ As the MSSD initiative progressed school leaders were also encouraged to foster devolution of responsibility for action to the classroom level with less reliance on lead teachers and external experts to encourage greater ownership of inclusiveness across the schools.

4.4 Focus on learning outcomes for all students

Meeting the needs of students with disability in mainstream classrooms requires more than generating commitment and enthusiasm across the school community. It requires a marked increase in teachers with the skills and understanding needed to ensure that schools focused on improving learning outcomes for students with disability. The experience of the MSSD initiative resulted in a changing ‘lexicon’ associated with disability not based on deficit thinking but more focused on learning strengths and learning needs combined with evidence of deeper knowledge. As the initiative evolved there was less talk in the case study schools about disability as a ‘problem’ that needs to be resourced and more about where an individual student is on their learning trajectory and what is required for learning to continue.

Transformation of classroom approaches involved a number of components, including significant reconceptualising of structures and processes: as one teacher observed during a seminar presentation ‘differentiation is not about modification or tinkering at the classroom level with less reliance on lead teachers and external experts to encourage greater ownership of inclusiveness across the schools. “Relationships between the support teams and principals were strengthened, resulting in buy-in from principals and a shift in thinking and practice in terms of acknowledging schools’ responsibility and making adjustments for students with disability.”

“By integrating the activities in Outputs 5 and 9, there was a positive impact at both classroom and school level. Teachers developed skills and confidence in making educational adjustments for students with disability, supported by on-the-ground support from the CEO Inclusion Support team.”
the margins’. Where it was most successful, the MSSD initiative was reported to have changed the approaches of the participating schools and teachers with new ways of thinking about pedagogy.

Education authorities reported that participating schools had achieved significant numbers of teachers with the skills and confidence to interpret assessment results and adapt the curriculum to match the learning needs of the students. They also reported that teachers were able to:

- readily find the information they needed about the nature of the disability
- identify the most effective approaches to teaching
- use evidence to inform their approach
- design and monitor student plans
- create strategies for follow-up interventions.

Teacher focus on the learning outcomes of students was supported by an increase in the use of structured evidence-based approaches that also emerged from, or were accelerated by, MSSD activities, including the introduction of statewide assessment and planning frameworks such as ABLES in Victoria and PLASTT in New South Wales. The closer interaction between teachers and specialists with expertise in the use of evidence-based approaches added considerable value to this process.

There was also a significant growth in the links between schools and university research and teaching. These helped shape the rethinking of approaches in many schools. A number of MSSD projects engaged academic experts from Australia and overseas for professional learning as well as seeking their advice on project planning and implementation. In some instances this involved award-granting programmes tailored to targeted groups of school leaders, teachers and support staff that had the added advantage of encouraging university experts to work more closely with schools to design new and innovative evidence-based intervention strategies.

The experience of the NCCD process gave some urgency to schools and teachers building knowledge about the learning capacity of students to inform adjustments. This also supported more effective partnerships with parents and, with increased numbers of teachers using evidence-based approaches, schools were better positioned to map student learning development. Schools were also prompted to more systematically reflect on what they were actually doing for students to enable their success. The benchmark data for monitoring and evaluating the progress of schools gave schools the confidence to think differently about their approaches, not only for students with disability but for all students, particularly the increased numbers of students with moderate learning difficulties.

### 4.4.1 New ways of engaging specialists and support staff

The increasingly collaborative nature of much of the work aimed at improving the educational experiences of students with disability had a direct influence on changing the nature of the professional relationship between classroom teachers, specialists, allied health professionals and school support staff. There was clear evidence from the case studies and authority reports
of the immediate and growing impact of MSSD initiative on the closer alignment of classroom activities with the work of specialist service providers. Authorities also reported a marked increase in the mutual respect for the contributions teachers and specialist professionals bring to bear on improving practice.

4.4.2 Special schools and special education teachers

The impact of MSSD on schools and teachers was particularly evident in the enhanced role of special schools and special education teachers. The new approaches placed these experts in a more central role in many schools where previously their impact was often relatively peripheral to the mainstream operations. In addition to working ‘elbow to elbow’ with teachers in the classroom to enhance learning for individual students with disability, classroom teachers were able to engage these experts as a key resource for developing their own professional skills in assessing student progress and planning learning activities.

Education authority reports provided many examples of special education teachers themselves initiating a more collaborative approach through MSSD initiatives and supporting the shift from deficit models of withdrawing students for testing and support. Their work increasingly involved providing strategies and resources for teachers, team teaching, joint planning and guidance in differentiating curriculum. As one special education teacher observed: ‘I no longer do what teachers can be skilled and supported to do for themselves.’

4.4.3 Health and allied health professionals

The MSSD initiative encouraged schools to take diverse and often creative approaches to engage health and allied health professionals with strategies ranging from implementing whole school practices through to advice for individual students. Focus groups were highly positive about the impact of MSSD on increased collaboration with allied health services and agencies and the raised awareness of support in the school community. They saw working with experts in the community as an extension of the focus on team sharing and noted a change in the nature of professional discussions to an emphasis on cross-disciplinary approaches. This was just one part of a broader change to all aspects of supportive practices reflecting the increased understanding that meeting the needs of students is not solely the responsibility of learning support teachers.

Moreover, working side by side in the classroom, health and allied health professionals were informed by the pedagogical understanding of the teachers first hand. The new collaborative arrangements encouraged specialists to expand their role to become key providers of school-based professional learning programmes to improve curriculum design and planning. It also added considerable value for teachers:
When we teach together, we not only plan what we do but we take time at the end of the lesson to reflect on what has worked and what hasn’t. It can be as simple as seating arrangements or modelling effective strategies in group-work. As a beginning teacher, I find this level of support and guidance invaluable in building my repertoire of skills.

4.4.4 Paraprofessional staff

For some authorities the shift in orientation towards collaborative approaches extended to reimagining the role of learning support teachers. School support staff were widely reported to have embraced the opportunity provided by MSSD activities to adopt a more clearly defined role as paraprofessionals working in partnership with teachers.

The professionalisation of these roles was underpinned by extensive additional training experiences, which in many instances provided a springboard for further tertiary study. It was also clear that as a direct consequence of their training, a pattern emerged of paraprofessionals increasing their involvement with teachers in the planning and delivery of support for students with disability in schools. The quality of their engagement improved significantly over the life of the MSSD initiative, as one principal remarked ‘... we will know when we have been successful when we see less of our aides sitting beside their student and more of them working with groups or moving around to support learning across the whole class.’ One authority noted that the use of teacher aides closely complemented the increased involvement of health professionals in schools which changed the approach altogether:

“The biggest overall impact of the MSSD initiative was on teacher capacity and the experience of classroom teachers and teacher assistants working side by side to reframe the way the schools operated to address the needs of students with disability.”

...having assisted in reversing the not uncommon phenomenon of children with the greatest need being supported by adults in the classroom with minimal professional knowledge. The improvements have been further embedded in school practice with rethinking and a shift towards a professional partnership model of teachers and aides working together in the classroom.

4.5 Embedding assistive technologies in the classroom

The impact of the rapid increase internationally in the development, quality and use of new software applications for students with disability coincided with the roll out of the MSSD initiative, with the wave of new digital learning environments overtaking many of the planned approaches set out in the initial implementation plans of the education authorities and associations.

For large numbers of teachers the MSSD initiative provided a first step in using personal learning devices and dedicated learning software. However, the impact of MSSD went well beyond these immediate achievements. The exposure to assistive technologies designed specifically for students with special learning needs provided a stimulus and entry point for schools and teachers which had a particularly significant impact on their confidence and competence as well as generating considerable enthusiasm for broader change.
The opportunity to test the potential of learning technologies addressing specific student needs created a positive climate for embracing augmentative and alternative communications (AAC) strategies in the classroom with the added benefit of using mainstream personal devices such as the iPad to support teacher-student and student-student communications. The now common use of touch screen technology dramatically reduced distinctions between students with disability and other students and encouraged more inclusive patterns of learning.

Teachers were surprised at the marked changes in their approaches to pedagogy. In some cases that came as a result of new communication technologies. For example, the Northern Territory DoE, using microphone and audio in targeted schools meant teachers gave closer attention to the clarity of their directions and communications. This also had benefits for the whole class with notable reductions in classroom disruptions generally, more time spent on learning tasks, and better engagement socially by the students with hearing impairments.

In addition to the increased use of assistive technologies to support teaching practices changes over the three years of MSSD activities included:

- an increase in the frequency of assistive technologies identified in planning processes and documentation for students with disability
- more sophisticated use of assistive technologies by students to express their learning
- schools extending the possibilities available to create independence and interdependence in students with disabilities
- changes in the way schools used their resources to ensure that students with disability had access to assistive technologies.

Assistive technology also created opportunities for students with disability to participate in schools on the same basis as other students, such as at school assembly and even beyond the school gate, described by one authority as: ‘life changing for students, their families, teachers and schools’.

### 4.6 Strengthened partnerships with parents, carers and students

The impact of MSSD on schools and teachers extended to relationships with parents, carers and student. Although none of the MSSD outputs refer directly to parents and carers the key outcome of schools being ‘better able to meet the educational needs of students with disability’ emphasised the need to achieve this through improved collaboration with parents, carers and students. In most cases the focus of these changes in approach was around the development of individual learning plans for students and the management of student transitions through different levels of schooling and into post-school activities. Improving the knowledge and
understanding of school leadership teams, particularly the priority given to the professional development of principals, set the groundwork for change.

Given the limited capacity of schools, with few teachers skilled in meeting the needs of students with disability in the initial phase of the MSSD initiative, it is not surprising that activities to engage with parents, carers and students emerged more strongly as the initiative evolved. The impact of the NCCD process in the extension phase was particularly significant. Since evidence of consultation is required to inform adjustments and individualised planning for learning, parents and students were increasingly likely to be involved in enrolment procedures and meetings with classroom teachers regarding individual learning strengths and needs.

For some sectors changing the nature of the school-parent relationship was initially challenging but with the growing confidence of principals and teachers as their understanding of the needs of students with disability increased, a range of new approaches emerged. For example, the AISNSW reported that as a direct result of DSE 2005 training, principals and teachers were confidently conducting collaborative planning meetings with parents and drawing less and less on external support than what was generally experienced prior to the implementation of the MSSD initiative.

Authorities also took steps to formalise involvement with families, and where this occurred they saw an increased focus on building trust with parents and more effective communication systems. The examples of the impact of MSSD on the approaches of schools and teachers in relation to parents include system-level supports such as the Positive Partnerships Professional Learning Programme (WA DoE) and the development of various guidelines and tools to assist schools in engaging parents in other sectors.

The impact of MSSD initiative on collaborative approaches to managing student transitions shifted the focus from traditional information evenings and individual consultations to a broader range of options to assist schools, teachers, specialists, parents in making choices. Authorities produced a number of comprehensive kits such as the Transition into Primary School kit developed by the Victorian Deaf Education Institute, which included resources aimed at early intervention centres, receiving schools, deaf children and their parents. In Tasmania the Knowme online resource allowed parents and families to consolidate in one location all relevant information about their family member with a disability: it can be easily updated and shared with teachers and other professionals as appropriate.

The involvement of students in decision-making about their education pathways has been less obvious across the sectors but as a result of MSSD, education authorities, schools and teachers became increasingly conscious of the need to engage students, particularly in the secondary schools, in making choices about their futures. The Western Australian DoE Big Plan Project provided an example of supporting students to have a voice in their futures. The Big Plan helps
students at a senior campus of a Distinctive School ‘identify their dream in life’, their interests, hopes and aspirations, and build a team including parents, carers and agency staff, to help them achieve it. The approach works from a key question: ‘What would it take for this student to have a full and interesting life, surrounded by friends and family and where they could make a valued contribution to their community?’ The school supports students with disability to prepare for work and/or post-school study and build their social skills and independence (Case Study 26).

Overall, schools that participated in MSSD activities appeared to be on the threshold of a new era of partnerships with families to enhance the educational outcomes of students with disability. There was increasing evidence of parents playing a key role in planning for individual student learning and their personal experience recognised as an invaluable source of information for school leaders and teachers in formulating approaches to change. A number of authorities reported that families were feeling more connected and positive in the knowledge that their children were getting support and appropriate adjustments: ‘Better outcomes for students means better outcomes for family’. They also identified increased levels of follow up by families at home to reinforce school programmes which gave these students a stronger sense of being able participate in the same way as other students.

The website resource Disability Standards for Education: A Practical Guide for Individuals, Families and Communities, was developed by the University of Canberra as part of the DSE 2005 eLearning project. It was designed to raise awareness and understanding of the Standards and how they help people with disability. The website provides practical information including videos, text, stories, and links. It is organised into four topics, with each topic accessed from a link under a video introduction. (Case Study 2)
5 Factors supporting successful implementation of the MSSD initiative

5.1 Introduction

This chapter identifies some of the key elements and conditions at the national level and across the authorities that most successfully promoted changes from MSSD activities aimed at providing better support for students with disability. The successful practices identified are based primarily on the authority reports, consultations and case studies.

5.2 Design and implementation of the MSSD initiative

The approach to the design and implementation developed by the Commonwealth Government and state authorities was highly successful in achieving the MMSD objective and in many respects exceeded expectations. The design elements identified below were generally considered central to the success of the initiative nationally.

5.2.1 Alignment with policy and legislation

The importance of legislative obligations and accountabilities to the success of the MSSD implementation process was critical to the success of the initiative: for some authorities the combination of DSA/DSE 2005 and NCCD requirements proved to be a highly effective lever to prompt change beyond basic compliance. Having legislation for DSA on the rights of students directly tied to the initiative — aligned but flexible in the adoption — was a significant element in its success. However, the influence of legislative obligations should not diminish the significance of the high level of activity and enthusiasm for change that occurred more generally in response to the MSSD initiative.

While DDA/DSE underpinned the high level of focus and commitment of schools through the increased and shared understanding of professional responsibilities around legislative obligations, other policy developments also played a part in embedding expectations that schools should take responsibility for students with disability, as one authority manager observed:

*The alignment of this initiative with the introduction of the Australian curriculum, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the implementation of the pilot phases of the NCCD added to the purpose of providing and meaningful education to those students with a disability in our schools.*

The experience of school involvement in the NCCD process provided a vehicle for every school to build knowledge and understandings of DDA/DSE, and to look at systems and processes in place for making adjustments and collaborating with parents, including supportive evidence. Focus groups saw the NCCD process acted as a 'wake up' call for schools to more systematically reflect on what they were doing for students to enable their success. NCCD set benchmark data
for monitoring and evaluating the progress of the school and encouraged schools think differently about their approaches: as one stakeholder observed, it gave them time to ‘slow down, reflect, collect data and implement’.

Focus groups referred to a change in mindset of school staff to engage and share responsibility for students with disability. One group emphasised the importance of having a shared understanding of disability standards as a professional reference point for conversation, raising teacher confidence working with students with disability students and targeting support services on the needs of the child.

5.2.2 Clear coordinating goals

The model of a targeted initiative focused strongly and unambiguously on students and building the capacity of schools to address their needs was widely agreed as an effective strategy and a key factor in the success of the initiative. The outputs provided parameters for actions without being overly constraining and, although somewhat loose, the agreed benchmarks meant that energy was directed to achieving tangible goals in terms of the numbers of schools, teachers and students involved in the activities.

The importance of creating conditions for sustainable change was generally well understood by most authorities from the outset and they planned accordingly. The limited term nature of the initiative encouraged most authorities to select outputs that would have the greatest impact and, as one authority noted, provided direction:

“We tightened up our approach to measurement, reporting, preparing for ongoing evaluation meetings. Also the finite nature of the Initiative meant we focused on sustainability and where we could make a difference for the longer term.”

5.2.3 Choice and flexibility to experiment

The flexibility built into the initiative design through the choice of outputs was a key strength. Most education authorities took the opportunity to try new approaches on a large scale that they would not otherwise have done, or at least, not so rapidly. Some reported the initiative stretched their thinking in new ways, and gave them new perspectives. For authorities well into major reforms to create inclusive learning environments for students with disability, the choice and flexibility enabled them to consolidate or expand innovative approaches underway as well as testing new approaches emerging from the work in progress. Either way, the choice and flexibility factor facilitated activity and played to the strengths of the authorities.

“In my experience of many government-funded initiatives across the range of educational services over the years, I believe the MSSD was amongst the best.”
5.2.4  Emphasis on collaborative activity

The importance attached to collaborative activity was a strong theme at national and authority levels throughout the MSSD initiative. Nationally the development of the DSE 2005 eLearning modules by the University Canberra stands out as a model of what is possible when the jurisdictions work together with a common goal. Likewise, cross-sector initiatives were an essential factor in the success of some outputs, especially in smaller sectors. One authority observed that MSSD provided opportunities via the federal government to become a policy-seeding agent by making funding available for the states to create collaborative projects as a new way of working.

“The Initiative created an incredible space to experiment. We regularly asked ‘What do we learn from this?’ ‘What is our goal for this year?’ ‘Where is our focus?’ ‘What is our footprint?’”

5.2.5  Formative planning and reporting processes

The arrangements for planning and reporting agreed by education authorities were intended to achieve more than compliance with funding requirements: they played a significant role in the success of the initiative. The formative nature of the planning was emphasised by the approach of the Department from the time of the early stages of the initiative when achievement targets were negotiated and the first progress reports were received and revised in a consultative process.

The reporting was manageable for authorities and focused attention on progress against their objectives. While the reporting ensured the authorities maintained their focus on the planned activities and outputs the balance of compliance and formative development overcame some initial perceptions that the process would be onerous. Authorities commented that while the implementation was in some respects taxing, in retrospect it was very successful:

Being able to provide feedback and being listened to made it a genuinely partnership approach not ‘us and them’. The Department showed a real interest and enthusiasm for the work we are doing.

The authorities were universally happy with the administrative arrangements with the Department of Education. They noted that the communications were good and that clear expectations were set. It was particularly important to them that there was continuity and relationship building between the DoE and the authorities. This was considered a significant factor in managing the initiative over the extended period to a positive conclusion, and at a personal level, as one authority observed: ‘The DoE officer responsible throughout the project was valued as our “go to” person – outstanding’.

5.2.6  The use of benchmarks as indicators of success

The achievement benchmarks for each MSSD output had both positive and negative aspects but on the whole they contributed to the success of the initiative. While they were problematic in some respects they nonetheless provided a focal point of tangible goals informing developments for the authorities.
However, from a programme evaluation perspective the benchmarks had a number of weaknesses. Since this was the first time some of the authorities had engaged in activities on the scale of the MSSD the estimates were essentially calculated guesses. Not surprisingly the authorities set modest targets that in most instances were quickly exceeded well beyond expectations as can be seen in Part B of this report which shows the benchmarks and achievements for each authority.

Authorities understood that the benchmarks indicated levels of activity such as the number of schools directly involved, but were not expected to provide information about changes in practice in the classroom, or the extent to which those changes made a difference to the learning experience and outcomes for students. Since most anticipated benchmark achievements were met in the early stages of the initiative, and mostly exceeded, there was a risk that this could have been perceived as a sufficient measure of success, creating a false sense that the task of achieving change had been completed.

On the positive side, as the initiative evolved it became clear that the Department and authorities saw these measures as useful indicators for planning purposes and for gaining support and recognition for achievements in the jurisdictions. Indeed, by the final report in 2015 both the Department and authorities were able to point to the output achievements as indicative evidence of the breadth and depth of impact. Moreover, they were able to identify areas that could clearly be developed further or, in some cases, given less attention.

5.2.7 Initiative evaluation as a formative influence

Evaluation reports typically place the evaluation in the background. However, in this case the Department and the National Evaluation Working Group made the process of programme evaluation an integral part of the initiative design and implementation. Feedback from the authority reports and the final interviews with initiative leaders and managers in each jurisdiction made it clear that the MSSD evaluation was itself a factor in the success of the initiative.

Amongst other things the evaluation reports and consultations provided authorities with regular opportunities to reflect on their progress and to make adjustments on the basis of independent feedback. The evaluation also provided an additional line of communication between the Department and the authorities that sometimes clarified and supported developments for both. The process also played a key role in raising awareness of developments in other jurisdictions:

*It was great to know that there was a review across the states. It was very useful being able to read the progress reports and to be made aware of what was happening around the country. The face-to-face evaluation conversations were also important as they allowed an insight into what other sectors and jurisdictions are doing in this area that can inform practice of our sector.*

The evaluation case studies (Appendix B and C) and information seminars (Appendix D) also contributed to the development of good practice as well as providing authorities with an
opportunity to meet together around common issues, to showcase their work and share ideas. On a number of occasions new cross-sector initiatives were prompted by these events.

5.3 **Authority leadership and management**

The observations of the evaluation team at the mid-point of the initiative in relation to the authority leadership and management were confirmed in the overall assessment of their effectiveness. The high level of achievement in the most active authorities can largely be attributed to a combination of the following factors:

- leadership provided at senior levels to consolidate, refine and sharpen the expectations arising from MSSD projects and strategies
- momentum and traction established by authority staff responsible for MSSD coordination across the system
- rigorous attention to project methodology including detailed project planning, feedback mechanisms and stakeholder consultation
- high expectations and clear connections across MSSD projects identified and regularly monitored statewide
- high levels of positive support expressed by schools in supporting staff for high-priority MSSD professional learning activities.

As we note elsewhere in this report, the independent sector does not have central authority to manage jurisdiction-wide initiatives. However, in most cases they were able to meet these criteria for effective programme implementation with targeted initiatives using MSSD funds to promote, guide and support activities.

5.3.1 **Adapting outputs to local priorities**

The MSSD initiative provided education authorities with the flexibility to focus resources on areas in which they saw the greatest need, or the greatest opportunity to effect positive change in schools, without jeopardising the overall integrity and direction of the initiative. The diverse responses of the authorities generally worked well over the three years of the initiative and included a mix of:

- matching existing activities to selected outputs
- complementing or building on existing activities appropriate for some outputs with new approaches for others
- devolving the selection and implementation of outputs from the authority to the local level within agreed priorities and a guiding framework.

5.3.2 **Aligning MSSD with authority level strategies**

Some of the most effective system-level strategies emphasised the importance of aligning initiatives with the current or planned strategic directions of the education authorities. For example, in the New South Wales government sector the MSSD initiative directly
complemented the objectives of the broader reform agenda Every Student, Every School. The fact that change occurred in a relatively short timeframe across a number of fronts in a large and complex school system is cause for acknowledging success in its own right. Likewise, the reorganisation of the New South Wales public school system, and the formation of principal networks, provided fertile ground for special schools to develop and demonstrate the extent of local level expertise to support teachers and principals in their efforts to support and enhance learning for students with disability.

5.3.3 Providing frameworks and guiding principles

Almost all authorities produced high quality locally designed frameworks and guiding principles to support the implementation of the outputs. The contribution of these to the success of initiatives was strongest where they were developed in close consultation with schools, often involving short periods of pilot testing, and systematic rollout processes.

The strong uptake and successful application of assistive technologies provided a number of examples of close guidance by the authorities to introduce assistive technology for students, strengthen teacher capability in its use, and increase the capacity of schools to introduce and manage learning technologies. These were most effective where the focus was first and foremost on responding to student needs rather than mass allocation of hardware or applications. Good practice in the strategies used by authorities typically included the following main elements:

- identifying priority areas of disability
- trialling equipment in selected schools
- distributing grants for the purchase of equipment
- providing technical support for setting up and using equipment in the classroom
- readily accessible expert advice on selecting appropriate applications
- professional development specific to the immediate needs of teachers
- setting expectations concerning preferred approaches that schools should adopt.

5.3.4 Investing in system-level tools and resources

A significant number of new tools and resources were designed, tested and made available during the MSSD initiative to support schools and teachers in their efforts to meet the needs of specific groups of students. Appendix G provides a summary list of some of the major responses identified in the authority reports. The development of tools and resources by health and allied health specialists in collaboration with teachers and parents was a feature of the outputs.

Many of the new purpose-built products, as well those that were under development prior to the MSSD initiative, were the product of new working relationships between teachers,
specialists and support staff on the ground. Tools for structured approaches guiding school-parent partnerships that were particularly successful included, for example, the New South Wales DEC use of the PLASST student profile report. This was pivotal to the collaborative process whereby teachers and parents plan for a student’s learning with the emphasis on a structured approach to interactions between teachers, parents, and where appropriate the students themselves, allied health professionals and other relevant stakeholders.

Similarly, in Victoria, the DoE ABLES Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) documented the goals developed and devised by each teacher in consultation with parents and allied health staff. A half-yearly and annual report on these goals is provided to parents and caregivers as a highly effective tool to inform parents about the progress of their child.

5.4 Intensified engagement with professional learning

In all sectors, across all jurisdictions, the rapid increase in the level of engagement with professional learning by school staff over the three years of MSSD has been a major success factor supporting implementation of the initiative. Underpinned by a sense of urgency on the part of principals and schools to address the needs of students with disability in the mainstream classroom, the MSSD initiative directly generated an increased appetite for professional learning for school leaders, classroom teachers, support staff and specialists. The expanding options for professional learning included online learning, problem-based learning, positive partnerships and engaging allied health professionals.

5.4.1 Impact on the strategic directions of authorities and schools

Professional learning became more central to strategic plans than anticipated as the MSSD activities gained momentum and teacher take-up of opportunities expanded. This had broader effects on strategic directions as discussions of disability focused more sharply on changing classroom practice. The intensified engagement of teachers in professional learning was widely considered to have had an impact on almost all other outcomes in one way or another. As school staff became more aware of their capacity to make decisions about student learning needs, their on-going professional development typically became more focused and deliberate. Authorities responded with additional learning opportunities and modes of delivery that best met teacher needs.

5.4.2 Integrated approaches to professional learning

Given the obvious success of online training initiatives provided under the MSSD initiative it is possible to overlook the effectiveness of systematically integrated approaches to professional learning taken by the authorities. Most professional learning for MSSD involved a blended learning experience using online delivery combined with face-to-face tutor and peer support. Focus groups recognised the potential impact of increased school access to online learning for staff and the growth of resources required to support their work. The success of integrated approaches to professional learning was profound in some sectors, for example with the three-pronged strategy designed by AISNSW involving:
• workshop sessions for principals, teachers and support staff across a range of matters related to students with disability
• customised support, guidance and mentoring related to development and implementation of school plans for improvement — specific to students with disability but also aligned with each school’s overarching plan
• targeted professional learning activity specifically related to relevant legislation and the NCCD.

The design and delivery of high quality online and blended learning experiences for school leaders, teachers and support staff stimulated unanticipated demand for more. This is one of a number of examples of the MSSD initiative providing a catalyst for change and more generally raising the confidence and competence of principals, teachers and support staff to engage with online learning. The online approaches supported by regular distance mode tutoring were especially well received in regional and remote areas with limited access to face-to-face professional development opportunities.

5.4.3 Stimulation increased demand for formal qualifications

Education authorities that provided support and incentives such as scholarships for school staff to enrol in award-bearing tertiary education course were particularly successful in generating further demands for ongoing training. In some cases this involved close collaboration with universities to develop teacher capability such as the assessment of learning levels as the basis for curriculum adaptation. For example in Victoria, DET introduced an innovative system–wide approach to professional learning extending beyond the MSSD initiative with the ABLES project which culminated in the release of a comprehensive professional learning programme across the state.

Other authorities stimulated demand for formal qualifications through programmes directly linked to school leadership roles such as CECV where a Masters of Educational Intervention coursework programme was designed and delivered by the University of Melbourne around the AITSL framework. The skill-based and evidence-based coursework focused participants on ‘Knowing how students learn’ and involved a shift to new and different leadership roles in schools. Similarly, teachers in Queensland government schools were offered Graduate Certificate Scholarships in Autism Studies established with the Griffith University Autism Centre of Excellence.

5.5 Reframing professional roles and responsibilities

The successful reframing of approaches to working with health professionals is detailed in almost all authority reports. In some sectors the MSSD activities were a significant breakthrough in shifting the orientation of schools and staff towards a positive and purposeful approach to the learning needs of students with disabilities. Although the evidence of direct impact on students is not yet available from authorities there was a strong impression that students of all levels of ability, particularly those with oral language difficulties or delays in literacy development, were benefiting from the collaborative working relationships.
The examples of shifts in role orientation include the Northern Territory CEO where the Inclusion Support Services team worked with schools in a proactive way in comparison with the previous somewhat reactive style of service. The teams worked in classrooms with teachers, delivered training in inclusion support at a whole school level and empowered principals and Inclusion Support Co-ordinators to build school capacity. The roles of Inclusion Support Co-ordinators also included a greater contribution to the professional learning of staff in other schools through sharing of teaching practice at network meetings.

5.6  A coordinated approach to cross-sector collaboration

The success of newly initiated collaborative arrangements under MSSD outputs can be attributed in large part to education authorities taking a planned strategic approach to the task. Examples from the initial implementation plans included sharing of resources, combined cross-sector professional learning opportunities, and joint sponsorship of leading national and international experts. This was particularly evident and highly valued in states and territories with smaller and disparate populations. It also raised awareness of the potential for further opportunities for collaborative activities in related areas. As the MSSD initiative evolved, and with greater contact, the various authorities were able to identify further opportunities for working together and pooling resources and expertise.

Focus groups emphasised the significance of building trust at all levels of operation to extend relationships within and beyond the local context. This was cited as a key factor in supporting exceptionally productive cross-sectoral collaborations, which in turn opened up new opportunities for allied health professionals and others to engage more widely across schools. New networks were also created between teachers and allied health professionals, between schools and families, and between schools and a range of organisations, and in some jurisdictions, between relevant government agencies such as health and education.

5.7  Using evidence-based approaches to monitor progress and focus actions

The new approaches to working with specialists and support staff under MSSD created opportunities for monitoring and using data to guide more coordinated approaches to improving student learning outcomes. With direct advice and support from specialists in the classroom environment, teachers became more confident about differentiating the curriculum and tracking the performance of students.

The effectiveness of using research-based advice of specialists and academics combined with the first-hand knowledge and observations of teachers, paraprofessionals and parents, was demonstrated in a number of case studies. For example, the Consolidating Post-School Transitioning Opportunities project of Brisbane Catholic Education provided a case study college with benchmarking data, which it considered in conjunction with information provided by parents, students and post-

“We realised early on that the bulk of teachers genuinely wanted to meet the needs of students with disability in the most professional way possible.”
school service providers. The college also used a tracking tool to monitor personal and social capabilities and mapped these across the whole secondary curriculum and other school co-curricular experiences to inform teachers of potential gaps for students.

Some sectors took it upon themselves to conduct internal evaluations of programme effectiveness and the extension of the initiative encouraged others to take a closer interest in systematically collecting data to guide future planning. Although this data is fragmented and limited in scope and application across the sectors, it could well be a highly useful resource if authorities choose to make their findings available to a wider audience. Two major exceptions were the work of the OLT and the University of Canberra in monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the impact of the Outputs 5 and 6 respectively. There are other university-based interventions that will presumably involve systematic data collection and analysis related to specific interventions that should be available to inform strategies in the future.

Stakeholders were conscious of the need to embed NCCD baseline data in systems and processes, and as a core element to guide ongoing improvements with appropriate support to interpret data and find the points of need. They valued the growing evidence base and the multiple forms of data and saw strong potential for using data focused on the needs of students to inform long-term follow up in their schools. A major gain from the experience of data collection is the impact on systems for whole school improvement with ongoing identification of student need planning processes, collaboration, monitoring and evaluation.
6 Sustainable effects of the initiative

6.1 Introduction

At the heart of the MSSD initiative was an expectation that strengthened capacity in schools would translate to sustainable approaches to meeting the learning needs of individual students. There was considerable evidence from the evaluation of authorities building a critical mass of teachers with the skills and understandings to sustain the changes that emerged over the three years of the initiative. The stimulus for change and opportunity for experimentation offered by MSSD resulted in significant steps made towards enhancing and consolidating existing approaches, introducing new approaches and creating new opportunities for ongoing change beyond the life of the initiative. The conjunction of MSSD with NCCD stimulated an evidence base at the school level to guide ongoing changes in approaches to teaching and learning for students with disability.

6.2 A baseline for consolidation and expansion

Most authorities now have a substantial amount of baseline data to use for planning purposes beyond the life of the MSSD initiative. The data collected has potential for strategic and diagnostic use to direct resources for developments in the immediate future. There are, however, some caveats and limitations in interpreting the baseline data particularly with respect to the overall reach of the initiative across Australian schools. The first, as we have noted at other points in this report, is that coverage of all schools was not required as a measure of success in the initiative: indeed some authorities deliberately chose to gain maximum effect for their allocated funds by limiting their focus to particular schools or student groups, or to field test new or innovative strategies as the basis for refinement and implantation on a larger scale.

A second caveat in considering the data provided by the authority progress reports is that it is not possible to provide an accurate picture of the overall number of schools, teachers, paraprofessionals and students with disability who participated in the various activities. Since many of the activities occurred under different outputs, staff could not necessarily be identified by function: some outputs were reported in terms of the participation of all school staff while others were able to distinguish between teachers, paraprofessionals and support staff (including school administrative officers). Related was the variation in reporting of the take up of activities such as professional learning workshops or modules: some authorities reported the total numbers participating whereas others reported registrations for events, which may have involved multiple enrolments of individuals. There was also variation in the reporting of student numbers with some authorities reporting activities involving both students with disability and mainstream students.

Notwithstanding these limitations, we are reasonably confident that the number of schools, staff and students involved in the diverse array of MSSD outputs was significant and well beyond those expected in the initial planning and rollout phase of the initiative. Figure 6.1
shows the proportion of Australian schools supported under each output. It is clear that the activities supporting the NCCD process covered almost four out of five schools nationally. There is obviously a high level of overlap with leadership training, which covered close to two-thirds of schools, and over half of all schools engaged in DSE 2005 training by the end of 2014.

In relation to the major areas of focus of MSSD the standout achievements of the initiative from the numbers reported by the authorities show that the outputs collectively and separately made a marked impact nationally, particularly around the following themes:

- Almost 6000 schools were supported by MSSD to enable principals and leadership teams to strengthen teacher capability (Output 7). This represents 63 percent of Australian schools over the three years of the initiative. Under this and related outputs 12,559 school leaders undertook training in inclusive practices.
- 78,150 teachers were trained in the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6) covering 5,264 schools (56%) with much of this training conducted through online modules developed with the University of Canberra.
- Under Output 13, introduced in 2014, some 7,346 schools received additional support to assist 65,619 teachers in understanding and implementing the NCCD.
- 36,261 teachers were provided with specialist training in disability (Output 5) either face-to-face, online and/or through post-graduate studies. This involved 4364 schools, which represents around 47 percent of all Australian schools.
- 47,821 teachers across 4,624 schools (49.2%) undertook training related to assessing and adapting curriculum to support the needs of students with disability (Output 8) while expert advice and training to support teachers in developing and modifying lesson plans (Output 9) attracted 12,752 teachers across 2,646 schools (28.2%).
• Health and allied health professionals provided support to 1,389 schools and more than 4000 teachers (Output 4) with a focus on changing the ways they work with schools and teachers.

• 1058 schools and 8,679 staff were involved in supporting collaborative teaching practices (Output 10) underpinned by the professional development (Certificate 3 and other courses) for 27,000 paraprofessionals (Output 11) in 1,897 schools (20%).

• Support for student transitions (Output 12) addressed the needs of 3408 students with disability in 407 schools where they were undergoing transitions either from school into work or education or between stages of schooling.

• 2,177 schools (23%) were supported by special schools and support centres (Output 3). The 179 centres involved under the MSSD initiative developed as centres of excellence, targeting 24,286 students with disability.

• A wide range of more than 8,000 assistive technology items was provided to 1,143 schools with 14,157 teachers trained in their use (Outputs 1 and 2).

In summarising these achievements it is important to acknowledge that this does not necessarily represent the interrelated effects of the outputs and cumulative impact of the unifying programme goals in many authorities, such as the Victorian DET, which concluded that in its experience:

... every school has benefited from a range of DET MSSD initiatives on offer. Over the MSSD timeframe, approximately one in four teachers participated in face-to-face and online professional learning and consultation available to schools, representing each specialist school and over half of the primary, primary-secondary and secondary schools statewide.

6.3 Embedding structures and processes

There was general agreement across the jurisdictions that the MSSD initiative was a significant catalyst for change. Some sectors referred to the changes already being embedded in school structures and processes by the third year of the initiative which for some sectors was part of a deliberate long-term strategy, supported or accelerated by the MSSD initiative. There were other changes in structures and processes, some unanticipated, resulting directly from the MSSD activities as illustrated by the four examples that follow.

6.3.1 New accountabilities for principals and leadership teams

The central role of leadership development in embedding change through the MSSD initiative is acknowledged at a number of points in this report. In terms of sustainability school leadership teams not only took the first steps for schools in addressing the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) and the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (DSE) requirements they also created new structures and processes to manage the NCCD data collection process and to incorporate the findings into school strategy. Executive leadership groups also embedded these responsibilities and associated accountabilities into school operations with clearly designated senior leadership roles.
6.3.2 New professional networks and communities of practice

MSSD activities stimulated new collaborative networks within and across sectors, and in some cases, nationally. Distinctive approaches included the use of collegial networks as a base for sustainable leadership development in the Bastow Institute in Victoria aimed at strengthening the existing community of practice for specialist school principals to embed change in school operations.

Amongst the most successful networks likely to be sustained in the immediate future are those that supported major changes in the orientation and delivery of specialist services. By the end of 2013, and with the promise of more to be done in the extension year of 2014, reports confirmed our preliminary observations that the professional skills of specialists working with classroom teachers had been enhanced, and that there was an equally significant change in the collaborative orientation of teachers in devising and implementing new approaches. These included cross-sector vocational networks such as those established to ensure collaboration between school staff and community-based specialists in the support of students and their families, which resulted in more informed access pathways leading to enrolments in tertiary institutions.

Embedding new professional networks emerged as a result of new structures and processes developed to support effective approaches to online professional learning. In some jurisdictions collegial networks were encouraged around training events and further supported by action research projects. These communities of practice enabled participants to engage in conversations around research addressing the needs of students with disability and encouraged them to conduct school-based research projects.

6.3.3 Enhanced roles of paraprofessionals

Enhanced roles of paraprofessionals recognised in the structures and processes of education authorities and schools was cited by authorities and focus groups as a prerequisite for sustaining the changes in classroom practices generated, or in many cases accelerated, by the MSSD initiative. The changed nature of the working relationships between teachers and paraprofessionals in the classroom, and the associated shifts in role expectations, was supported by two elements over the life of the MSSD initiative in particular: the creation of new opportunities for professional learning for paraprofessionals through formal training programmes, including postgraduate education, combined with more active participation in decision making concerning strategies aimed at meeting the needs of students with disability in the classroom.

Ongoing work will be needed to sustain these changes. One authority noted that the progression from participation in professional learning and training opportunities to involvement in collaborative planning and engagement in enhanced classroom practice are likely to remain key challenges in the immediate future. Widespread acceptance of classroom support staff as integral to effective classroom operation will emerge with their increased
capability generally, and specifically, their skills in managing personalised instruction and positive communication support for students.

6.3.4 Tools and resources for schools and teachers

Appendix G provides a summary of the major tools and resources developed or enhanced under the MSSD initiative and selected on the basis of their likely sustainability. Some of these will be embedded in the processes and structures of authorities and schools as they shape the ongoing improvements in approaches to pedagogy. Professional learning experiences offered under MSSD, particularly formal award-bearing courses, have already taken the knowledge and skills of principals, teachers and support staff school to new levels. Moreover, they have changed the expectations of staff with respect to the preferred forms of delivery of these experiences: the flexibility of online learning has clearly appealed to a wide range of schools staff and will continue to evolve with their increased confidence and competence in engaging with blended learning approaches. This will also have a sustainable impact on career paths as teachers acquire or upgrade their skills in special education.

A number of the online tools developed to support inclusive teaching go beyond adding to the repertoire of teachers in the classroom. They are part of some fundamental changes to structures and processes that will embed new approaches to pedagogy including online assessment, screening and planning tools with various combinations of functions. These and other student tracking tools to monitor student progress are being built into some authority systems to assist teachers, as well as screening tools for teams of health professionals and experts to provide reports with strategies for the classroom teacher, including recommended educational adjustments. Related are the various data tools refined and adapted for authority-level processes to assist with the implementation of the NCCD.

6.4 Challenges for sustainable change

6.4.1 Maintaining focus and momentum

The extended timeframe of MSSD encouraged the consolidation and integration of innovative approaches in government and Catholic authorities from system to school level. The main challenge for all stakeholders will be to maintain focus and momentum beyond 2014. On current evidence this looks entirely likely for most outputs since the lessons learned are already informing planning. However, as noted elsewhere, the MSSD initiative was not intended to cover all schools in all jurisdictions, and ongoing effort will be required to capitalise on the lessons learned to date and to disseminate them more broadly.

In practical terms there was considerable discussion across all focus groups of the challenges associated with maintaining the momentum of the MSSD initiatives at the school level. Most groups reported evidence of momentum building already and were confident that the impact of innovative approaches, such as the practices promoted by lighthouse schools, would have a longer-term impact. Principals, teachers and support staff cited benefits in terms of their new or renewed interest and abilities in professional development, especially with respect to online
learning and opportunities to gain formal qualifications that appear to have opened up new options.

A number of focus groups also had a strong sense towards the end of the initiative that MSSD was not simply ‘just another’ initiative: they acknowledged that ‘accountabilities are there that may not have been before’. This was accompanied by substantial changes in school cultures where ‘diversity is the norm and inclusion is firmly on the agenda’ with practices embedded in daily programmes. More specifically, schools recognised they needed to develop champions for change with skilled ‘energisers’ who can ‘trial, plan, enthuse others and be a driving force, supported by school leadership’ to help move forward. They also emphasised the importance of continuing to allow room for innovation, and making opportunities available to a larger cohort of schools.

6.4.2 Supporting initiatives in rural and remote settings

Maintaining continuity of intervention strategies was identified as a particular issue for rural and remote schools. The case studies provide good practice examples of education authorities creating systems and processes to ensure sustainability in these settings in the face of the limited options these schools have given their distance from major centres particularly with respect to their access to allied health services and key specialists. Continuity of relationships is a major challenge with the high turnover of trained specialists in these areas. Small isolated schools rely heavily on the expertise and enthusiasm of individual principals or classroom teachers and the loss of such key people makes it difficult to sustain new initiatives. However, there is considerable promise for improvement as a result of MSSD activities, for example, the new possibilities for skills development in special education provided by OLT, which has recently adapted its approaches to delivery in remote areas.

6.4.3 Meeting raised expectations for professional learning

The effectiveness of activity related to improving capacity in schools to support learning for students with disability is largely influenced by two elements of resourcing: time and coordination. A consistent message received throughout the consultations and case studies was that investment in teacher release is essential to free up time for groups of teachers to work together during a normal school day. However, some sectors had limited capacity for teacher release from classroom duties for professional learning, small independent schools in
particular, and this will need to be addressed by authorities if the gains of MSSD are to be consolidated given the usual changes in school staffing profiles over time.

Quality assurance and accountability is also a potential challenge for authorities in the provision of professional learning. For example, effective train the trainer models and mentoring require careful design and close monitoring as was clearly the case in some jurisdictions.

### 6.4.4 Challenges for schools beyond 2015

Stakeholders were asked as part of the evaluation process to consider immediate and long-term changes in schools, and society more generally, that may have an impact on approaches to students with disability beyond the life of the MSSD initiative. The purpose of this was to share observations on the changing context that might influence the approaches of the current initiatives underway, and also to identify opportunities for future interventions and programme development. Much of the focus group discussion concerned the expanding number of students in mainstream schools needing support and the potentially significant increase in numbers of those with complex multiple issues, particularly social and emotional trauma presenting more challenging behaviours for classroom teachers to manage.

Meeting the needs of teachers wanting to access more online learning emerged as a significant but welcome challenge as a direct consequence of the MSSD activities. As teachers acquire more skills and experience of online professional learning they will have higher standards. In the experience of the focus groups teachers are likely to expect an appropriate balance of online learning with face-to-face time involving instructors, colleagues and specialists. In some jurisdictions group work discussion for individual teachers completing online training is now the norm. Staff are also likely to expect regular updates of modules and related resources. There is a great deal of confidence that the resources generated so far will be used within mainstream schools for years to come.

The comments of focus groups around issues of maintaining technology support included the obvious challenge facing educators everywhere: keeping up to date with new learning technologies and, as one group put it: ‘negotiating the technology maze.’ The introduction of assistive technologies and software for use in the mainstream classroom requires ongoing strategies to maximise, progress and evaluate their effectiveness as learning tools. Focus groups
also referred to the emerging challenges of making technologies work at the system levels, including networking solutions.

6.4.5 Managing stakeholder expectations

Focus groups pointed to the challenge of schools and individual teachers managing the expectation of stakeholders and the potential gaps in delivery and expertise. The groups did, however, acknowledge the growth of confidence in their ability to meet the challenges. Most felt they had learned some major lessons about what is possible through the MSSD activities and that their efforts to break down barriers had been highly successful, particularly in jurisdictions where there had been some initial reluctance on the part of specialists and general classroom teachers to work together. They also pointed to the one-on-one professional learning experiences supporting the online experience as a significant element in preparing them for the future.

6.5 From outputs to outcomes

The initial limited two-year term nature of the MSSD initiative was deliberately cast as an opportunity to create an environment for experimentation to set the foundations for longer-term change. At that time the underlying project logic model assumed that while it would be possible to assess progress in terms of the amount of activity for each of the outputs it was not expected they would generate significant outcomes other than immediate local changes in approach, nor would it be reasonable to expect authorities to demonstrate clear measurable impacts for cohorts of students with disability. For that reason the measures of output were limited to achievements against approximate estimates of how many schools, teachers and students with disability in each authority would be affected by the activities.

However, the extension phase provided a welcome chance for outputs to start producing short and mid term project outcomes. In hindsight it may have been useful to have identified indicators for some of these in the revised implementation plans but nonetheless it is possible to report strong signs of early outcomes for many of the outputs.

The first test of success of the outputs is whether the authorities elected to sustain the approaches with the specific initiatives in 2015 and the immediate future. It is reasonable to assume that, with the exception of meeting compliance requirements as is the case with NCCD, the continuation, consolidation and expansion of specific outputs is a clear sign that authorities are convinced by the evidence to hand that these strategies have promise.

A second test of success of the outputs concerns the extent to which specific outputs were adopted across authorities. It is clear that some strategies stand out for their almost universal adoption and the overall level of attention they received nationally, and that the significant appetite in schools and school systems for the reforms that MSSD delivered increased

“.... in contrast to a course that might be completed over two or three days ... we find that the elements to effectiveness are the sustained learning with tutor sessions, interwoven with individual study sessions over time that provides the opportunity for teachers to try out what they are learning and then discuss with others to reflect on and reinforce what they have learned.”
dramatically during the initiative as stakeholders became aware of new approaches and their potential for adoption or adaptation at the local level.

The third and perhaps critical test of success of the outputs and the initiative as a whole is whether there is emerging evidence of impact on the five major outcomes identified in the initial plans (remembering that it was not intended that these be achieved as part of the requirements in the initial planned timeframe or in the extension phase). There was considerable anecdotal evidence from case studies, showcase events and authority reports to indicate that schools directly involved with the MSSD initiative:

- had improved learning experiences and educational outcomes (Outcome 1)
- were better positioned to more effectively meet the educational needs of students with disabilities, increasingly in collaboration with parents, carers and students (Outcome 2)
- were becoming more inclusive environments, in accordance with the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Outcome 3).

Across all jurisdictions, an early outcome of the intense period of professional training, often mandatory, for principals and school leaders was that they were better prepared to support teachers and had become more capable of identifying and addressing the educational needs of students with disabilities (Outcome 4). Finally, it was also clear that the schools and teachers involved in MSSD initiatives experienced not just better access to expert support (Outcome 5) but also more inclusive approaches.

6.6 2015 and beyond

All authorities planned to continue some MSSD initiatives through 2015 and beyond. At least one (Victorian ISV) aimed to continue all of the activities funded under MSSD, and others such as the Western Australian CEO planned to provide ongoing support and resourcing across outputs that have proven successful. Around half the authorities proposed to extend and expand the reach of some initiatives in 2015.

6.6.1 Building leadership capacity

Most authorities planned to continue to offer training for school principals and/or school leadership teams to strengthen teachers’ ability to assist students with disability, in the first instance through the DSE 2005 eLearning modules. Major ongoing projects in leadership capacity building include:

- Queensland DET will continue the QSIL programme supporting 42 school leadership teams from across the state through a model of coaching, mentoring and work force planning. It will also target an additional 42 schools leadership teams to encourage further in-depth involvement in strategies to improve learning for students with disability through a model of coaching, mentoring and work force planning.
- The Western Australia DoE aims to continue support for the Distinctive Schools and networks with partner schools in targeted priority areas.
6.6.2 Respecting obligations under DSE 2005

More than half of the 24 authorities plan to continue the work started under MSSD to provide training for school staff to improve understanding of their obligations under the DSE 2005 and how to meet those obligations. The training will generally be aligned with ongoing support for schools with the implementation of the NCCD. Eighteen authorities will continue to use the University of Canberra eLearning modules and some have extended their licence agreements until 2018. Some authorities aim to cover all staff in the next few years, for example, the Tasmanian CEO will have all staff complete modules 1-3 by August 2015 and expects all staff to have participated by the end of 2016. There is also an increased expectation in most sectors that completing key modules will be mandatory, especially for school leaders.

NCCD support activities will also be stepped up in most jurisdictions, for example the Western Australia DoE plans to make an NCCD school support handbook available to all schools online post 2015. In addition, an NCCD professional learning will be placed online as a school development package for use by schools in 2015 and beyond.

6.6.3 Building skills in special education

More than half the education authorities had plans in place to continue or expand training for teachers to build their skills in special education. Their final reports referred to maintaining focus with:

- continuous improvement to meet the needs of students with disability
- whole school approaches
- ongoing provision of professional learning.

Almost all authorities with plans for further activities recognised that online training —widely embraced by teaching and support staff— has proven to be highly cost effective and will be maintained. The provision of OLT modules for teaching and support staff will continue across all participating authorities with extended licence agreements generally supplemented by face-to-face professional development.

“The authority found the MSSD initiative to be an exceptionally worthwhile programme with ongoing impact on learning for students with a disability and building capacity of educators to better understand and support students with a disability.”
development opportunities such as the Tasmanian DoE which aims to generate an ongoing stream of facilitators for OLT courses to embed these learning experiences into normal school practice. Similarly, in 2015 the ACT CEO will offer five different OLT modules to 12 cohorts of school staff, and it expects an increase in the following years as new staff are appointed in schools.

In addition, new resources were planned for development and trial such as the Western Australia DoE Curriculum Adjustments Packages and the New South Wales DEC new online materials to support personalised learning. New South Wales DEC also plans to offer further scholarships in 2015 to enable teachers to gain a postgraduate qualification in special education and Queensland CEC authorities will have in place professional development strategies to induct new staff into the DSE 2005 requirements.

6.6.4 Working with specialists and support staff

A number of education authorities proposed further action to strengthen support for schools for students with disability involving specialists as well as related support staff. Some decided to continue appointments of key people such as specialists, coordinators, and programme managers or continue the service delivery models they developed during the MSSD initiative such as the South Australia DEC Team Around the Child service delivery model and the Northern Territory DoE Intervention Service Model. Others decided on the basis of successful trials to provide additional consultants and support staff to continue project activity.

6.6.5 New directions for special schools and support centres

Authorities involved in developing support centres as centres of expertise in the educational needs of students with disability plan to continue or expand their activities in 2015. Providing expert support to groups of other schools that may not have this expertise took different forms depending on the jurisdiction context, which appears to have set the foundations for long-term changes in structures and processes. For example:

- South Australia DECD plans to sustain the work of the Adelaide West/SERU support centre beyond 2015 and will also support six other settings assuming the role of support centres based on the growing strength of the LitCon Special model developed by the Gordon Education Centre.
- New South Wales DEC will incorporate a further 10 or 11 specialist centres across regional and remote areas in New South Wales in 2015.
- Western Australia DoE plans to broaden access to the Distinctive School’s student centred evidence based model to involve twelve schools across three education regions (two rural and remote regions) as well as increasing opportunities for schools with capacity to support needs to become new Distinctive Schools.

As a direct outcome of the shift in approach under the MSSD initiative, the Tasmanian DoE proposes to work with special schools to consider their purpose and to reframe their roles as centres of expertise.
7 Lessons for future initiatives

7.1 Introduction

At a number of points in this report we identify lessons from the MSSD experience that might inform future activities and longer-term reforms to support students with disabilities. Chapter 4 focused on six major areas of the initiative that had a clear impact on the approaches of schools and teachers: each of these has wider application. Chapter 5 examined key factors supporting successful implementation, and Chapter 6 singled out aspects of the initiative that established the foundations for sustainable effects. These lessons are illustrated in some detail in Part B, which explores the elements of good practice that emerged throughout the initiative, and further in Part C, which provides a summary of each authority’s activities, achievements and lessons learned.

This chapter considers aspects of the design and implementation of the MSSD initiative that might be drawn upon by the Department and education authorities to inform the implementation of other initiatives. It looks in particular at lessons for making the most of short-term stimulus initiatives where the timeframe for project rollout and completion is limited. It includes examples of system-level planning and implementation issues relevant for policy planners and administrators as well as those responsible for implementation at the local level.

7.2 Lessons for project design

Short-term initiatives aimed at stimulating action for sustainable change present special challenges for project design, particularly where multiple stakeholders from diverse contexts are involved. In the case of the MSSD initiative there were major variations in starting points across the education authorities in terms of:

- their organisational arrangements
- administrative capacity (staffing and resources) to deliver the outputs
- the extent to which they had already been working towards inclusive education
- competing priorities in their jurisdictions
- differences in their initial expectations of the outcomes of the MSSD initiative.

7.2.1 Strategic use of legislative obligations

The overriding lesson from the MSSD initiative that featured across all the authorities concerned the strategic use of the legislative obligations and accountabilities to drive and embed change beyond compliance. That is, while the legislative requirements clearly focused attention of the authorities it was not considered in the planning and implementation of activities to be sufficient to bring about more fundamental changes to the approaches of schools. As we emphasise earlier in this report, the requirements of DDA and DSE 2005, in conjunction with other policy developments, were not by any means responsible for the
enthusiasm for change that occurred in response to the MSSD initiative. The Department and the authorities understood that compliance alone would not achieve the objective of the initiative hence the legislation was largely characterised as a reference point, rather than a driver of change, to encourage schools to focus on activities that would produce long-term change.

7.2.2 A framework supporting diverse contexts

Unambiguous objectives and clear organising goals are widely accepted as essential for effective and efficient programme implementation. A major reason for the success of the MSSD initiative was that the framework incorporated these elements, but more importantly, targeted needs recognised and understood by authorities that could be readily translated into actions relevant at the school level.

The key lessons with respect to the goals of the MSSD initiative were that they:

- supported a shared understanding of purpose
- minimised ambiguity and confusion in the early stages of implementation
- sharpened focused on actions that were readily understood as relevant to achieving the objective of the initiative
- defined outputs in terms of clear measurable actions
- focused attention on outputs that could be achieved in the short time frame
- were sufficiently ambitious without being unrealistic.

The effectiveness of using a defined set of outputs provides a valuable lesson for initiatives that aim to encourage relevant responses at system, regional and local levels. The use of a limited number of defined outputs had the intended effect of focusing the attention of the authorities on the objective of the initiative and, in the initial tight timeframe of two years, provided the necessary urgency to get things underway.

Choice and flexibility in the implementation of the MSSD initiative was the most highly rated element of success by the authorities: it raised their level of commitment and encouraged creative thinking within the parameters of the menu of outputs. The defined outputs had the added benefit of providing considerable scope for action while maintaining a sense of national coherence for the initiative, as noted by one authority:

*Sectors had flexibility in implementation, which meant we were able to develop an implementation plan that suited the independent context of the association and the schools. It also enabled us to support schools in a proactive way to meet the needs of their students. Future initiatives should allow this same flexibility.*

The positive response to the framework was underpinned by the collaborative approach to planning and reporting which enabled the Department and authorities to get the implementation process underway smoothly, even allowing for marked differences in starting points. The lesson here is that minimising the delays and reducing obstacles in the initial stages is crucial for short-term projects. The aim is to get things moving, with due diligence, to the
point where there is strong sense of collective ownership and consensus about the potential of
the initiative to make a difference:

The process of setting the framework and the objectives worked well, assisted in
the first instance by a collaborative approach to the design in consultation with the
major stakeholders.

7.2.3 Planning and reporting

The environmental scan required for each authority was a highly effective planning measure
that ensured that local initiatives focused from the outset on the most pressing needs. Overall,
the authorities conducted jurisdiction-wide data analysis to identify the levels of support
needed for students with disability, and, in almost all cases, were then able to make strategic
decisions about where best to allocate the resources for maximum impact in the short time
frame within the parameters of the agreed outputs.

The very few exceptions to this pattern also provide some lessons for future initiatives. In
addition to starting from a weak baseline from which to assess progress, there is the potential
to allocate funds to pre-existing solutions that do not necessarily match the problems identified
by the initiative.

Other lessons for reporting processes from the MSSD experience include the importance of
reporting cycles, as one authority put it, ‘keeping things tight’, which informed and
supplemented their system-wide actions, and maintained the integrity of the initiative and their
strategy. While some found the reporting was at times difficult under pressure from other
priorities, they saw it as ‘useful in maintaining focus and momentum as well as accountability of
funding’.

At the same time, the authorities had some concern that the timing and format of reporting
encouraged repetition of information, albeit in different words, since there was little progress
to report at certain points in the first 18 months. With hindsight, the extension of the initiative
could have been an opportunity to revise the reports to focus on issues such as dissemination,
quality assurance and indicators of potential sustainability. It may also have been preferable to
structure the final report as a standalone document synthesising the overall achievements of
the initiative in each authority.

There are also some lessons from the experience of using benchmarks as part of the reporting
requirements. There were obvious advantages in this process including the benefit of
authorities setting tangible goals directly measuring output activity. As we noted in Chapter 5,
the achievement benchmarks had both positive and negative aspects. Benchmarks were in
some cases based initially on assumptions and estimates from limited data and experience, and
were generally fairly low and, understandably, on the safe side. Given that most authorities well
exceeded their targets early in the process it may have been useful to reset the benchmarks
following the first round of reporting. The purpose of such performance indicators also needs to
be clearly understood by all stakeholders from the outset: while most authorities saw the
achievement targets as indicative, and a tangible formative guide for assessing progress, a few were perhaps overly focused on meeting the benchmarks as a matter of compliance.

7.2.4 Connecting evaluation and dissemination

Lessons from the formative elements of the evaluation process were noted in Chapter 5. In addition, a major lesson from the MSSD experience for future initiatives is that the role of the evaluators as the key source of dissemination of successful practices requires careful management. There is a potential risk of losing distance and objectivity when it comes to the summative role of the evaluation.

Judging from the feedback of the authorities involved in the MSSD initiative this balancing act was achieved by the quality of the relationship building by the consultants and the mutual respect that emerged. The authorities particularly valued the ‘collegial and supportive approach’ of the evaluation, but equally, they found it useful to ‘have someone at arm’s length to discuss progress...the real value is in getting frank and fearless advice’. Evaluation in these developmental contexts benefits from good communication processes with regular visits and phone meetings. Evaluators need to ask good questions to test thinking, to give the stakeholders the opportunity to reflect and think critically about the implementation process and to make adjustments: above all they need to support a strong sense of accountability.

The Department and the authorities understood the limits of the critical friend model and appreciated that the evaluators were there to assist, but not to be advocates for the initiative. It helped that the project brief required the evaluators to engage with the authorities without making onerous demands on their time.

7.3 Lessons for implementation

Three aspects of the MSSD implementation process provide lessons for future initiatives at both national and jurisdiction levels. Again, some of these are discussed in previous chapters in terms of successful elements of the MSSD initiative

7.3.1 Communicating the purpose of the initiative

While it was widely understood that reforming approaches to disability is a long-term project, and despite clear messages from the Department that the MSSD initiative was aimed at encouraging innovation and experimentation (and that funding would cease after two years), a few authorities still planned their activities on the assumption that the initiative would provide supplementary support for existing projects. Communication plans are a useful device to ensure that those responsible for implementing initiatives at all levels convey consistent messages. This might be included as a requirement of implementation plans for projects of this kind, particularly where a wide range of stakeholders are involved. Planned early reinforcement of expectations through progress reporting process could also assist in reinforcing the purpose of the initiative.
7.3.2 Streamlining the start-up phase

Short-term initiatives require streamlined processes to gain the early confidence and support of stakeholders while at the same time carefully managing the inevitable delays that occur such as staff appointments, contracts with external providers and getting administrative arrangements in place. Some authorities, especially those with limited administrative capacity, were concerned that the MSSD initiative was rolled out very quickly which they considered gave them insufficient time to decide on the most appropriate options. By the mid point of the initiative, as authorities became aware of what others were doing and the gains they were making, some reflected that they had not put their efforts in the areas that would add most value in the longer term.

In terms of lessons for future initiatives of this kind there are two sides to this. On the one hand more time for authorities to explore what the initiative might achieve may have resulted in more effective use of funds and stronger outcomes. On the other hand a longer start-up process may have simply delayed action, generated more complexity in management and a less satisfactory conclusion.

The timeframe is obviously important. Had the initiative not been extended to 2014 it would have been considerably less effective in many authorities with far less to show in terms of sustainable impact. It is likely that the evaluation in that context would have suggested that a two-year timeframe required a more sharply staged rollout to maximise impact. At the same time we hasten to add that the good will, enthusiasm and diligence of the Department and the authorities was a key factor in overcoming initial obstacles to implementation: which is a lesson in itself.

7.3.3 Factors hindering project rollout

Progress reports from the education authorities in 2013 showed that while there was slow progress in a few areas, the majority of authorities were well on the way to embedding the outputs across their jurisdictions. The lessons from the authorities that experienced low levels of activity in the initial phase (which were not confined to a particular sector) include obstacles that might be anticipated in implementation planning such as:

- an absence of clarity in implementation plans which necessitated further detailed planning
- an overly ambitious approach to the initiative
- caution in over-committing to initiatives that might commit jurisdictions to long-term financial obligations
- the compounding effect of authority restructuring and expenditure constraints overriding the implementation of all initiatives at the time
- workload demands and pressures of other priorities on nominated coordinators leading to delays in start-up activity.
The design and implementation of short-term initiatives such as MSSD needs to acknowledge that sectors are often overwhelmed at any one time with a range of national and system-wide initiatives competing for the attention of regional administrators, school principals and classroom teachers. Small schools present particular challenges given their limited capacity to support and sustain changes.

It is important to acknowledge the uncertainties facing school staff, including principals. We reported in one case study that initially there was a sense amongst staff that ‘the challenges were so profound that survival and coping strategies were the main focus of much of the discussion’. By the second case study visit, although issues and challenges were still prominent, it was obvious that staff had been empowered and demonstrated a clear sense of direction.

**7.3.4 Setting policy initiatives in the bigger picture**

The importance of stakeholders feeling they are part of a bigger national picture cannot be overstated. The alignment of the MSSD initiative with the introduction of the Australian curriculum, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the implementation of the pilot phases of the NCCD added to the sense of purpose of providing and meaningful education to students with disabilities. One authority reported that at the jurisdiction level: ‘People need to understand where we have come from and where we are heading’. It also acknowledged it had made the mistake of assuming its principals and leadership teams had more knowledge than they did.

The lesson for coordinating agencies is that implementation plans should include strategies for raising the profile of an initiative and ‘joining the dots’ for stakeholders. The plans might also include this, along with dissemination, as a performance requirement. Setting the initiative in the bigger picture is not simply about generating publicity: our observations suggest that raising the status of the initiative generates stakeholder commitment and sense of achievement. We found many examples in the information seminars of teachers and support staff excited to realise that their innovative activities were part of a national initiative.

**7.3.5 Structured opportunities for information sharing and collaboration**

During the final round of information seminars focus groups were strongly of the view that teaching and support staff need more opportunities to come together for structured discussion about their work. We were somewhat surprised how little opportunity was reported for this kind of professional engagement around common issues and challenges. Many participants made the point that they had not expected to learn a great deal from the information seminars but left highly appreciative of the chance to provide input into the evaluation process, and to engage with colleagues, for the first time in most cases, in reflecting on the broader issues around the impact of their work on students with disability, the challenges they face and the opportunities for further initiatives.
7.4 Lessons from the extension of the initiative

Important lessons emerged for project design and implementation from the unanticipated extension of the initiative year for the Department and the individual authorities. While the initial two-year time frame had some disadvantages it also challenged many authorities to move more quickly to set structures and processes in place that might not otherwise have occurred. If the MSSD initiative had been designed as a three year initiative it would have been different but it is impossible to know just how. Either way the extension was fortuitous and had a clear multiplying effect in adding value not just in terms of the quantity of activity or the extension of influence but in changing the culture of the participating schools.

The education authority reports and case studies provide considerable evidence of lessons learned and shifts in thinking that can be attributed to the extension which made a significant difference in the potential sustainability of activities at all levels and across all outputs. As evidence of impact on schools, teachers and students began to emerge in the second year, and activities became embedded in practice, the authorities were in a strong position to capitalise on their strategies.

Almost all authorities had already changed their expectations of the MSSD initiative by the time the extension was announced. However, the extension came as timely reinforcement and reward for effort for schools, education leaders, classroom teachers, support staff and specialists. It provided stakeholders with confirmation that the work they were undertaking was important and worth pursuing: it also added to the profile and standing of the activities in the school communities. Some sectors were encouraged to take the activities to a new level of sophistication, fill gaps that were evident at the planning stage or address additional needs that emerged as the projects evolved.

Had the MSSD initiative been planned originally as a three-year project the response of authorities would most likely have been different and quite possibly less effective in some respects. This leaves the question for future initiatives of this kind as to how capture these unanticipated value-adding elements without deliberately disguising or holding back on the potential for extension. One way of achieving this might be to stage funds on the basis of promise and performance, for example using a proof of concept phase to ensure recipients are in tune with the objectives of the initiative and show sufficient promise to warrant funding for the next stage.
8 Summary of findings

The evaluation findings are drawn largely from previous chapters with some additional insights taken from presentations by the education authorities at the 2015 MSSD National Showcase. The presentations highlighted the range and quality of new approaches implemented across the jurisdictions over the three years of the MSSD initiative, and the potential for adoption or adaptation in other settings. They also made it clear that the appetite for the reforms that MSSD delivered will continue beyond the life of the initiative.

Overall impact of the initiative

- As a modest, short-term investment, the MSSD initiative achieved its major objective: to build the skills of teachers and increase school capacity to better meet the educational needs of students with disability.
- In terms of broad impact, the initiative accelerated responses to the growing demand for schools to address the needs of students with disability. It also supported a major shift in participating schools away from deficit models of disability towards more inclusive approaches.
- The number of schools, staff and students involved in the MSSD outputs was well beyond those predicted in the initial planning and rollout phase: the unanticipated breadth and depth of engagement with the initiative in all jurisdictions is a clear indicator of its impact.
- The initiative made a significant contribution to changing the culture of participating schools, particularly in relation to the expectations of school communities about the capacity of students with disability to achieve higher levels of education outcomes.

New opportunities for innovation and experimentation

- MSSD had the intended effect of generating a range of innovations and an attitude of experimentation that may not otherwise have occurred, and certainly not as rapidly or widely across the jurisdictions.
- The stimulus for experimentation enabled authorities and schools to introduce and test new strategies to improve the education of students with disability, consolidate and enhance existing approaches, and expand the reach of new and innovative approaches.
- The initiative was also successful in creating new opportunities for schools and teachers to develop strategies directly relevant to their contexts and the needs of their students. It recognised that ultimately for each authority the ingredients for success needed to align with its strategic plans and operational processes.

Impact on approaches of schools and teachers

- The most significant changes in the approaches of participating schools and teachers centred on the introduction of whole school strategies to support improved learning outcomes for students with disability.
- The development and enhancement of the skills of teachers, and the increased school capacity to better meet the educational needs of students with disability, occurred
most obviously where schools had a strong leadership team responsible for implementing whole of school change.

- The effectiveness of school principals and leadership groups in promoting and guiding change was typically underpinned by their use of school-based evidence to guide improvements.

**Building increased staff capacity through professional learning**

- The focus on intensified engagement of principals, teachers and support staff in professional learning was key to the rapid increase in staff capacity to support students with disability in the mainstream context.

- New opportunities for teachers and paraprofessionals to undertake formal qualifications in special education produced significant early benefits for schools and teachers and, importantly, laid the groundwork for long-term changes in the orientation and roles of teachers and support staff.

- The rapid expansion and high quality of tailored professional learning opportunities equipped a critical mass of classroom teachers and paraprofessionals to rethink their teaching approaches to include students with disability in the classroom.

- Not all sectors were able to benefit from these activities to build skills in special education: some had limited capacity for teacher release from classroom duties for professional learning, small independent schools in particular, which will need to be addressed if the gains of MSSD are to be consolidated.

- MSSD triggered a more focused approach to the introduction of learning technologies for students with disability and in the process stimulated schools, teachers, support staff and parents to engage with other possibilities of software and applications.

- This had the more general benefit, sometimes across whole sectors, of raising the technological and pedagogical competence and confidence of teachers and support staff.

- The level of significant engagement with online professional learning driven by MSSD activities across all jurisdictions, particularly the OLT and eLearning Modules, set new standards and created high expectations for the quality and delivery of professional learning experiences more generally.

- The use of online learning complemented by tutor-led workshops and peer learning networks was especially effective in building the skills and confidence of teachers, support staff and, in some cases, parents.

- The OnlineTraining Ltd (OLT) modules for special education needs were universally well received across all participating authorities. These provided a model of what is possible to achieve in accommodating diverse structures for schooling across state, regional and local contexts. The flexibility in design and delivery enabled sectors to work collaboratively in different ways to adapt the modules to suit the needs of their school staff.

- The DSE 2005 eLearning modules developed by the University of Canberra were pivotal in increasing staff knowledge and practices and making known the obligations under the DSE 2005 in schools. The modules were particularly effective where completion was made mandatory for principals and leadership teams.
New approaches to working with specialists and support staff

- MSSD activities changed the nature of the professional relationships between classroom teachers, specialists, allied health professionals and school support staff in participating schools.
- The new approaches shifted reliance on specialist support for individual students towards building school capacity and teacher capability in the classroom along with closer alignment of classroom activities with specialist service provider support.
- The enhanced role of paraprofessional staff in the classroom was a major outcome of the MSSD initiative for a number of authorities. Given opportunities for training, paraprofessionals were able to take a more active role in decision-making in the classroom to support teachers in meeting the needs of students with disability.
- The investment in promoting new approaches to working with specialists and support staff appears to have paid considerable dividends, particularly in terms of the high level of ongoing support proposed by authorities beyond the life of the MSSD initiative.

Importance of collaborative approaches

- The success of newly initiated collaborative arrangements under MSSD outputs can be attributed in large part to authorities taking a planned strategic approach to the challenge of maximising the impact of their outputs through shared expertise and resources.
- Collaborative approaches were especially successful in supporting teachers to devise and implement new approaches for students with disability, including cross-sector vocational networks such as those established to ensure collaboration between school staff and community-based specialists in the support of students and their families.
- MSSD activities raised awareness across all jurisdictions of the potential for further opportunities for collaborative activities in related areas. Sharing of resources, combined cross-sector professional learning opportunities, and joint sponsorship of leading national and international experts proved to be a particularly cost-effective strategy for states and territories with smaller and disparate populations.
- New networks established through the MSSD initiative generated a high level of demand from practitioners to engage more effectively with colleagues across sectors, established new communities of practice, and stimulated new common interest networks within and across sectors.
- The development of the DSE 2005 eLearning modules by the University Canberra (the largest online professional learning programme ever produced collaboratively in Australian education) demonstrates clearly the benefits of jurisdictions working together towards a common goal.

Increased sense of school ownership and accountability

- The legislative obligations of the DDA and DSE 2005 were essential to underpinning and maintaining a high level of focus and commitment throughout the MSSD initiative, particularly in the final year with the addition of Output 13, supporting the implementation of the NCCD.
- A new set of accountabilities emerged with the conjunction of the MSSD initiative and the implementation of the NCCD, which increased the shared understanding of
professional responsibilities around legislative obligations. There was clear evidence of the growing importance attached to whole of school ownership and responsibility for students with disability.

**Engaging parents and students**

- By the final year of the MSSD initiative principals and teachers in many sectors were engaging more confidently with parents of students with disability on a wide range of matters including the design and management of individual learning plans. In these sectors teachers were increasingly encouraged to work as partners with parents to provide improved learning experiences for students.

- While limited parent involvement remains an issue in some sectors it appears likely that the growing confidence of schools and teachers — directly resulting from the widely embraced professional learning — is likely to result in much higher levels of parent participation in the immediate future.

- Involving students with disability in making decisions about their current and future educational needs and aspirations also presents a challenge for schools and teachers. Other than a few projects related to student transition management, there were few examples of systematic approaches to engaging students in discussions about ways of improving their learning experiences in the classroom and their educational futures.

**Overall effectiveness of the initiative**

- The MSSD initiative was a highly effective national project that clearly achieved its goal to stimulate new strategies to build the skills of teachers and increase school capacity to better meet the educational needs of students with disability. It provided a strong foundation for ongoing strategies in the jurisdictions to work towards the longer-term outcome of improved learning experiences and educational outcomes for these students.

- The activities implemented by the education authorities were appropriately aligned with the objective of the initiative: they were also efficient in the sense that almost all authorities achieved or well exceeded the benchmarks for the planned outputs within the resources and timeframe of the initiative.

- Clear incentives for innovation and experimentation embedded in the design of the initiative encouraged authorities to work from and advance existing innovations. The most successful of these aligned the initiative with jurisdiction priorities and integrated them with system-wide reforms and initiatives.

- The effectiveness of the MSSD initiative stemmed in large part from the strategic use of the legislative obligations and accountabilities of DDA and DSE 2005 to drive change beyond compliance with requirements towards more fundamental changes in the approaches of schools.

- The effectiveness of the initiative can also be attributed to the clear organising goals and framework of defined outputs, which had the intended effect of focusing the attention of authorities on the objective of the initiative while providing choice and flexibility for them to respond in ways that were appropriate to the needs of their schools, teachers and students.
PART B: IMPLEMENTING THE OUTPUTS

Part B provides a synthesis of the ways in which authorities implemented the outputs and the elements of good practice that emerged throughout the initiative. These are organised under the broad themes of:

- building leadership capacity
- responding to obligations under DSE 2005
- building skills in special education
- strategies for inclusive learning
- working with specialists and support staff
- new directions for special schools and support centres
- inclusive learning technologies.

The illustrative examples of activities are taken from the observations of the authority reports, seminar presentations and the case studies.
9 Building leadership capacity

The highest proportion of MSSD funds (17.6%) was allocated to activities directly targeted at supporting school principals and leadership teams to strengthen teachers’ ability to assist students with disability (Output 7). Activities to build leadership capacity were generally designed to provide principals and leadership teams with knowledge and understanding of the needs of students with disability, and the ways in which leaders can best assist teachers to best meet these needs.

9.1 Supporting school leadership to strengthen teacher capability (Output 7)

Table 9-1: Output 7 by authority

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<th>SECTOR</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>ACT</th>
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<td>Catholic</td>
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<td>Independent</td>
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Almost half the education authorities implemented projects related to Output 7, and most of these focused on ensuring a sustainable impact on leadership skills. Catholic authorities allocated 21.6 percent of their funds to leadership development followed by government (17%) and independent schools (14.2%). In total this involved just over $52 million spread evenly across the three years of the initiative although there were notable variations in emphasis in the two phases of implementation.

These numbers significantly understate the level of attention given by almost all authorities to ensuring principals and leadership teams had the skills and confidence to lead and implement new strategies to support students with disability in addition to Output 7. School principals and leadership teams were a primary target of other key outputs, particularly those that required whole of school commitment, such as supporting DSE 2005 training for all staff and the implementation of the NCCD. Some authorities made it mandatory for school leaders to complete DSE 2005 training modules online prior to introducing the modules to school staff. It should again be emphasised, as with other outputs, that some authorities had this work covered within school leadership programmes established prior to MSSD.

9.1.1 Approaches and activities

Leadership programmes generally aimed to concentrate the attention of school leadership teams on the immediate task of capacity building in their schools. The process of distributing leadership with respect to supporting students with disability aimed to empower school support teams to analyse, evaluate and take action in support of the overall directions of the school.
Education authority reports, and the case studies related to Output 7, illustrate the typically systemically integrated approaches taken.

9.1.2 Placing leadership development in the context of system-wide strategies

New South Wales and Victoria leadership development programmes were an integral part of major system-wide reform processes. For example, almost half the MSSD funds in Victorian Government schools were allocated to supporting school leadership within Output 7, which along with the other selected MSSD outputs were aligned with four strategic reform directions across the system creating best practice approaches to be sustained beyond the MSSD initiative.

In the ACT government sector the approach to Output 7 coincided with a major innovation to support school leaders in strengthening teachers’ capability. A new model of support across the system was introduced early in the MSSD initiative with the development of the Disability Education Coordinator (DECO) project. Where previously a standard case-study approach was used with approximately one specialist support person per 90 students, the MSSD initiative provided an opportunity to introduce designated school-based DECOs (from existing school staff) to support principal and school leadership development directly targeted at improving opportunities for students with disability in each school (Case Study 36).

9.1.3 Using external drivers to support leadership initiatives

While compliance with the DDA and DSE 2005 was the most obvious example of using external requirements to lever change, the roll out of the NCCD also concentrated attention on principals and school leadership teams. Leadership teams were prompted to examine more closely the nature and extent of the needs of students with disability prior to implementing whole of school action involving adjustments. For example, New South Wales government schools used student data from the initial NCCD process to improve the capacity and skills of school leaders and teachers to provide personalised learning and support for students, combined with differentiated delivery of curriculum, with the additional objective of ensuring that schools were fully conversant with the requirements of the NCCD.

A distinctive approach taken by AISNSW was to engage lawyers to support training in DSE 2005 as part of a suite of professional learning and opportunities to support independent schools to establish and implement their own school level projects to improve engagement and learning for students with disability who have high needs (Case Study 9).

9.1.4 Providing courses, workshops and learning packages

A wide range of structured professional learning opportunities for principals and school leadership teams was supported by MSSD funds. These included award-granting courses such as the distinctive approach taken by the Victorian Catholic Education sector, with a flagship
programme for school leadership through a Masters of Educational Intervention coursework programme designed and delivered by the University of Melbourne. The skill-based and evidence-based coursework built around the AITSL framework focused participants on ‘Knowing how students learn’ and involved a shift to some new and different leadership roles in schools with more than 150 school leadership teams receiving targeted professional development in the latter part of 2013. In the process of gaining a formal qualification the critical mass of expertise amongst school leaders expanded around school-based projects.

Also under Output 7 some New South Wales Catholic Dioceses took up Graduate Certificates in Inclusion and Wellbeing to encourage the use of evidence in making sound decisions around the inclusion and wellbeing of students with further resources developed, such as fact sheets, how-to guides, video tutorials and info-lines.

Substantial formal courses included the Victorian government Specialist Schools Leadership Programme, initiated in partnership with the Principals’ Association of Specialist Schools (PASS), provided by the Bastow school leadership institute. The course was commissioned partly in response to the increasing calls on specialist principals and teachers to support mainstream schools teachers. In total, 76 leaders from 35 specialist schools completed the Bastow course, enhancing their knowledge and skills to develop emotional intelligence and resilience, work effectively with stakeholders, and design and evaluate curriculum and assessment practices that meet the needs of specialist school students (Case Study 11).

Almost all of the 11 education authorities involved in Output 7 provided forms of workshop and information programmes to strengthen teachers’ capability through leadership. For example, Independent Schools Victoria supported principals and leadership teams with information sessions through its ISV Development Centre. The Centre played a key role in supporting the initiatives through its regular annual programme of professional learning seminars under the banner of Students with Individual Needs and Learning Difficulties to ‘...increase the leaders’ understanding of the projects and the support and time teachers need to ensure maximum benefit to students with disabilities’.

In some instances these strategies were developed further with the extension of the MSSD initiative as in Queensland where DET set itself the task of building its workforce capacity with a professional development package involving online training for principals to help staff better understand relevant issues and trends. This evolved into a comprehensive suite of connected elements under the umbrella of the Quality Schools, Inclusive Leaders (QSIL) project focusing on whole school inclusive practices.

9.1.5 Targeting specific areas for leadership development

The development of knowledge and skills to manage extreme behaviours of students in classrooms was identified by a number of authorities as an area of pressing need. In response, Victorian DET developed a professional learning programme, School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support, which was expanded to include professional learning for more than 700 school leaders.
and teachers, including the specialist school leaders, using an evidence-based framework for preventing and responding to student behaviour.

The Queensland DET approach to Output 7 also included a series of activities through a Complex Case Management training package for regions to ensure that the specific requirements for students with disability are met. The focus was on schools providing reasonable adjustments, connecting services and providing multiple agency case management. A Guide to Complex Case Management was developed and piloted with 12 special schools with regionally-based Complex Case Support Officers (CCSO) employed to provide mentoring and advice to build capability to review and implement systems of support, intervention and referral for students with significant support needs.

9.1.6 Engaging academic experts in special education

In supporting leadership teams to strengthen teachers’ capability, a reasonably straightforward and cost-efficient option for some authorities was to use national and international experts as consultants and facilitators to design and facilitate workshops for school leaders. For example, AISWA implemented a professional learning leadership series for principals, school leaders and board members on strategic planning for inclusive schooling environments. University experts provided advice on student integration, adaptation of learning, and enriching teaching strategies to meet the needs of all students through forums and strategic meetings. They facilitated school action planning and implementation with visits to schools and assisted local leadership planning for school inclusivity. AISWA also created opportunities for additional leadership mentoring support to further support development plans to improve inclusive school practice.

A central element of the South Australia DECD strategy that impacted across a number of other outputs (particularly Output 8) involved highly regarded international researchers and consultants delivering professional learning across a range of formats including conferences and workshop sessions. An internationally respected educator and researcher was contracted to support the learning of leaders, teachers and paraprofessionals.

9.1.7 Sustaining leadership capacity through collegial networks

Education authorities created opportunities to build and sustain leadership capacity by establishing networks and communities of practice. For example, the Victorian Bastow Institute programme required that two participants from each school attend the course: a principal plus one member of their leadership team. This aspect of the course design and delivery had the broader effect of strengthening the network of specialist principals and teachers as a sustainable base for ongoing development. Similarly, the CEVC Masters programme referred to previously created structured opportunities for teachers to network with colleagues within their school context culminating in a two-day symposium attracting school leadership teams from 96 schools.
In other jurisdictions collegial networks were encouraged around a core of training events and supported action research projects such as the ACT where all 86 ETD schools engaged in DECO projects evolving from an initial base of four DECO networks. An intense period of activity in 2013 included the launch of a portal at a highly successful DECO conference with over 110 participants, which continued in 2014 building highly active networks.

### 9.1.8 Integrating leadership with other outputs

While the focus within the independent sector in New South Wales during the extension phase of the MSSD initiative centred primarily on broad capacity building related to DSE 2005 and the NCCD (Outputs 6 and 13), this was built on the strong foundation of what was achieved with two cohorts of schools during 2012 and 2013. The model brought together activity encompassing Output 5 training for all school staff (Output 5), supporting principals and leadership teams (Output 7), and developing or modifying lesson plans (Output 9). It required participating schools to undertake a predetermined process to complete their own situational analysis, develop a plan to address identified issues and undertake action in accordance with their plan.

The ACT Catholic Education Office approach delivered Output 7 activities directly at the school level, integrated with other outputs. A process to support disability awareness training among principals and their leadership teams was designed as a starting point for addressing and improving all areas of access and participation of students with disability in Archdiocesan schools. It aimed to promote a positive change in the attitudes of principals and leadership teams towards the access and participation rights and the specific adjustments required for students with disability.
10 Responding to obligations under DSE 2005

With the introduction of support for the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13) in the extension phase of the MSSD initiative, training in the obligations under DSE 2005 (Output 6) became all the more important as authorities came to realise that understanding the DSE 2005 was integral to staff being able to make professional judgements about the students supported and the adjustments they receive.

Output 13 was not part of the original suite of outputs aligned to the MSSD initiative and was only added to the implementation plans for action in 2014. Of the three sectors, the independent sector invested the highest proportion of their total funding to Output 13 (21%).

In the initial phase of the initiative just 3.3 percent of funding was allocated to DSE 2005 training under Output 6 with an increase to 8.7 percent of the extension funding with the introduction of the NCCD.

10.1 DSE 2005 training (Output 6)

Table 10-1: Output 6 by authority

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<tr>
<th>SECTOR</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>QLD</th>
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<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
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</table>

DSE 2005 training was selected by 20 of the 24 authorities as an area requiring support from MSSD funds, with two other authorities also implementing DSE 2005 training but under other outputs (7 and 13). Of the total $15.2 million allocated to Output 6 (5.2 percent of all MSSD funds), more than half supported activities for Output 6 in the 12 months extension phase. The extension to the MSSD initiative was a particularly important opportunity for the independent sector to make inroads into DSE 2005 training with 18.2 percent of their total MSSD funds allocated to DSE 2005 training activities. In contrast, the government sector allocated just 3.1 percent of funds to Output 6 due largely to the activities to which they were committed prior to the MSSD initiative.

Ten education authorities committed MSSD resources to facilitate the development of a series of online learning resources developed by the University of Canberra — the DSE 2005 eLearning initiative with fourteen authorities using these resources through a licence agreement. Two authorities used the DSE 2005 eLearning modules under other MSSD outputs, Queensland DET (Output 7) and ACT CEO (Output 13). Eight authorities used the eLearning modules in conjunction with a range of other strategies, and seven authorities did not use the eLearning modules but chose instead to implement other strategies for training in the DSE 2005, including for example, Northern Territory CEO which implemented DSE 2005 training under Output 13.
Table 10-2: Strategies used by authorities for DSE 2005 training

Government (G), Catholic (C), Independent (I)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>NSW</th>
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<td>I</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSE 2005 eLearning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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10.1.1 University of Canberra DSE 2005 eLearning

Researchers from the University of Canberra Education Institute developed the DSE 2005 eLearning initiative aimed at helping teachers, parents, and communities learn more about teaching and learning of students with disability. The modules were funded from eight state and territory government education authorities, the New South Wales CEC, and the Commonwealth Department of Education, and made available to staff in schools throughout Australia under licence to authorities.

Each course focuses on the legal obligations of educators under the DDA and contains interactive scenarios on how to implement the DSE 2005 in everyday practice. Participant learning is assessed and a certificate is awarded upon successful completion of Part One (Lessons 1-3) or Part Two (Lessons 4-8). The modules available in 2014 were:

- Education Leaders
- Education Assistants
- Early Childhood Prior to Fulltime School
- Early Childhood School
- Primary Schools
- Junior Secondary Schools
- Senior Secondary Schools.

The University of Canberra website also provided the online resource, Disability Standards for Education: A Practical Guide for Individuals, Families and Communities.

Authorities using DSE 2005 eLearning

In Victoria DET the initial rollout of the DSE 2005 eLearning modules in the second half of 2013 focused on the Education Leaders course and attracted 1,309 teachers from 500 schools. By the
end of 2014 this had increased to 2638 staff in total. DET also played a key role in the
development and release of the parents and communities resource.

In Queensland, DET purchased a licence agreement for the DSE 2005 eLearning modules in the
first phase of the MSSD initiative under Output 7 (leadership). Completion of the DSE 2005
eLearning modules is a mandatory prerequisite for all leadership teams in Queensland
government schools. DET contributed extensively to the development and testing of the first
three compliance modules and took responsibility to assist with research and development for
the Junior Secondary module.

The suite of seven courses was used for South Australian DECD staff performing different
professional roles specifically targeted to each level. The communication strategy to promote
the DSE 2005 eLearning encompassed professional development, media releases, official launch
of the web-based resource and the distribution of printed material commissioned by DECD to all
government schools and community including non-government agencies. DSE 2005 training
also formed part of the prerequisite training for all South Australian government schools
implementing the NCCD.

All Catholic schools in South Australia were required to develop an implementation plan with
goals related to both the DSE 2005 and NCCD in order to access resources including a limited
pool of funding for teacher release. In total, 98 of the 103 Catholic schools in South Australia
participated in a minimum of three of the DSE 2005 eLearning modules.

DSE 2005 eLearning as a foundation combined with other strategies

For eight authorities the DSE 2005 eLearning was the cornerstone of their Output 6 strategy but
was supplemented by other strategies to suit local needs and contexts.

For New South Wales DEC the DSE 2005 eLearning modules provided a baseline of knowledge
with over 42,000 teachers across more than 900 schools using the modules. DEC also provided
standalone training, resources and support on understanding obligations under the DDA and
DSE 2005.

The Catholic sector in New South Wales established a multi-faceted approach involving almost
all schools in DSE 2005 training. Diocesan-based education officers used the DSE 2005 eLearning
course as a foundation for building understanding of the DSE 2005 and the requirements for the
NCCD. The officers also used the CEC’s online module, Disability Plans (IPs) e-Learning, for
targeted professional learning on developing quality personalised planning for students with
disability.

Some authorities provided the DSE 2005 eLearning as an option for staff to choose in addition
to other professional learning sessions. Independent Schools Victoria took this approach with a
series of professional learning sessions for classroom teachers as well as specialist school staff.
ISV also provided support where necessary for staff who chose to access the DSE 2005
eLearning modules through Victorian DET which made the DSE 2005 eLearning modules
available to all Victorian schools.
Some 45 ISV member schools took advantage of the opportunity in 2014 with many others planning to do so in 2015 in preparation for the implementation of the NCCD. ISV also offered a programme of professional learning opportunities and materials tailored specifically to the needs of Victorian Independent schools, covering a range of disabilities in schools, particularly targeting learning disabilities such as dyslexia. These programmes were offered at three levels: core skills for all staff, advanced skills for support staff, and specialist skills for coordinators.

Western Australia DoE provided staff training on the DSE 2005 combined with workshops run by consultants, teleconferencing, and participation in the DSE 2005 eLearning modules. Over 5,670 staff accessed training integral to the implementation of NCCD.

The ACT Education and Training Directorate aligned its use of the DSE 2005 eLearning package with the OLT disability education inclusion training courses): staff who enrolled in an OLT course were expected to complete the DSE 2005 eLearning module, which participants could count towards registration maintenance with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. The modules were supplemented with presentations prepared by ETD Disability Education staff. ETD staff and DECOs worked together to develop a set of resources to promote the DSE 2005 eLearning modules including a resource kit, Understanding Learning Difficulties: a Practical Guide, provided to all representative teachers and school psychologists.

In Tasmania the DoE approached training for all school staff on the DSE 2005 in two ways: through a series of face-to-face workshops targeted at specific groups of staff, and with the development and provision of the DSE 2005 eLearning modules. In collaboration with its Professional Learning Institute, DoE designed and provided a four-day professional development programme for all support teachers in each region. A professional learning module, Inclusive Leadership for Students with Special Needs, based on an enquiry model of learning, was conducted at all forums for principals through 2012-2013.

In the extension period of the MSSD initiative the Tasmanian Catholic and independent sectors partnered with the DoE to purchase the licence for the University of Canberra DSE 2005 eLearning modules. The uptake of the modules was extremely high with almost all schools participating by the final year. The success of the implementation was due largely to the CEO requirement that leadership teams had to complete the first set of modules. The extension of the MSSD initiative also enabled Independent Schools Tasmania to provide complementary activities with Output 6 and Output 13 (NCCD). IST Project Officers designed a resource package of activities combining these two outputs using a range of complementary professional learning information and activities. Cross-sector collaboration throughout the MSSD initiative was a major benefit for IST schools in Tasmania.

“The approach focused first on principals and business managers as key points of influence in their schools, and also ensured that prior to development meetings with the project officers in schools, every participant was required to provide a certificate of completion.”
10.1.2 Other strategies

Independent schools in New South Wales took a different approach. All regional and metropolitan schools were invited to attend a series of training days for the implementation of the NCCD. Overall, seven whole day sessions were conducted in metropolitan Sydney and a further six in rural and regional locations. The training was divided into two sections: the first was on the DDA and DSE 2005, and the second concerned the processes for the data collection. Additionally, AISNSW continued to use other resources to offer principals and school leaders opportunities to participate in one-day workshops related to DSE 2005. These sessions were led in the first part by lawyers with extensive knowledge of the Standards and case law related to the DDA (Case Study 9).

Catholic schools in Queensland were offered professional learning through a range of workshops and resources focused on staff obligations and expectations under the DSE 2005. These were facilitated by specialists, and included a DSE 2005 Training Package, Understand your Obligation, consisting of eight videos and support material. Brisbane Catholic Education staff designed and developed this professional development package in collaboration with the independent sector. The DVDs were made available to staff on the Catholic schools website portal and hard copies were also provided to Queensland Catholic and independent schools (Case study 19).

In Western Australia, consultants, Disability Support Co-ordinators, and teachers from the Special Education Support Centre facilitated Catholic schools staff training in the DSE 2005. In total, 3,621 teachers, teacher assistants and administration staff across 50 schools received training. AISWA introduced Output 6 in 2014 via four Inclusive Education Consultants delivering professional learning to 38 schools. Telephone and face-to-face support was also provided to all schools as a follow up on request.

10.2 Implementation of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (Output 13)

Table 10-3: Output 13 by authority

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<th>SECTOR</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>QLD</th>
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All but one of the 24 education authorities chose to support schools with the implementation of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data for Students with Disability (NCCD) in the extension period of the MSSD initiative and it was worth noting that two of the smallest jurisdictions used the highest proportion of their extension funding for this output — Tasmania (71%) and the ACT (51%).
A typical set of skill training for NCCD included:

- DSE 2005
- curriculum and assessment adjustments
- curriculum differentiation and modification
- reporting against adapted curriculum
- reporting on student progress against adapted curriculum.

10.2.1 Authority strategies

The focus for the DEC in New South Wales under Output 13 was on establishing a range of supportive strategies and actions including:

- tailored professional learning materials and guidance for schools
- a draft document to support school staff decision making about adjustments
- additional local professional learning and support for teachers and educational leaders
- additional funding to support each schools participating in the NCCD for the first time.

DEC added new functions within its electronic enrolment and registration application to accommodate the collection of data for the NCCD. It provided a central Help Desk support for schools and a DEC intranet site containing information and links for the NCCD.

Catholic schools in New South Wales were provided with access to an online planning tool to assist teachers to create effective personalised plans for students with disability and through this process assist staff in implementing requirements and obligations under the DDA and the DSE 2005. The data collected via the online tool fed into the NCCD and was completed by CEC at a statewide level on behalf of all Catholic schools in New South Wales. Independent schools were invited to attend a series of training days for the implementation of the NCCD with follow-up workshops to assist schools according to needs.

In Victoria, DET provided a comprehensive set of resources and direct assistance to schools to support the implementation of NCCD. By the end of 2014, more than 70 percent of schools had participated in the implementation process. Independent Schools Victoria established the Student Assessment Project (SAP) to help schools and teachers make decisions about whether students met the definition of disability under the DDA, and the appropriate form of support required. The longer-term goal of SAP is to build the professional expertise of schools and teachers to enable them to make these judgements for themselves.

Queensland DET activities for Output 13 included the development of a centralised data collection tool and professional development package (Whole School Approach to Student Learning) to support schools in the application of NCCD methodology. The Catholic and independent sectors in Queensland worked in collaboration towards a consistent approach to the NCCD process for non-government schools in Queensland. ISQ launched a series of initiatives to support schools in establishing appropriate processes, policies and professional
learning experiences to enhance the implementation of the NCCD. It also assisted schools to adjust integrated data systems within their own school operating systems to inform decision-making processes for students with disability and evaluate individual achievement of students on modified education plans. A series of workshops on the NCCD was run statewide in Brisbane and eight regional centres.

The approach for supporting the implementation of the NCCD of the independent schools in South Australia was either via whole school professional development or one-to-one support to individual teachers under MSSD Output 5 with clear links to Output 6 (DSE 2005) and Output 13 (NCCD). AISSA used face-to-face professional learning sessions in preference to online training options as it was felt that the personalised approach enabled participants to ask questions and enabled discussions of pertinent issues and opportunities. It also conducted follow-up visits to schools to ensure that changed practices were well embedded in schools. The professional learning sessions typically provided guidance and support related to the collection of student information to support accurate data collection, such as:

- identifying students receiving adjustments to address a disability
- identifying level of adjustments (e.g. no adjustment at this time, supplementary, substantial or extensive)
- identifying categories of disability for students receiving adjustments to address a disability under the DDA
- documentation of individual learning plans.

In Western Australia, DoE established an NCCD Project Team to manage and support the implementation. Two videos were made of a student from each of the ‘extensive’ and ‘substantial’ categories to give participants a picture of the teaching and learning adjustments necessary for these categories and 15 case studies were provided to school staff.

For Catholic schools in Western Australia, the inclusion of Output 13 in 2014 enabled participating CEO schools to access training and implement the database. Whole day training was offered to principals and Disability/Learning Support staff, either in person or via videoconference presentations. Each school received additional support from a Student with Disability Consultant.

AISWA presented professional learning to all their member schools, and encouraged them to participate in the 2014 collection. Intended outcomes were to:

- provide schools with the opportunity to review their current systems
- expand and modify those systems to adequately record information
- gather and store evidence appropriately with the support of AISWA Inclusive Education Consultants
- create an internal quality assurance process specific for all staff.

Almost all Tasmanian government schools participated in the implementation of the NCCD. The process commenced in 2014 with complementary activity provided in Output 6 requiring
principals and key staff to complete lessons 1-3 of the DSE 2005 Educational Leaders module. Professional learning to support this included understanding and making judgements on the levels of educational adjustments, collection of evidences of adjustments, and use of the purpose-built DoE Student Support System, which was designed and implemented in the first year of the MSSD. The implementation of the Quality Assurance Framework developed in 2014 by the Joint Working Group nationally supported quality assurance with the principal as the only designated officer who could approve and send the NCCD data.

Tasmania CEO focused its NCCD strategy on whole staff training, leadership training and Disability Coordinators training using a package of material for schools. Participation in the NCCD process grew from 30 percent of schools in 2013 to cover all schools in 2014.

The extension of the MSSD initiative enabled Independent Schools Tasmania to provide complementary activities with Output 6 and Output 13. Project Officers designed a resource package of activities combining these two outputs and using a range of complementary professional learning information and activities. In 2014 IST introduced all schools to the online DSE 2005 eLearning developed by the University of Canberra, supplemented by in-school support to contextualise understanding. The approach focused first on principals and business managers as key points of influence in their schools. By December 2014 all teachers in IST schools, and many teacher aides and ancillary staff, had completed required training modules.

The Northern Territory DoE implementation of the NCCD began in 2013 with 54 schools. OLT online training courses, with Northern Territory case studies, assisted special education teachers to identify students with disability, develop skills in collecting data and design Educational Adjustment Plans (EAP). A designated NCCD support advisor assisted each participating school in 2014. The Student Needs Profiling Instrument and EAP template were reviewed, to ensure alignment with NCCD processes and language.

All Northern Territory Catholic schools participated in 2014, with a total of 83 profiles of students being developed during the 12-month period. This training was delivered at Network meetings, including Principals and Inclusion Support Coordinators from schools. Follow up assistance to schools was provided during a trial period in 2014, prior to the roll-out phase to all schools in 2015.

For Catholic schools in the ACT the introduction of Output 13 involved a variety of activities including: development and delivery of training days for school principals, learning support teachers and other staff in the data collection process; DSE 2005 eLearning modules; and
participation in a moderation day to develop consistency of judgment around students’ levels of need.

AISACT strategies included providing training and financial support for schools to participate in professional learning, and the implementation of an advisory service to support schools reporting on students with disability. Thirty-eight participants attended a training day on the NCCD delivered by AISNSW, including a refresher on the DDA and DSE 2005, and training on identifying and classifying eligible students, making adjustments, record keeping and reporting.
11 Building skills in special education

Almost one third of the total MSSD funds was allocated to providing teachers with training and support to directly build skills in special education (Output 5), assessing learning levels for individual students, adapting curriculum (Output 8) and modifying lesson plans (Output 9). Over half the MSSD funds allocated to Output 5 by New South Wales DEC accounted for 30 percent of their initial MSSD funds and 20 percent of their extension funds.

11.1 Skills training in special education (Output 5)

Table 11-1: Output 5 by authority

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<tr>
<th>SECTOR</th>
<th>NSW</th>
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<th>QLD</th>
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<td>Catholic</td>
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<td>Independent</td>
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Eighteen education authorities selected Output 5 as part of their MSSD implementation plan, including two for the initial phase only (NSW Catholic and independent sectors), and one where Output 5 was added in the extension phase (SA independent sector). Of the 18 authorities involved in activities under Output 5, 13 chose to participate in the OnlineTraining Ltd (OLT) courses to build skills in special education (www.oltaustralia.net). One authority chose to participate in OLT courses under Output 8 activities (QLD DET) and another within the leadership activities of Output 7 (ACT ETD).

Nine authorities used a combination of strategies, including OLT courses, to build skills in special education under Output 5, while five developed a range of other strategies (not including OLT) including scholarships for postgraduate studies, working with speech pathologists on an oral language project, providing access to nationally accredited training via links with a school-based Registered Training Organisation, and providing professional learning programmes facilitated in schools or online.

11.1.1 OnlineTraining Ltd (OLT)

The majority of authorities selected the OLT suite of courses to provide skills training in special education. While the OLT learning materials have their origins in products developed in the United Kingdom, the materials were significantly revised and customised to ensure validity in the context of Australian schools. Education authorities were able to commission a specific course, for example, in the Northern Territory where the course Introduction to Special Education was commissioned by the government sector and designed locally featuring Northern Territory examples and case studies relating to six key areas of disability.

The web-based format of the OLT courses accommodated different learning styles with Australian case studies featuring students, families and education personnel in a range of school
settings. A number of interactive elements supported and encouraged the learning process, such as animations, self-assessment exercises, online quizzes, video clips, online forums, printable resources and links to related websites.

**Contractual arrangements**

Prior to the MSSD initiative the New South Wales government sector took a leading role in adapting the OLT courses. Under the MSSD initiative, DEC worked with OLT to further develop the courses and broaden its reach in New South Wales as well as sharing an expanded licence with one other authority and providing a range of support to others.

Education authorities engaged with the OLT courses with a variety of contractual arrangements including:

- negotiating their own licence with OLT to deliver one or more of the courses
- negotiating access to the courses via an expanded New South Wales DEC licence.

A number of authorities formed a contractual arrangement with New South Wales DEC to provide initial training cohorts, training for tutors, supporting materials and, in some instances, ongoing support. This was the case for two Catholic Dioceses in New South Wales, as well as for Queensland government schools, South Australia government and Catholic schools, and all Northern Territory schools.

An example of this support arrangement was set up with CESA, which provided school staff with the opportunity to participate in OLT modules on Understanding Dyslexia and Significant Difficulties in Reading. Through the agreement established with New South Wales DEC, training was provided for an initial cohort of 12 teachers. In addition, access to training materials and advice related to systems and processes, combined with the coordination work of two DECD special education consultants, enabled 20 CESA participants to complete the tutor training and become tutors.

Queensland DET purchased licences for OLT modules in Autism, Dyslexia and Significant Difficulties in Reading, Managing Behaviour, Motor Co-ordination Difficulties, Speech Language and Communication Needs, and Understanding Hearing Loss. These include training on differentiation and the provision of curriculum adjustments. It trained 435 trained tutors to lead the implementation of the online courses, delivering face-to-face sessions to classroom teachers in primary, secondary and special schools. Each region employed a regional tutor to coordinate the delivery of courses and to maintain the consistency and rigour of the training. DET also engaged the New South Wales DECD to train a core group of tutors on the use of these resources and provided access to the training material.

**OLT modules**

Five modules were available in the original OLT suite — Understanding Hearing Loss was introduced in 2012, and the UK Visual Impairment module is currently being updated to an Australian context with input from the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney. Authorities that
participated in the OLT courses selected modules according to their own context and needs. The authorities that engaged in the seven modules are included in the following table.

Table 11-2: Engagement in OLT modules under MSSD by sector

Government (G), Catholic (C), Independent (I)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modules (N=number of authorities)</th>
<th>NSW</th>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorders (12)</td>
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<td>Understanding and Managing Behaviour (13)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding Motor Coordination Difficulties (7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding Speech, Language and Communication needs (14)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding Dyslexia and Significant Difficulties in Reading (11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding Hearing Loss (7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visual impairment (1)</td>
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This table includes use of OLT by Queensland and ACT government education authorities within other MSSD outputs. Western Australian authorities are not included as their use of the OLT modules was outside of the MSSD funding.

The fundamental feature of the OLT professional learning model is flexibility in delivery. Participants are required to join a cohort of other personnel to participate in tutor-led training sessions, to work through the online content and respond to set tasks at their own pace in learning. Approximately 20 hours are needed to complete each specific course.

For government schools in Tasmania the nature and level of staff participation in OLT modules reflected the challenges identified by DoE and classroom teachers. The DoE approach was first to train facilitators who could then lead cohorts through the module topics. More than 1000
staff completed OLT modules with the highest enrolments in the courses on managing behaviour, autism and dyslexia.

11.1.2 Postgraduate qualifications

Seven authorities provided support for certified courses or postgraduate qualifications in special education under Output 5. The NSW and ACT Catholic education authorities encouraged school staff to undertake a Postgraduate Certificate in Inclusion and Wellbeing designed and delivered by the Australian Catholic University. ACT teaching staff were also offered scholarships to encourage participation. The course was designed for teachers who aspire to work in the disability field either as a Learning Support Teacher or in the classroom. It included a community of practice where participants were able to engage in conversations around the purpose of research in addressing the needs of students with disability. Participants also conducted school-based research projects on a diverse range of topics and shared their findings with school colleagues and the CEO.

Other authorities also offered scholarships to staff to undertake postgraduate study such as WA DoE and CEO, Queensland CEC, and Victoria DET that offered a course in Deaf Education and Autism.

11.1.3 Other approaches

A different approach to develop skills in special education was taken by CESA which established a close working relationship with TALK SA to implement an oral language project across a number of primary schools in the southern region of Adelaide. The oral language project featured a train the trainer component with two teachers engaged in action research who were expected to share their knowledge and learning with their peers in the junior primary area of their school.

The Western Australia government sector took a multi-pronged approach to developing skills in special education. The strategy included MSSD Development Grants to provide schools with the opportunity to identify local needs and build capacity. Professional learning examples included support for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and learning disabilities; enhancing curriculum adjustments; development of individual educational plans; and an accredited Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) university programme for teachers and education assistants. DoE also developed a Learning Disabilities Toolkit in 2013 and trialled it across education regions in 2014.
12 Strategies for inclusive learning

12.1 Assessing learning levels and adapting curriculum (Output 8)

Table 12-1: Output 8 by authority

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Five government sector and four Catholic sector authorities implemented initiatives aimed at delivering outputs to improve the assessment of individual learning levels of students with disability, make adaptations to the curriculum, and introduce appropriate reporting processes. It is noteworthy that four of the six case studies were nominated solely as Output 8 concerned with assessing learning levels and adapting curriculum. They represented significant system-wide innovations for the Victorian, Queensland and South Australian government systems.

Of the total MSSD funds 14 percent was allocated to Output 8 activities which was spread fairly evenly across both funding periods, with government schools in South Australian and Queensland using the highest proportion of their funds for this output (45 and 35 percent respectively).

12.1.1 Strategies to support staff

New South Wales CEC implementation plans for Outputs 6 and 13, positioned Output 8 as the bridge to link with other activities. The planning arrangements for activity related to Output 8 were sufficiently flexible to enable the Dioceses and other authorities to conduct a range of professional learning programmes and other projects to support schools in enacting their obligations under the legislation. Activity under Output 8 focused on how DSE 2005 obligations could be achieved through collaborative planning and differentiation.

Queensland government schools used the OLT modules to provide training to staff on differentiation and the provision of curriculum adjustments, as well as the ASD Curriculum Adjustment Project, which included a planning tool to help coordinate individual support plans for students with disability, the development of models for differentiating curriculum materials and teaching styles, and staff scholarships for graduate studies in ASD. Ninety teachers from Queensland government schools were offered Graduate Certificate Scholarships in Autism Studies established with the Griffith University Autism Centre of Excellence (Case Study 16).

A major initiative for the South Australian DECD — the Lead/Buddy schools programme — involved 51 schools working together in staff capacity building processes. DECD established an integrated package of professional learning guidance and support to ensure that there was a
depth of special education skills within each lead school prior to embarking on any capacity building activity with buddy schools. The schools participated in a whole school OLT course or requested support from a project officer, and then extended staff capacity by supporting other schools within their local partnership, and then became a centre of expertise in meeting the curriculum and social needs of students living with a disability (Case Study 21 and 22).

**New frameworks for assessing learning levels and adapting curriculum**

New South Wales DEC activity related to Output 8 centred on further development, refinement and implementation of the online assessment tool for teachers known as the Personalised Learning and Support Signposting Tool (PLASST), to be used by teachers to support or inform four distinct areas of activity:

- collaboration, consultation and negotiation
- assessment
- responding to identified
- monitoring and evaluation adjustment and interventions.

PLASST was not intended as a tool to produce personal learning plans, but to assist with personalising learning and support for students and to assist teachers with collaboration and planning. DEC saw the PLASST student profile report as pivotal in the collaborative process whereby teachers and parents plan for individual student’s learning with the emphasis on a structured approach to interactions between teachers, parents, and, where relevant, the students themselves, allied health professionals and other relevant stakeholders.

A new approach developed for the Victorian DET, the Abilities Based Learning and Educational Support (ABLES) framework aimed at assisting teachers to assess and report on student progress and learning achievement. It also provided guidance in ways of responding to individual learning readiness and needs. ABLES resources target the development of individual learning plans to ensure high quality teaching and learning is available in every classroom that needs it (Case Study 14).
12.2 Developing and modifying lesson plans (Output 9)

Table 12-2: Output 9 by authority

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Ten authorities focused on supporting teachers to develop or modify lesson plans to suit the needs of students with disability. Just six percent of total funding was allocated to Output 9 activities, most of it in the initial period.

12.2.1 Strategies for modifying lesson plans

As part of its Every Student, Every School initiative, New South Wales DEC sought to have a specialist Learning and Support Teacher (LST) in every mainstream government school in the state, to skill classroom teachers and support students with additional learning and support needs. This involved 30 percent of the MSSD initial funding for DEC. LSTs are specialist staff who help classroom teachers develop skills to meet the learning needs of all students in their class including modelling appropriate teaching strategies or adapting lesson plans for students with disability.

For Queensland Catholic schools Output 9 built upon work completed for Output 8, with a sharp increase overall in the number of teachers with skills in modifying lesson plans for students with disability. Most local authorities used external consultants and their own personnel for workshops and mentoring sessions to support teachers in making adjustments, or modifying programmes for students. They also shared best practice, resources and assessment tools, and provided support to increase teacher confidence in implementing inclusive strategies and adjustments in curriculum and pedagogy.

Strategies to support lesson modification for independent schools in Queensland included professional learning opportunities on specific areas of disability, and the specific modifications and adjustments to lesson plans required for improving student learning outcomes. The workshops were designed for teachers, teacher aides and school leaders by consultants and specialists with the main goal of improving pedagogy, engagement and planning for students with disability.

To address the modifications required for the increasing number of students with a diagnosis of Autism, the CEO in Tasmania focused on engaging a specialist advisory teacher with expertise in autism whose primary role was to work one-to-one with teachers. CEO saw the need for teachers to have an expert working alongside them to provide the support and knowledge and also to build capacity with schools through on-site professional development opportunities. Complementary training and support was also provided to parents through Parents of Children with Autism support groups.
Independent Schools Tasmania worked in collaboration with the Catholic sector and shared a specialist consultant to support teachers to develop or modify lesson plans to accommodate the learning needs of students with disability. IST targeted three schools with high demands and minimal resources requiring support. It is noteworthy that regional networking sessions facilitated by IST project officers had a ripple effect with 15 additional schools participating at their own expense. By 2014 the activities of Output 9 were extended to cover all areas of the state with an emphasis on professional learning opportunities targeted at the whole of staff level. Networks and collegial partnerships then emerged as a basis for complementary activities.

In a system-changing approach the Northern Territory DoE integrated Outputs 4 and 9 whereby the team of speech, language and communication teacher and speech pathologist (the SLC team) implemented a service model of ‘whole classroom-whole school’, combining speech pathology assessment of student learning needs with professional learning, including the modelling of practical classroom strategies. These were complemented by the posting of classroom resources on a SharePoint website for ongoing teacher learning. The SLC team created new ways of working with classroom teachers in differentiating within the curriculum, transforming practices. By translating assessment data into effective classroom practices, the team created the link between assessment and programmes, so that teachers could deliver both individual and whole class speech therapy programmes that were sensitive to students’ needs. In some remote communities students were assessed in their first language, with the assistance of local first language speakers.

Also in the Northern Territory the Catholic sector used its own Inclusion Support Advisors to support teachers to develop or modify lesson plans with 80 percent of schools participating. Teachers developed skills in designing Educational Adjustment Plans (EAPs) using SMART goals for students. It was also evident through evaluations by principals, leadership teams and classroom teachers, that schools were taking more ownership in planning for students with disability.
13 Working with specialists and school support staff

Four MSSD Outputs (4, 10, 11, and 12) involved rethinking the roles of specialists and school support staff and the ways they could most effectively work with classroom teachers to improve the educational outcomes of students. Activities under this heading overlap with other outputs but the focus in this area was primarily on the teacher as the person responsible for the education of students with disability in the classroom with collaborative support from specialists such as speech pathologists, psychologists, occupational therapists, behaviour support specialist and others. More fundamentally this meant shifting school approaches from models of individual student deficit, management and remediation to inclusive models of teaching and learning.

The four outputs around this theme represented $44.6m or 15 percent of all MSSD funds allocated, with most of that allocated in the initial phase of the programme, particularly the activities around support for student transitions, most of which did not continue into the final year of the initiative. Almost all authorities designed activities with the understanding at the time that MSSD funds were limited to two years and therefore used the opportunity to trial new ideas or consolidate approaches under development.

There were few differences in the emphasis given to these outputs across the sectors. The notable exception were the Catholic and independent sectors which put more resources from MSSD funds in areas where they had relatively few central support services, for example involving health/allied health professionals, and enhancing the roles of teacher aides in schools. For these sectors MSSD was instrumental in stimulating or accelerating major improvements in regional and remote areas particularly where speech pathologists were involved.

13.1 Working with health professionals (Output 4)

Table 13-1: Output 4 by authority

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Nine of the 24 education authorities implemented initiatives involving working with health and/or allied health and other professionals. There was a strong emphasis on speech language and communication issues involving the services of speech pathologists, with schools shifting from a reliance on specialist support for individual students towards building school capacity and increasing teacher capability. The models guiding the initiatives were designed to ensure that the knowledge and skills of teachers were enriched and that they would be more
competent and confident in using strategies to support individual students with disability in the classroom. Where specialist services were provided in the past, they were generally limited to assessments of students and the provision of a report of varying levels of usefulness. In contrast, the arrangements tested over the three years of MSSD evolved into a collaborative consultancy model in which allied health professionals worked with students and staff in classrooms to provide practical advice and resources to support engagement in learning.

13.1.1 Strategies for working with health professionals

Most authority initiatives involved health professionals and teachers rethinking their approaches to supporting students with disability in the classroom. They typically worked on building a shared view of student skills and attributes based on assessments by school staff, the observations of allied health professionals, and guided observations from parents or carers. The day-to-day roles of health professionals in the schools moved towards:

- assessing student needs
- planning strategies with school staff and families
- modelling of the strategies
- demonstrating the use of resources in the classroom
- facilitating staff professional learning sessions.

The breadth and depth of engagement varied considerably. For example, more than 80 Queensland independent schools engaged a range of health professionals to provide advice on adjustments, sensory awareness programmes, emotional regulation programmes, cognitive behaviour therapy, explanations of results, findings of formal tests and professional learning sessions. They also assisted teachers with the preparation of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and assessments to inform curriculum planning and presented professional development sessions at whole school staff days.

The range of activities expanded in some sectors with the integration of outputs such as the Northern Territory DoE which combined coordinating with health/allied health professionals (Output 4) and supporting teachers to modify lesson plans (Output 9) whereby the team of speech, language and communication teacher, and speech pathologist implemented a service model of ‘whole classroom-whole school’, combining speech pathology assessment of student learning needs with professional learning, including the modelling of practical classroom strategies.

“Collaborating with allied health professionals not only provided teachers with skills and knowledge related to specific aspects of learning, but also enabled better monitoring of student plans and identification of needs, interpretation of assessment results and strategies for follow-up interventions.”
13.2 Supporting collaborative teaching (Output 10)

Table 13-2: Output 10 by authority

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Activities implemented under Output 10 related closely to the approaches developed for working with specialists and support staff. This was also intended to cover team teaching but for most authorities the main focus was on getting specialists, support staff, parents and other stakeholders into the classroom alongside teachers to work directly with individual students.

Two government and two Catholic authorities implemented projects to encourage collaborative teaching practices, although again this is somewhat misleading since it understates the attention given to collaborative teaching practices under the banner of other outputs. It is noteworthy that this output was particularly relevant to supporting students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, which featured in three of the initiatives largely because collaborative practices involving teachers, specialists, support staff and parents were considered essential to strengthening options for ASD students and supporting inclusive classrooms.

13.2.1 Strategies for collaboration

The four initiatives under Output 10 took significantly different approaches in response to local contexts which were adapted to suit changing conditions as the MSSD initiative progressed. For example, in the first phase of the MSSD initiative New South Wales CEC projects provided schools with an opportunity to reflect on role descriptions and protocols around collaborative teaching models that suited their context. Teachers then worked in teams to develop collaborative approaches to meet the requirements of the DSE 2005, including a range of parent participation projects to inform them about their student’s personalised planning and support.

Similarly, the South Australia Catholic Education Autism Spectrum Disorder Project was established with the aim of building capacity and initially involved an ASD consultant to support participating teachers. On the basis of this experience the project evolved into more of a mentoring and networking arrangement where teachers learned to develop skills with and from each other. The provision of release time for teachers to meet with the team to plan and attend professional learning and network meetings was a significant element in its success.
The approach of the Victorian DET for ASD students also evolved on the basis of trials in one region over 18 months. It involved two elements: Autism Inclusion Support Programmes, and Autism Teacher Coaches. Fifteen schools appointed ISP Coordinators, who worked collaboratively with teachers from their own and other network schools to support and demonstrate effective teaching practice for students with an ASD. By the end of 2014 over 7,000 teachers had been supported to meet the needs of ASD students through this strategy.

13.3 Engaging paraprofessionals (Output 11)

Table 13-3: Output 11 by authority

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Paraprofessionals working in classrooms cover a range of position titles including: teacher aides, teacher support staff, learning support officers and teaching assistants. The positions embrace a wide range of roles, from providing support for specific individuals in classrooms, to working with groups of students with varying special needs. The notion of enhancing these roles came with the growing recognition that classroom support staff had the potential to play an even more significant role than was previously the case: firstly, if given increased opportunities for training, and secondly, more active participation in decision-making to meet the needs of students with disability in the classroom.

The importance attached to this output was reflected in the high level of support from authorities and the strategic significance attached to the roles with respect to sustaining and enhancing the work of paraprofessionals. For example, Queensland DET commenced its approach to Output 11 with the establishment of a Teacher Aide Reference Group to consult widely with school stakeholders to plan and prioritise the professional learning needs across Queensland.

Eight authorities implemented projects to enhance the engagement of paraprofessionals, including substantial opportunities for professional learning covered under other outputs.

Professional learning, including mentoring, featured in all eight of the education authority strategies. These were typically provided through certificate courses delivered by the authority or by commissioned training providers. Queensland DET consultation with key education stakeholders showed the need for more effective support for, and use of, teacher aides. DET considered paraprofessionals (teacher aides) and their role in supporting students with disability as essential to the success of the MSSD implementation plans. The Quality Schools, Inclusive Leaders (QSIL) instructional leadership package clarified best practice approaches to involving teacher aides as a key resource for school leadership teams. The level of DET commitment to this was highlighted by the creation of online interactive courses developed
with OLT, specifically for teacher aides tailored to the authority and jurisdiction context, Teacher aides were also encouraged to take part in the majority of related learning opportunities being delivered to schools, and the offer of scholarships.

In addition to Certificate 3 studies in disability, Queensland Catholic school training programmes included a Diploma in Flexible Learning delivered through TAFE, as well as other forms of training such as workshops targeting specific disabilities.

Two authorities introduced scholarships to encourage paraprofessional staff to pursue formal study programmes. In order to engage Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) at a more effective level in the classroom, the ACT CEO offered scholarships in Certificate III School Support designed and delivered by a private Registered Training Organisation. In Queensland, DET offered approximately 120 scholarships to enable teacher aides to gain qualifications in a Certificate IV Education Support with online disability electives. By early 2015, training activities directed towards enhancing practice in classrooms for paraprofessionals was close to reaching 22,000 course completions across the state.

Other examples of comprehensive approaches include the approach of Independent Schools Queensland which recognised that many students with disability have been marginalised in the past through isolation: ISQ therefore focused the engagement of paraprofessionals on responding to diversity through inclusive practices. An RTO specialising in paraprofessional training was commissioned to provide a workshop programme for teacher aides leading to Certificate IV Education Support. The workshops were complemented in each school in consultation and collaboration with teachers.

These kinds of initiatives were complemented across the authorities by other forms of training often involving teachers and paraprofessionals engaging in professional learning together as part of whole school approaches. For example, while not a specific output in the South Australian DECD strategy, professional learning for paraprofessionals nevertheless continued in the extension phase, via participation in activity related to Output 5, online learning modules and Output 6, training for all staff related to the DSE 2005, and also as an integral component of school-based professional learning activity as part of Output 8, lead/buddy schools.

Building a culture of professionalism

In a region where turnover of teaching staff is high, teacher aides are more often settled in the area and are therefore a source of continuity for school programmes, which makes their ongoing professional development critical to the success of strategies to improve the teaching of students with disability. The case study school developed a QSL Coach-Mentor Action Plan as a key part of its strategy to enhance the roles of paraprofessionals with the overarching goal of identifying and embedding ‘highly effective inclusive pedagogical strategies to improve the learning outcomes of students’. (Case Study 18 – QLD DET)
13.4 Support for student transitions (Output 12)

Table 13-4: Output 12 by authority

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Seven education authorities introduced MSSD initiatives focused on student transitions, two in the government sector and five in Catholic systems, using diverse approaches in response to local contexts. In addition to the seven nominated outputs, transition issues were also covered under other outputs. Within the development of support centres (Output 3) the South Australian government had a strong focus on embedding knowledge and skills in schools through train the trainer professional learning activity. This also aimed to ensure that there were a number of teachers in each school with the knowledge and skills to support student transition through schools.

Authorities considered that transition points for students with disability are almost always especially challenging for students with disability, and that the task of managing transitions for students with disability required a coordinated approach from multiple stakeholders to ensure that students, parents and carers are able to successfully negotiate the often complex arrangements involved in moving across different school levels, and from school to work or further study.

13.4.1 Strategies for transitions

Projects related to transitions for senior students concentrated on processes required from Year 9 until the completion of school with guidelines and protocols for providers of post school services and training partners. In the New South Wales Catholic sector, schools were encouraged to tailor activity to suit the specific needs of their community and the targeted transition period, be it entry to school, transition between classes and/or campus or transition from school to post school programmes. This initiative enabled the development of resources for students with complex physical, emotional, social and cognitive support needs. Online resources were also produced with local information about post-school options and services for students with disability.

The appointment of Transitions Officers as specialists in the design, development and implementation of system-wide strategies under MSSD was an example of the increased attention given to the educational outcomes of students with disability. Under Output 12 the ACT CEO developed a transition support programme for school communities and appointed a Transitions Officer (Senior Officer Learning Support) to work with schools at every educational transition stage bringing a team of people together to plan, and implement a local transition protocol for individual students. The teams included students, parents, school staff, other CEO Officers, and external specialists.
Authorities addressed the significant challenge of managing the contributions of multiple agencies and stakeholders to successful transitions. In Queensland, CEC authorities worked on transition strategies with outside agencies such as Disability Employment Services, TAFE, School Community Industry Partnership Service, and the Endeavour Foundation. They also engaged outside consultants to deliver information on career pathways, established parent support groups, and provided access to pathways coordinators for work readiness programmes. Moreover, cross-sector vocational networks were established to ensure collaboration between school staff and community-based Disability Liaison Officers in the support of students and their families resulting in more informed access pathways leading to enrolments in tertiary institutions.

Transition support in Western Australian government schools also directly addressed the needs of families in making choices and managing transitions. This included greater opportunities for family awareness; family assistance to make informed choices about educational provision, learning development and services access; targeted support for students through case management planning; and personalised pathways and transition plans.

This also involved the task of sharing confidential information across government and non-government agencies and coordinated access to opportunities for further education, employment and alternatives to employment, such as VET in schools, Disability Employment Services and Australian Disability Enterprises. A case management approach was central to the Western Australian DoE Transition Programme, which was designed to ensure smooth and effective transition for individual students from school to self-nominated alternatives to employment service providers. Implementation of The Big Plan project in a senior campus of a Distinctive School in Western Australia included five two-hour student workshops in schools. Each student brought their support team to these workshops, where the students themselves, their teachers, caregivers, friends and agencies created a plan for the students’ school-to-post-school transitions (Case Study 26).

Under the Transition to Adult Life Project students at a case study Catholic school in Western Australia registered with the School Curriculum Standards Authority of Western Australia and completed a variety of courses of study and endorsed programmes, such as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). The curriculum emphasised three main areas of career education: independent living, leisure, and recreation (Case Study 29).

MSSD funds were also used by the Tasmanian DoE in partnership with the TASCARE Society to develop an online web-based resource for students with disability through all key stages of school and post-education experience. The Tasmanian Knowme transition support package, materials and resources developed in collaboration with key stakeholder and parent groups through TASCARE allowed parents and families to consolidate in one location all relevant information about their family member with a disability (Case Study 30).
14 New directions for special schools and support centres

14.1 Developing centres of excellence (Output 3)

Table 14-1: Output 3 by authority

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Output 3, developing support centres which serve as a centre of excellence, was a focus of eight authorities, across five jurisdictions. It was also allocated the second highest amount of total funding ($45.0 million or 15%) after leadership activities, the bulk of which occurred in larger jurisdictions.

In Western Australia the DoE directed almost two-thirds of their funding to this output (61.7%) concentrating investment in the development of support centres. The New South Wales government sector also invested a sizable proportion of their funding to developing support centres (23.3%). Those education authorities that implemented activities under Output 3 typically invested a reasonable proportion of funding to Output 3, which reflects the considerable outlay required for set up and operation of support centres.

14.2 Approaches and activities

Eight of the 24 authorities and associations developed centres of expertise in a variety of forms. In one instance this was not a physical site but a virtual support centre. Five of the support centres were initiatives of the government sector, two Catholic and one independent. The centres were diverse in their origins and focus: some were developed as innovative extensions of an existing government or non-government organisation, others were newly created in response to the opportunity created by the MSSD initiative.

Seven of the eight Output 3 initiatives were the subject of case studies. The most common approach was providing expert support from specialists through expanded and more effective partnerships and networks across a range of schools and covering a range of disabilities, but with differences in emphasis according to local needs. Two of the case studies concern specific areas of disability.

For New South Wales Catholic schools support centres assumed varying structures and roles across the Diocese. In some instances, specific purpose facilities were established and, in other settings, augmentation of existing roles occurred. For example, in the early phase of the project,
the Eileen O’Connor Centre in the Sydney Diocese supported students with diverse learning needs through a mix of onsite, online and blended learning using a range of technology facilities. In other instances, Catholic Special Schools established projects that facilitated sharing knowledge, skills and understanding and the development of collaborative partnerships with the Diocese and regular schools, and of particular value, supporting and strengthening rural networks. Services and programmes also included a school-based advisory service, curriculum support in the use of tablets, a repository of curated and created teacher resources and topical newsletters for teachers and parents.

14.2.1 New partnerships

For some authorities new and innovative arrangements were devised to draw more effectively on the expertise of existing organisations.

As a core component of Every Student Every School, New South Wales DEC aimed to provide support and guidance to learning and support teams by drawing on the skills and knowledge of 106 government special schools and positioning them as centres of expertise. The rationale for the approach was that special schools had deep knowledge and understanding of students with additional learning and support needs. The approach included professional learning, support for teachers and support staff, and growing the capacity of schools by increasing the capabilities of each school’s learning and support team. DEC regional officers supported the special schools to develop and implement the networks and projects.

Special schools were also involved in professional development activities, which included forming peer mentor groups. These supported the schools to develop the networks and find academic partners. An example of these activities was two professional learning programmes for a network of schools in western Sydney conducted on how to case manage students with anxiety disorder. While a special school was responsible for the development and implementation of the project, it was strategic in drawing expertise from universities, and also in the manner in which it empowered learning and support teams in the use of case management interventions (Case Study 3).

Another approach to partnerships involved the Victorian government sector with a not-for-profit support group whose membership is made up of the parents of students with Down syndrome, Down Syndrome Victoria (DSV) to support the integration of students with Down syndrome into the regular school setting. The DSV consultants supported face-to-face discussions involving the child, teachers and parents focused particularly on helping teachers to...
set achievable goals for each student, and providing guidance on monitoring progress. The professional expertise of the consultants was a key element, particularly their depth of understanding of the issues, continuous improvement informed by research on best practices, and their commitment to student success in the regular classroom. From their perspective, a notable measure of success was the quality of the relationship between the student, teacher and aide (Case Study 10).

In South Australia, LitConSpecial, a tool to enable teachers to map student development, was devised by a special education centre and trialled with the support of partner schools. To support teachers implementing LitCon Special, the Gordon Education Centre developed a manual covering the continuum, each domain and its elements, negotiated education plans and SMARTAR goals. It included a comprehensive list of references and internet resources.

By giving teachers a detailed understanding of each student’s literacy profile and the resources and learning strategies that align with this profile, LitCon Special enabled them to set targets and focus curriculum delivery according to each student’s learning needs. Being online, LitCon Special allowed for the sharing of teaching and learning strategies between classes and schools (Case Study 23).

14.2.2 Expanding networks

Some authorities gave particular attention to the development of new networks between schools, especially in regional areas, with a view to expanding capacity and making the best use of special school expertise. For example, a regional Special Education Network Centre in Western Australia was part of a long-term plan for the development of support centres of expertise for schools, staff and community. The Centre provided training for teachers and assistants, programmes tailored to the needs of individual students, and a range of life-skills and self-care activities (Case Study 28).

In New South Wales four new networked specialist centres were established by DEC (Broken Hill, Wagga Wagga, Tamworth and Dubbo) to provide interdisciplinary services with three key functions providing:

- indirect services and support via provision of information, links to resources and professional learning activity
- direct services as required for schools as a whole, individual teachers and/or individual students
- a referral pathway to allied health professionals or other health services through links with New South Wales Health and other agencies

“It gives us a consistent language when we are discussing students and their learning... LitCon puts data about each student at our fingertips: the conversation with parents are much more powerful as a result...it just makes me a better teacher.”
14.2.3 Targeted disabilities

Two of the case studies provide examples of initiatives related to specific disabilities. In Victoria, the Down Syndrome Inclusion Support Service programme provided appropriate pedagogy and curriculum for students with Down syndrome beginning school to ensure a best start approach. To qualify for this support through the MSSD initiative schools had to be registered with Down Syndrome Victoria (DSV) for the students at the school to receive the service. The service included nine hours of consultant visits annually through day visits of three hours each term, email and telephone support, a periodic journal, access to a specialised library, and access to professional development training programmes (Case study 10).

A strategic partnership between parents of students with ASD and specialists from Griffith University and key regional staff from Queensland DET led to the formation of the Far North Queensland Autism Centre of Expertise (FNQ ACE). The focus of the FNQ ACE as a centre of expertise was to build the capacity of school staff to maximise learning opportunities for students with ASD that are enrolled in state schools in the region. The FNQ ACE engaged with schools at three levels of service delivery: intensive management of complex cases; targeted support; and whole school planning on a region-wide basis (Case Study 17).
15  Inclusive learning technologies

15.1  Providing assistive technology and training (Outputs 1 and 2)

Table 15-1: Output 1 and 2 by authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTPUT</th>
<th>SECTOR</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>ACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Catholic</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Government</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eleven education authorities across seven jurisdictions invested a total of $10.2 million in Output 1 and thirteen authorities across seven jurisdictions invested $11.2 million in Output 2. Of the total MSSD funds only 7.2 percent was allocated to activities under these two outputs combined, but for some of the smaller jurisdictions the investment was a large proportion of their total funding such as for Tasmania (17.4%) and the Northern Territory (16.2%).

Most of the authorities that selected activities for Outputs 1 and 2 implemented them as a combined strategy (nine authorities), with just two authorities implementing Output 1 alone, and four authorities implementing Output 2 alone. Almost half purchased new technologies for students with disability in the classroom, with slightly more than half introducing training in the use of the hardware and related software to enhance student learning. Some authorities focused on enhancing learning for children with specific disabilities such as visual or hearing impairment in partnership with specialist services and facilities.

15.1.1  Approaches and activities

Most authorities implementing Output 1 provided iPads/tablets and related software for students with disability while some, such as South Australian DECD and Victoria DET, worked in partnership with specialist services to assess the individual needs of students with vision or hearing impairment using more specialised technology in the classroom.

The provision of iPads/tablets and related software was the main focus for eight of the authorities. In Western Australia the CEO noted what was a common theme: iPads became ‘a communication tool for better curriculum engagement and participation where once they were perhaps too often observers’. For students with disability this meant increased ability to follow classroom routines, greater independence, and better capacity to express needs and to make choices related to their learning. Output 1 was typically rated high by authorities in terms of value for money and level of success.
The experience of the three sectors in Tasmania reflected the general pattern of activity as well as the diversity of sector contexts across other states and territories. All three sectors engaged in activities on assistive technology. DoE and CEO provided iPads and other compatible devices and software as well as training, while IST focused on providing training to strengthen teacher capacity and improve the use of existing technology available.

In the initial phase of the MSSD initiative Tasmania DoE supplied students diagnosed with severe disabilities with iPads and supporting software such as interactive whiteboards, iPad compatible braille display devices and compatible software portable magnification devices. Funding was also provided for the purchase of appropriate applications, with priority given to students requiring augmented communication support, students with autism spectrum disorders, students with global development delay, and motor coordination difficulties. Additional iPads were allocated to students with hearing impairment, vision impairment and those newly enrolled at one of the four special schools. DoE also developed a network of IT leaders to support staff from mainstream primary and secondary schools in the use of the technology.

Similarly, the focus for Tasmanian CEO was initially on providing iPads to individual students with disability to encourage communication with teachers and peers and to allow enhanced access to learning in mainstream classrooms. However, by the end of 2013 the rollout broadened to a bigger cohort of students to help mainstream groups, including students with learning needs. CEO also provided personalised training through a mixture of regional professional learning opportunities, one-on-one support, and whole of school instruction to build skills in using the devices and software to more easily access the curriculum (Case Study 32).

Independent Schools Tasmania (IST) identified three schools with significant need for support in the area of assistive technology, involving more than 65 students with special needs. IST engaged a project officer to train and support the 18 teaching staff in the three schools, with a combined professional learning session each term supplemented with two school-specific sessions delivered each term. While the training was targeted at classroom teachers, parents were also encouraged to participate in some sessions. In addition to targeting selected schools for training, IST provided support in the form of in-class modelling of best practice, participation in cross-sector network sessions and conference attendance. Specific assistive software applications and programme resources were provided as required with up to $5,000 per school allocated for this purpose. Support from the MSSD initiative was also directed towards developing a strong network to sustain skills in assistive technology.

In the case of the ACT Archdiocese all schools were provided with assistive technologies, mostly iPads and site licenses for software, complemented by a closely integrated series of training activities delivered by central services. The strategy in ACT was to use the iPads and TextHelp initially as stand-alone tools to enable students with disability to use and improve their literacy skills. The text to speech features of both these assistive technologies allowed students to hear auditory prompts as they engaged with text, thus giving them a sense of accomplishment as
they completed assignments and tasks, often with reduced reliance on a teacher or learning support assistant.

The strategy of the Northern Territory DoE was driven by a competitive grants system for assistive technologies, such as interactive whiteboards, iPads, apps and specific software (of up to $10,000 each), combined with facilitated professional learning. In addition, a significant related project concerned the use of assistive technology help in the classroom for students with hearing impairment. Having met a set of eligibility criteria, including a school action plan for assistive technology, six schools were provided with amplification systems to augment curriculum engagement for primary Indigenous students with conductive hearing loss (Case study 35).

To supplement the individual school grants providing assistive technology, all government schools in the Northern Territory were provided with a subscription to the Spectronics online service. Spectronics is an Australian company specialising in inclusive learning technologies that provides access to point-in-time professional learning, resources and forums, for both teachers and families of students with disability. Spectronics ran workshops for Northern Territory schools, on the diverse needs of students using iPads and other technologies in the classroom. The DoE approach reached approximately 60 percent of schools across the Territory (Case Study 33).

15.1.2 Stand-alone training strategies

Four authorities focused solely on training. Three were from the independent schools sector (Queensland, Tasmania and Northern Territory) as their role and capacity was generally more limited to providing support in the form of professional development. The strategy for Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) was to develop case studies focused on specific assistive technologies teachers could use to support students with disability in their classroom and shared these on the ISQ website. ISQ also facilitated six action research projects on using assistive technology to raise literacy and numeracy outcomes for students with disability, based on the use of iPads, Read and Write Gold, Texthelp and Dragon Naturally Speaking. Professional learning was provided for project participants, and a train the trainer system was implemented at school level to assist with the dissemination of IT knowledge and skills gained through the workshops.

15.1.3 Partnerships with specialist centres

For some authorities partnering with specialist centres of expertise enabled them to get targeted assistance with assistive technology for students with vision or hearing impairment. In
South Australia DECD worked with the South Australian School for Vision Impairment (SASVI) which developed a mechanism to assess the individual needs of students with vision impairment and ensure the most appropriate assistive technology and training was made available.

In Victoria the partnership with DET’s Statewide Vision Resource Centre (SVRC), included devices and software provided to support blind and vision-impaired students. Assistive technology items included screen reading and magnification software, BrailleNote computers and Braille Writers, iPads and electronic dictionaries and thesauruses. Training was provided to teachers from schools working with students who had received the assistive technology.

Also in Victoria, a pilot programme overseen by the Victorian Deaf Education Institute (VDEI) introduced real time captioning in eight Victorian government schools. Real time captioning was of greatest benefit to senior students where a teacher-centred approach was the primary mode of learning. In the second stage of development school personnel implemented speech-to-text captioning technology with the support of a trainer appointed to manage devices and software. An example of this strategy, highlighted in Case Study 13, included the following elements:

- a project manager based at the school
- professional development training and follow-up support to staff
- infrastructure to underpin the captioning process
- effective information flows to all stakeholders
- monitoring and evaluating the impact on student learning.

New South Wales DEC also engaged a specialist provider to develop and trial real time captioning for students (under Output 4), in collaboration with the Australian Hearing Hub at Macquarie University to develop two resources: an application for mobile devices to measure the acoustics in classrooms; and an online module for teachers that provided information and advice on how to improve the acoustics in the classroom. This became available to all DEC schools, hosted online through Macquarie University’s learning centre.

For the Queensland DET the main focus was initially on targeted professional development for teachers — delivered jointly by Apple Australia, Spectronics, and DET specialists — to support students with disability to access the Australian Curriculum. The project developed a support network of 20 Regional Teachers (Assistive Technology) in 14 centres across the state training more than 10,000 staff via a wide range of activities including: web conferences, online resources, training in the use of iPads, and workshops for teacher aides supporting the attainment of a Certificate of Digital Practice.
PART C: AUTHORITY ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Part C provides a summary of the activities and achievements of each of the 24 education authorities and associations over the three years of the MSSD initiative including their:

- implementation strategies
- approaches to selected outputs
- performance against benchmarks.

The authority reports also provide a summary of the emerging outcomes from the MSSD activities, the lessons learned in each case, and the likely sustainable effects of the initiative in the jurisdiction.
16  New South Wales

16.1  New South Wales Government

The New South Wales Department of Education and Communities (DEC) implemented the MSSD initiative through its Disability, Learning and Support Directorate and local educational services. The initiative was coordinated either by reorienting roles to focus solely on specific activity, or by absorbing MSSD activity as part of ongoing responsibilities. Additionally, some temporary positions were established at peak periods to implement and support specific projects and activities at statewide and/or regional and local levels.

With approximately 755,000 students enrolled across 2,200 public schools, the MSSD initiative focused on improving the capabilities of more than 60,000 teachers, non-teaching staff and school leaders to better meet the learning needs of students with disability.

A total of $72,081,723 in MSSD funds was allocated to support DEC schools covering six outputs, with 23 percent supporting the development of centres of expertise, over 26 percent on providing teachers with skills training in special education, and 20 percent on learning to modify lesson plans to suit the needs of students with disability.

16.1.1  Implementation strategy

DEC aligned the MSSD initiative with its own policy reform initiative, Every Student, Every School. This policy context is central to understanding how the MSSD initiative unfolded in New South Wales Government schools in that, while DEC has reported against a number of MSSD outputs (six outputs in both 2012-13 and 2014), the Every Student, Every School policy was the key driver of activity with the MSSD outputs contributing to the programme of reform at varying levels. As such, the MSSD initiative supported implementation of a range of activities to establish a learning and support framework in all public schools across New South Wales.

16.1.2  Approaches to the outputs

Developing support centres (Output 3)

New South Wales special schools developed their own project or in collaboration with other special schools to deliver a product or service supporting the learning needs of students across a range of settings. These included professional learning programmes for teachers to address specific areas of need, computer applications, brochures, kits and reference materials.

In parallel with this development, there was a broader restructure of the public school system in New South Wales providing special schools with the opportunity to work more collaboratively with mainstream settings. The public school system also experienced a significant transformation in which ten geographic regions were replaced by 65 principal locality networks reflecting local relationships. Separately, school networks or ‘communities of schools’ are also
being encouraged at the discretion of schools. These school networks may be more aligned with professional practice or priorities, for example, schools combining or sharing resources to focus on a specific learning area that may be on a geographic basis or a specific interest basis regardless of location.

As a result of the restructuring, the involvement of special schools with regular settings has enhanced their standing within these networks. Rather than being peripheral to the operational side of the networks — supporting local professional learning programmes, curriculum provision and student support — this strategy has potential for special schools to be seen as a valuable local resource to assist and guide colleagues in regular settings to support learning for students with disability.

Based on the successful implementation of Output 3 and the positive response in regular settings to an enhanced role for special schools, DEC built on existing good practice and expanded project activity into other areas in 2014. The strategy has a particular focus on project activity to support students with complex needs in regional and remote settings. Four new networked specialist centres were established in Broken Hill, Wagga Wagga, Tamworth and Dubbo to provide interdisciplinary services with three key functions:

- indirect services and support via provision of information, links to resources and professional learning activity
- direct services as required for schools as a whole, individual teachers and/or individual students
- a referral pathway to allied health professionals or other health services through links with New South Wales Health and other agencies.

Each centre was developed locally, informed by analysis of a range of data and designed to respond to local needs and priorities. The networked specialist centres are evolving to provide DEC expertise and links with the surrounding schools with government and non-government specialist health and wellbeing services.

**Coordinating with health/allied health professionals (Output 4)**

Output 4 involved a small number of projects that have drawn directly on the expertise of allied health professionals or that support schools to work more effectively with other professionals. For example, speech pathologists from The Children’s Hospital at Westmead and the NSW Centre for Effective Reading have worked with two other highly qualified speech pathologists to develop and refine a professional learning course for teachers.

Additional resources developed collaboratively by speech pathologists, psychologists and neuropsychologists were added to the NSW Centre for Effective Reading website in Term 1, 2014. These resources were enhanced by a further two projects: a series of seven professional learning modules for classroom teachers to skill teachers in supporting students with language learning needs in the area of vocabulary development; and professional learning and support materials to address anxiety in students with complex reading difficulties.
DEC also engaged a specialist provider to develop and trial real time captioning for students who are deaf or hearing impaired in New South Wales public schools and collaborated with the Australian Hearing Hub at Macquarie University to develop two resources: an application for mobile devices to measure the acoustics in classrooms; and an online module for teachers that provides information and advice on how to improve the acoustics in the classroom which is now available to all Department schools and is hosted online through Macquarie University’s learning centre. The two resources are linked and both will also be accessible via the existing OnlineTraining Ltd course focused on supporting students with a hearing loss available to all teachers in all New South Wales government schools.

**Building skills in special education (Output 5)**

An ongoing and highly successful component of the Every Student, Every School initiative provides opportunities for teachers to engage in a programme of professional learning in one or more of six core modules in special education developed in association with OnlineTraining Ltd (OLT) and will ensure that all schools have the knowledge base, skills, tools and other resources to make informed and meaningful adjustments for students.

A scholarship programme was initially offered during 2012-13 and extended in 2014 to enable a total of 273 teachers in New South Wales to gain a postgraduate qualification in special education. Further scholarships will be offered in 2015.

**Training in Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6)**

In addition to being embedded within all aspects of the Every Student, Every School initiative, DEC provided standalone training, resources and support on understanding obligations under the DDA and DSE 2005.

The modules developed by the University of Canberra provided a useful baseline of knowledge on which schools have built. More than 42,000 teachers across more than 900 schools used the modules since the beginning of Term 3, 2013. DEC reported that the material was generally well-received and notes that:

> .... in some schools whole staff teams have undertaken lessons while in other schools the lessons have been completed by smaller numbers and by some sole individuals. A number of schools are making the lessons available on a planned basis for their new or recently qualified teachers.

**Supporting school leadership to build teacher capability (Output 7)**

The MSSD initiative provided DEC with the opportunity to support school principals and leadership teams to strengthen teachers’ ability to assist students with disability via an upgrade and further development of online resources. This process was completed during the first two years of the initiative. It included development of an improved website and enhancing specialist information for schools about disability and related health conditions and the implications that such conditions had for learning.
Supporting teachers assess learning and adapt curriculum (Output 8)

During 2014, activity related to this output centred on further development, refinement and implementation of an online assessment tool for teachers known as the Personalised Learning and Support Signposting Tool (PLASST). The PLASST is now complete and accessible to all New South Wales government schools. DEC is currently providing each school information to support their engagement with and use of the PLASST, as a tool that may be used by teachers to support or inform four distinct areas of activity: collaboration, consultation and negotiation; assessment; responding to identified; and monitoring and evaluation adjustment and interventions. It is not intended as a tool to produce personal learning plans, but is expected to assist with personalising learning and support for some students. The PLASST student profile report is also expected to assist teachers with collaboration and planning with other teachers in conjunction with the school’s Learning and Support Team. It may also inform planning for teachers’ professional learning.

In addition to its primary purpose of assisting teachers in understanding and responding to the needs of their students with additional learning needs, the PLASST will also support schools’ participation in the implementation of the NCCD process, mandatory for all schools from 2015 onwards.

Supporting teachers to modify lesson plans (Output 9)

Establishing a specialist teacher presence in every regular public school is a key component of the Every Student, Every School strategy. The focus of the role of the Learning and Support Teacher is to strengthen the capacity of each school’s learning and support team to plan for and respond to the learning needs of students with disability, and support classroom teachers in making appropriate adjustments.

The significant restructuring of specialist support occurred in parallel with extensive professional development for principals, teachers and non-teaching staff regarding DSE 2005 accountabilities combined with enhancing specialised knowledge and skills via extensive participation in the online learning modules.

Supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)

DEC is highly cognisant of the links between improving understanding of obligations related to the legislation and standards (Output 6) and what will be required of schools in terms of providing evidence of adjustments that have been made through the NCCD for students with disability (Output 13). The emphasis of action under Output 13, supporting schools with the implementation of the NCCD, therefore focused on establishing a range of supportive strategies and actions including:

- tailored professional learning materials and guidance for schools
- a draft document to support school staff decision making about adjustments
- additional local professional learning and support for teachers and educational leaders
additional funding to support each schools participating in the NCCD for the first time.

DEC also added new functions within its electronic enrolment and registration application to accommodate the collection of data for the NCCD; provided a central Help Desk support available to schools; and a DEC intranet site containing information and links for the NCCD.

### 16.1.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

Table 16-1: NSW Government MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>80-120</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>300-500</td>
<td>545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Schools</td>
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<td>700-1,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>4,000-6,000</td>
<td>14,330</td>
<td>10,000-11,000</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
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<td>Teachers</td>
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<td>Schools</td>
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<td>1,500-2,000</td>
<td>1,711</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DEC met or exceeded benchmarks in all areas with performance against the benchmarks for Outputs 5, 7, 8, and 9, significantly higher.

### 16.1.4 Overall impact of the MSSD initiative

**Summary of outcomes**

**System wide reform**

While MSSD and the DEC Every Student, Every School initiative were undoubtedly complementary to the objectives of a broader reform agenda, the fact that change occurred in a relatively short timeframe across a number of fronts, in a large and complex school system, is cause for acknowledging success in its own right.

The broader reforms of increasing principal authority for local school decision-making and associated accountability included the implementation of the national curriculum, the Local Schools, Local Decisions, Learning Management and Business Reform (LMBR), and the implementation of the new Resource Allocation Model (RAM).

The various components of Every Student, Every School, which came together as a learning and support framework, were considered to be ‘enablers’ to facilitate and guide school decision-making about student learning and support through a strong focus on professional learning and support for teachers. Collectively, they enabled schools to implement personalised learning and support for students. Ultimately, the reforms are expected to enhance the capacity of individual schools to achieve personalised learning and support for students with disability.
Over 1,900 Learning and Support Teachers were deployed across all government schools as the key focus of Output 9. Working through the guidance and direction of each school’s Learning and Support Team, the Learning and Support Teachers supported classroom teachers in planning and implementing teaching programmes and making personalised adjustments for students with disability.

*Role of special schools*

The reorganisation of the public school system in New South Wales and the formation of principal networks provided fertile ground for special schools to develop and demonstrate the extent of local level expertise to support teachers and principals in their efforts to support and enhance learning for students with disability. The special schools developed products and services that are of value to regular settings have become agents for supporting positive culture and practices in these settings.

*Professional learning opportunities*

The uptake of online professional learning over the period of the MSSD initiative was impressive, with consistently high feedback from participants about the quality and appropriateness of the training they have received, both immediately after completion and again, six months after the course concluded.

As a result of the very high level of uptake of the DSE 2005 eLearning modules DEC undertook a consultation process in 2014 with a range of stakeholders to inform the development of additional materials to complement and support the use of the modules related to the DSE 2005. These support materials will be trialled in schools in Semester 1, 2015 prior to finalising the materials for release to all schools.

As a result of the scholarship programme, DEC facilitated discussion with a number of universities about current and future undergraduate and graduate studies in special education. The scholarships offset fees but do not prescribe the course or subjects to be studied. The choices students are making in terms of their studies is providing universities with a realistic sense of contemporary needs in relation to special education which, in turn, has also informed discussion with DEC about revision of special education courses.

*Personalised Learning and Support Signposting Tool (PLASST)*

DEC was overwhelmed by the positive response to PLASST based on the trial process completed in 2013. DEC initially aimed to gather data on approximately 6,000 students in order to further develop the tool, but ultimately collected data on more than 24,000 students by over 6,000 teachers.

DEC sees the PLASST student profile report as being pivotal in the collaborative process whereby teachers and parents plan for individual student’s learning with the emphasis on a structured approach to interactions between teachers, parents, and, where relevant, the students themselves, allied health professionals and other relevant stakeholders.
Lessons learned

Overall, capability building was the major impact of the MSSD initiative in New South Wales government schools and this remains as continuing focus of the Every Student, Every School strategy. From a systemic perspective such capability building is making an important contribution within the context of a number of major, overarching reforms underway, in particular, increased local school authority and principal responsibility for decision making through Local Schools, Local Decisions and the RAM combined with the implications for schools of the NDIS.

The MSSD initiative made a highly valuable contribution to seeding action in some areas and accelerating and expanding ongoing activity in others. Professional learning and support for teachers is a priority to strengthen their understandings and responses to students with disability and their parents and carers. Professional learning broadly, with online learning as one proven successful method for this, and the PLASST, are viewed by DEC representatives as key vehicles for maintaining momentum in every New South Wales government school.

Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative

DEC is seeking to continue to build on the significant momentum that has been fostered by the MSSD initiative to reengage educators, particularly principals and teachers, in conversations about why the current reforms, including Every Student, Every School, are so important for responding to diversity.

DEC is also seeking to expand the arrangements for specialist centres of expertise (Output 3) to incorporate a further 10 or 11 specialist centres across New South Wales in 2015. A further small-scale project relates to the review and update of the NSW Centre for the Effective Reading website that is expected to be re-launched in Term 2, 2015.

In addition to the expansion of networked specialist centres into regional and remote areas, DEC reports that senior staff working in the field supporting schools, and representatives of key principal groups, plan to extend the special schools as centres of expertise initiative in 2015, to enable special schools to further develop projects that strengthen the capacity of schools to meet the needs of students with disability.

The professional learning course developed by speech pathologists on collaborative intervention for significant reading and language difficulties (Output 4) is being trialled with schools in Term 1, 2015 with a view to enabling speech pathologists based at the NSW Centre for Effective Reading to work with schools in rural and remote areas from Term 2, 2015 onwards.

Although some of the OLT online modules (Output 5) were introduced prior to the MSSD initiative, the rate of participation accelerated during the timeframe of the initiative as well as expanding into new areas of learning for teaching and non-teaching personnel. There is a strong commitment to maintaining the quality assurance arrangements that have sustained the quality of professional learning since its inception. DEC is also confident that the additional lessons that
have been produced by the University of Canberra (Output 6), combined with other support material developed to support engagement with the NCCD and evidences of personalised learning and support, will also contribute to further strengthening understanding in schools regarding ‘must do’ and ‘why’.

With activity informed by a Learning and Support Framework, including a strengthened focus of roles for a Learning and Support Team within each school along with that of the Learning and Support Teacher, a cultural change has occurred in New South Wales government schools reflected in operational changes. A significant transformation of the school system has occurred. While some schools have progressed along this journey further than others, feedback via consultations, seminars and other opportunities to observe schools in action leaves no doubt that the transformation may be characterised in terms of ‘less’ and ‘more’. That is, less evidence of a deficit approach that was the basis of the roles of former Support Teacher Learning Assistance (STLA) teachers and more emphasis on supporting class teachers in planning for and implementing lessons that meet the learning needs of all students in the class.

DEC officials note that a positive outcome of an increased presence of specialist learning and resources directly in every school is evident in the focus on learning and support. There was also an observed decline in the level of correspondence related to concerns about schools failing to meet the needs of students with disability in some way.

In many respects, the potential for PLASST to inform and guide planning for learning is only beginning to become apparent. With further development of the PLASST to occur post feedback from teachers and principals during 2015, it will be some time in the future before the tool becomes embedded in schools and utilised to its full potential. DEC plans to continue to invest in its development and refinement and also provide advice and guidance to schools in its usage. As such, PLASST will become a long-standing and tangible legacy of the investment in tools and resources as a result of the MSSD initiative.

The key message that DEC is promoting centres on evidence of personalised learning and support being achieved. This approach is viewed to be consistent with the DSE 2005 and also aligned with the evidence requirements for the NCCD. DEC expects that the process to personalise learning and support will be consistent across settings but the nature of evidence for each element will look different in each school according to individual student needs in their local context.

**Sustaining momentum**

The transformation of the New South Wales government school system is ongoing and cannot solely be attributed to the structural reform of placing a specialist teacher in each setting. Aside from the structural support achieved through the leadership of principals and the guidance of the Learning and Support Team within the school, there are a number of other elements to the Every Student, Every School initiative that contributed to this process that are equally important outcomes of the MSSD initiative.
From the perspective of key personnel within DEC, ‘business as usual’ may be an accurate characterisation of many of these elements. MSSD has been central to their establishment in the first place or in accelerating their impact, but there remains an ongoing role to sustain changing practices. That is, while some action undertaken as part of the initiative is completed, such as the restructuring of the workforce, other elements which were established or that accelerated their application via MSSD resources are expected to continue beyond the lifespan of the initiative.

16.2 New South Wales Catholic

The Catholic Education Commission (CEC) was responsible for the allocation of MSSD funds. Authority over operational activity rested with the respective education authorities that constitute Catholic education in New South Wales, including the 11 Catholic Diocese and the Congregational schools. There are approximately 250,000 students enrolled across 580 Catholic schools in New South Wales, with 19,000 teachers, 580 school leaders, and 6,300 non-teaching staff.

A total of $17,131,412 was allocated to support MSSD activities in NSW Catholic schools, covering 11 outputs in the initial phase and three outputs in the extension phase. The largest proportion of the funding was allocated to training school staff in special education (12%), training in Disability Standards of Education 2005 (15%), and training on making adjustments in the curriculum to suit the needs of students with disability (18%).

16.2.1 Implementation strategy

During the first phase of the MSSD, the CEC adopted a fairly open-ended approach to implementing the initiative. Each Diocese consulted widely with schools and other stakeholders and completed scans of need in order to design and establish projects which resulted in a varied approach to implementation with over 50 projects of varying size and scope across most of the 11 MSSD outputs.

For the most part, Catholic education authorities absorbed the additional workload to manage the implementation of the MSSD initiative within existing staffing structures although, in the first phase of the initiative additional personnel were employed, to fulfil specific operational roles related to activity in areas such as allied health projects and use of assistive technologies.

For the MSSD extension phase the CEC focused solely on three MSSD outputs: 6, 8, and 13. Distinguishing features of the CEC strategy in the extension phase included the development and use of ‘in-house’ tools and resources to complement and augment resources developed by other entities, and ongoing activity across the majority of the MSSD outputs albeit, in many cases, on a smaller scale than in 2012-2013.
16.2.2 Approaches to the outputs

Providing assistive technology (Output 1) and providing assistive technology training (Output 2)

With the support of Diocese staff, specialist service providers and allied health professionals, teachers learned how to evaluate devices, apps and programmes to more appropriately meet student need. In some instances, this led to purchases of specific items, suited only to the needs of an individual student, while in many other instances, schools purchased generic devices such as tablets.

Using the principles of Universal Design for learning — encompassing goal setting, teaching strategies, resources and assessment processes — assistive technologies and applications were identified on an ‘as needs basis’ to ensure that all students will be engaged in learning with the use of assistive technologies driven by functional learning needs, not the disability.

Developing support centres (Output 3)

Across the Diocese, support centres assumed varying structures and roles. In some instances, specific purpose facilities were established and, in other settings, augmentation of existing roles occurred. For example, in the early phase of the project, the Eileen O’Connor Centre in the Sydney Diocese supported students with diverse learning needs through a mix of onsite, online and blended learning using a range of technology facilities. In other instances, Catholic Special Schools established projects that facilitated sharing knowledge, skills and understanding and the development of collaborative partnerships with the Diocese and regular schools, and of particular value, supporting and strengthening rural networks. Services and programmes also included a school-based advisory service, curriculum support in the use of tablets, a repository of curated and created teacher resources and topical newsletters for teachers and parents.

Coordinating with health/allied health professionals (Output 4)

One of the consistent features across the planning and project activity centred on working with allied health professionals in less traditional ways. In some areas, therapists provided direct classroom collaboration with staff in enhancing accessible learning for students with disability. Targeted support included literacy, handwriting, speaking and writing using complex sentences, expressive vocabulary, receptive language, phonological awareness, spelling, reading comprehension and body awareness and coordination.

Collaborating with allied health professionals not only provided teachers with skills and knowledge related to specific aspects of learning, but also enabled better monitoring of student plans and identification of needs, interpretation of assessment results and strategies for follow-up interventions.

Building skills in special education (Output 5)

A range of professional learning programmes for teachers was established across all Dioceses. Two Dioceses obtained licences to enable delivery of modules developed by OnlineTraining Ltd
(OLT), and training in specific methodologies to make adjustments and plan for learning for students with disability. Certified courses (at postgraduate level) included an Inclusion and Student Wellbeing course, and related courses concerned with inclusive educational practice; teaching students with cognitive delay and anxiety disorder; curriculum differentiation; and understanding mental health care plans; as well as mentoring and other programmes developed in collaboration with universities.

For pre-service teachers, Dioceses provided opportunities to undertake placements in school settings to learn and experience strategies to support learning for students with disability.

Additionally, at both the level of the individual Diocese and through a statewide exercise, a number of showcase activities were held within the sector to enable a broader range of stakeholders to be informed of and learn from MSSD activity. These events have been captured in publications and video/DVD.

Training in Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6)

CEC established a multi-faceted approach involving almost all schools in DSE 2005 training. Diocesan-based education officers used the DSE 2005 eLearning course developed by the University of Canberra as a foundation for building understanding of the DSE 2005 and the requirements for the NCCD.

The officers also used the CEC’s online eLearning module Disability Plans (IPs) e-Learning for targeted professional learning on developing quality personalised planning for students with disability. This professional learning strategy was regarded as central to changing policy and practice in schools and embedding effective and sustainable practices into the future.

Supporting school leadership to build teacher capability (Output 7)

Strategies employed to support school principals and leadership teams over the life of the MSSD initiative, included numerous professional learning courses and web sites covering relevant policy frameworks, school culture, pedagogy and teacher attitudes, relationship-building, community resources and partnerships. These were strongly focused on evidence-based practice, strategic planning and links with school improvement processes.

Some Dioceses also took up Graduate Certificates in Inclusion and Wellbeing to encourage the use of evidence in making sound decisions around the inclusion and wellbeing of students with further resources developed, such as fact sheets, ‘How-To’ guides, video tutorials and info-lines. Principals and school leadership teams were supported to strengthen teachers’ ability to adjust for the needs of students with disability.

Supporting teachers assess learning and adapt curriculum (Output 8)

As a result of the CEC’s implementation plans for Outputs 6 and 13, the CEC positioned Output 8, as the bridge to link with other activity. The planning arrangements for activity related to Output 8 were sufficiently flexible to enable the Dioceses and other authorities to conduct a
range of professional learning programmes and other projects to support schools in enacting their obligations under the legislation.

As Output 6 provided an emphasis on understanding the obligations under the DSE 2005, activity under Output 8 focused on how these obligations could be achieved through collaborative planning and differentiation. The Diocese put a range of strategies in place to implement Output 8 within specific schools, including:

- support for monitoring learning progress for targeted students at regular intervals to determine the effectiveness of intervention and inform future planning
- professional learning for special education teachers focusing on working with classroom teachers on the Individual Plan (IP) online tool
- making the necessary adjustments in class for students with particular needs
- support for collaborative planning meetings for teachers of students with disability, where required.

School initiated activities included professional learning experiences designed by a school leadership team and supported by Diocesan education officers for school staff focused on providing appropriate individual plans for students with disability. This included identified areas for improvement, specific learning goals, descriptions of targeted intervention programmes, and use of assistive technology. These experiences aimed at developing teacher skills to implement interventions within their classroom as opposed to reliance on outside interventions.

To facilitate these Diocese and school initiated professional learning programmes, each Diocese seconded an education officer with relevant skills to support teachers. Additionally, resources were developed and made available through intranet web pages for school staff to access information on the most appropriate adjustments, resources and services to support students with disability and diverse learning needs.

**Supporting collaborative teaching practices (Output 10)**

CEC reported that projects implemented in the first phase of the MSSD initiative provided the opportunity for schools to reflect on role descriptions and protocols around collaborative teaching models that suit their context. With these arrangements clarified, teachers worked in teams to develop collaborative approaches to meet the requirements of the DDA, including a range of parent participation projects to inform them about their student’s personalised planning and support. Additionally, collaborative planning between primary and secondary schools and within secondary schools included personalised planning, collaborative goal setting and evaluative tools for students with disability.

**Engaging paraprofessionals (Output 11)**

Learning Support Officers/Teacher Assistants were extensively involved in collaborative mentor programmes and school and Diocesan professional learning programmes (including online learning programmes) throughout the MSSD initiative. They also completed the Certificate III
course delivered through self-paced learning using face-to-face sessions and ongoing online training.

**Supporting student transitions (Output 12)**

Where Dioceses and other authorities established projects to support transitions for students with disability, schools were able to tailor activity to suit the specific needs of their community and the targeted transition period, be it entry to school, transition between classes and/or campus or transition from school to post school programmes.

Projects related to transitions for senior students concentrated on processes required from Year 9 until the completion of school with guidelines and protocols being established with providers of post school services and training partners. This initiative enabled the development of resources for students with complex physical, emotional, social and cognitive support needs, and online resources were also produced with local information about post-school options and services for students with disability.

In rural areas portable technology enabled schools to assist students at key transition points, such as school entry, movement between classes, transfer to a new environment and to post school services and/or workforce. Moreover, cross-sector vocational networks were established to ensure collaboration between school staff and community-based Disability Liaison Officers in the support of students and their families resulting in more informed access pathways leading to enrolments in tertiary institutions.

**Supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)**

CEC viewed the implementation of the NCCD as an opportunity to quality assure and embed existing personalised planning processes and to provide data that will be analysed and aggregated by the CEC for reporting purposes. Schools were provided with:

- access to an online planning tool for personalising learning developed and refined by the CEC over a number of years
- opportunities for moderation across sites to ensure consistency in interpretations and planning outputs, including personalised adjustments and appropriate interventions for individual students.

The online planning tool assists teachers to create effective personalised plans for students with disability and through this process assist staff in implementing requirements and obligations under the DDA and the DSE 2005. It features data gathering and planning across six domains: curriculum, communication, mobility, safety, personal care and social. The data collected via the online tool also feeds into the NCCD. This output is achieved via a regression analysis process that is completed by CEC at a statewide level on behalf of all Catholic schools in New South Wales.

Resources were also allocated in the extensions phase to enable schools to draw on the expertise of Diocesan-based, special education personnel and external allied health professionals with experience in working with schools.
16.2.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

The CEC met or exceeded all benchmarks. In some instances the benchmarks were exceeded by a significant margin. For example, for Output 1 and the allocation of assistive technology items, and Output 2, there was a commensurate acceleration in the professional development provided to teachers and teacher aides in the use of these items. Similar levels of performance were achieved across Output 5, training in special education; Output 7, supporting leadership; and Output 11, engaging paraprofessionals.

In the final year of implementation numbers of staff trained in the DSE 2005 (Output 6) far exceeded the benchmark of 1,800 – 2,000, with 17,498 staff participating, along with achievement for Output 8 with 11,070 staff participating, well above the benchmark set.

Table 16-2: NSW Catholic MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>60 - 80</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>400-500</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>120-150</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>200-250</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>700-800</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>400-500</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>1,800-2,000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>School Leadership</td>
<td>250-300</td>
<td>1,200</td>
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<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>800-1000</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1,400-1,500</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>300-350</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Teacher’s Aides</td>
<td>300-350</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>80-100</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>370-390</td>
<td>538</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16.2.4 Overall impact of the MSSD initiative

Summary of outcomes

CEC was conscious that the MSSD initiative did not have the same level of impact in all Catholic schools across New South Wales. For the schools involved in the initiative in 2012-2013, CEC reports that the MSSD initiative fulfilled its objective of enhancing the knowledge and skills of teachers, principals and non-teaching staff and the overall capacity of schools to better meet the learning needs of students with disability. CEC reported growth of knowledge and an increase in student and teacher interest in the appropriate use of assistive technologies to support all students, but particularly students with disability and diverse learning needs. Moreover, CEC also observed an exciting development related to the increasing number of students who customise their own learning environment based on their own interpretation of Universal Design.

Strategies for Output 8 had a positive impact on the way in which teachers use data to inform and monitor learning:
The work of using data to assist in mapping and tracking student learning, determining learning intentions and related success criteria, developing relevant teaching and learning activities that are appropriately scaffolded with adjustments and providing effective feedback have been the core initiatives. A coaching model has been utilised to deepen understanding and support the implementation of adjustments.

Teachers in metropolitan and rural areas networked with allied health professionals (Output 4) resulting in increased knowledge, enhanced pedagogical skills and greater awareness of the role of allied health in improving accessibility and participation for students.

CEC also reported that through training provided as part of Output 11, paraprofessionals increased their ability to assist in personalised instruction and positive communication support for students through projects that enhanced whole school inclusive practice.

As a result of the support related to Output 13, CEC reported that teachers improved in their ability to make consistent teacher judgements through collaborative planning.

With a narrower focus on three MSSD outputs in the extension phase of the initiative, Catholic education authorities were able to maximise coverage across all Catholic schools, who have benefited from the initiative in some way, whether it be via project activity or through training related to obligations under the DSE 2005, with specific emphasis on:

- ensuring a depth of understanding and capability in responding to the requirements of relevant legislation
- skilling principals, teachers and non-teaching staff in responding to the learning needs of individual students through adjustments and personalising learning programmes.

Coverage across the Catholic education sector

The diverse nature of MSSD activity in the Catholic education sector was problematic in terms of initial roll out of the activities, but also successful in what it delivered to the sector. Due to the ‘bottom up’ nature of a large proportion of the initial activity, categorisation according to the MSSD outputs was a challenge. Although the CEC’s progress reports of activity discretely categorised across most of the MSSD outputs, there was a significant level of crossover in the nature of many activities, with a number of the MSSD outputs being relevant to a given project or activity. The obligations that schools must meet in response to the DDA were embedded within and across the majority of projects and activities within the sector.

The depth of learning and resultant strengthening of capabilities in the participating schools were reported as consistently strong. For example, the learning that occurred through interactions with allied health professionals across a number of settings meant that the teachers involved were better able to identify behaviours in a student with sensory processing difficulties, oral language learning difficulties or cognitive delay. They now know how to refer the student for further intervention and assessment whilst implementing suitable adjustments to the learning environment.
A further strength arising from this learning relates to the way that the Catholic education sector captured the lessons arising from MSSD activity and disseminated it across broader audiences. For example, a number of Dioceses conducted seminars and workshops where a range of MSSD activity were presented giving participants detailed insights into project methodologies, strategies and outcomes. In the Wagga Wagga Diocese, the MORE project operating across a number of MSSD outputs produced a detailed document that summarised the project activity, processes and rationale behind the projects that were completed by the 15 schools that participated in the project.

Activity was extended to most Catholic schools in New South Wales in 2014, to ensure schools were aware of, and acting on, their obligations under the DDA. Dioceses have achieved this outcome via briefings, workshops, school level professional learning sessions combined with information and guidelines being disseminated via websites, information packs and other documented resources.

Online planning tool

The rollout of the online planning tool was also a major area of success for Catholic education in New South Wales. The strength of the online tool centred on the dual purposes of:

- enhancing pedagogy by the way it informs planning for learning based on identified strengths and areas where adjustments and/or personalised approaches are required
- supporting accountability by providing evidence of adjustments and personalised approaches to fulfil obligations as determined by legislation.

CEC observed that as schools became more familiar with the online tool and what it was able to deliver in terms of classroom planning across its six domains and evidence of adjustments in the same areas, its users — principals, teachers and support staff — began to view the tool in a different light, ‘... less as an instrument of compliance and more as a tool that informs pedagogy and supports accountability.’

Approach to professional learning

Throughout the MSSD initiative, CEC observed that the most effective projects and activities were those that adopted a blended approach to professional learning using e-learning strategies, a range of relevant, high quality online resources, technologies as communication tools, and ensuring opportunities were also provided for face-to-face and group interaction.

Providing time for participants to trial what they had learned, and reflect on the outcomes achieved, was a key element in the success of the professional learning. Additionally, some Diocese formed close working relationships with universities as a means to quality assure the professional learning activity.

Lessons learned

Through its interaction with Dioceses and independent Catholic schools in New South Wales, CEC identified a number of elements contributing to the sustainability of the MSSD initiative. There is now a greater propensity for collaborative planning within schools and between
schools and their communities, across schools, across Diocese and across sectors, ‘MSSD has been the vehicle that has fostered collaboration which is now paying dividends in terms of knowledge sharing and maximising the use of resources.’

The experience of the MSSD has resulted in a changing ‘lexicon’ associated with disability with fewer labels based on deficit thinking and more of a focus on learning strengths and learning needs combined evidence of deeper knowledge. ‘What might have been referred to as a language problem in the past may now be discussed in terms of receptive language or semantic language, reflecting a deeper knowledge than what might have been apparent in the past.’

**Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative**

Teachers across New South Wales Catholic schools now have a closer working relationship with allied health professionals, ‘While the resources are no longer available to support activity to the same level, the experience has demonstrated clear benefits of collaborative professional relationships with speech pathologists, occupational therapists etc.’

In their totality, CEC reports that these elements contribute to contrasting responses to disability in schools between what might have been the norm prior to MSSD and what has emerged as a legacy of the initiative. While the focus in the past may have centred on seeking assessments in order to determine a label that would then attract a particular level of resourcing, the current sequence of activity generally features:

- use of the online tool to understand relative strengths and areas requiring adjustment for learning
- consultation and collaboration to set goals, inform adjustments and plan for learning which may include involvement of specialist/allied health professionals but which would always include parent/carer engagement and increasingly involvement of the student
- only in circumstances where barriers to learning may be identified, assessment, diagnosis and action in response to professional advice.

The MSSD initiative provided clear benefits in that it enabled a range of project activity to be implemented across the 11 Diocese, Congregational schools and schools operated by other education authorities in the Catholic sector in New South Wales. With the projects and professional learning activity covering the majority the MSSD outputs in 2012-2013, showcasing and sharing of learning via websites publications and workshops and seminar programmes became an important feature of the overarching strategy in the sector.

The same insights have also fostered a strong understanding of what constitutes effective professional learning strategies as well as the benefits that arise through collaboration both within schools and their communities and across schools, Diocese and education sectors.

With Dioceses and independent Catholic schools in New South Wales reporting to CEC a common and consistent message of enhanced knowledge, improved skills and effective working relationships with allied health professionals, the MSSD initiative has proven to fulfil its
objective of enhancing the capabilities of staff and overall capacity of schools to better meet the learning needs of students with disability in the sector.

16.3  New South Wales Independent

As the peak body for independent schools in New South Wales, the Association of Independent Schools (AISNSW) manages a range of government-funded programmes for both the state and federal governments. These programmes are available to all independent schools in New South Wales.

There are more than 460 independent schools in New South Wales enrolling over 187,000 students. Approximately 400 are members of AISNSW which employs over 100 staff to provide a wide range of services to both member and non-member independent schools. These staff include a team of six special education consultants, led by the Director: Student Services, who assisted schools in the implementation of the MSSD initiative, in addition to providing other support and services to schools to help improve the education outcomes of students with disability.

A total of $5,794,758 was allocated to New South Wales independent schools from the MSSD funding and was distributed across activities for five of the MSSD outputs with funding fairly evenly distributed until the final year when the majority of funds was used to improve the understanding of the DSE 2005 (40%) and supporting the implementation of the NCCD (60%).

16.3.1 Implementation strategy

As a representative and support body, rather than one which exercises authority over schools, the AISNSW has been highly conscious of the fact that schools in the independent sector ‘own’ or control the planning cycle — ‘... projects have to be embedded in the goals and culture of each individual school’. Consequently, AISNSW characterises its role as providing the services and support that are external to schools but nevertheless integral to the effectiveness of the planning that independent schools undertake.

At the same time, throughout the MSSD initiative, AISNSW has been conscious of the need for accountability. As such, resources have only been released to schools where there is evidence of planning and a demonstrated understanding of the MSSD initiative being primarily focused on enhancing capabilities and building capacity in schools to better meet the needs of students with disability.

With this understanding in mind, AISNSW utilised the MSSD initiative in 2012-2013 as a means to build on existing practices related to the consulting services it provides to schools, as well as to introduce specific project activity to build capabilities and capacity in two cohorts of targeted schools. While AISNSW consultancy support to these schools remained ongoing during the extension phase, MSSD financial resources were not allocated to these schools in 2014.
Drawing on a broad consultative process that included input from a steering committee, advocacy groups and the schools that participated in MSSD project activity in 2012-2013, the AISNSW decided to focus on two MSSD outputs in 2014: Output 6, training for all staff to improve their understanding of their obligations under the DSE 2005, and Output 13, providing complementary activity to support schools with the implementation of the NCCD.

The rationale for this approach was clearly outlined in the AISNSW Implementation Plan for 2014:

> While the MSSD has provided schools participating in 2012 and 2013 with professional learning and support on understanding and implementing the DDA and Disability Standards for Education 2005, there is still a large number of schools that have not participated in this professional learning initiative. Only a small number of schools participated in the 2012 trial on the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data for School Students with a Disability. The vast majority of schools in the sector do not have exposure to, or an understanding of, the data collection model and data collection tool. While schools may understand reasonable adjustments, the process, evidence, levels of adjustment and categories of disability required for the data collection will be completely new to the vast majority of schools.

Notwithstanding the focus on Outputs 6 and 13, AISNSW drew on other resources (such as the Students First support fund) to roll out a professional learning programme to other independent schools that largely followed the approach adopted with the two MSSD funded cohorts in 2012-2013. As suggested by AISNSW representatives, ‘… the model we developed and implemented over the last two years has proven to be highly effective in building capacity in schools and more schools are now seeking to be involved.’

### 16.3.2 Approaches to the outputs

**Training for Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6) and supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)**

All regional and metropolitan New South Wales independent schools were invited to attend a series of training days for the implementation of the NCCD. Overall, seven whole day sessions were conducted in metropolitan Sydney and a further six in rural and regional locations.

While the briefings focused primarily on the NCCD, the close correlation between the two MSSD outputs, by implication, necessitated the inclusion of some overview material related to the DSE 2005. Consequently, the training was divided into two sections: the first was on the DDA and DSE 2005 and the second session was the processes for the data collection.

With AISNSW understanding the importance of context, combined with knowledge of the varying capacity of schools to respond to the requirements of the DSE 2005 and the NCCD, follow-up workshops and other strategies to assist schools were made available according to identified needs.
Additionally, AISNSW also continued to use other resources to offer principals and other school leaders opportunities to participate in one-day workshops related to the Standards. These sessions were led in the first part by lawyers with extensive knowledge of the Standards and case law related to the DDA.

**Other MSSD outputs (5, 7 and 9)**

As noted above, while the focus within the independent sector in New South Wales during the extension phase of the MSSD initiative centred primarily on broad capacity building related to Outputs 6 and 13, this action was built on the strong foundation of what was achieved with two cohorts of schools during 2012 and 2013. Indeed, the approach that was implemented during the extension phase was initially tested and refined using the same cohort of schools.

The model that was adopted with the two cohorts brought together activity encompassing Output 5, training for all school staff, Output 7, supporting principals and leadership teams, and Output 9, develop or modify lesson plans. It required participating schools to undertake a predetermined process to complete their own situational analysis, develop a plan to address identified issues and undertake action in accordance with their plan – ‘…we provided the framework for schools to develop their own priorities that reconcile with existing planning at the school level’.

This process was supported by a range of professional learning activities including:

- training sessions for school representatives during holiday periods
- in-school planning and implementation support that was delivered by a team of AISNSW consultants
- targeted input from external providers with particular specialist knowledge and expertise, such as:
  - Associate Professor David Evans from the University of Sydney
  - lawyers who have a close working relationship with AISNSW delivering legal perspectives to principals and school registrars.

With a desire to minimise dependency and foster sustainability, the relationship with the initial cohorts of schools has changed over time. That is, while the capability and capacity building has been largely self-fulfilling — schools being less prone to seek support services from AISNSW — parameters have been placed around support services. This is largely achieved through a mix of:

- negotiated support which is pre-empted by a planning sheet that is completed by the school in advance of any site visits to determine respective roles and responsibilities and how the school plans to progress action beyond the consultant visit
- advice about external service providers that are able to provide services on a fee for service basis.

Where services are provided to schools, the lessons that have been learned through activity related to MSSD Outputs 5, 7, and 9, continue to inform and guide such interactions which are customised according to the identified needs of the school — at a whole school level, faculty or working 1:1 with an individual teacher in their classroom.
16.3.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

Table 16-3: NSW Independent MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>914</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>School Leadership</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AISNSW exceeded all benchmarks that were established for the final reporting period, most notably in relation to Output 6, school staff trained to improve understanding of obligations under the DSE 2005. In this instance, 1,159 staff were reported to have been trained against the extension phase benchmark of 500 staff. As noted above, a varied approach has been adopted in providing customised training delivered to staff on a site-by-site basis. Training for school leaders was generally achieved through a programme delivered by the AISNSW in Sydney with a key component of the programme facilitated by lawyers with expertise in the DSE 2005.

16.3.4 Overall impact of the MSSD initiative

The MSSD initiative provided the independent sector in New South Wales with the opportunity to build on existing support arrangements with schools to develop and strengthen the capacity of independent schools to better meet the needs of students with disability enrolled in the sector. Three integrated approaches were established during the course of the initiative to achieve this outcome:

- workshop sessions for principals, teachers and support staff across a range of matters related to students with disability
- customised support, guidance and mentoring related to development and implementation of school plans for improvement — specific to students with disability but also aligned with each school’s overarching plan
- targeted professional learning activity specifically related to relevant legislation and the NCCD.

The impact of this approach was reported to be quite profound by AISNSW. School personnel were reported to have knowledge and understanding of their DSE 2005 obligations and are now more capable in applying this understanding on an individual basis. Principals and teachers were more confident leading collaborations between staff and parents such interactions and drawing less on AISNSW support than what was generally experienced prior to the implementation of the MSSD initiative. Collaboration was also more apparent across schools where there was a willingness to share expertise and resources and within AISNSW where staff with responsibility for literacy and numeracy worked within the same team as staff with responsibility for special education.
Lessons learned

While the trial of the professional learning related to the DSE 2005 and the NCCD was successful with the two cohorts of schools that were involved in the initial phase of the MSSD initiative, that experience with other independent schools was not as smooth or straightforward. ‘The trial schools were well grounded with a clear understanding of their obligations under the DSE 2005 and open to improving education for students with disabilities.’

By contrast, the invitation for all remaining independent schools to be involved in training during 2014 and the expectation within this that executive personnel (principals and other school leaders) should attend was not well received in some settings. Where this occurred, there was a general impression that the data collection was a compliance matter that could be managed by other staff.

From the perspective of AISNSW, in order to develop a whole school approach to inclusive practices, it is vital to have school leaders on board and contributing to goal setting, planning, and determining expected outcomes and, just as important, working with school staff to ensure all parties understand how such arrangements align with an overarching school plan, ‘…. spending time to clarify these elements prior to initiating a programme of professional learning is an important ingredient in ensuring its success’.

Despite the initial concerns AISNSW was able to secure full representation and, 12 months on, key staff within the organisation report a positive response and outlook towards the data collection across all schools. ‘… what started out as a source of anxiety in some schools is now seen as the vehicle for building teacher capacity and supporting students and their learning ….. it is clearly transferring into the classroom where real change is occurring in adjustments for learning.’

The experience related to the data collection built on what was achieved in the independent sector of New South Wales during the first phase of the MSSD initiative. Specifically, consultation with AISNSW representatives highlighted that the schools involved in MSSD activity over the first two years:

- were confidently managing their own arrangements for students with disability and making much fewer requests of AISNSW as a result
- where contact was made, it rarely relates to a crisis or major issue but is more an exercise in ‘… touching base or running things by us for affirmation’
- were acting as a resource for AISNSW in that other schools are being referred to them from time to time as sources of expertise.

In relation to the last point the AISNSW reported a propensity for schools to work in a collaborative spirit to support each other in refining plans and resolving issues. In an environment generally characterised as highly competitive, schools were openly embracing opportunities for mentoring across sites and sharing resources to the extent that loose collaborative networks are beginning to form.
**Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative**

The key legacy effect of the MSSD initiative for the independent sector in New South Wales is that it fulfilled its key objective in enhancing the capability of teachers, non-teaching staff and school leaders and the overall capacity of schools to meet the learning needs of students with disability. School personnel were more capable in applying their understanding of DSE 2005 to individual students. Indeed, key staff through independent schools’ engagement with MSSD, AISNSW observed that it was receiving fewer parent complaints related to students with disability and, for the first time in memory, in 2014 there was no request to support a school before the Human Rights Commission involving alleged discrimination issues or other matters related to students’ disability from a New South Wales independent school.

While enhanced capability was apparent across various layers within schools such as policies, enrolment procedures and school facilities, AISNSW highlights the transformation that occurred in classrooms as being a significant legacy of the MSSD initiative. Teachers were less inclined to be ‘... seeking someone with a magic wand to solve what they perceive to be a problem’, and more aware of the obligations (their own and those of the school), and more confident and skilled in planning for learning by consulting with parents and students and collaborating with other staff. ‘They see the bigger picture and how identified issues fit in with the context of the school.’

Through this growing confidence, AISNSW also observed a number of teachers emerge as the next generation of school leaders, particularly in the manner in which they have shared their own learning and development via seminars and workshops with other schools.
17  Victoria

17.1  Victoria Government

The Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) provides schooling to more than 560,000 students enrolled in 1,526 government schools. The legislative and budget arrangements for schools allow for teaching and learning for all students, including students with disability. A senior DET manager in the Wellbeing Health & Engagement group was responsible for coordinating the implementation of the MSSD for the duration of the initiative.

A total of $55,690,021 in MSSD funds was allocated to support DET schools covering nine MSSD outputs, with a large proportion of the funds concentrated on supporting school principals and school leadership teams to strengthen teachers’ ability to assist students with disability (Output 7), where nearly 46 percent of the funding was spent.

17.1.1  Implementation strategy

The DET MSSD initiatives were designed and implemented in the context of system-wide reforms based on environment scans, data collection and analysis. DET identified trends and challenges in the school population that translated into seven key opportunities to address the needs of students with disability in the mainstream classroom setting. These included, for example:

- meeting the needs of the rising number students diagnosed with autism
- improving mainstream schooling access to specialist support
- building on the established track record of leadership in inclusive curriculum and pedagogy.

The challenges were directly related to the objectives of the MSSD initiative and shaped the selection and implementation of the outputs which aligned with four strategic reform directions across the system with potential long-term effects:

- Utilising technology
- Building school capacity
- Strengthening options
- Focus on teaching and learning.

Important elements reinforcing the strategy included the state's Disability Action Plan, and consultations with peak representative groups, experts, and the Catholic and independent sectors.

The intent of the original implementation plan was to use a series of discrete but complementary project-based approaches to advance current and proposed programmes. As the initiative evolved DET consolidated the clear links between the MSSD outputs and the
strategic plans for improving the training of the education workforce in the state. This generally meant multiple approaches to achieve each output with clearly complementary objectives.

The major focus of the MSSD implementation strategy was on consolidating and expanding capacity through professional learning programmes, specialist consultation services, assistive technology and leadership development. The level of activity to address the needs of students with ASD was intensified in the extension phase to enable teachers to work beyond the classroom and build networks to embed the changes in approach.

17.1.2 Approaches to the outputs

Providing assistive technology (Output 1) and providing assistive technology training (Output 2)

In partnership with DET’s Statewide Vision Resource Centre (SVRC), assistive technology, including devices and software provided support for over 250 blind and vision-impaired students. Assistive technology items included screen reading and magnification software, BrailleNote computers and Braille Writers, iPads and electronic dictionaries and thesauruses.

Training was provided to more than 120 teachers from 70 schools working with students who had received the assistive technology. SVRC provided tailored coaching to ensure the students and teachers were getting the most out of the additional equipment.

A pilot programme overseen by the Victorian Deaf Education Institute (VDEI) introduced live captioning in eight schools in the first stage. Live captioning was of greatest benefit to senior students where a teacher-centred approach is the primary mode of learning. In the second stage school personnel implemented speech-to-text captioning technology with the support of a trainer appointed to manage devices and software. More than 60 teachers received training.

Developing support centres (Output 3)

DET worked with established centres of expertise supporting students with specific disabilities to build school capacity using a variation on the traditional model of specialist intervention.

Down Syndrome Victoria (DSV) used the MSSD initiative to extend its consultancy services to teachers and school teams. DSV provided targeted support for children with Down Syndrome in their first year of school to ensure a best start approach. More than 70 schools and 100 teachers of students benefited from individual visits and access to a range of resources from DSV.

A Victorian Deaf Education Institute (VDEI) project aimed at early intervention supported the transition of students into primary schools who are deaf or hard of hearing. VDEI developed and delivered the ‘Transition into Primary School’ kit containing resources aimed at early intervention centres, receiving schools, deaf children and their parents. Families and staff from more than 50 schools participated in the programme and received expert support through VDEI for the transition to primary school.
Targeted consultation and advice for teachers, school teams and parents provided by AMAZE (Autism Victoria) supported schools to meet the individual needs of these students. Aspect Victoria (Autism Spectrum Australia) worked with teachers in schools to support the development of social skills and assist the transition from primary to secondary schools for students with an ASD.

The extension phase created an opportunity for DET to engage Anglicare to deliver a ‘TEACHaR Educational Support Program’ targeting students with disabilities in Out of Home Care (OoHC). Anglicare educational specialists provided support in cooperation with the school, classroom teachers and the broader OoHC care team to improve the students’ educational outcomes.

**Building skills in special education (Output 5)**

More than 5,200 teachers completed disability specific courses under the MSSD initiative. There were two elements to the skills training strategy. The first involved OnlineTraining Ltd (OLT) courses offered to all schools across the state, coordinated by four dedicated lead tutors and more than 270 volunteer school-based tutors. The second innovative element of the DET programme was the provision of 100 teacher scholarships in Deaf Education and Autism. These intensive one-year training courses in effective teaching practices were fully subscribed.

**Training in Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6)**

Under Output 6 DET worked with the University of Canberra and other states to develop and deliver online modules to train school staff in understanding their obligations under the DSE 2005. The initial rollout, in the second half of 2013, focused on education leaders and attracted 1,309 teachers from 500 schools. By the end of 2014 this had increased to 2638 staff in total.

**Supporting school leadership to build teacher capability (Output 7)**

Almost half the MSSD funds in Victorian Government schools were allocated to supporting school leadership within Output 7 with a range of initiatives to improve school leadership capability across mainstream schools. In addition, a Specialist Schools Leadership Program was offered in partnership with the Bastow Institute. The course was commissioned partly in response to the increasing calls for specialist principals and teachers to support mainstream schools teachers.

In total, 76 leaders from 35 specialist schools completed the Bastow course, enhancing their knowledge and skills to: develop emotional intelligence and resilience; work effectively with stakeholders; and design and evaluate curriculum and assessment practices that meet the needs of specialist school students. The course provided participants with an opportunity to initiate school-based projects and was also structured to encourage networking for the principals and leadership teams across the schools.

DET also provided professional learning for more than 700 school leaders and teachers on preventing and responding to extreme and challenging behaviours, using an evidence-based
framework for preventing and responding to student behaviour School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support.

**Supporting teachers assess learning and adapt curriculum (Output 8)**

In collaboration with The University of Melbourne, DET developed the Abilities Based Learning and Educational Support (ABLES) framework aimed at assisting teachers to assess and report on student progress and learning achievement. It also provided guidance in ways of responding to individual learning readiness and needs. ABLES resources target the development of individual learning plans to ensure high quality teaching and learning is available in every classroom that needs it.

Development work was conducted in the first half of 2013 on the basis of research with teachers on assessment, curriculum and reporting for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The project culminated in the release of a comprehensive professional learning programme across the state, and since then, with the support of 120 ABLES leaders more than 2,000 teachers have participated in the blended learning delivery of the programme.

**Supporting collaborative teaching practices (Output 10)**

DET focused on collaborative teaching practices as a strategy to strengthen options for students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The approach evolved on the basis of trials in one region over 18 months and involved two elements: Autism Inclusion Support Programmes (ISP), and Autism Teacher Coaches.

Fifteen schools appointed ISP Coordinators, who worked collaboratively with teachers from their own and other network schools to support and demonstrate effective teaching practice for students with an ASD. In total, nearly 500 teachers from 60 schools engaged in this initiative.

Ten Autism Inclusion Coaches worked across the state in metropolitan and regional locations, consulting with more than 6,500 teachers from 700 schools to increase knowledge, practices and skills to meet the needs of students with an ASD. The coaches showcased their work to around 4,000 teachers across 500 schools, demonstrating effective practices to meet the needs of ASD students in context of school settings.

**Supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)**

DET provided a comprehensive set of resources and direct assistance to schools to support implementation of NCCD. By the end of 2014, more than 70 percent of schools had participated in the implementation of NCCD.
17.1.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

Table 17-1: VIC Government MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>1,360</td>
<td>2,186</td>
<td>2,360</td>
<td>3,058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>1,309</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>2,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Leadership</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1,641</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>3,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>1,641</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>2,023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>981</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>7,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1,158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All benchmarks were well and truly met by DET with the standout being Output 10 where over 7,000 teachers were supported, nine times more than the target. The majority of these (6,500) were supported by the Autism Teacher Coaches who worked across all school types to increase knowledge and skills to meet the needs of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

It is also noteworthy that 2,638 school staff engaged in some form of DSE 2005 training (Output 6), almost double the expected number.

17.1.4 Impact of the MSSD initiative

Summary of outcomes

In its final progress report DET observes that:

Across the state, every school has benefited from a range of DET MSSD initiatives on offer. Over the MSSD timeframe, approximately one in four teachers participated in face-to-face and online professional learning and consultation available to schools, representing each specialist school and over half of the primary, primary-secondary and secondary schools statewide.

In areas such as the introduction of assistive technologies (Output 1), DET considers that had the MSSD initiative not been introduced the most likely scenario would have been to increase capacity and skills at an incremental rate. MSSD enabled a revolution because it provided for a ‘...major investment in both hardware and licences for software that increased the quantum of adoption in a short space of time’.

DET aims to use the learnings gained from the MSSD initiative — along with the infrastructure now in place and the resources created — to support teachers in their efforts to create a more inclusive system for all children (not just students with disability). DET expects that the OLT online training will continue to provide sufficient depth in knowledge and expertise so that every school will have a critical mass of staff who know about disability and how to respond to student needs. DET also expects that schools will grow in their understanding of the DDA and
DSE 2005: a major paradigm shift from a categorical system to one based on identifying broad needs and making adjustments for all students with disability.

**Lessons learned**

A distinctive feature of the DET approach throughout the initiative was the consistent focus on teaching and learning activities in schools and growing the capacity of the schools workforce. For example, the ABLES initiative (Output 8) ensured Victoria led the way in providing a truly inclusive approach to the introduction of AusVELS (Foundation to Year 10 Victorian curriculum for English, Mathematics, History and Science). DET saw this as a clear illustration of the importance of focusing on the core function of teaching and learning with the goal of ensuring the rights of every child to an inclusive experience of the curriculum.

DET’s projects under each output were very much workforce driven with a view to making a long-term investment in growing capacity to address the needs of students with disability. Having trained the relevant workforce the main task now is to sustain the level of specialist expertise acquired over the life of the initiative.

The strategy of using existing centres of expertise meant that DET was able to direct internal and external resources to the area of greatest need. It strengthened existing relationships with organisations such as AMAZE, Anglicare and Down Syndrome Victoria. Considerable effort in the establishment phase produced a strong uptake by volunteers. The lesson in this instance, both for DET and the agencies, is that doing business together meant a better understanding of each other’s priorities and approaches with positive outcomes for the students with disability they targeted. This in effect identified a common ‘client’ and considerably enhanced the relationships with existing specialist agencies. These partnerships with Autism Victoria (AMAZE), Down Syndrome Victoria, VDEI and Anglicare provided guidance and support directly to almost 500 schools and set the foundations for sustainable improvements in the capability of classroom teachers and school leaders.

DET considers that training for DSE 2005 using the University of Canberra modules was probably the most important Output (6). As a project of national significance with an innovative approach to cross-jurisdictional development, it includes some flagship elements of system reform. The DSE 2005 online training was an important learning experience for all jurisdictions. It took longer than anticipated to get underway and to bed down and the benefits are only just emerging more clearly. DET decided at the outset to identify what it could contribute best to produce quantum gains from DSE 2005 training. One of the most recent positive elements in the evaluation of the modules has been the improved open access for parents made possible by an open website in contrast to previous modules of managed steps through a series of course.

**Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative**

As with other sectors the extension of the MSSD initiative was well received. Given the initial delays in the roll out of the programme, and the perhaps ambitious time frame for some outputs, the extension allowed unanticipated space to build upon foundational work to ensure
new ideas could be appropriately developed, tested, and implemented with a potentially sustainable impact.

It is particularly noteworthy that DET emphasised the benefits of training a current cohort of teachers to meet immediate needs in specialist settings, while at the same time having an eye to building expertise in the training process to enhance mainstream classroom practice in the longer term. For example, the strategic importance of using technology to support students with disability and the associated training was aimed at building training resources for impact beyond the MSSD timeframe to ensuring long-term availability, and flexibility to meet future needs. As DET reports:

> With significant engagement from school leaders, principals and school staff, it is expected that the benefits of the MSSD NP will have a long lasting legacy beyond the conclusion of the national partnership. Victoria’s performance has met or exceeded final benchmark indicators and goals as identified in its Implementation Plan.

### 17.2 Victoria Catholic

The **Catholic Education Commission Victoria (CECV)** is made up of four diocese: Ballarat, Melbourne, Sandhurst and Sale. In 2013 there were 385 primary, 94 secondary and 7 special schools with over 14,000 FTE teachers and over 5,000 non-teaching staff, providing Catholic education to over 200,000 students across Victoria. A member of the Catholic Education Office senior executive leadership team (Student and Family Engagement) led the design and implementation of MSSD for the duration of the initiative.

A total of $12,498,018 of MSSD funds was allocated to CECV, covering four MSSD outputs, with the majority of funds (74%) spent on Output 7, supporting principals and school leadership teams to strengthen teachers’ ability to assist students with disability.

#### 17.2.1 Implementation strategy

The CECV approach to intervention was underpinned from the outset of MSSD by a clear philosophical position in relation to assisting students with disability: that all children learn differently and at different rates. The focus of the MSSD activities was on the first 3-4 years of schooling. The CECV plans referred to the importance of teachers using proven pedagogical methods in classrooms for students needing adjustments as required by legislation and the DSE 2005 to ensure that students with learning disabilities are identified and adjustments addressed as early as possible. From the CECV perspective this reflects the definitions provided by the DDA, which reinforces the need for a system-wide approach to making programme adjustments.

CECV worked within the broader framework of its workforce reform agenda addressing the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) guidelines. This perspective reflected system wide changes that shaped the approach to the MSSD initiative. An especially valuable feature embedded in the design of the MSSD initiative was the scope given to
innovative responses which meant CECV did not feel constrained by the outputs, and was able to make the workforce change agenda central to its strategy.

17.2.2 Approaches to the outputs

Providing assistive technology (Output 1)

The initial implementation plan proposed that assistive technology (Outputs 1 and 2) would provide for student needs ‘within a framework that supports diverse needs and differentiated learning activities of students with disability’. As a first step, a technology audit of schools receiving a visiting teachers service was conducted in 2012 and schools were invited to nominate a representative to attend professional learning opportunities throughout 2013.

The objectives of the projects included: the enhancement of access to assistive technology for students with sensory and physical disabilities in classrooms; linking assistive technology to the annual personal learning plans for students with disability; and enhancing the distribution of technology devices and usage through a ‘Bring your own device’ (BYOD) approach.

CECV activities concerned with assistive technologies were initially focused on listening systems for hearing impaired students, but by 2014 this had moved towards the ‘context of contemporary pedagogy and open plan collaborative learning environments’ with 1185 assistive technology items distributed to students at 153 schools.

Providing assistive technology training (Output 2)

The training element in this strategy supported students with visual impairment and hearing loss. CECV worked in collaboration with key specialist bodies to ‘develop sustainable and innovative training modules that enhance teacher capacity and student outcomes through the use of assistive technology’.

Six types of professional development opportunities assisted teachers to develop personalised and differentiated learning experiences for students with disability. In 2014, 107 schools were supported from Output 2 with 562 teachers and Learning Support Officers receiving individual, small group and whole staff professional learning and consultations. CECV built teacher capacity further to embed assistive technology in a seamless way rather than ‘tacking it on’ to the learning experience.

The professional learning opportunities included a range of options such as workshops, collaborative partnerships, and activities to encourage creativity and innovation in the design and adoption of assistive technologies with 1061 teachers participating in some form of professional learning on the use of assistive technologies. Teachers and Learning Support Officers received individual, small group and whole staff professional development to develop their knowledge about the inclusive use of technology.
Supporting school leadership to build teacher capability (Output 7)

CECV took a distinctive approach to strengthening teachers’ capability with a flagship programme for school leadership (Output 7). The Masters of Educational Intervention coursework programme was designed and delivered by the University of Melbourne around the AITSL framework. The skill-based and evidence-based coursework focused participants on ‘Knowing how students learn’ and involved a shift to some new and different leadership roles in schools.

Fifty schools participated in the first cohort. Each participating school provided a single set of role statements for teachers that described the objectives of the positions, the time allocations and duties of the individuals and nominated measures of success. The networked learning approach was extended beyond the initial 50 sites which, combined with elements of supported school planning, are now supported by strategic cluster activities. More than 150 school leadership teams received targeted professional development in the latter part of 2013. In the process of teams of school leaders gaining a formal qualification to improve their understanding of the learning needs of students, the critical mass of expertise expanded around school-based projects.

A two-day CECV Symposium ‘Celebrating Diversity in Contemporary Learning’ showcased MSSD activities in the sector attracting 232 school leadership teams from 96 schools. Following this successful event, expressions of interest were called for a third cohort of the partnership with the University of Melbourne. As a result of the high level of interest the revised implementation plan proposed introducing two additional cohorts in 2014 involving 25 participating schools. On the basis of experience in the first phase of the MSSD initiative CECV incorporated an additional objective for Output 7:

> ... to enable opportunities for leadership teams, Lead Teachers, and school staff to work collaboratively within the school community to ensure appropriate adjustments and inclusive practices for students with additional learning needs. Schools may conduct an audit of current practices in order to determine areas for improvement with a shared focus of improving student outcomes.

CECV also created a policy framework titled The Intervention Framework, which linked learning outcomes to the use of evidence based interventions. Particular focus on the early years of schooling became a key strategy in the Strategy Plan 2015-2019.

Supporting student transitions (Output 12)

CECV developed a framework supporting students to transition effectively (Output 12) aimed at assisting students with special needs to have a positive experience of transition to secondary school. Student and parent surveys to evaluate the transition process (for all students as well as students with additional needs) provided information to guide school action plans.

Activities also included information evenings for families of students with disability, a resource book to share best practice, and networking for Learning Support Officers. Output 12 was completed as planned in 2013 and did not continue in 2014.
17.2.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

Table 17-2: VIC Catholic MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>110-120</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>130-140</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>90-120</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>150-170</td>
<td>1,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>School Leadership</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>140-200</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CECV met all their benchmarks with a significantly greater reach for training in assistive technology than expected with 1,061 staff receiving some professional learning in this area.

17.2.4 Impact of the MSSD initiative

Summary of outcomes

The CECV outputs were successfully implemented with immediate and mid-term outcomes and strong indications of long-term changes in policy and practice.

The focus of providing assistive technology (Output 2) on improving the acoustic quality of classrooms has engaged students more effectively in learning and improved their interactions with peers in the classroom. The introduction of hearing access technology was dependent on developing teacher skills and understanding of its use and the ways it could be integrated with other learning space technology. An unanticipated outcome was that this also made teachers more conscious of their instructional styles and encouraged changed approaches to teaching for all children as well as those with hearing impairment.

There was a significant increase in student and teacher use of assistive technology over the three-year period of MSSD activities in Victorian Catholic schools particularly as a result of the ‘Bring Your Own Device’ strategy which proved to be highly effective in engaging parents and teachers with the concept of personalised learning. Student choice and requests for discrete technologies supported by MSSD encouraged student self-management of technological devices, which has been incorporated into school design of learning spaces.

Assistive technologies designed for students with disability were increasingly being adopted as mainstream teaching tools: as a consequence of this, CECV reported evidence of a greater sense of inclusion and belonging for students with a disability.

Output 7 leadership activities provided some of the most valuable lessons from the MSSD initiative for the Victorian Catholic sector. The impact of the post-graduate coursework programme supporting school leadership teams was so obviously strong that it set benchmarks for the next level of development. The general enthusiasm for the programme created considerable additional demand from other teachers, which is now being met by ongoing CECV support for an additional cohort to participate.
The impact of the post-graduate masters programme was felt beyond the immediate growth in skills and understandings of classroom teachers. School principals report that new approaches to inclusiveness can be pursued with a core group of a few teachers, which effectively reduced if not eliminated the expectation that specialist support teachers should be the sole or even major providers of expertise to assist students with disability. The focus shifted away from issues of entitlement and loadings for specialist support, to whole school responsibilities for improving learning for students with disability, accompanied by a marked increase in schools looking to further teacher training rather than relying on the provision of a learning support officer. This included alternatives to the relatively high commitment of teacher time experienced by those in the post-graduate masters programme.

CECV believed that had MSSD not been introduced the sector may not have had the confidence to go down the policy path to produce change of the scope and scale it generated.

Schools that already had good plans in place and had a strong history of effective practice were able to capitalise on the MSSD stimulus. It gave these schools confidence that they could achieve greater things with children. To broaden the effects, CECV considers the MSSD intervention was needed to accelerate and extend the reach of the changes by building a critical mass of more highly accomplished leaders.

**Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative**

Differentiated pedagogical practice emerged across the Victorian Catholic sector over the three years of implementing MSSD outputs, and, with the shift to open space learning and related change in practice, prompted a move from interventions for special cases towards a focus on the rights of all students. There was a reported willingness to work without categorical assessments of students with disability and support for continuing some of the most successful interventions for the general benefit of the students.

Making adjustments at the whole school level made learning far more visible and the ability of schools to measure the effect size of their work. CECV sees this as a major shift as a system: its strategic plan for 2015-2019 embraces a fully inclusive model with its student adjustments strategy and considers that the connectedness of the plan would not have occurred without MSSD.

The introduction of assistive technologies and associated professional learning produced a breakthrough in teachers’ consciousness of what could be achieved with technology and software: they gained personal access to genuinely innovative approaches to pedagogy. There was greater awareness about using learning space designs to enable students with hearing impairments greater freedom of movement to choose spaces that enable them to hear better and interact more effectively with the teacher and other students.

Perhaps the most sustainable effect of the MSSD initiative overall from the CECV perspective is that schools were now talking about teaching and learning and not about the categories of students with disability. Teachers were using contemporary pedagogies that aim to differentiate and personalise learning opportunities for all students. Schools also shifted dramatically in their
views of professional learning. If a course was prepared that addressed the issues schools face, they were now highly likely to take up the opportunity.

17.3 Victoria Independent

Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) is the peak organisation representing 207 Victorian independent schools, which educate almost 130,000 students. The sector accounts for 14.3 percent of all Victorian school students with 177 of the 207 schools receiving government funding support for over 3,000 students with disability. Some of the independent schools have dedicated units concerned with students with disability. ISV is not a central governing or administrative agency, and implementation therefore relies on schools taking up offers to participate in MSSD activities promoted by the association.

A total of $3,955,451 in MSSD funds was allocated to support independent schools in Victoria covering five MSSD outputs. ISV focused this funding on providing training for staff in special education (41%), and in the final year of the initiative on supporting schools with the implementation of the NCCD (27%).

17.3.1 Implementation strategy

ISV focused on programmes aimed at building the skills and capacity of staff in participating schools to support students with disability. The ISV Development Centre played a key role in supporting the initiatives through its regular annual programme of professional learning seminars under the banner of ‘Students with individual needs and learning difficulties’.

The initial phase of MSSD (2012-2013) provided an opportunity for ISV to introduce two professional development programmes — Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment and Junior Great Books — around three selected outputs: developing centres of expertise and expert support (Output 3); providing training for classroom teachers (Output 5); and supporting school principals and school leadership teams (Output 7).

The ISV implementation plan describes the Feuerstein programme as an approach ‘designed to enhance the cognitive modifiability and social adaptability of the individual, so as to increase her/his capacity to benefit from her/his direct exposure to environmental stimuli and life experiences. As such, the programme promotes a dynamic, interactive relationship for students, which facilitates cognitive development.’

The US designed Junior Great Books programme is based on a range of graded short stories linked to teaching strategies designed to more effectively engage students in discussions around its content. The questioning techniques are open-ended, but require strong evidence to support opinions and positions taken by students. Junior Great Books does not target students with disabilities specifically, rather, it takes the view that the teaching strategies and open-ended nature of the questioning techniques apply to all students at all levels, and are particularly relevant for students with disability.
In the extension phase of MSSD (2014) ISV commenced Output 6, providing training of the DSE 2005 along with Output 13, supporting the implementation of the NCCD.

17.3.2 Approaches to the outputs

Developing support centres (Output 3)

In 2013 ISV received accreditation to establish an Authorised Feuerstein Institute Training Centre to support the Instrumental Enrichment programme. The focus in 2013 and 2014 was on the training centre providing support to schools, and setting up a train the trainer model. Ten courses were conducted with the opportunity for follow up working with trainers in the schools, and nine courses were held in 2014. The training requires close monitoring to ensure its effective implementation and was able to concentrate on a small number of schools with the training initially involving two teachers per school. In 2014, 15 educators commenced training as accredited Feuerstein trainers.

Building skills in special education (Output 5)

Feuerstein basic courses provided skills training for more than 100 teachers and 17 schools. These activities, involving co-teaching and coaching, included lesson planning sessions. As there was an increasing number of teachers who had completed Modules One and Two of the course in 2012 and 2013, the focus in 2014 was on teachers completing the full cycle of training by completing Module Three. The Feuerstein training was extended in 2014 to include targeted support for staff working with the most severely disabled students, and for students in the early years of schooling.

The Junior Great Books courses followed a similar pattern of expanded coverage. An initial series of two-day courses for teachers in 2012, ultimately reached 149 teachers from 76 schools with some schools also receiving coaching visits from experienced trainers. Two Junior Great Books courses completed in 2014, allowed a further 43 teachers from 25 schools to complete their training, and six schools benefited from a coaching visit from an experienced trainer.

Training in Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6)

ISV introduced a series of professional learning sessions for classroom teachers as well as specialist school staff, and provided support where necessary for staff who chose to access the University of Canberra DSE 2005 modules online. The Department of Education and Training made the online modules available to all Victorian schools: 45 ISV member schools took advantage of the opportunity in 2014 with many others planning to do so in 2015 in preparation for the implementation of the NCCD.

ISV provided 14 first level training sessions on obligations under DSE 2005 in 2014 focusing on Learning Difficulties, Including Dyslexia. These sessions were offered in locations around Victoria with 549 teachers from 87 schools participating. A follow up advanced course — Dyslexia: Advanced Skills for Support Staff — was taken up by 201 staff. ISV also offered Dyslexia: Specialist Skills for Special Education Coordinators with 58 participants from 48 schools.
participating. The course provided practical strategies for groups of both teachers and learning support staff within schools, particularly those who worked one-on-one with students.

**Supporting school leadership to build teacher capability (Output 7)**

The delivery of both Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment and Junior Great Books involved consultations with principals and leadership teams (Output 7). When trainers visited schools to work with staff, the principal and leadership team were asked to observe the model lesson and where possible provide opportunities for trainers to speak at staff meetings. This encouraged greater support and understanding from school leadership. ISV also supported a group of five schools to act as models of programme implementation to encourage broader adoption of the approaches.

**Supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)**

ISV discussions with schools through the pilot phase of the NCCD in 2012 and 2013 raised concerns that individual classroom teachers did not have sufficient training and expertise in identifying and assessing students with individual needs. In response to this challenge, with MSSD support, ISV established the Student Assessment Project (SAP). The SAP was designed to help schools and teachers make decisions about whether students met the definition of disability under the DDA, and the appropriate form of support required. The longer-term goal of SAP is to build the professional expertise of schools and teachers to enable them to make these judgements for themselves.

Bringing together a team of health professionals and experts working with children with disability ISV designed a Teacher Observation Form to keep track of students’ behaviour, and purchased screening tools for the schools in question. The process then involves ISV’s panel of health professionals interpreting the results for the school and providing a report with strategies for the classroom teacher, including recommended educational adjustments.

ISV also provided professional learning for staff with special education qualifications on a broad range of screening assessment tools, with the aim of building capacity within schools to identify students with individual needs and make educational adjustments.

**17.3.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement**

ISV benchmarks for each output was met or exceeded, particularly for Output 5 where training courses were exceptionally well attended suggesting a high level of demand. In the extension phase of the initiative when ISV commenced Output 6 benchmark targets were almost tripled, providing some form of training in understanding their obligations under DSE 2005 to 549 staff.
Table 17-3: VIC Independent MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>40-70</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>80-100</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>180-240</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>340-400</td>
<td>656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>180-200</td>
<td>549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>School Leadership</td>
<td>75-120</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>130-150</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>200-220</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17.3.4 Overall impact of the MSSD initiative

Summary of outcomes

The successful elements of the MSSD activities as reported by ISV include:

- in-school coaching and co-teaching by experienced trainers
- train the trainer activities using local educators to ensure sustainability
- online communities focused on programme development in schools
- ongoing commitment of principals and leadership teams to the programmes
- increasing requests to have trainers attend ‘Staff Professional Learning Days’.

Demand for training consistently exceeded expectations providing clear evidence that there was a growing realisation in schools that these issues need to be addressed. For example, ISV initially envisaged that 20 schools would participate in the course Dyslexia: Advanced Skills for Support Staff but the number rose to 53 of the 87 schools that had participated in the first stage of the training. ISV reports that schools participating in the University of Canberra DSE 2005 training (Output 6):

...were overwhelmingly positive about the experience. Once connected, schools often required all staff to complete the modules. For people who were not already familiar with the DDA, the University of Canberra modules were considered highly valuable.

ISV also noted in its final report that the response to the professional development sessions on DDA and the DSE 2005 was also overwhelming, with almost 600 school staff receiving direct professional learning support.

Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative

ISV designed the activities funded under the MSSD with the intention that they continue beyond 2014. ISV plans to continue all activities funded under MSSD in 2015, however it noted it was not possible to build long-term plans until current funding issues are resolved.

Given the high demand from schools for both dyslexia and assessment training, ISV planned and advertised further courses for both to run in 2015. It was also investigating whether there are other ways in which the benefits of this training can be extended into schools, as well as providing ongoing support to those teachers who received training in 2014.
ISV had intended to commission research into the benefits of both the Junior Great Books and Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment programmes during the implementation process but recognised that it would have been premature to make a start. The Junior Great Books programme has not been systematically tested in special learning needs environments or with students with disability in a mainstream setting. However, discussions have commenced with international organisations to conduct this research at a later date.

ISV will continue to monitor the depth of knowledge of DDA and DSE 2005 in schools. It expects that the NCCD process will reveal the extent of needs of students with disability that schools until now have not been aware of and that this will prompt close attention from school leadership in the future. In addition to the professional development opportunities ISV will support to schools in completing the collection process and in submitting the appropriate data to the Australian Government including the provision of on-site technical assistance where appropriate. Proposed training and support materials will focus on the ways in which the data collection process and its underlying principles can be used to benefit students with disability, their parents and their teachers. This is intended to assist in embedding the focus on providing educational adjustments as a normal part of effective teacher practice.

**Lessons learned from the MSSD experience**

The initial challenge presented by MSSD was to resolve the tension of shifting funding from individual support to benefiting all students and getting schools to make issues of disability relevant to their context. ISV raised the level of awareness across the member schools of the importance of addressing the needs of students who present with a wide range of learning difficulties and disability. The strategy was effective in making inroads by focusing on multiple sites with the goal of building a critical mass of schools connected through communities of practice, rather than isolated programmes targeted at specific needs.

The MSSD initiative provided an unanticipated opportunity to introduce innovations to independent schools and an impetus for developments around a broader programme of activities promoting inclusive, sustainable and quality learning experiences for students with disability. It also tapped into a great deal of good will amongst schools to improve learning experiences for students with disability.

Aside from the limitation of the funding the most significant barrier to success was the lack of understanding and experience of teachers and support staff who do not work directly with students in the special education field and the prevailing view that this was the domain of specialist teachers. This is particularly problematic in the independent sector where there is no central resource of expertise and each school has full responsibility for students with disability.

ISV predicted that the biggest change over the next five years will be the focus on the DDA/DSE 2005 across all schools and with all teachers. In designing its approach to Output 13, ISV emphasised the opportunity NCCD provided for schools to reflect on their practices and implement any necessary changes as part of a continuous improvement exercise:
To this end, Independent Schools Victoria designed a holistic programme that was designed to use the introduction of the NCCD as a tool to provide advice and support to all levels within schools and to ensure that schools took a whole-of-school approach to the identification of and support for students with disability.
18 Queensland

18.1 Queensland Government

The Department of Education and Training (DET), formerly known as the Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE), is responsible for more than 70 percent of all Queensland school students with more than 515,000 students in 1,234 schools. In 2011, over 23,000 school students were identified with a disability in Queensland state schools. Those identified for targeted resources through the Education Adjustment Program cover six disability categories of Autism Spectrum Disorder, Hearing Impairment, Intellectual Impairment, Physical Impairment, Speech-Language Impairment, and Vision Impairment. Other students who have a disability, as defined by the DDA, are supported through an array of student support services allocated to regions and schools.

A total of $49,657,157 in MSSD funds was allocated to support Queensland government schools covering six outputs. DET used the majority of the funds across Output 7, supporting leadership teams (18%), Output 8, adapting the curriculum (37%) and Output 11, strengthening skills of paraprofessionals (17%).

18.1.1 Implementation strategy

The implementation and oversight of the MSSD initiative in DET is the responsibility of the Director, Student Support, State Schools – Operations. An MSSD Management Group representing schools, regions and central office areas was established in 2012 to guide the implementation of the MSSD Project. The project team completed extensive consultation with key stakeholder groups and identified the key strategies and individual projects to be undertaken coordinated by seven MSSD regional implementation teams.

DET commenced the MSSD initiative with an overarching set of four strategies: building workforce capacity; better teaching support; customised curriculum resources; and focused training. The consultations identified five major DET initiatives, which were then arranged around the initial five MSSD outputs selected to support the four broad strategies. In 2013 DET drew its strategy together with a detailed matrix of its MSSD activities.

18.1.2 Approaches to the outputs

Providing assistive technology training (Output 2)

The initial implementation plan proposed training to teachers on the development of digital literacy for students with intellectual impairment. By 2013 this progressed to focusing on targeted professional development for teachers — delivered jointly by Apple Australia, Spectronics, and DET specialists — to support students with disability to access the Australian Curriculum and specific training in the use of tablet devices to assist curriculum access.
The project developed further with the support of a network of 20 Regional Teachers (Assistive Technology) in 14 centres across the state with a wide range of activities including: web conferences, online resources, training in the use of iPads, and workshops for teacher aides supporting the attainment of Certificate of Digital Practice.

Training was provided to more than 10,773 staff from more than 80 percent of Queensland state schools in the area of assistive technology to improve curriculum engagement of students with disability.

**Developing support centres (Output 3)**

The implementation plan proposed establishing a support centre to guide best practice for the growing number of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and for students with challenging behaviours arising from their disabilities. In 2013 two centres had been established via partnerships with universities: one located in far north Queensland and the other in south-east Queensland. The role of the centres was to engage leading experts to develop evidence-based resources, and deliver targeted support and professional development for school staff. A total of four Centres of Expertise have now been established under the MSSD initiative.

- The Far North Queensland Region’s Centre has engaged with Griffith University in a pilot project with three schools to build their capacity to support successful outcomes for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders. It has supported over 1000 staff from 61 state schools.
- South East Region’s ASD Centre of Expertise, in collaboration with Bond University, has provided direct support to a total of 1317 staff from 74 Queensland state schools.
- North Coast Region’s ‘Inclusive Classrooms’ EdStudio Centre of Expertise was developed to support implementation of the P-12 curriculum, assessment and reporting framework for all Queensland state schools.
- The Mental Health Hub of Capability Centre of Expertise provides support to school staff to keep students with mental health needs engaged in learning and resources for all state schools.

**Supporting school leadership to build teacher capability (Output 7)**

DET set itself the task of building its workforce capacity by supporting school principals and school leadership teams to strengthen teachers’ ability to assist students with disability. The initial proposal was for a professional development package involving online training for principals to help staff better understand relevant issues and trends, including complex case management strategies across multiple agencies and the national DSE 2005. This was developed through 2013 into a comprehensive suite of connected elements under the umbrella of the Quality Schools, Inclusive Leaders (QSIL) project focusing on whole school inclusive practices.

**Quality Schools, Inclusive Leaders (QSIL) project**

The QSIL Leadership Professional Development Package is pivotal to the DET approach. DET engaged Professor Loretta Giorcelli, an internationally recognised expert, to develop and implement a professional development package for principals and leadership teams. Titled
‘Effective Inclusive Practices’, the package was delivered to more than 3500 staff across the state. The two-day programme includes a subsequent action research project in each school and a three-month report back day highlighting the school’s progress and approach to change.

The implementation of phase one of the leadership project concluded in July 2014. Almost all principals and leadership teams successfully engaged in a variety of professional development activities including complex case management, the DSE 2005 online courses, and the QSIL two-day workshop programme.

Disability Standards for Education 2005 eLearning courses

The University of Canberra DSE 2005 eLearning training package was purchased in the first phase of the MSSD initiative. DET contributed extensively to the development and testing of the first three compliance modules and took responsibility to assist with research and development for the Junior Secondary module. Queensland schools have accessed all five courses available within the suite of materials. Completion of the DSE 2005 modules is a mandatory prerequisite for all leadership teams.

Complex case management

The DET approach to Output 7 also included a series of activities through a Complex Case Management training package for regions, including training of regional facilitators, to ensure that the specific requirements for students with disability are met. The focus is on schools providing reasonable adjustments, connecting services and multiple agency case management. A Guide to Complex Case Management was developed and piloted with 12 special schools, and regionally-based Complex Case Support Officers (CCSO) were employed to provide mentoring and advice to build capability to review and implement systems of support, intervention and referral for students with significant support needs.

Supporting teachers assess learning and adapt curriculum (Output 8)

The Output 8 activities initially proposed by DET were characterised as an ASD Curriculum Adjustment Project aimed at ensuring that students with disability are engaged in the curriculum and achieve appropriate educational outcomes. The implementation plan proposed a centralised student focused planning tool to help coordinate individual support plans for students with disability, the development of models for differentiating curriculum materials and teaching styles and staff scholarships for graduate studies in ASD.

DET also purchased licences for OnlineTraining Ltd (OLT) modules to provide training to staff on differentiation and the provision of curriculum adjustments. It also trained 435 trained tutors to lead the implementation of the online courses, delivering face-to-face sessions to classroom teachers in primary, secondary and special schools. Each region employed a regional tutor to coordinate the delivery of courses and to maintain the consistency and rigour of the training. DET engaged the New South Wales Department of Education and Training to train a core group of tutors on the use of these resources and provide access to New South Wales training material.
Ninety teachers were offered Graduate Certificate Scholarships in Autism Studies established with Griffith University’s Autism Centre of Excellence. This aimed to improve teacher knowledge of ways to support students with ASD and also to assist their schools and colleagues to improve student learning outcomes.

A transition project was also incorporated under Output 8 to respond to school, community and regional needs to strengthen transition of students with disability into school, from primary into secondary school, and to post-school opportunities. Critical components of this project included a review of the DET School to Post-School Transition for Students with Disabilities online course, the coordination of a statewide ASDAN licence, and the development of a consistent statewide approach to transition to school.

Two existing information systems, OneSchool and the Adjustment Information Management System (AIMS), were integrated and modified to provide a one-stop shop for information regarding students with disability and readily accessible professional information to support and enhance student learning.

**Engaging paraprofessionals (Output 11)**

DET commenced Output 11 with the establishment of a Teacher Aide Reference Group to consult widely with school stakeholders to plan and prioritise the professional learning needs across Queensland. Seven disability-specific online interactive modules were designed: Teacher Aide General Information; Autism Spectrum Disorder; Intellectual Impairment; Hearing Impairment; Vision Impairment; Physical Impairment; and Speech Language Impairment. An additional course on Understanding Disability and Behaviour has been produced.

Approximately 120 scholarships were offered to enable teacher aides to gain qualifications in a Certificate IV Education Support with disability electives. The suite of seven online courses allows Queensland teacher aides to gain recognition of prior learning if they wish to undertake further qualifications. By the time of the final progress report early in 2015, training activities directed towards enhancing practice in classrooms for paraprofessionals was close to reaching 22,000 course completions by teacher aides across the state.

**Supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)**

DET included training to support schools with the implementation of the NCCD as an output in 2014. Activities included the development of a centralised data collection tool, professional development package (Whole School Approach to student learning) to support schools in the application of NCCD methodology and understandings, identification and training of personnel to deliver the package, and rollout and delivery of the professional development package. In 2014 a total of 66 percent of Queensland state schools took part in the data collection. All DET schools will be included in 2015.
18.1.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

Table 18-1: QLD Government MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>200-300</td>
<td>8,536</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>8,536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>50-70</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>School Leadership</td>
<td>100-150</td>
<td>3,507</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>4,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>600-700</td>
<td>12,027</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>18,146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Teacher Aides</td>
<td>300-350</td>
<td>6,822</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>21,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>956</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All DET benchmarks were exceeded with Outputs 2, 7, 8, and 11 reaching far beyond expectations. High levels of benchmark performance were most apparent for those outputs with clear links to enhanced daily classroom practice.

18.1.4 Impact of the MSSD initiative

Summary of outcomes

By December 2014 the DET implementation teams had successfully engaged over 95 percent of Queensland state schools with more than 44,000 staff having participated in one or more of the MSSD initiatives offered.

Outputs with clear links to enhanced daily classroom practice were the most popular, for example:

- Training for teachers and teacher aides in adaptive technology (Output 2) made schools and teachers more aware of the range and use of highly specialised and more general technology to access and engage with the Australian Curriculum.

- The establishment of four Centres of Expertise (Output 3) provided direct support to schools with advice and delivery professional learning activities specific to students with disability. These centres also provide whole school approaches and referral action plans to support students documentation, guidelines for parent engagement, and resources for teachers.

- The QSIL initiative (Output 7), which DET considers has been the most effective element contributing to the successful implementation of MSSD, involved almost all principals in Stage 1. The leadership package gave school leadership teams the confidence to address barriers they might have faced in implementing new strategies. These included mentoring and advice to principals and school leadership teams with complex case management processes and training for school staff in the use of the case management tool.

- Schools have embedded the lessons from the OLT training modules into their practices under the DET model of implementation. Regionally based tutors supported teachers in their training which has created a critical mass of teachers confident about their approaches in the classroom.

- Approaches to student assessment and curriculum adaptations (Output 8) provided tailored materials and training opportunities that have built strong expectations and
improved capability of teachers to make adjustments catering for individual student needs and enhancing differentiation of classroom practice.

- Tailored materials and training opportunities for paraprofessionals (Output 11) has enhanced the role of teacher aides as integral to effective classroom operation and acknowledged the importance of their role and relationships in supporting students with disability. Until MSSD paraprofessionals had been somewhat in the background and their potential in the classroom underutilised. They are now recognised as a major resource to advance the inclusiveness strategy.

Other immediate effects of the MSSD initiative included the consolidation of communication technologies into the OneSchool site with enhanced functionality for students with disability. It provided case notes on individual students made available only to relevant people including principals with appropriate sensitivity protocols.

The MSSD extension period resulted in an acceleration of the take-up of professional opportunities by school staff on most outputs. It also extended Output 8 into significant expansion of transition activities to support senior level learners with disability and further developed school inclusive education in Queensland schools through coaching and mentoring with a staff member identified as an inclusivity mentor to build the capability of classroom teachers.

Given the initial delays in the rollout of MSSD in Queensland, DET planned for many of the activities to continue into the first half of 2015 including:

- ongoing provision of OLT modules
- further development of the OneSchool site ‘Student Plan’
- employment of a Guidance Officer Mental Health in each region
- involving all Queensland State Schools in NCCD with active leadership from principals
- introduction of mentors to support teachers to build inclusive practices in their classrooms.

Lessons learned

The distinctive strength of the activities in Queensland State Schools has been in the attention given to project planning and devolution of responsibility for implementation to the regions. DET was able to cover a lot of ground under each output, which gave it considerable flexibility to pursue areas of strength as they emerged. The focus was sharpened in the final 18 months of the initiative around the cornerstone QSIL programme and as it evolved other unifying projects emerged which, while not proposed in the initial implementation, were aligned with the original set of outputs and recast in response to the rapidly changing context. QSIL and the OneSchool portal effectively provided statewide supports to anchor the MSSD outputs.

A major lesson from the DET approach to implementing MSSD is that aligning activities under whole of state projects has a powerful unifying effect and generates greater support at all levels. This creates a dynamic whereby the whole is considerably more than the sum of its parts. DET notes it has learned that actively promoting the work underway pays off in terms of gaining
support and maintaining enthusiasm at all levels. It requires a constant effort to get the message across to all regions in the face of their competing priorities, and to maintain high visibility for the strategy.

**Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative**

DET has committed to three specific actions to ensure sustainability:

- contracting with ASDAN United Kingdom (UK) for access to a range of resources which support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum for students in transitions
- purchasing licences for online learning (Disability Standards for Education and OnlineTraining Ltd), software (JAWS & MAGic) and ASDAN curriculum resources
- developing products from the MSSD projects containing best practice research, case studies and tools.

DET plans to reinforce the need to embed the changes from MSSD starting in 2015. A range of meetings will be held with assistant regional directors to reinforce the outputs and outcomes of MSSD.

Major projects are continuing throughout 2015 to support the completion of the MSSD initiative. The transition from school to post-school further education or employment is an issue to be pursued in 2015. The main challenge is to get some consistency in approaches to post-school transitions for students with disability across the state. A project is also underway to investigate issues for students with disability making the transition from Year 6 to Year 7 (high school).

Capacity and capability will be supported with continuing appointments in each region for 2015 of a Regional Coordinator, Project Officer Online Training, Guidance Officer Mental Health, and Complex Case Support Officer. These positions are designed to support the regions as they embed the MSSD philosophy into everyday practice.

The QSIL programme will continue to support 42 school leadership teams from across the state through a model of coaching, mentoring and work force planning. Stage two of QSIL will have significant ongoing ramifications for all school principals. DET will target an additional 42 schools to encourage further in-depth involvement in strategies to improve learning for students with disability. With all information technology initiatives now under One School, DET expects significant improvements in the connections between the various initiatives.

More generally, DET will continue to make explicit connections across projects, to ensure that implementation does not occur in ‘silos’ so that the medium- to long-term sustainability of the initiative is assured. The linchpin of this strategy lies in building cultural change through a fully inclusive concept of school leadership and building on enhanced capabilities and practices for ‘pillars of expertise’ in specific schools to create a critical mass of school clusters and staff networks.
In the longer term it is anticipated that students with disability will typically enrol in their local school and that all teachers will have sufficient knowledge and skills to adapt their curriculum to match the learning needs of the students. Teachers will be able to readily find the information they need about the nature of the disability and the most effective approaches to teaching and will be more confident in their ability to improve the learning opportunities of each child.

18.2 Queensland Catholic

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) represents 22 Catholic schooling authorities (five diocesan offices and 17 religious institute colleges) covering 296 Catholic schools in Queensland with around 143,000 students in total.

A total of $7,986,609 in MSSD funds was allocated to support QCEC schools covering eight MSSD outputs. QCEC concentrated the larger proportion of funds on Output 8, supporting teachers to adapt the curriculum (35%), Output 4, schools coordinating with allied health professionals (20%), and Output 12, supporting students with transitions (17%).

The implementation of the MSSD initiative has been managed in Queensland at three levels:

- QCEC provides guidelines for designated authorities and has responsibility for compliance with the Australian Government Department of Education MSSD planning and reporting requirements.
- Catholic schooling authorities provide detailed planning and information and support to schools.
- Schools or school clusters/networks implement project activity and activities at the school level.

18.2.1 Implementation strategy

With the agreement of the 22 Catholic schooling authorities the initial 12 outputs were narrowed down to eight outputs. Each authority received a share of the MSSD funds. Some authorities were focused on a limited number of outputs to gain maximum impact while others opted for breadth and stretched their capacity to cover a diverse range of local issues. The MSSD implementation process for QCEC essentially worked to plan although some initial modifications to the skills training programme were needed when more than five times the number of teachers anticipated enrolled.

Catholic schooling authorities typically took a different approach making use of a combination of two or three approaches to implement MSSD strategies and projects for Outputs 4, 6, and 8, including:

- action to clarify goals and potential implementation issues
- train the trainer (perhaps with a facilitator training component) to build capabilities
- school projects undertaken with systemic guidance or in a process of supported school planning.
Most of the strategies adopted for the remaining MSSD outputs (5, 9, 11 and 12) emphasise enhanced practice for teachers or teacher aides based on use of new materials or skills acquired through training, professional development or coaching and mentoring opportunities.

In 2014 QCEC added Output 13, support for the implementation of the NCCD.

18.2.2 Approaches to the outputs

Coordinating with health/allied health professionals (Output 4)

Queensland Catholic schools used a number of strategies to strengthen school and teacher capacity to support students with disability by working collaboratively with allied health professionals. The final sector progress report highlights the following elements:

- networking of teachers with collegial health professionals
- documenting strategies for teachers working with students with disability
- engaging speech and language pathologists (part-time) to support schools/classroom teachers and other support staff, families, and students with disability
- engaging a team leader to provide management, professional supervision and improved coordination of supports to students with a disability.

The authorities found MSSD instrumental in stimulating or accelerating major improvements in regional and remote areas particularly where speech pathologists were involved. This resulted in significant capacity building in the areas, although for some it was difficult to recruit speech pathologists at all let alone those who had experience working with schools.

Building skills in special education (Output 5)

For Output 5 Catholic schooling authorities offered financial sponsorship or study support for teachers and learning enrichment teachers to undertake postgraduate study or other programmes to build their skills in special education. In the first stage of implementation (2012-2013) 253 teachers took up this offer of support. This offer of support continued until December 2014.

Training in Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6)

Catholic schooling authorities provided a range of professional learning opportunities for school staff in DSE 2005 training facilitated by Diocesan and school staff as well as external specialists. Brisbane Catholic Education staff designed a set of short, clearly contextualised videos on key aspects of Catholic schooling policies and procedures affecting students with disabilities. This professional development package for DSE 2005 training ‘Understand your obligation’ was made available to staff on the Brisbane Catholic schools website portal.

More than 450 hard copies of the information package were provided to Queensland Catholic schools (200 copies were also requested by Queensland independent schools), and there are strong indications that all relevant staff are currently making use of the videos and
accompanying materials. QCEC also reports that school administrators have a clearer understanding of their responsibilities for ensuring that improved practices result.

Supporting teachers assess learning and adapt curriculum (Output 8)

Authorities that implemented activities concerned with assessment of learning levels and adaptation of curriculum focused mainly on early years to years 6 and 7. The strategies included provision of professional development workshops, coaching and mentoring, collaborative planning in team support meetings and follow-up meetings with individual teachers. QCEC reports that 1,310 members of school staff participated in some form of professional development in this area over the implementation of the MSSD.

Catholic schooling authorities supported networking with feeder schools to establish a process for assessing the learning requirements for enrolling students. Evidence of student needs and assessment of their learning levels was guided by teacher ‘pods’ (teams) which developed reflective and collaborative practices to enhance pedagogical delivery.

Supporting teachers to modify lesson plans (Output 9)

Across the sector activities for Output 9 built upon work completed for Output 8, with a sharp increase overall in the number of teachers with skills in modifying lesson plans for students with disability. Again the specific strategies varied around the authorities. Most used external consultants and their own personnel for workshops and mentoring sessions to support teachers in making adjustment or modifying programmes for students. They also shared best practice, resources and assessment tools, and provided support to increase teacher confidence in implementing inclusive strategies and adjustments in curriculum and pedagogy. The final level of teacher participation was double that anticipated with over 2,500 staff being supported.

Engaging paraprofessionals (Output 11)

In the first phase of MSSD implementation 160 teacher aides participated in training programmes designed to extend their capabilities for supporting students with disabilities, about twice the number expected. The training programmes included Certificate 3 studies and a Diploma in Flexible Learning delivered through TAFE, as well as other forms of training such as workshops targeting specific disabilities including, for example, understanding autism, anxiety management strategies, personal care for students with severe disabilities, and training in the use of assistive technologies.

Authorities encouraged teacher aides to work collaboratively with classroom teachers on the effective use of assistive technology and applications. By December 2014, 162 teacher aides had participated in some form of training to strengthen their skills to support students with disability.

Supporting student transitions (Output 12)

QCEC documents a wide range of strategies to support student transitions including:
• evaluating set goals and practices relating to transition focused education
• extending and modifying current transition strategies/practices
• establishing new approaches to transition management based on evaluation data
• establishing the role of a Transition Officer to support school transition teams (year 7 and post school transition).

Schools also developed tools to monitor and track student progress throughout the years of senior schooling including data on students’ structured work placements, training, accreditation and assessment and other disability related employment and training needs. This was facilitated by using network days between primary and secondary schools to plan for transition needs of students. Professional development also focused on post-school opportunities for students with disability, work readiness programmes, and transition planning and monitoring of students.

In addition, Catholic schooling authorities worked on transition strategies with outside agencies such as Disability Employment Services, TAFE, School Community Industry Partnership Service, and Endeavour Foundation. It also engaged outside consultants to deliver information on career pathways, established parent support groups, and provided access to pathways coordinators for work readiness programmes.

Amongst the Catholic colleges there are examples for Output 12 of improved use of school-based data, Senior Education and Training (SET) plans, work experience, showcasing of best procedures and practices, and liaison with external agencies regarding employment options. By the end of 2014 QCEC reported that 410 students had been supported to transition effectively between stages of schooling or into further education or employment.

Supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)

Queensland Catholic schools commenced work on Output 13 in 2014, supporting 272 schools with the implementation of the NCCD. Diocesan education offices had key roles in working with schools in collecting data related to students with disability using a number of strategies including providing professional development, assistance in setting adjustment levels and individual support plans, and sharing best practice of data gathering and evidence.

18.2.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

Table 18-2: QLD Catholic MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>140-200</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>700-800</td>
<td>1,837</td>
<td>1,200-1,300</td>
<td>2,215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>450-650</td>
<td>1,112</td>
<td>850-950</td>
<td>1,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>790-1,040</td>
<td>1,377</td>
<td>1,140-1,240</td>
<td>2,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Teacher Aides</td>
<td>65-75</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>90-95</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>115-185</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>350-400</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>60-200</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Catholic schooling authorities used the extension phase to significantly increase its benchmarks and met or well exceeded the benchmarks by the end of 2014. It exceeded its reach for Output 6 with almost double the proposed number of staff participating in some training. Output 8 participation experienced rapid growth in implementation numbers, with the final number exceeding the upper limits of the expected benchmark by more than one-third. For Output 9 over 2,500 teachers participated in some sort of training, again double the targeted benchmark.

18.2.4 Impact of the MSSD initiative

Summary of outcomes

The MSSD funding enabled Catholic schooling authorities to set procedures in place and provided confidence in identifying ‘what we can do, and what our teachers can do’. The authorities have been extremely positive about the activities to coordinate with health professionals (Output 4). This has been particularly well received in regional and remote areas where speech pathologists have supported capacity building around speech and language in the schools.

The majority of Catholic schooling authorities had taken DSE 2005 training (Output 6) on board by 2014 and in some cases developed their own training packages. Some stand-alone schools provided resources designed by them for the school portal. By the end of 2014 QCEC was confident that all authorities had engaged staff in professional development activities to improve their understanding of the disability standards. Some authorities had produced training packages while a few individual schools developed standalone resources for staff, for example on their school portal.

Developing the skills needed to modify lesson plans (Output 9) linked closely to the adaption of curriculum in almost all dioceses. In at least one authority every member of staff had participated in training activities. For paraprofessionals (Output 11) the training also opened up new networks and generated collaborative efforts between schools. In some Catholic schooling authorities teacher aides completed short courses in specific areas of disability.

By the end of 2014 dedicated school staff had provided support for student transitions (Output 12). Tools are now available to monitor and track students to ‘ensure no one gets lost’. Catholic schooling authorities provides Equity Services planning to cover entry to the Prep Year and the Prep Year to Year 1 and again from Year 6 to secondary school to assist with these major transition periods.

Almost all Catholic authorities in Queensland committed to the NCCD (Output 13). The data collection tool was central to the professional development programmes but each authority took its own approach. Most school staff had previously undertaken training in DDA and then DSE 2005.
Lessons Learned

Given the number and diversity of the 22 Catholic schooling authorities the selection of outputs at each of the three levels may have been more sharply focused had there been more time to consider and discuss the likely impact of the options in the early roll out of the MSSD to the jurisdictions. Some members were more strategically focused on a few outputs while others stretched themselves across multiple outputs to address a wide range of identified locally specific issues.

A large number of teachers enrolled in additional skills training in special education in the hope of gaining recognition for further qualifications. This applied particularly to paraprofessionals who engaged in Output 11 professional learning. An important feature of the approach to the MSSD across the Catholic schooling authorities is the involvement of paraprofessionals and teacher aides. The progression from participation in professional learning and training opportunities to involvement in collaborative planning and onto engagement in enhanced classroom practice for improved student outcomes are likely to remain key medium to longer-term challenges in many Catholic schools. There are, however, some very positive signs arising from the both the range of schools and staff involved, and the extent of innovation apparent in some of the strategies adopted.

Authorities also found that the key to success in transitions for students with disability is the involvement of parents in partnership with teachers in the transition process. It appears that for some authorities reporting processes for students with disability are gaining attention as models to be adapted for all students. Overall, QCEC considered the most successful approach to emerge from the MSSD initiative was the focus on all school staff participating in professional development on students with disability: ‘no longer is it someone else’s problem but that all staff share the responsibility of supporting the students’.

Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative

Catholic schooling authorities responded positively and productively to the MSSD initiative to address priority concerns and challenges arising from the growth in both numbers and expectations for students with disability, especially though not exclusively for those with ASD issues. Since anticipated benchmarks were achieved, the key presenting challenge will be one of maintaining and building upon the momentum for change in the schooling of students with disability that has been established in many Queensland Catholic schools and colleges.

For 2015 most authorities will have in place professional development strategies to induct new staff into the DSE 2015 requirements and some plan to develop refresher resources and workshops. While diocese were reluctant to use the University of Canberra modules in the initial phase given the expense relative to other commitments and uncertainty as to its viability and applicability, some are now considering the possibility for the future.

With a five year horizon QCEC believes most schooling authorities will continue to work with the current documents and resources and develop them further around professional learning
programmes for staff. Most Catholic schooling authorities have now established networks, resources and strategies to maintain the activities generated under MSSD.

Some allied health staff, especially speech and language specialists, will continue to be involved and are likely to broaden the scope of their role. It is also likely that the differentiated curriculum will extend beyond students with disability to include a broader range of students with learning difficulties.

QCEC is confident that the Catholic sector has professional development plans in place to induct new staff and provide refresher opportunities for existing staff.

18.3 Queensland Independent

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) acts as a service agency for a wide diversity of member schools. It currently represents and supports 186 independent schools educating over 110,000 Queensland students. Currently, 159 of these schools support students with disability.

A total of $4,113,728 in MSSD funds was allocated to ISQ schools. These funds were used to support six MSSD outputs with a fairly even distribution of funds between the outputs overall with some emphasis of funding on Output 4, coordinating with allied health professionals (20%) and Output 11, engaging and up skilling paraprofessionals (20%). In the extension phase (2014), 60 percent of the additional funds were allocated to support the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13).

18.3.1 Implementation strategy

After consultation with the member schools ISQ focused its selection of outputs on professional development for teachers in the use of assistive technology (Output 2), greater access to allied health services (Output 4), training in the DSE 2005 (Output 6), support for teachers to develop or modify lesson plans (Output 9), and employment of additional paraprofessionals (Output 11). Four of the five priority MSSD outputs nominated by ISQ overlapped with those of the Catholic sector in Queensland. The two sectors collaborated on several MSSD professional learning and training opportunities.

In the MSSD extension phase ISQ decided to focus more emphatically on providing access to allied health services (Output 4), developing paraprofessionals (11), and implementing the NCCD (Output 13).

18.3.2 Approaches to the outputs

Providing assistive technology training (Output 2)

ISQ engaged an expert from the Disability Services Support Unit (Education Queensland) to develop teachers’ skills using assistive technology. Schools involved in an ISQ Planning for All Learners project shared their stories of best practice and prepared case studies highlighting the
use of assistive technology to improve learning outcomes for students with disability. The case studies were uploaded onto the ISQ website for sharing with all Queensland independent schools. A number of professional learning activities focused on specific assistive technologies teachers could use to support students with disability in their classroom.

ISQ also facilitated six action research projects with a specific focus on using assistive technology to raise literacy and numeracy outcomes for students with disability. The projects were based on the use of ipads, Read and Write Gold, Texthelp and Dragon Naturally Speaking. Schools involved with the projects worked in a multi-disciplinary team of classroom teachers, learning support specialists, IT specialists, teacher aides and school leaders.

Professional learning was provided for project participants, including a 2 day workshop showcasing a variety of cutting edge assistive technology available for schools, and workshops based on Universal Design for Learning, a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. A train the trainer system was implemented at school level to assist with the dissemination of IT knowledge and skills gained through the workshops, and a mentoring system was also put in place with the consultant who provided email support on request. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected by the schools to measure outcomes against targets, with the final reports published on the ISQ website.

Coordinating with health/allied health professionals (Output 4)

More than 80 ISQ schools engaged a range of health professionals — physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, educational psychologists and counsellors — to provide expert support related to addressing the needs of individual students. They provided advice on adjustments, sensory awareness programmes, emotional regulation programmes, cognitive behaviour therapy, explanations of results, findings of formal tests and professional learning sessions. They also assisted teachers with the preparation of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and assessments to inform curriculum planning and presented professional development sessions at whole school staff days.

Training in Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6)

ISQ organised metropolitan and regional one-day workshops and a series of webinars led by an expert from the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) for school leaders and their staff to improve their understanding of the DSE 2005. A webinar session around the DSE 2005 was made available for remote schools.

With the advice of the QUT expert, and in partnership with Brisbane Catholic Education, ISQ also developed supplementary resources to support compliance with the provisions of the DDA. These were made available on the ISQ website through a dedicated webpage. Every independent school in Queensland received a copy of the training package to help them meet their legal obligations.
Supporting teachers to modify lesson plans (Output 9)

ISQ provided a range of professional learning opportunities, centrally and regionally, on specific areas of disability, and the specific modifications and adjustments to lesson plans required for improving student learning outcomes. The workshops were designed for teachers, teacher aides and school leaders by consultants and specialists with the main goal of improving pedagogy, engagement and planning for students with disability. The topics included, for example:

- Supporting students with speech language impairment.
- Effective classroom management for teachers of students with disability.
- Special Education: Differentiated Curriculum.
- Catering for diverse learners.

Engaging paraprofessionals (Output 11)

ISQ recognised that many students with disability have been marginalised in the past through isolation and it therefore focused the engagement of paraprofessionals on responding to diversity through inclusive practices. An RTO specialising in paraprofessional training was commissioned to provide a workshop programme for teacher aides leading to Certificate IV Education Support. The workshops were complemented in each school in consultation and collaboration with teachers.

Supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)

In collaboration with the Catholic sector ISQ worked towards a consistent approach to the NCCD process for non-government schools in Queensland. In 2014, ISQ launched a series of initiatives to support schools in establishing appropriate processes, policies and professional learning experiences to enhance the implementation of the NCCD. It also assisted schools to adjust integrated data systems within their own school operating systems to inform decision-making processes for students with disability and evaluate individual achievement of students on modified education plans.

A series of workshops on the NCCD were run statewide in Brisbane and eight regional centres. The workshops focused on developing a common understanding throughout the independent schools sector of the definition of disability, identification processes and implications for school practice under the DSE 2005. The workshops gave school leaders and teachers an opportunity to undertake moderation exercises with their peers around adjustments and accommodations. A dedicated webpage containing resources and research materials was developed on the ISQ website to provide further support and clarification for schools.
18.3.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

ISQ exceeded all their benchmarks with a notable achievement in the numbers of teacher aides engaged and trained in working with students with disability.

Table 18-3: QLD Independent MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>75 - 80</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Teacher Aides</td>
<td>145-150</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>180 - 190</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>100 - 150</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18.3.4 Overall impact of the MSSD initiative

Summary of outcomes

Increased access to allied health services emerged as perhaps the most significant outcome of MSSD for ISQ schools. ISQ schools were particularly attracted to projects that strengthened support to students through the use of health and allied health professionals (Output 4). Most ISQ schools are too small to provide guidance and support staff but with MSSD resources they were able to gain access to expert support. The MSSD initiative supplemented the higher costs for allied health professional support and also encouraged schools to take diverse and often creative approaches to engage allied health professionals with strategies ranging from implementing whole school practices through to advice for individual students.

ISQ reported that remote and regional school access to specialists was greatly enhanced by the MSSD initiative. It also helped break what ISQ identified as a ‘service deficit’ in remote and regional schools, allowing improved pedagogical practices and immediate verification of the need for extra support.

The implementation of school professional learning sessions by allied health professionals ensured a whole school collaborative approach to student teaching and learning in a sustainable manner. ISQ noted an increased focus on school inclusion practices as a result of the workshops, which was evident from the number of phone clarifications that the ISQ office has received regarding enrolment and curriculum adjustments. The use of teacher aides closely complemented the increased involvement of health professionals in ISQ schools. The quality of their engagement improved significantly following the provision of opportunities for certificated professional development (Output 11). ISQ progress reported also showed a significant increase in the number of teacher aides engaged in the education of students with disability over the three years of MSSD initiative and noted extremely positive feedback from staff and parents: the latter were particularly enthusiastic about their child being able to access the curriculum more freely through use of teacher aide support.
The close collaboration with the Catholic sector for DSE 2005 training (Output 6) assisted ISQ to successfully reach a diverse range of independent schools along the regional coast of Queensland, which is also likely to pay subsequent dividends with staff making use of the Brisbane Catholic Education’s video materials after their distribution to all Queensland independent schools.

Output 13 was a key strategy of the MSSD initiative and involved professional learning opportunities, resource development and policy development for independent schools. There was a high level of uptake in activities under NCCD with 67 percent of independent schools in Queensland engaged in events funded under MSSD in 2014 and shared processes and resources put in practice based on these experiences to benefit a wider cohort of students with disability. The immediate priority for ISQ in 2015 is to continue to support schools with the NCCD rollout. This includes visits to individual schools. The issue of equity across the sectors in Queensland is being addressed through cross sectoral meetings held jointly with the government and Catholic offices to ensure that all schools are getting the same information.

DSE 2005 training (Output 6) was linked directly to the NCCD rollout (Output 13), which will continue in 2015.

Training for assistive technology use (Output 2) was particularly popular with ISQ teachers and, through the links established with the Department of Education Queensland, the new learnings are likely to be sustained. This will be done in part through the focus on making the most of existing systems and software which teachers and parents are already familiar with, such as standard word processing.

ISQ was aware that many teachers were not confident developing lesson plans that suit the needs of students with disability. The projects under Output 9 and related activities around other outputs enabled schools identify the direction of change needed to maximise achievements of students with disability through provision of professional development to assist teachers to identify and cater for students with disability.

**Lessons learned**

ISQ reported that the outcomes from the MSSD initiative were positive, particularly for schools that received funds directly. ISQ took particular care to ensure that the MSSD funds got to schools in a timely manner and that it enabled them to implement their plans. This enabled schools to engage allied health practitioners to work with teachers and build sustainable relationships with schools and parents.

From the perspective of independent schools in Queensland one of the greatest needs for the future is for more resources to be dedicated to gaining support from health and allied health professionals in the classroom. As with most other authorities around Australia, ISQ found that access to specialists for students with disability living some distance from population centres in regional and rural areas has proved to be more difficult to both achieve and to sustain.
Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative

A significant outcome of MSSD with potential long-term benefits was the positive shift in the commitment of principals in independent schools. A briefing early in 2015 in Brisbane was sold out and DSE 2005 refresher workshops to be conducted around the state in 2015 are also expected to be in great demand. ISQ will continue to provide teacher aide workshops and related programmes and will maintain its website training resources that all schools can access, to share and use for whole school professional learning.

In the longer term it is expected that there will be an improvement in standards and positive outcomes for students with disability translating into post-school outcomes for further education or employment. ISQ acknowledges how positively and enthusiastically schools have responded to the opportunities to improve the support they provide for students with disability in their school. ISQ reports that:

... feedback and data collected through a final survey indicates not only a continued increase of participation by independent schools but at a deeper level a broader understanding and commitment to implementation of inclusive practices within our schools.
19 South Australia

19.1 South Australia Government

The MSSD initiative was implemented within the government sector of South Australia through the role of a specific team (with a manager, five project coordinators and one support staff) within Student, Aboriginal & Family Services in the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD).

With approximately 167,000 students enrolled across 555 schools, the MSSD initiative focused on improving the capabilities of 11,000 teachers, 2,750 school leaders and other non-teaching staff such as teacher aides to better meet the learning needs of students with disability in South Australian Government schools.

A total of $17,977,885 of MSSD funds was allocated to support South Australian government schools covering eight outputs. DECD allocated 45 percent of these funds into the Lead/Buddy Schools programme within Output 8, supporting staff in assessing students and adapting the curriculum.

19.1.1 Implementation strategy

The South Australian Government strategies for implementing the MSSD initiative were selected following stakeholder consultations about the menu of outputs and were informed by the Department’s Special Education Taskforce (2009-2010), the Department’s 2012-2016 Strategic Plan and the Government of South Australia’s 2011 Social Inclusion Board’s Disability Blue Print, Strong Voices.

The South Australian Government’s plan for MSSD centred on strategies to:

- improve the capacity and skills of classroom teachers, paraprofessionals and school leaders
- build better relationships with families of students with disabilities and create more inclusive schools and stronger communities to enable the delivery of a more effective approach to supporting students with disability with complex needs
- provide assistive learning and communication technologies for students with disability and targeted training and support for teachers, school services officers and parents.

The initial implementation plan identified eight individual strategies designed to have maximum impact across the life of the National Partnership Agreement with the aim to improve teaching and learning for students with disability by attending to the:

- ways in which education and other aspects of their lives are connected and integrated
- relationships between their families and the education system
- school communities where they learn, form relationships and participate
• ways in which teachers access and apply the specific tools that they need in order to
teach and for students to learn and show achievement.

During the 2014 extension phase Output 11, engaging paraprofessionals was not included in
planning or reporting (although some activity in this did continue) and Output 13, supporting
schools with the NCCD, was included as an additional area of focus.

19.1.2 Approaches to the outputs

Providing assistive technology (Output 1)

In order to better meet the learning needs of students with visual impairment, the South
Australian School for Vision Impairment (SASVI) developed a mechanism that assesses the
individual needs of students with vision impairment to access the school curriculum and ensure
the most appropriate assistive technology and training is available to support them. As such,
Output 1, training in assistive technologies, was embedded within the arrangements established
by SASVI who facilitate various courses for families as well as educators and students. The
courses were delivered in a training lab developed through the initiative and equipped with
assistive technologies specific to the needs of students with vision impairment.

Developing support centres (Output 3)

DECD adopted three distinct strategies in relation to Output 3. Firstly, it allocated resources to
the Adelaide West Education Centre and the Special Education Resource Unit (SERU), to
develop protocols and processes associated with the Communication Plan to assist in assessing
the functional communication needs of students with Complex Communication Needs (CCN). In
a similar function to what has been established with SASVI, students were provided with
assistive technologies that support their communication needs, and they, with their families and
educators, were provided with intensive support in the use of the equipment.

Secondly, the Gordon Education Centre developed a comprehensive literacy planning,
assessment and reporting tool known as LitCon Special for teachers of students with intellectual
and/or significant cognitive disabilities. LitCon Special links to a student’s Negotiated Education
Plan and the Australian Curriculum and enables access to improved data mapping of student
progress in the literacy continuum. The programme was migrated from a Microsoft Excel
database to an online version hosted at a secure DECD site.

Thirdly, Team Around the Child (TAC) is a multi-disciplinary approach to supporting students
with complex disabilities. An integral aspect of the TAC is its family-centred practice, in which
the family is empowered to participate as equal members with the child’s team of professionals
who work with the child in order to develop and implement a straightforward and integrated
service plan. A project officer provided training sessions for professionals from education, allied
health and the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI), also developed a
document detailing the process of action.
Building skills in special education (Output 5)

Over the life of the MSSD initiative, DECD established licences with OnLine Training UK, the parent company of OnlineTraining Ltd (OLT), to deliver courses in five areas:

- Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)
- Understanding Motor Coordination Difficulties (MCD)
- Inclusion of students with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)
- Understanding and Managing Behaviour
- Understanding Dyslexia and Significant Difficulties in Reading.

As with delivery in other jurisdictions, trained tutors supported a blended learning approach that allows participants to learn in an environment that encourages discussion with group members in open forums, and development of goals and interventions within a timetable that is flexible to individual needs.

The timeframe for completing an OLT course is 10-12 weeks which included three, three-hour face-to-face support sessions.

Training in Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6)

Training to improve understanding of the obligations of the DDA and DSE 2005 was achieved via a package of online resources developed by the University of Canberra.

The DSE 2005 eLearning course offers a suite of seven courses released and designed for staff performing different professional roles and specifically targeted to each level and context of the pre/post school system. It also forms part of the prerequisite training for all schools on the NCCD.

In addition there is a web-based resource for individuals, parents and communities that highlight the legislative obligations and activities for students in an educational setting. The communication strategy to promote the DSE 2005 eLearning encompassed professional development, media releases, official launch of the web-based resource and included the distribution of printed material commissioned by DECD to all government schools and community including non-government agencies.

Supporting school leadership to build teacher capability (Output 7)

A central element of the DECD strategy that impacted across a number of other outputs (particularly Output 8) was the involvement of highly regarded international researchers and consultants in delivering professional learning across a range of formats including conferences and workshop sessions with school representatives.

Initially, Professor Barry Carpenter, an Honorary Professor at the University of Worcester and a respected educator and researcher, was contracted to support the learning of leaders, teachers and paraprofessionals. As the initiative unfolded and areas of specialised interest were
identified, Professor Carpenter co-presented at a sector conference with other experts highly regarded in their specialist fields.

**Supporting teachers assess learning and adapt curriculum (Output 8)**

The Lead/Buddy school programme — the largest and most complex undertaking of DECD — involved a total of 51 schools working together in capacity building processes. The lead schools were identified through a selection process that required existing strengths in leadership and teaching and learning. DECD as the central agency established an integrated package of professional learning, guidance and support to ensure that there is a depth of capability within each lead school prior to embarking on any capacity building activity with buddy schools.

These schools participated in a whole school Online Training course or requested support from a Project Officer employed through the National Partnership initiative. The Project Officers mentored staff, observed classroom practice with a student/s that had a disability or facilitated a training session to all staff or a small group. Most commonly, these training sessions focused on differentiating the curriculum, what assistive technology was available and how to use it, what Autism is, visual communication and understanding behaviour in communication, and how to use engagement tools and prepare SMARTAR goals.

These schools extended staff capacity by supporting schools within their local partnership, becoming a centre of expertise in how to meet the curriculum and social needs of students living with a disability.

**Engaging paraprofessionals (Output 11)**

In the initial phase of the MSSD initiative, DECD established a range of professional learning activities that specifically targeted teacher aides and other non-teaching staff in government schools.

While not a specific output in the extension phase, professional learning for paraprofessionals nevertheless continued via participation in activity related to Output 5, online learning modules and Output 6, training for all staff related to the DSE 2005, and as an integral component of school-based professional learning activity as part of Output 8, lead/buddy schools.

**Supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)**

Incorporated as part of the extension phase, DECD, like other education authorities, sought to collect data on students with disability. The NCCD was implemented in three phases: phase one was October 2013 with 180 South Australian government schools, with phase two collection in August 2014 and the final phase data collected from all schools during March 2015 (although originally planned for August 2015).
19.1.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

Table 19-1: SA Government MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>28-40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55-85</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>21-48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>62-100</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>153-300</td>
<td>1,339</td>
<td>1,500-3,000</td>
<td>2,226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>60-150</td>
<td>3,506</td>
<td>1,500-3,000</td>
<td>8,493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>School Leadership</td>
<td>70-100</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>300-350</td>
<td>776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>60-120</td>
<td>1,706</td>
<td>900-1300</td>
<td>3,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Teacher Aides</td>
<td>46-80</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>450-520</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While there was an obvious conservative approach to setting benchmarks in the initial planning undertaken by DECD, there was an extremely positive take-up by schools of what the initiative had to offer. That is, as a result of extensive awareness raising via the conferences and seminars that were established in the initial stages of the initiative combined with the capacity building achieved by the Lead/Buddy School approach, schools were more receptive to engaging in professional learning activity to build skills and understandings related to meeting the educational needs of students with disability.

With the opportunity provided by the extension of the initiative, DECD was able to expand their reach considerably in the final period, particularly for Output 6, training on the DSE 2005, where they tripled the planned number of participants of the University of Canberra online modules.

Output 11, support for strengthening paraprofessional skills in working with students with disability, achieved well over the predicted numbers, with 715 paraprofessionals completing a variety of professional learning such as a range of the OLT modules, workshops on personalised learning programmes or other whole school training in differentiation, Autism and assistive technology.

19.1.4 Overall impact of the MSSD initiative

Summary of outcomes

The positive impact that the MSSD initiative had in the South Australian government sector encompassed a range of professional learning opportunities for principals, teachers and non-teaching staff including enhanced capabilities to support learning for students with disability. The professional learning fostered a whole school approach to learning and well-being for all students with schools also being aware and accountable for legislated obligations under the DDA.

Equally, the capacity of the school system was enhanced via specialised services and resources including the arrangements established by SASVI for students with visual impairment, protocols and processes developed by SERU and Adelaide West Education Centre for students with
Complex Communication Needs, the *Team Around the Child* strategy and LitCon Special a literacy planning and assessment tool developed by the Gordon Education Centre.

**Lessons learned**

**Whole school approach**

The integrated manner in which DECD implemented the MSSD initiative had a positive impact within individual schools where a whole school approach to learning and well-being for all students was most apparent. With awareness of obligations being raised via the specific training programmes developed by the University of Canberra, as well as incidental referencing to the DSE 2005 as part of professional learning activities (Outputs 5, 7, 8, 11 and 13), there is now a strong sense that planning for learning for all students is everyone’s responsibility, not just the role of the special education teachers.

DECD reported that the whole school approach fostered:

> .... a more inclusive learning environment in the classroom, increased the awareness of the rights of students with disabilities. The impact on the learning to educators has seen a significantly higher proportion of participants understanding their legal responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, with positive change in attitudes in making reasonable adjustments for students with Disability..... [additionally] further positive impacts have been seen; recognition and elimination of barriers to education for students and their families; a better learning environment implemented; better practices for consultation with parents, carers and associates as stipulated in the standards; better understanding on the definition of who the DDA Act 1992 covers across disability.

**Innovation**

Innovation was evident at a number of levels as a result of the MSSD initiative. For example, the work of SASVI, Adelaide West Education Centre and SERU was all geared towards maximising the impact of finite resources to support the operational activity in schools and individual classrooms.

LitCon Special is a further example of the innovation that was fostered by the MSSD initiative. As detailed in the case study of its development, LitCon Special is a comprehensive literacy planning, assessment and reporting tool for teachers of students with intellectual and/or significant cognitive disabilities. LitCon Special provides the means for rigour and practical strategies to be implemented for literacy learning. It provides a bridge between a student’s negotiated education plan, which otherwise might be too focused on social/emotional and life skills strategies, and the generalised learning requirements of the Australian Curriculum. By giving teachers a fine-grained understanding of each student’s literacy profile and the resources and learning strategies that align with this profile, teachers are able to set targets and focus curriculum delivery according to each student’s learning needs.

The strong take-up of LitCon Special across a range of settings in South Australia, combined with the high level of interest in the tool in other jurisdictions, is testament to the quality of the
product and the manner in which MSSD enabled such an innovative resource to be seeded and developed.

**Linkages**

Similarly, the integrated approach also led to a number of linkages being established across a range of levels. Most notably with:

- Other policy frameworks and elements of reform, such as within South Australia, the Teaching for Effective Learning (TFEL) framework and its domains related to learning: creating safe conditions for rigorous learning, developing expert learners and personalising and connecting learning. More broadly, linkages are also apparent with the Australian Curriculum and Professional Standards for Australian Teachers.

- Other sectors and jurisdictions, most notably the Department of Education and Communities in New South Wales in planning for and implementing the OLT Training courses and Catholic Education South Australia.

- The implementation of LitCon Special in the Limestone Coast Region included South Australian government schools, Catholic Education, Tennyson Woods College, Mt Gambier and Flinders University.

- Support services with the arrangements associated with the Team Around the Child being the most obvious example of highly effective processes and structures maximise support for optimum learning to occur.

- International researchers and universities. As noted above, in addition to the researchers, academics and consultants who have supported activity related to Output 7, DECD has a strong working relationship with the University of Canberra in relation to the delivery of Output 6.

**Centrality of leadership and coordination**

For DECD, the MSSD initiative represents a significant investment in leadership across the Department particularly schools and reliance on the same leadership and effective coordination strategies to achieve the significant gains that the initiative has delivered.

The investment in leadership is apparent in what has been achieved via Output 7 with highly regarded international researchers and consultants being engaged to deliver conference presentations and workshops as well as working with schools on an individual basis. The quality of the interactions that were observed as part of the evaluation, between the researchers and principals, key teaching staff and managers within the Department were noted to be highly motivating, informative and, in many respects, reinforcing the good practice that was becoming increasingly evident in South Australian government schools.

The investment in leadership and the positive impact of leadership across the MSSD outputs were not simply confined to school principals. Rather, through the development of resources, implementation of effective strategies and presentations at showcase events and seminars, the next generation of school leaders — assistant principals, coordinators and key teachers — have grown and developed leadership skills and experience as a result of being involved in MSSD related activity.
Enhanced accountability

Hand in glove with the whole school approach and centrality of leadership and coordination was a recognition of enhanced accountability for the learning outcomes for all students, including students with disability. Staff within DECD saw a common pattern to this development.

While it begins with awareness raising, it is built on effective planning and delivery – key elements of the professional learning achieved through Output 5 – with differentiation being the key to ensuring that the learning needs of all students are being met. What works for students with a disability generally works well for everyone else.

Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative

The legacy of the South Australian government sector’s participation in the initiative is twofold in nature. Firstly, there is a strong sense of enhanced capacity and capability being embedded across the government sector. The initiative has achieved its primary objective of injecting resources into schools and school systems to raise knowledge, understanding and skills at all levels to better meet the needs of students with disability.

Additionally, and just as importantly in terms of sustainability, the MSSD initiative was the impetus for ongoing activity across most of the outputs beyond what was resourced by the lifespan of funding. For example:

- SASVI will continue to match assistive technologies to the learning needs of visually impaired students and provide training as required for students, teachers, aides and parents. At the same time, planning is underway to assure the long-term viability of this arrangement, particularly in relation to replacement of items and staying abreast of technological developments.
- With continuity being assured for the next 12 months, similar considerations are being given to sustaining the work of the Adelaide West/SERU support centre. Alternatives being considered include augmenting SERU’s role to maintain resources and support assessments or up skilling speech pathologists to enable them to perform the same function.
- SERU will continue to promote professional learning opportunities that aim to build on teachers’ understandings of differentiating the curriculum, structured teaching for students with ASD and the development of individual learning goals.
- Team Around the Child is firmly entrenched in the Adelaide Hills region where it was implemented, with continued interest from other parts of the state to make use of this service delivery model. Additionally, in recent circumstances, allied health professionals from other agencies have willingly assumed a coordination role with a given team thereby minimising the demand on DECD resources where this occurs.
- LitCon Special continues to grow from strength to strength with concerns identified in the case study about sustainability allayed as a result of six other settings assuming the role of support centres. Moreover, with the interest of high numbers of schools in South Australia and other jurisdictions, planning is underway to commercialise software and also, potentially, to develop a similarly detailed numeracy planning tool.
- Demand for places in the five OLT courses continues to escalate.
• The DSE 2005 eLearning has a contractual licence agreement to 2018 and is an integral component of the NCCD.

19.2 South Australia Catholic

Catholic Education South Australia (CESA) on behalf of the South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools (SACCS) was the overarching body that assumed responsibility for the implementation of the MSSD initiative in South Australian Catholic Schools.

With approximately 48,000 students enrolled in 103 South Australian Catholic schools staffed with 6,000 teachers and 106 principals as well as other non-teaching staff, the implementation of the MSSD initiative was supported by a Senior Education Adviser-Special Education and 10 special education consultants who absorbed responsibilities in this area as part of their ongoing roles.

A total of $2,096,941 in MSSD funds was allocated to support Catholic schools in South Australia. These funds were distributed fairly evenly over 2012-2014, covering six outputs. In the extension phase CESA focused the funding on just three outputs: Output 5, training for staff in special education (20%), Output 6, training on the DSE 2005 (40%), and Output 13, the implementation of the NCCD (40%).

19.2.1 Implementation strategy

CESA completed an extensive environmental scan and stakeholder consultation process in order to develop a response to the MSSD initiative. The response drew on the goals that had been established in the Catholic Education SA Strategic Plan 2010-2014 and Special Education Team Strategic Plan. Four key themes emerged for inclusion in the implementation plan to enhance the capacity of South Australian Catholic schools to provide more support for students with disability. The themes were:

- increase teacher capacity to plan and programme in order to meet the learning needs of students with a disability
- build school capacity to support students with an autism spectrum disorder and complex learning and behavioural needs
- provide professional learning for teachers in oral language
- deliver Allied Health Services in Country Regions.

CESA’s implementation plan for the MSSD initiative featured a number of discrete projects that were derived from broad consultation and analysis of need as outlined above. While some of these projects continued to be resourced as part of CESA’s strategy to implement the MSSD outputs, others ceased or continued on but were resourced through other means.

During the extension phase of the MSSD initiative, CESA also adopted a system-wide approach to implementing Outputs 6 and 13 where the majority of Catholic schools in South Australia have developed an implementation plan outlining goals and strategies related to ensuring that
all staff are fully conversant with their obligations related to the DDA and DSE 2005 and that schools are fully compliant with the requirements of the NCCD.

19.2.2 Approaches to the outputs

Coordinating with health/allied health professionals (Output 4)

CESA’s Allied Health Project operated until July 2014. Initially, 13 schools were supported through the project with services provided by four psychologists, nine speech pathologists and one occupational therapist. The schools reported that an additional 68 teachers and 29 students resourced through the Special Education programme, as well as 86 students with a learning disability, were supported during this period. Services included 61 individual student assessments, support, advice and professional learning on speech and oral language development, dyslexia, intellectual disability, sensory processing, emotional intelligence, technology supports, understanding the role of allied health practitioners in schools, unpacking and interpretation of assessments and reports and making adjustments to the curriculum.

In 2014, an additional five country schools were provided with small grants and a further three allied health professionals provided services to schools during this period which included professional learning for whole of school staff on the interpretation of assessment reports, mental health, first aid and dyslexia, individual student assessments, as well as working with classroom teachers on the implementation of strategies to optimise student access, participation and success in the classroom.

Building skills in special education (Output 5)

In the initial phase of the MSSD initiative, CESA established a close working relationship with TALK SA to implement an oral language project across a number of primary schools in the southern region of Adelaide. In this project, two junior primary school teachers from each participating school worked with a speech pathologist to plan and deliver a series of lessons based on a specific oral language skill that, in turn, was expected to contribute to broader literacy learning. The principles of action research were an inherent feature of this approach in that the skills and expertise of both sets of professionals (speech pathologist and participating teachers) were given equal recognition in designing and implementing the series of lessons. The oral language project also featured a train the trainer component in that the two teachers who were engaged in the action research from each of the participating schools were expected to share their knowledge and learning with their peers in the junior primary area of their school.

During the extension phase, CESA provided school staff with the opportunity to participate in OLT modules in Understanding Dyslexia and Significant Difficulties in Reading. Through an agreement that has been established with DECD and support from the Department of Education and Communities (DEC) in New South Wales, training was provided for an initial cohort of 12 teachers. With this continued support providing access to training materials and advice related to systems and processes, combined with the coordination work of two special education consultants, 20 participants were able to complete the tutor training and become tutors. Thirty
teachers commenced the course and were to complete it in Term 1 2015. Already, from the initial training, several schools indicated their tutor would be delivering the online training course in a whole school context. The two consultants coordinating the project provided support and assistance to tutors during the initial phases of the delivery of the course whilst the tutors gain confidence. It is anticipated that, in country areas, CESA and DECD will work collaboratively with school staff from both sectors to have access to the online training.

Training in Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6) and supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)

All Catholic schools were invited to develop a plan to provide training to their staff to improve their understanding of the DSE 2005 and engage with the NCCD initiative. Schools were required to develop an implementation plan with goals related to both the DSE 2005 and NCCD in order to access resources including a limited pool of funding for teacher release.

In total, 98 of the overall 103 Catholic schools in South Australia were provided with a grant to enable leaders, teachers, and teacher aides to participate in a minimum of three of the DSE 2005 eLearning lessons developed by University of Canberra. As reported by CESA, over 3,000 CESA personnel have participated in the online training. Similarly, CESA’s records indicate that over 300 teachers and/or school leaders have input data related to the NCCD.

Supporting teachers assess learning and adapt curriculum (Output 8)

Targeted specifically at the needs of secondary schools, the differentiation project involved teams of teachers from each of the 12 participating schools working in collaboration with an academic from Flinders University to modify lesson plans in order to more effectively implement learning programmes for students with disability. Schools commonly released teachers in faculties to develop units of work that had flexibility both in design and measuring evidence of learning in a range of formats.

Supporting collaborative teaching practices (Output 10)

The Autism Spectrum Disorder project was established with the aim to build capacity within the school to support students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Whilst an ASD consultant was initially engaged to up skill participating teachers, the project evolved into more of a mentoring and networking arrangement where teachers learned to develop skills with and from each other. As such, the provision of release time for teachers to meet with the team to plan and attend professional learning and network meetings was overwhelmingly positive.

Additionally, a joint project between TAFE SA and Catholic Education SA offered Education Support Officers (ESOs) in 20 project schools a four-unit course in Autism Spectrum Disorders. This provided 16 ESOs with training and they gained a Statement of Competency Attainment and accreditation toward a range of national training packages at Certificate III or IV level. Class teachers who worked with the ESOs and enrolled in the TAFE course were invited to participate in the first session and at least three additional sessions of the course. Eight classroom teachers
took up this professional learning opportunity and received a letter of attainment from TAFE SA regarding the domains achieved in the AITSL National Professional Standards for Teachers.

Participating schools identified a number of key elements to more effectively cater for learning for students with ASD including: the team (roles and responsibilities, including case management); partnerships (school, family, CESA and outside agencies); data and documentation; teacher support; planning, reflecting and debriefing; professional learning and values; and culture and leadership.

In finalising the project during 2014, CESA reported evidence of growth in teacher knowledge, practice and confidence; increased student engagement and participation, positive attitudes towards students with complex needs and teacher and school capacity to coordinate and manage other support services in collaboration with families.

19.2.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

Table 19-2: SA Catholic MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>30-36</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>150-180</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>200-250</td>
<td>3,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>71-75</td>
<td>663</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>48-56</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CESA met or exceeded all benchmarks that were established. Most notably, achievement numbers in relation to Output 6 (training on the DSE 2005) were extremely high against benchmarks with 3,040 staff participating in the University of Canberra online modules.

19.2.4 Overall impact of the MSSD initiative

Summary of outcomes

Enhancing practice

Undoubtedly, a major area of success centres on the involvement of schools in professional learning and training related to the DSE 2005 and the NCCD. As suggested by CESA in its report to the Australian government, this strategy fostered more than simple gains in knowledge and skills to also focus on pedagogy and learning for students with a disability.

School leaders and staff indicated that the DSE 2005 eLearning is a 'valuable resource' that reinforces the responsibilities of school staff to provide an education for students with a disability on the 'same basis' as all students. Schools undertaking the NCCD commented that the process has enabled them to focus more explicitly on adjustments being made to include students, a significant pedagogical shift from focusing on the type of disability or needs of the student.
The investment of resources into the combination of Outputs 6 and 13 went beyond an exercise in conveying information and compliance with administrative procedures. Where the school reported success, key components included the active involvement of the school leader, whole school and community information, leaders and teachers meeting to consider the student cohort, having release time to document and develop Individual Education Plans and being provided with the opportunity to meet with parent or carers during this process. As reported by one teacher, ‘... it promoted great conversations about students and fantastic curriculum and adjustment discussion’.

Emerging networks and affiliations

As a largely unintended outcome of the differentiation project, Catholic secondary schools in South Australia are forming loose networks to foster collaboration between schools. This situation has arisen as an outcome of the two feedback sessions that were open to schools that were otherwise not involved in the project. With presenters from the participating schools sharing their project activity and what they had learned from it, there was a groundswell of interest from the non-participating schools. This led to ongoing collaboration across leadership and teaching teams, sharing good practice and resources and facilitating its implementation in other settings.

Relationships with allied health professionals and specialist consultants

Similarly, participation in the oral language project and the ASD project provided schools with fresh insights into expanding working relationships with allied health professionals and specialists from allied fields. That is, while schools have had long standing relationships with allied health professionals and other specialists providing assessments and therapy services, the project activity opened up the potential for consultancy and mentoring services to be added to this mix.

As the CESA report noted in relation to the ASD project:

... access to an ASD specialist via the extension of the MSSD has facilitated an ongoing commitment at a local level towards building capacity, for example an increase in take up of planned professional learning for all staff, individualised professional learning, development of structures, process and policies within schools to manage complex students, including reflection and re-evaluation of current processes. Further it has consolidated partnerships between schools and outside agencies. For example a number of Catholic schools have sought to continue services via fee for service arrangements with Autism SA.

With schools now seeking to work with allied health professionals in this manner, CESA noted a high level of demand for occupational therapists to provide guidance related to making adjustments for learning for individual students, ‘... previously schools might have received a report and not known what to do with it but now they are drawing on specialists to ensure that optimum learning can occur’.
Take up of professional learning opportunities

While acknowledging that licence fees have been quite expensive for a small authority, CESA is highly confident that the provision of opportunities for Catholic school teachers to engage in the OLT course related to Dyslexia and Learning Difficulties in Reading represents a highly worthwhile investment that will continue beyond the life of the MSSD initiative. Feedback from participants was universally positive about the training and the quality of resources, and demand for places in future courses was quite strong.

Sustainable effects of the MSSD authority

With a restructure occurring within CESA that links ‘inclusion and learning’ as the area of support for schools, the MSSD initiative will have an enduring effect in South Australian Catholic schools. For the most part, each of the projects and corresponding outputs will continue beyond the life of the initiative. For example, while the oral language project ceased being resourced via MSSD in 2013, CESA has continued to devote other resources to the same project and implemented it in other areas of suburban Adelaide. In each instance, the lessons learned via the experience in the southern Adelaide schools were applied to enhance the project in other settings.

For CESA, changes in accountability processes for schools, via the Continuous Improvement Framework for Catholic Schools, combined with a restructure within the organisation, fostered working with schools in different ways. Engagement with the MSSD initiative provided schools and CESA with the capability and capacity to respond to this situation in a number of interconnected ways including:

- The Special Education Team and Behaviour Education Team coming together as the ‘Inclusion and Learning’ Team. It brings together team members who previously collaborated, but now are developing an integrated service model of support to schools.
- Two domains within the Continuous Improvement Framework have particular relevance for this work:
  - high quality teaching and learning
  - effective use of data.

With the revised organisational structure, combined with the experience of schools in relation to the NCCD (Output 13), CESA believes that the organisation and schools are well placed to respond to the requirements of the framework in these domains.

The implementation of the NCCD started out as a compliance issue for many schools but transformed into a focus on pedagogy. Teachers and school leaders continue to request professional learning related to planning, formulating meaningful goals and making adjustments.

Through its involvement in the MSSD initiative, CESA is conscious of a transformation in the manner in which professional learning is delivered:
For us there are significantly less ‘talking heads’ and fewer workshop sessions facilitated by experts. With the experience of our projects (oral language, differentiation and ASD) our programmes are more network centred with communities of learners. The programmes are more likely to occur over an extended period of time to enable learning to be tested, embedded and shared to enable participants to reflect on its impact.

In addition to aligning changes to organisational structure to integrate inclusion and learning and the transformation in professional learning strategies, CESA is also conscious that involvement in the MSSD initiative fostered a collaborative relationship with universities that had not existed prior to MSSD.

For the Catholic schools in South Australia that participated in the MSSD initiative there has been a significant strengthening of classroom practice in meeting the educational needs of students with disability. In part the enhanced practice may be attributed to the positive effects of the professional learning activity that teachers, principals and non-teaching staff were involved in during the course of the initiative, particularly in relation to the DSE 2005 and the NCCD. Greater parent and community engagement and more effective collaboration within schools and across schools as well as with allied health professionals — strategies that were actively promoted as part of the professional learning — have also achieved enhanced practice.

Activity arising from the MSSD initiative also aligned with and contributed to, overarching approaches to school improvement, and the MSSD initiative is viewed as a highly successful strategy in enhancing the overall effectiveness of Catholic schools in South Australia.

19.3 South Australia Independent

Representing interests of 95 member schools with a total enrolment of approximately 45,000 students the Association of Independent Schools, South Australia (AISSA), is committed to improving access and educational outcomes for children and students with disability and to working with governments in order to reduce inequality and build communities. The independent school sector educates 1,536 students identified with disability. In addition, a significant increase in the numbers of students with learning difficulties over the last 10 years has been noted with 6,455 or approximately 15 percent of students in independent schools being classified as having a learning difficulty.

Three AISSA education consultants, working individually or in small teams, supported teachers, principals and non-teaching in responding to the MSSD initiative in South Australian independent schools.

A total of $1,767,830 in MSSD funds was allocated to South Australian independent schools, covering six MSSD outputs over 2012-2014. In the initial phase of the MSSD initiative 50 percent of the funds were allocated to provide assistive technology to students with disability (Output 1). In the extension phase 50 percent of the additional funding was used to support skills training in special education (Output 5), including an emphasis on understanding the DSE 2005, and 50 percent to support the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13).
19.3.1 Implementation strategy

The literacy, numeracy and special learning needs programme was a feature of the Australian government’s targeted programmes which ended in 2013. Through an environmental scan, stakeholder consultations and consideration of relevant research and its own strategic plan, AISSA initially identified four of the MSSD outputs (1, 2, 4, and 6) for the focus of the initiative within the independent sector. Activity related to the four outputs was developed to allow schools to implement one or more of the outputs according to their level of need, context and capacity. This emphasis aligned with the overarching strategy of the AISSA to support a continuous improvement approach in schools.

In 2014, the MSSD was the only source of funding for special needs to the independent sector in South Australia apart from a small grant received from the state government for an allied health initiative. Hence the two new outputs (5 and 13) were seen as crucial to enabling AISSA to continue to support teachers to meet the needs of students with disability in the independent sector.

AISSA reported that independent schools responded positively to the MSSD initiative. The initiative was closely linked to other programmes and services provided by the AISSA, and the outputs were developed in response to the needs identified by schools. Schools engaged positively with the outputs and many identified benefits of this overall approach. At the completion of the final 2014 reporting period, 99 of 101 Independent schools/campuses participated in one or more of the six outputs.

19.3.2 Approaches to the outputs

Providing assistive technology (Output 1) and providing assistive technology training (Output 2)

From the outset, AISSA was highly conscious of the links between Outputs 1 and 2 for teachers and teacher aides. As a result, there was a close correlation between the number of schools in receipt of assistive technologies (iPads) and the number of schools engaged in training.

In relation to the delivery of training, AISSA engaged representatives from each school in a train the trainer approach to embedding skills in use of various applications within each school. Two staff from each school (usually a special education teacher and a classroom teacher) were required to attend training sessions. The pair then trained two other staff at their schools to begin the process of expanding knowledge and classroom practice in using assistive technologies.

Although AISSA did not continue resourcing Outputs 1 and 2 during the extension phase of the MSSD initiative, schools involved in the project continued to collaborate in a loose networking arrangement to share applications and provide insights into their use in particular contexts.
Coordinating with health/allied health professionals (Output 4)

During the period 2012-2013, over 30 allied health professionals (usually a psychologist, speech pathologist or occupational therapist) were engaged to work with staff on project level activity to address the learning needs of students with disability. In these projects, the skills and knowledge of both the allied health professionals were brought together with the skills and experience of participating teachers to analyse a particular issue and then design and implement a detailed response to the identified issue. A detailed overview of a typical project within the independent sector of South Australia has been documented as one of the evaluation case studies.

While activity related to this output was not resourced via MSSD in the extension phase, additional projects have continued to be established to utilise the expertise of allied health professionals in a consultancy model through resources provided by the South Australian State Government.

Building skills in special education (Output 5) and supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)

The AISSA Implementation Plan for 2014 was quite specific in positioning the nature of activity that was to be conducted either via whole school professional development or one-to-one support to individual teachers under Output 5, providing training for pre-service and/or practicing teachers to build their skills in special education, in 2014:

- Disability Standards for Education 2005
- curriculum and assessment adjustments
- curriculum differentiation and modification
- reporting against adapted curriculum
- reporting on student progress against adapted curriculum.

The professional learning sessions were developed and delivered from the central AISSA office on Using the Australian Curriculum 3 Dimensional Design for Students with Diverse Needs. The AISSA consultants also delivered professional learning sessions in schools in line with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Australian Curriculum. These sessions were targeted at whole school staff, leadership teams, cluster groups, classroom teachers and support staff.

AISSA was quite deliberate in targeting face-to-face delivery in preference to online training options as it was felt that the personalised approach enabled participants to ask questions and enabled discussion of pertinent issues and opportunities. Moreover, with a willingness to conduct follow-up visits to schools, AISSA ensured that changed practices were well embedded in schools, particularly where AISSA consultants were able to work one-to-one with teachers in classrooms.
These arrangements ensured that schools were well prepared for the NCCD in that participating schools were supported to formalise data collection procedures and accountability processes, including the documentation of individual learning plans for students with disability. The professional learning sessions also incorporated guidance and support related to collection of student information to support accurate data collection.

### 19.3.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

Table 19-3: SA Independent MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>80-90</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>400-450</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>50-100</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>2,100-2,200</td>
<td>2,287</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>50-80</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The benchmarking clearly demonstrates the priority setting that was established by AISSA. With a target of 2,100 – 2,200 school staff to receive training to improve their understanding of their obligations under the DSE 2005, 2,287 were engaged in such training over 2012-2013.

Similarly, relatively larger numbers of schools and teachers experienced enhanced capacity in relation to the deployment of assistive technologies and training in their use in comparison to the remaining MSSD outputs. For Output 4, the depth of professional learning for the staff involved within targeted schools based on identified and long standing needs, is arguably equally valid in terms of deployment of resources irrespective of the comparatively lower numbers of staff involved (for this output, staff members across a total of 23 schools).

### 19.3.4 Overall impact of the MSSD initiative

**Summary of outcomes**

*Take up of assistive technologies*

The provision of assistive technologies and associated training was well received in South Australian independent schools, most notably because it fostered greater participation and engagement for the students involved. Also, by providing professional learning for teachers in the use of assistive technologies, there has been a link to student learning through these arrangements.

*Embedded knowledge and skills*

From the outset of the MSSD initiative, AISSA placed a significant emphasis on ensuring that schools were fully conversant with their obligations in response to the DDA and DSE 2005 and were provided with guidance in acting on these obligations as part of enrolment procedures, in planning for learning and in day-to-day activity within classrooms. However, through the course
of the initiative, it became apparent to AISSA staff that schools were not prepared for introduction of the NCCD and, in some instances, had not fully grasped how to plan for and implement individualised learning. For some schools, the orientation towards special education remained primarily focused on verification procedures in order to gain funding for students with disability.

It is for this reason that AISSA placed a strong emphasis on training for teachers and preparing schools for the NCCD during the extension phase of the MSSD initiative. In response, AISSA experienced ongoing high levels of demand for professional learning programmes that have been customised according to the needs of individual schools. AISSA reports that the capabilities of school leaders, teachers and support staff was greatly enhanced over the last three years:

.... schools are now confidently acting on their obligations and making the adjustments as required. There is a greater awareness of what inclusion means for students and their diverse needs. Learning needs are being met more effectively by teachers due to their increased learning and better knowledge.

The provision of a small grant (on average $1,000 per school) to free up time within schools to enable planning and acting on the learning that has occurred has been greatly appreciated by more than 300 school representatives who were involved in the training.

*Impact of the NCCD*

With evidence of consultation being required to inform adjustments and individualised planning for learning, parents and students are far more likely to be involved in enrolment procedures and meetings with classroom teachers regarding learning strengths and needs. The spin off in terms of meaningful engagement with families is regarded as one of the key successes of the MSSD initiative.

*Networking between schools*

A largely unintended but nevertheless gratifying outcome of involvement in the MSSD initiative was the level of cooperation and collaboration between schools. AISSA reports that schools that were engaged in MSSD activity in the early days of the initiative, particularly the schools involved in Output 4 (coordinating with allied health professionals), assumed a leadership role in freely sharing resources and advice with other schools.

*Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative*

Consultation with AISSA representatives suggests that the most obvious legacy of the MSSD initiative is the enhanced capability of teachers, principals and non-teaching staff in South Australian independent schools to support students with disability. Most importantly, there has been a distinct transformation in the manner in which schools are responding to the learning needs of students with disability. Whereas, prior to the MSSD initiative, staff charged with responsibility for special education would manage most matters related to students with disability, it is now classroom teachers who are confidently developing individual learning plans for students with disability.
Similarly, AISSA is conscious of a similar transformation in the response of school leaders and registrars in enrolling students with disability. ‘Prior to MSSD, the typical response would have been ‘what do I do?’ but now schools are more likely to contact us for validation purposes – ‘this is what we have put in place, is there anything else we should do?’

Concurrent with the enhanced capacity of schools is a shift in orientation within AISSA. As part of a restructure within the organisation, staffing for special education will change from 3.0 FTE in 2014, to the current 1.6 FTE to a proposed 1.0 FTE by the end of 2015. Concurrent with the reduction of designated special education staff is a ‘blurring’ of the boundaries between what has been traditionally designated ‘curriculum consultancy’ roles and those designated ‘special education’.

A final impact of the MSSD initiative in the independent sector in South Australia relates to the positive working relationships that it fostered between AISSA and universities. Through interaction across a number of MSSD outputs, as well as a current project related to robotics and learning (including learning for students with disability), AISSA reports positive benefits for schools, AISSA and universities in terms of knowledge sharing and development of resources.

**Impact summary**

The MSSD initiative aligned with AISSA’s overarching strategy to support a continuous improvement approach in schools. During the period 2012-2013 the initiative fostered a range of activities under four outputs to build capability amongst principals, teachers and non-teaching staff in independent schools in South Australia. It also enabled a significant investment in assistive technologies and associated professional learning to expand knowledge and improve classroom practice in using assistive technologies.

A major component of the initial phase of MSSD centred on collaboration with allied health professionals. This proved to be a highly practical means of imparting knowledge and up skilling staff in making adjustments and planning for learning for students with disability. In the extension phase of the initiative AISSA placed a strong emphasis in delivering professional learning related to the obligations of schools under relevant legislation in conjunction with supporting schools with the NCCD, with the addition of Outputs 5 and 13. The resultant planning processes had a highly positive effect on the way in which schools collaborate with parents, determining relative strengths and personalising learning for individual students.
20 Western Australia

20.1 Western Australia Government

The Western Australia Department of Education (DoE) is responsible for the delivery of education to students in over 797 schools in communities across the State, including urban and regional and remote parts of Western Australia. These include comprehensive schools, selective schools and education support schools.

Schools of Special Educational Needs provide support for students with disability and diverse learning needs through: ‘School of Special Educational Needs: Disability’ (SSEND); ‘School of Special Educational Needs: Sensory’ (Vision Education Service and the Western Australian Institute for Deaf Education); and the ‘School of Medical and Mental Health’. Education Support Centres (ESC) cater for specialised support for students with a high level of disability in designated primary and secondary schools settings across Western Australia. These Centres have played an important role in DoE MSSD implementation.

A total of $23,074,906 in MSSD funds was allocated to support Western Australia government schools covering seven MSSD outputs. DoE focused their MSSD funds on Output 3, developing centres of expertise (using 62 percent of funding) with Output 11, engaging paraprofessionals also receiving a relatively large proportion of the overall funding for DoE (13%).

20.1.1 Implementation strategy

The DoE appointed a More Support for Students with Disabilities (MSSD) Project Team in 2012 to manage the MSSD initiative including: Project Manager for overall leadership, management, strategic development and inter agency liaison; Professional Support Operations for resource planning, information management and development of programmes; and Professional Support Workforce Development to facilitate professional learning, external contract services and technologies across the state. The initiative is overseen by the Executive Director Performance, Evaluation and Research.

DoE MSSD implementation combined support for both existing services and new initiatives that have promoted greater school capacity in addressing student needs. Initiatives strengthened by MSSD funding included: integration alongside peers without a disability; approved specialist programme support - schools or a clusters of schools with twenty or more eligible students enrolled; and Education Support Centres - specialist facilities that provide an intensive modified educational programme for eligible students with a disability, typically those with an intellectual disability.

The funding also helped initiate new programmes and services such as: funded postgraduate professional learning; professional development in legal obligations; collaborative partnerships; up skilling paraprofessionals; the Distinctive School model; and data collection.
The MSSD initiative coincided with a systemic shift to greater school empowerment and a period of whole of government resourcing policy constraints. The latter impacted on initial MSSD plans, requiring a variation and delaying the project for some time. The revised strategy aimed to maximise MSSD access statewide in accordance with policy directives. The reconfigured approach favoured a networking model, with Distinctive Schools as key service centres that generated support for a range of projects and strategies, along with other DoE initiatives, that strengthened school support capacity across all education regions.

Despite initial revision, MSSD initiatives progressed as planned, within structured schedules and operational strategies, including Output 13, Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD), which was added in the extension phase and implemented in 2014.

20.1.2 Approaches to the outputs

Developing support centres (Output 3)

Schools with established expertise were invited to apply for MSSD Expertise Grants to become Distinctive Schools. Successful applicants received local resourcing to further develop and share their knowledge and experience with volunteer partner schools seeking support. In supporting schools in remote locations, MSSD funding enabled access to digital technologies and technical support ensuring Distinctive Schools and partner schools are well connected and have access to consistent communication, professional learning and mentoring support.

Distinctive Schools led partner school projects and enhanced local practices to support students. They often addressed more than one output and developed networks within and beyond their local education regions. Fifty-eight Distinctive Schools shared their expertise with over 550 schools across the state in a number of projects such as Positive Partnerships Professional Learning Programme targeting teaching and strategies for effective parent, school and teacher partnerships; programmes on improved student academic, behavioural, social and emotional outcomes for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); and treatment and education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children Programme. The latter had University of North Carolina approval to develop a series of blended professional learning modules.

Distinctive Schools also developed a range of online school resources and provided blended professional online learning modules that will be available through the Department’s One Classroom website, such as: My future My Life (Transition Planning); using iPad Application; Protective Behaviours Scope and Sequence tool; and Learning Disabilities Toolkit. Individual MSSD Development Grants were also made available to 200 schools involving 3,878 students with disabilities. The grants allowed schools to test a range of strategies and developed capacity to address locally identified needs consistent with MSSD outputs.

MSSD Network Grants also provided opportunity for 22 networks of schools to share knowledge and expertise. Projects included strategies for teaching and learning adjustments, leading effective curriculum, and supporting transition needs of students with disability.
Coordinating with health/allied health professionals (Output 4)

A government and non-government health /allied health professionals and service delivery agencies reference group was established to raise awareness of the MSSD initiative and create opportunities for collaborative approaches to student educational needs and strengthen existing partnerships and service delivery. Information assisted with identification of potential regional health/allied health challenges to supporting schools.

The approach to working with health professionals provided broader, more coordinated school support and service delivery as well as opportunities through professional learning workshops. Distinctive schools also supported school access to professionals through projects such as integration of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) into the curriculum programme of twelve schools; and coordinated access to therapy programmes by allied health agencies in rural and remote regions that supported teacher and assistant implementation.

In total 106 allied professionals were engaged, far exceeding the targeted benchmark.

Building skills in special education (Output 5)

MSSD Development Grants provided schools with the opportunity to identify local needs and build capacity far exceeding expectations with over 5,770 staff participating in special education skills training.

Professional learning was wide and varied. Examples included support for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and learning disabilities; enhancing curriculum adjustments; development of individual educational plans; and an accredited Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) programme with Western Australian Universities for teachers and education assistants.

DoE also developed a Learning Disabilities Toolkit in 2013 and trialled it across education regions in 2014. The Toolkit helps teachers determine student learning disabilities and educational needs.

Training in Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Outcome 6)

Staff training on the DSE 2005 was implemented by the use of consultants, teleconferencing and online programmes. Over 5,670 staff accessed training exceeding the benchmark ten fold and maximising necessary prior understanding integral to the implementation of NCCD. Initiatives included: training for school psychologists and consulting teachers with review of current practices in meeting obligations; voluntary one-on-one school service to review local processes; and competency training in the Standards through the University of Canberra online learning course. The online University of Canberra course on the DSE 2005 has been advertised and promoted at every training opportunity run by the NCCD consultants.
**Engaging paraprofessionals (Output 11)**

Part of the DoE strategy to staff schools with appropriately skilled education assistants was the MSSD Education Assistant Certificate III and IV in Education Support (disability focus). This was available to 367 education assistants working with students with disability.

Other professional learning examples included workshops on Autism Spectrum Disorder and effective strategies to support students with learning disabilities. Survey data from schools that accessed MSSD Development Grants identified 1526 education assistants participated in professional learning. In total over 6100 paraprofessionals were engaged in professional learning – significantly greater than the set benchmark.

**Supporting student transitions (Output 12)**

2014 MSSD Development Grants were utilised by 26 schools to support enhanced transition processes for 226 students as they moved between stages of schooling, training, employment and further education. This included transitioning into adult life and the community, as well as support for students and families with movement from primary to secondary, one year of schooling to the next, to pre-primary and moving from one school to another.

A programme for final year student transition to a self-nominated Disability Services Organisation provider was also implemented. Sixty students from 19 schools were supported with transition from school to adult life. Focus centred on the importance of collaboration, quality information and additional support resources.

Transition support included: greater opportunities for family awareness; family assistance to make informed choices about educational provision, learning development and services access; targeted support for students through case management planning; and personalised pathways and transition plans. It also included: sharing confidential information across government and non-government agencies; and coordinated access to opportunities for further education, employment and alternatives to employment, such as VET in schools, Disability Employment Services and Australian Disability Enterprises.

Distinctive Schools also supported school, student and family engagement for transition across stages of schooling across regions. Activities included: enhancing curriculum; support for transition to secondary schooling; building teacher capacity for enhanced curriculum, assessment and reporting strategies; and sharing expertise in the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Preliminary Units (P Units).

A total of 1538 students accessed transition support up to the end of December 2014. This number significantly exceeds the benchmark and reflects the success of Output 12 initiatives.

**Supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)**

MSSD resourcing established an NCCD Project Team to manage and support National Data Collection implementation. The principal consultant commenced planning for this
implementation in 2013. A communication plan and school guide were developed. Training has included: whole school staff; various departmental networks; professional associations; and community interest and parent groups.

As a result of a moderation exercise after the 2014 census, two videos were made of a student from each of the ‘extensive’ and ‘substantial’ categories to give participants a picture of the teaching and learning adjustments necessary for these categories. Fifteen case studies were provided for school staff to assist them with better determination of the category of disability and the level of adjustment.

Proformas were made available for collecting, summarising data and checklists of what constituted no adjustment, supplementary adjustment, substantial adjustment and extensive adjustment. Information was made available in electronic and hard copy format to assist network representatives in their role as resource persons for NCCD. Resources are also available through a Connect Communities web site.

Collaborative support by other jurisdictions in Australia also helped implementation of the NCCD through development of the University of Canberra eLearning course and OLT courses. The NCCD team has been rolling out training of two online courses: Understanding Dyslexia and Significant Difficulties in Reading as well as Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder. In April 2015 the Managing Behaviour course is to be added to the suite on training course available to Western Australian school staff.

In 2014, 648 Western Australian government schools were supported with the implementation of the NCCD under the MSSD initiative.

20.1.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

The DoE significantly exceeded benchmarks for all outputs. Positive outcomes and extent of coverage were attributed to the commitment by the MSSD Team and the growing numbers of Distinctive School networks increasing opportunities to support access across all education regions in Western Australia.

Table 20-1: WA Government MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>60-80</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>750-950</td>
<td>2,131</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>5,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>5,671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Teacher Aides</td>
<td>300-450</td>
<td>3,088</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>6,101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>120-145</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>1,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>648</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20.1.4 Impact of the MSSD initiative

Summary of outcomes

The high level of MSSD engagement by Western Australian public schools and stakeholders resulted in all output targets being met and exceeded across all output activities. Over 85 percent of all Western Australia public schools accessed involvement with MSSD initiatives by the end of 2014. Success may be attributed to several factors, which collectively provided impetus and direction, at system, regional and school levels:

- experienced project teams which accommodated need for review and coordinated extensive statewide professional learning, projects and strategies that enhanced school capacity in a period of policy constraint
- overarching MSSD configuration that reflected a systemic school reform culture of innovation and capacity for school empowerment to address local needs
- emergent multi-‘whole classroom-whole school’ approach of centrally supported school planning and professional learning opportunities with local, regional and national network services
- service augmentation by centres of expertise which have provided broader support and expanded expertise across a large and diverse state
- expanded professional learning opportunities through scholarships, online modules, teleconferencing, MSSD Development Grants, workshops, training and local, regional and national network services
- employment of the ‘Tipping Point Model’ in the implementation process where increased learning, networking and capacity building grew beyond a certain point where the rate of expertise and appropriate actions increased dramatically from a lesser level of expertise, to a more skilled level, sustained by volume of change.

The Distinctive School model (Output 3) provided opportunities for networked expertise and was integral to the DoE MSSD strategy as they supported activities across all MSSD outputs. Identification of schools of distinction in the education of students with disability was critical. Partnerships between metropolitan, rural and remote schools were a positive feature within networks. The number of service centres almost tripled the benchmark with over six times the number of schools supported. The model has also shown its economic value in times of policy constraints, yet maximising existing support across education regions. Such was the uptake that 551 schools are now networked statewide. In many cases, schools accessed support that previously may not have been as readily available. Feedback from all stakeholders was very positive.

The approach to working with health professionals (Output 4) helped to provide broader, more coordinated school support and service. The workshops for education assistants helped to frame their role and support for teachers in development of individual education plans, positive learning environments and effective use of assistive technologies.
Feedback indicated training initiatives for pre-service and practising teachers have enhanced school practices (Output 5) with DoE continuing a number of these activities in 2015 and beyond.

The activities of the NCCD Project Team supported 648 schools with the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13). This included rolling out training of two online courses: Understanding Dyslexia and Significant Difficulties in Reading as well as Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder. In April 2015 the Managing Behaviour course was to be added to the suite on training course available to Western Australian school staff. In March 2015, representatives from every network across Western Australia were invited to an information day on the purpose of the NCCD, the DDA and its implications for schools, and the DSE 2005 online training course.

**Sustainable effects of the MSSD authority**

The DoE is pleased with the engagement, outcomes and strategies that have underpinned its MSSD initiative. Plans are to continue support in all outputs beyond the MSSD timeframe.

Output 3 support centre services will continue in 2015 and onwards. The DoE plans to continue support for Distinctive Schools and networks with partner schools in targeted priority areas, as identified through the MSSD initiative. In 2015, additional opportunities for partner schools to build capacity using blended professional learning and online resources will be made available across the state. As ongoing data analysis and future requests for support increase, the DoE will also increase opportunities for schools with capacity to support needs to become new Distinctive Schools. Local network projects will also be developed and trialled in 2015 and made available system wide in 2016.

The Disability Coordination Team in the Kimberley Education Region will continue to be developed, in collaboration with the School of Special Education Needs: Disability (SSEND). Their role is to provide specialist support and expertise across the region.

The DoE plans to continue funding Output 4 by coordinating effective access to therapy programmes for students. One Distinctive School will continue to use its expertise in working with allied health agencies across rural and remote regions to train and support teachers and education assistants with implementation of therapy programmes. The framework being developed will be made available to all schools in 2016. A Distinctive School, in consultation with SSEND will also design and develop a tracking tool, professional learning and resources to support 13 schools working with students with severe mental health disorders.

Output 5 training will be ongoing and include the DoE Learning Disabilities Toolkit. It will be available to all schools in 2015. Blended professional learning designed and delivered to accompany the Toolkit will be available to all schools. Similarly, Curriculum Adjustments Packages are being developed to assist teachers with adjustments to the curriculum and learning environments. This is being trialled for wider access. Professional learning will be designed to accompany the package, and will be made available to schools in 2015. Negotiations are also under way to implement a third OnlineTraining Ltd Course, Managing Challenging Behaviours, planned to commence in Term 2 of 2015.
DoE expectations are that Output 6 will continue to be supported through the current University of Canberra DSE 2005 online resource. In addition, the education assistant online learning package will be made available from January 2015. Resources such as parent support information will also continue to be made available online to all schools via Connect Community, as they are developed in partnership with schools.

In continuing support for Output 11, the DoE is planning to extend the MSSD Certificate IV in Education Support Programme, in 2015. The aim is building capacity to staff schools with appropriately skilled education assistants.

The DoE also plans to expand Output 12 in 2015 by broadening access to one Distinctive School’s student centred evidence based model that guides the student, families and schools through transition. It is likely to involve twelve schools across three education regions (two rural and remote regions). Formulated as a cluster model, it will incorporate a secondary school and its feeder primary schools. The framework of consistent transition practices and processes aims to ensure a successful experience for students and their families with transition to secondary school. The framework will be available for clusters of schools across the state in 2016.

The DoE has committed to continue support for the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13). A school support handbook will be available to all schools online via Connect Community post 2015. In addition, the current face-to-face professional learning will be placed online, via Connect Community, as a school development package with all relevant information and documentation for use by schools in 2015 and beyond. Related activities such as training, the helpline and the Frequently Asked Question sheets developed from queries will continue in 2015. The latter will also be made available through Connect Community. A conference is planned for 2015 that will engage all lead school psychologists and administrator representatives from all school networks to outline the resources and processes available for 2015 and beyond.

20.2 Western Australia Catholic

Catholic Education in Western Australia is comprised of four regions which correlate with the four state Dioceses whose Bishops have mandated a single entity, the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA), and its executive arm, the Catholic Education Office Western Australia (CEO), to oversee Catholic Education for approximately 72,000 young people in 161 schools and colleges, across the state.

A total of $5,680,501 in MSSD funds was allocated to Western Australian Catholic schools covering seven MSSD outputs with a fairly balanced distribution of funds between them. The greatest proportion of the total CEO MSSD funds at 23 percent was allocated to providing training to school staff on the DSE 2005.
20.2.1 Implementation strategy

The More Support for Students with Disabilities (MSSD) initiative was implemented across the Catholic Schools system in accordance with the Funding Agreement and Implementation Plan. The outputs selected aimed to improve school and teacher capacity to provide support for students with disability. In particular, the regional and remote school communities have been targeted due to high needs and variable access. The CEO MSSD Project Team managed implementation.

The MSSD initiative built onto existing programmes and supported a number of new activities aimed at maximising services and support, statewide. MSSD funding strengthened established initiatives:

- introduction of iPads as communications tools (Outputs 1 and 2)
- curriculum assessment and adaptation to assist teachers cater for varied ability levels and report on progress (Output 9)
- systemic support through professional learning and consultations (Outputs 6, 8 & 9)
- ‘Transition to Life Programme’ to increase post school opportunities (Output 12)

The funding also helped initiate new programmes that addressed other specific challenges:

- support for the many high needs students in the Kimberley via a new Special Education Needs Centre in Broome (Output 3)
- Early Years Regional Intervention Centre in Perth (Output 3) providing new support services
- additional professional and behavioural support initiatives (Outputs 8 and 9)
- regional consultants to develop school capacity in meeting student needs (Outputs 8 and 9)
- professional learning relating to Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6)
- implementation of Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (Output 13)

Overall MSSD implementation progressed as planned, within structured schedules and operational strategies. Targets were met across all output activities. The success of the initiative generated additional CEO support and system wide services that will continue, post MSSD funding.

Only two modifications to the original implementation plan were made: Output 1 was discontinued in the extension phase as targets for the roll out of assistive technology hardware and associated professional training support had been achieved early, and Output 13, support for the implementation of the NCCD was introduced and accommodated by professional learning in Output 6 and resources released from Output 1.
20.2.2 Approaches to the outputs

Providing assistive technology (Output 1)

The MSSD initiative enabled student access to assistive technology and teacher access to associated professional learning. For students with disability, the iPads have become a communication tool for better curriculum engagement and participation, where once they were perhaps too often observers. Increased ability to follow classroom routines, greater independence, capacity to express needs, and to make choices related to their learning, are positive outcomes.

Technology was also an awareness raising experience for teachers whose levels of expertise and expectations were raised, along with understandings of differential curriculum. Overall some 256 students from 89 schools received direct support, exceeding the benchmark target. Output 1 is rated high by the CEO in terms of value for money and level of success.

Developing support centres (Output 3)

The MSSD initiative supported the development of two regional centres: Kimberley ‘Special Education Network Centre’ (SENC), and St Kieran ‘Early Years Regional Intervention Centre’ (EYRIC) in Perth. Specialised staffing allocations and programmes which otherwise would not be available are now accessed by students, teachers and families. The Centres supported over 90 students, 165 staff and 30 schools, exceeding targeted benchmarks.

Kimberley Support Centre - St Mary’s Catholic College WA Broome

The SENC offered specialised teaching and school support services with emphasis on professional learning and up skilling of staff, spawning broader expertise and potential for schools to network and build greater capacity to meet student needs. Networking of allied services and other outside agencies such as, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and School Psychologists, brought these services to the Centre.

Centre WA Early Intervention - St Kieran’s Perth

MSSD funding also provided families with choice in early intervention and early childhood education, an option not previously available. The Centre provides a service to families whose children have higher support needs through individualised programmes in communication, social development behaviour, self-help, and independent skills. These are managed in stakeholder partnership to assist both families and students when transitioning back into mainstream classrooms.

Training in Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6)

Staff training in understanding and application of the DDA and the DSE 2005 was facilitated by consultants, Disability Support Co-ordinators, and Special Education Support Centre teachers. In total, 3,621 teachers, teacher assistants and administration staff across 50 schools received training.
Supporting teachers assess learning and adapt curriculum (Output 8)

MSSD funding support also enabled provision of regional consultants in both the South West (Bunbury) and Mid-West (Geraldton) regions of Western Australia. The initiative was well received, providing access to levels of support previously not readily available to regional schools. Overall, some 600 teachers accessed consultant support, provided on a needs basis. If need was not evident for new staff, then support continued for previously supported teachers, continuing to work with students with disability. The benchmark for staff support has been achieved.

Bunbury support targeted a range of strategies, including: assistance with Individualised Planning; school-based professional development; follow up consultations; school enrolment advice; facilitation between Local Area Coordinators, CEO Bunbury and the Country Coordinator from Disability Services Commission (DSC).

Similar support in the Mid-West Region included: specialist staff training; professional delivery on student diversity, Australian Curriculum and Down Syndrome; transition planning; planning in mainstream contexts; liaison with external agencies; and cross regional support on the Australian Curriculum to develop comprehensive Individualised Plans using General Capabilities.

Supporting teachers to modify lesson plans (Output 9)

A CEO Behavioural Needs Consultant also worked directly with schools, to develop local strategies that supported staff and students through action research partnerships. Professional learning focused on Positive Behaviour Framework, Functional Behaviour Observation and Positive Relationship Building around Circle of Courage to develop understanding of needs and related strategies that helped students with challenging behavioural issues. School feedback has been positive.

In total, regional and specialist consultants supported some 801 teachers with development and modification of lesson plans, exceeding the benchmark target.

Supporting student transitions (Output 12)

The CEO Transition to Adult Life Project was another successful initiative supported by MSSD. The Project offered a variety of options regarding vocational choices. Students were expected to: identify work rights and responsibilities; demonstrate safe practices in the workplace; collect evidence of vocational skills; produce a log book from each work placement; collect evidence of skill development for post school service providers; demonstrate age appropriate social skills; and experience leisure and recreational options.

Thirty-three Catholic secondary and combined schools participated in the Transition from School Programme during 2014. All schools were mainstream schools, 13 of which had education support centres. Schools catered for all disabilities including students with intensive support needs through to high functioning students on the Autism Spectrum. In total some 440 students were supported through the programme, exceeding the benchmark.
Supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)

The inclusion of Output 13, supporting schools with the implementation of the NCCD was supported with MSSD and CEO funding in 2014. All participating CEO schools were able to access training and implement the database. Whole day training was offered to principals and Disability/Learning Support Coordinators from participating schools throughout Western Australia, either in person or via video-conference presentations. Each school received additional support from a Student with Disability Consultant to determine student eligibility, review disability category and adjustment level, with parents as partners. The 113 participating schools exceeded the benchmark target of 90. Feedback indicated the training was effective.

20.2.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

Catholic Education MSSD implementation was successful and embedded across the system, with almost all benchmarks met.

Table 20-2: WA Catholic MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>75-80</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>75-80</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>3,100-3,200</td>
<td>3,621</td>
<td>3,100-3,200</td>
<td>3,621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>340-350</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>600-700</td>
<td>588</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>170-180</td>
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<td>600-700</td>
<td>813</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20.2.4 Impact of the MSSD initiative

The development of the two regional support centres (Output 3) had some very positive outcomes for students with disability in the Catholic education system in Western Australia. Positive outcomes from the Kimberley Support Centre included enhanced practice in the cyclical management of student needs, adaptive teaching-learning relationships, and stakeholder collaboration, which promoted greater understanding for all participants. Networking of allied services from the Centre encouraged a more co-ordinated and unified approach to improve student engagement and outcomes. However, further progress was hampered with the transfer of the SENC Coordinator to other employment. Consequently the SENC experienced a period of limbo with regards to future development and sustainability. Attracting a replacement with the appropriate and desired expertise is a challenge, particularly in remote Western Australia.

MSSD funding facilitated necessary personnel and training for teachers and non-teaching staff in strategies and skills required to support students in classroom and school contexts. The Early Intervention Centre is valued and regarded as a necessary service within the Catholic system. Regional school principals, staff and families are aware of the programme and procedures for enrolment and transition. It has consolidated the relationships between schools and the shared responsibility involved in the ongoing support of students with disability in school.
environments. Feedback indicated the initiative exceeded benchmarks and continues to demonstrate the need and importance of early intervention by experienced special education trained staff.

Participant feedback on the training in the DSE 2005 (Output 6) was positive system wide. It provided staff with prior understanding of their obligations for implementation of the NCCD.

Feedback on the impact of activities for Outputs 8 and 9, suggested the levels of awareness, understanding and capacity for differentiated curriculum were significantly higher. Highlights included: evidence of increased capacity building and confidence to assess challenging behaviours and develop Individual Positive Behaviour Support Plans; change management shifts from punitive to positive and relational strategies; an administration coordinated data software package; professional learning to strengthen behaviour management policy across the school; interagency collaboration providing a ‘wrap around’ services; and advice in accessing General Capabilities.

Under the Transition to Adult Life Project (Output 12) students registered with the School Curriculum Standards Authority of Western Australia completed a variety of courses of study and endorsed programmes, such as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). Curriculum emphasised three main areas of career education: independent living, leisure, and recreation. Eighty-seven students achieved a nationally recognised training certificate (Certificate I or II level) and data from Year 12 students in 2014 indicated 76 percent of year 12 students who received funding had secured a pathway beyond school.

Feedback on the impact of the implementation of Output 13 indicated that training on the NCCD was effective. In addition, an online survey invited participating schools to comment on the NCCD processes to aid in planning for all Catholic Schools in 2015. The extent and richness of data collection was another catalyst in reviewing systemic student services support across all dioceses.

**Lessons learned**

Successful implementation was attributed to several factors, which collectively provided impetus and direction, at system, regional and school levels. These included: early MSSD familiarisation with key stakeholders; early system wide data analysis on disability needs and levels of support in action; creating an understanding that MSSD was not just something schools and system had to do, but rather needed to do; establishing a skilled MSSD implementation team (CEO staff, teachers, and principals); and targeted strategies and coordinated support to address these needs.

This initial period proved crucial to the overall success of MSSD outputs, particularly stakeholder analysis. Other distinctive implementation features included: ongoing extensive monitoring to ensure the initiative was not only in action, but was also value adding; regular feedback from schools to help fine tune implementation; key regional roles for school support; and consultant work within schools.
The level of success was also aided by ready access to the Commonwealth Department of Education staff who made themselves available for support, clarification and information. For the CEO this was a positive aspect and much appreciated. It helped keep implementation ticking along, but it also provided the CEO team with important suggestions, confirmation and acknowledgement of actions in the West.

**Flexibility and targeted active needs**

One of the major reasons for MSSD success was the fact it targeted active needs that existed and required to be addressed. Flexibility within the MSSD initiative encouraged creative thinking in addressing the many and varied needs at system, regional and local levels. MSSD did not just offer a framework, but importantly, funding to help service needs. There is a view that without the initiative and level of funding support there would not have been the level of change in culture and practices. A shared view is that many of these programmes would not have happened without the MSSD initiative.

The CEO is likely to set up a working party during 2015 to review funding and projects supported by Students with Disability grants. There is strong support from parents, teachers, schools and consultants within the Students with Disability Team for each of these projects to continue.

**Capacity to target school level needs**

The most successful outcomes emerged from initiatives at the school level that ensured stakeholders understood needs and differences and how best to implement appropriate actions. Stakeholder up skilling and knowledge developed local capacity to cater for difference and better engage students in their learning and development.

**Cyclical review and reporting**

The inbuilt MSSD reporting cycles informed and supplemented system actions, maintaining the integrity of the initiative and strategies (MSSD and CEO). While reporting was onerous at times, it was also useful in maintaining focus and momentum as well as accountability of funding.

Implementation was also identified as somewhat taxing, but it helped develop a more realistic assessment of needs, actions and what was possible over time. In early stages, output targets tended to be more aspirational, but as implementation continued they became more realistic, perhaps a reflection of greater confidence and understanding of practicalities in delivery.

**Cross sectoral networking**

Opportunity for cross sector networking was a small, unintended consequence. It is not uncommon for regional cross sectoral networking as schools support each other, given the disparate nature of Western Australia. In the Kimberley region for example, CEO and DoE schools accessed training from the ASDAN Coordinator at Fitzroy Valley District High School. Similarly non-CEO schools have accessed support from Mid-West Consultant programmes that have helped teachers cater for needs in the classroom.
Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative

In 2015 CEO will continue to provide support and resourcing across outputs that have proven successful. For Output 1 and 2, expectations are that future sustainability will be self-driven by increased numbers of teachers with expertise. However, professional training will continue, as will provision beyond MSSD, for both technology and adapted curriculum.

Questions have been raised regarding future costs within Output 1. Funding has ceased, but as hardware ages and maintenance needs grow there will be a need to fund these costs. Whether this is a system or school issue is debatable. However, given the success of MSSD initiative and creativity, there is optimism support will be found somewhere.

CEO is committed to continue support funding in Output 3 beyond the MSSD initiative. Success of the Early Years Regional Intervention Centre success has guaranteed its future as a system service model. In addition, Centre expertise will also add value to the overall review of systemic servicing of students with disability.

Plans are in place for ongoing CEO professional development in Output 6 via the training model to ensure understanding and application of the DDA and the DSE 2005 are embedded.

From 2015 the CEO is planning for additional regional consultant support. This may be attributed to the fact consultancy support in Output 8 has enabled more students being catered for, appropriate to their needs. Additional support will be welcomed in the regions. The Bunbury consultancy will be expanded to 1.6 Full Time Equivalent (FTE), beyond the conclusion of the MSSD initiative. Teachers and principals alike are highly supportive and appreciative of locally based consultants. They have local understanding and knowledge of student and teacher needs. In their view this makes the support even better and more successful.

The CEO acknowledges the Behavioural Consultant model of working directly with schools is proving very successful. It is highly likely this support will continue in Output 9 post MSSD.

CEO commitment is evident in its Transition to Adult Life Project (Output 12) as part of an embedded systemic programme with compliance requirements to ensure integrity and maximised outcomes. MSSD funding has enhanced the project and enabled school access to additional resource and personnel support. It is highly likely the Transition to Adult Life Project will be extended from 2015 into the future. Additional resources for schools were being explored by CEO to ensure sustainability.

Given the richness of data from Output 13, CEO consultants will continue to support schools who already submitted data in 2013 or 2014 as requested. New schools will continue to enter into the implementation phase.

Sustainability with CEO support

MSSD is regarded as one initiative which has been a real success, particularly in an area where student needs were not sufficiently addressed due to lack of support access, insufficient
funding, varying degrees of expertise and non-universal access to professional learning. The positive partnership between MSSD and CEO funding made a real difference in servicing an area of schooling that needed resources to provide appropriate support. Achievement of all Outcomes underpinned its success and helped activate student services. As such, many of the initial output programmes will continue to be system funded, giving them sustainability beyond the MSSD timeframe including: regional consultancies (South West and Mid-West); Centre for Early Intervention Perth; online professional learning for assistive technology; NCCD data analysis; Transition to Employment; Behavioural Management Consultant; and ongoing professional learning opportunities across various aspects of MSSD outputs.

MSSD success has been part of a rethink about future student services across the Catholic sector. It is expected planning will include participation by key stakeholders active in MSSD initiatives. A new Student Services Team has already been formed. In essence, MSSD initiatives and culture are being incorporated or merged into the evolving model for Student Services. For the future, activities relating to students with disability will fall under the umbrella of the evolving CEO Student Services model.

20.3 Western Australia Independent

The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA) is a non-profit organisation that supports, represents and promotes the interests of independent schools in Western Australia. AISWA's constituent members include over 155 independent schools, including independent school systems. As a non-systemic organisation, AISWA provides services and support to member schools through fees and external grants and funds, including the More Support for Students with Disability (MSSD) initiative.

As a sector, independent schools are diverse in nature and provide for students of all abilities, from all social and ethnic backgrounds, including an increasing number of those with disabilities and learning difficulties. They provide schooling for a wide range of schools in regional, remote and urban communities across the state.

A total of $1,769,701 in MSSD funds was allocated to independent schools in Western Australia covering four MSSD outputs. In the initial phase of the MSSD initiative 61 percent of the funding was allocated to support leadership strengthening teachers’ capability (Output 7) and 39 percent to support teachers to modify lesson plans to suit the needs of students with disability (Output 9). In the extension phase 60 percent was allocated to provide training on the DSE 2005 (Output 6) and 40 percent to support the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13).

20.3.1 Implementation strategy

The Association implemented MSSD as an opportunity to support schools with increased understanding, skills and capacity in addressing the diverse needs of students with disability. This was largely achieved through supporting school principals and leadership teams to build teacher capacity in addressing needs (Output 7), as well as directly supporting teachers to
develop and modify lesson plans that catered for a differentiated curriculum (Output 9) in 2012 and 2013.

Implementation strategies focused on professional learning series, seminars, action research, conferences and school development support. These strategies were delivered by external experts with a focus on inclusion and accommodation of diversity in learning needs. In addition, AISWA MSSD consultants followed up with support for schools that participated in the leadership series with implementation plan support to build inclusive schools.

The combination of professional learning and implementation was encapsulated within an action research framework that included a range of initiatives and strategies aligned to enrichment of practice and supported school planning. Collectively they strengthened project activity and outcomes:

- increased skills and knowledge of school leaders to effect whole-school change
- encouraged school leaders to reflect, monitor and review their inclusive practices and plan for improvement
- provided individualised professional learning, support and mentoring to schools in response to their own identified priority areas
- increased the capacity of school leaders and classroom teachers to create inclusive environments within diverse ability classrooms.

Feedback endorsed the success of these initiatives indicating: increased awareness and capacity by school leaders and teachers to better support students; more strategic future planning; and creation of inclusive school environments for all students.

To ensure school leaders and teachers were prepared for the implementation of the NCCD in August 2014, resource support shifted focus away from Outputs 7 and 9 to new Outputs 6 and 13.

The extension required a budget refocus as Outputs 6 and 13 significantly increased targeted group numbers (staff and schools), plus required training and support. All AISWA schools were asked to participate in the data collection in 2014. This strategy was not only to meet extension requirements, but also to maximise school participation prior to cessation of the MSSD funding and reduced future capacity to provide the same support levels.

20.3.2 Approaches to the outputs

Training in Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6)

Four Inclusive Education Consultants delivered professional learning to 38 schools comprising of 473 staff, leaders and teachers, at central and school-based venues. Participant numbers well exceeded the benchmark target. Professional learning included the information on the DDA and the DSE 2005, and obligations.
Professional learning was presented as part of ongoing support offered to all AISWA schools and will continue under the Student First Support Fund through Inclusive Education Consultants. Telephone and face-to-face support was provided to all schools as a follow up to all professional learning as requested.

**Supporting school leadership to build teacher capability (Output 7)**

In supporting leadership teams to strengthen teachers’ capability AISWA implemented a professional learning Leadership Series for principals, school leaders and board members, on strategic planning for inclusive schooling environments. Professor Bob Conway, former Dean of the School of Education at Flinders University, was the key presenter on student integration, adaptation of learning, and enriching teaching strategies to meet the needs of all students. These were supported though forums and strategic meetings throughout the year and facilitated school action planning and implementation.

Professor Conway also presented workshops for leaders and teachers to help students with disability access the curriculum in meaningful ways. He also visited schools as a mentor and assisted local leadership planning for school inclusivity.

Ruth Phillips, an expert in the area of inclusion, presented a fourth Leadership Series workshop as a follow up for participants from previous series. Additional leadership mentoring support opportunities provided further support in development plans to improve inclusive school practice.

The benchmark was significantly exceeded with over 151 principals and leadership team members accessing support, indicating a high level of programme success.

**Supporting teachers to modify lesson plans (Output 9)**

Enriched practices in the development and modification of lesson plans were the key focus of the Teacher Seminar series of workshops facilitated by Professor Bob Conway. These were augmented by professional learning and additional workshop opportunities delivered by AISWA Inclusive Education Consultants. They focused on:

- differentiation
- Universal Design for Learning
- Individual Education Plan workshops
- documented plans
- seminars on specific disabilities.

Around 80 schools and 1277 teachers participated in the overall learning programme for Output 9, thereby achieving the benchmark target.
Supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)

In 2014 four Inclusive Education Consultants delivered professional learning to 76 schools comprising of 605 staff (leaders and teachers) at central and school-based venues, achieving benchmark expectations. Professional learning included: information on the NCCD model; evidence required; documented plans; implications for schools and system reforms; and disability specific professional learning. Telephone and face-to-face support was provided to all schools as a follow up to all professional learning.

AISWA endeavoured to present professional learning to all AISWA schools, and encouraged them to participate in the 2014 collection. The future poses some challenge as to whether AISWA schools will be sufficiently equipped to participate in the 2015 collection with minimal support and without access to MSSD funding.

20.3.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

Table 20-3: WA Independent MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
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<td>140-160</td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>School Leadership</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>60-80</td>
<td>1,277</td>
<td>60-80</td>
<td>1,277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>60-80</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Western Australia independent sector far exceeded benchmark targets in Outputs 6, 7 and 9. This reflected sound planning, strategies and support provided by AISWA consultants. Despite a short time frame AISWA met the benchmark numbers of schools supported to implement the NCCD but as this was limited to only half the member schools there are still some significant challenges ahead for independent schools in Western Australia with the implementation of the NCCD.

20.3.4 Overall impact of the MSSD initiative

Summary of outcomes

MSSD support and local flexibility

AISWA’s MSSD implementation was made possible through MSSD resources and local flexibility to determine how best these may be utilised in maximising school support. Strengths emergent from implementation and support that promoted active participation included:

- overarching Action Research approach to professional learning, action planning and implementation
- effective targeting of MSSD resourcing which maximised school planning support and professional learning opportunities
positive and credible level of external expertise which has promoted learning engagement and enriched teaching practice through the Leadership Series and Teacher Seminar Series

capacity to engage additional consultants and provide additional support access

collaborative spirit between experts, AISWA consultants and schools whose feedback acknowledged the quality of, and access to, support for Outputs 6 and 13

flexibility and capacity to make significant changes to MSSD plans to accommodate the NCCD implementation (Output 13), and associated professional learning requirements for training in the DSE 2005 (Output 6).

Targeting school leadership

The most distinctive feature of AISWA’s approach was the ability to target school leaders over a period of two years, with Outputs 7 and 9, to provide the catalyst for effective change. School leadership engagement has been central to MSSD implementation. Subsequent broadened understanding and responsibility for support and reporting to teachers, assistants and parent/community stakeholders improved whole school inclusivity. Similarly, from Outputs 6 and 13, increased awareness and understanding of students who require support and the diversity of needs, added to promoting sustainable change.

MSSD funding support

There is general agreement that without the MSSD initiative and funding support many independent sector initiatives would not have occurred. MSSD provided a necessary boost for improved support for students with disability and inclusive school cultures.

National MSSD team

Positive acknowledgment was made of the support and ready access offered by the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training MSSD Team members. They have been constant mentors and help throughout the MSSD initiative.

Challenges to implementation

The short lead in time for Output 13 and associated professional learning through Output 6 challenged AISWA implementation. Given the number of schools and personnel to support, and knowledge that funding was end dated, all schools were invited to participate, prior to cessation of funds. Due to practicalities a shorter timeframe was set. Ultimately only the NCCD model was effectively implemented: providing complementary activity to support schools with the implementation of the NCCD; and providing training for all school staff to improve understanding of their obligations under the DSE 2005 and how to meet those obligations. As a consequence of limited time, there has been no meaningful quality assurance and many schools have missed out on support. Feedback suggests that even if a quality assurance model had been developed there would have been insufficient time to implement.
Lessons learned

Outputs 7 and 9 proved to be the most successful in terms of outcomes and sustainability. A key strength was having a longer timeline for implementation. More time offered the ability for follow up and support over a two-year period which helped embed school understandings, skills and practices. Regular AISWA meetings, face-to-face contacts, mentoring, professional learning opportunities and participation in Action Research ensured constant communication that ultimately increased sustainability. The level of principal ‘buy in’ to participation was far more than anticipated as evident in the positive manner in which responsibilities for whole school inclusion were implemented.

Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative

The MSSD project will have a long lasting effect for those schools that participated in the two year leadership series, Outputs 7 and 9, as these schools have significantly changed their structure to create an inclusive school community across a range of areas.

The professional learning provided for the NCCD model will be utilised to better support and educate students with disability. The data and impetus from the MSSD initiative has also been a critical driver for the development of AISWA’s Inclusive Education School Assessment Tool (IESAT). The IESAT has been effective in promoting long-term, sustainable change for those schools that engaged in the two-year leadership course.

AISWA plans to continue supporting schools with their initiatives. However, the level of support will be significantly reduced due to cessation of both the Australian Targeted Programmes and MSSD funding. Use of ISAET will continue as will consulting support for those schools who participated in the Leadership series, and for those schools wanting to engage in the process, should the capacity be available under the Student First funding. Assistance with NCCD implementation will be limited to centralised professional learning without the external experts previously available, and reduced phone support.

The issue remains that sustainability is only possible within participating schools, yet they are not the majority. Those non-participant schools will have lesser levels of future support. While all schools have been provided electronic information and support, these schools will find sustainability and quality assurance a challenge.
21 Tasmania

21.1 Tasmania Government

The Department of Education, Tasmania (DoE) is comprised of two Learning Services: North, and South, and educates over 62,000 students from prep to year 12. Schools are structured across 6 networks with a Principal Network Leader within each and including four designated special schools with over 200 students. DoE worked towards mainstreaming students for some time prior to the national partnerships agreement and the majority of students with disability are enrolled in their local school.

A total of $5,841,184 in MSSD funds was allocated to support Tasmanian government schools covering six MSSD outputs, with 26 percent of these total funds allocated to Output 13, supporting the implementation of the NCCD. Support for assistive technology (Outputs 1 and 2) were allocated 19 percent each, and supporting skills training in special education received 16 percent of the total funds. In the extension phase DoE allocated the majority of the funds to Output 13 activities.

21.1.1 Implementation strategy

The DoE Director Disability Programmes, Early Years and Schools, was responsible for implementing the MSSD initiative. DoE chose to implement five outputs with an ultimate target of ensuring their schools and teachers are better able to support students with disability, contribute to improve learning experiences, educational outcomes and transitions between stages of school and post school. The five outputs in the initial implementation plan included Outputs 1, 2, 5, 6, and 12.

A core objective was to improve the ability of teachers to tailor learning programmes to meet students’ needs, and, using assistive technologies, to ensure their engagement with the curriculum enhanced. In the MSSD extension phase, DoE continued work on all existing outputs other than Output 12, which ceased at the end of 2013, and commenced activities on Output 13, supporting schools with the implementation of the NCCD.

Outputs associated with professional development, such as the online modules (Output 5), shifted from using a train the trainer approach in the first stage, to a facilitator mode once selected teachers completed the first module. Hubs of expertise evolved as the cohorts worked together. Similarly, the ICT Network, which was originally a group of 20 ICT leaders, grew as staff developed the capacity to lead professional learning with a highly successful model of ‘spaced learning through a cascade approach’.
21.1.2 Approaches to the outputs

Providing assistive technology (Output 1)

The focus of Output 1 was first on introducing or extending the use of assistive technology for students with very complex learning needs. It was complemented by a structured approach to changing teachers’ practice through professional learning (Output 2).

The initial implementation plan included supplying students diagnosed with severe disabilities with 325 iPads and supporting software to such as interactive whiteboards, iPad compatible braille display devices and compatible software portable magnification devices. The distribution of iPads was limited to students below grade 9 year level so as not to impact on the Federal NSSCF (National Secondary School Computer Fund). By the beginning of 2014 DoE had allocated more than 1000 iPads to students in both special and mainstream schools. Funding was also provided for the purchase of appropriate applications, with priority given to students requiring augmented communication support, students with autism spectrum disorders, students with global development delay, and motor coordination difficulties. A further 50 iPads were allocated to students with hearing impairment, vision impairment and those newly enrolled at special schools.

Providing assistive technology training (Output 2)

A group of 20 ICT Network leaders worked on embedding iPad use and supporting staff to use the technology as a learning tool across the curriculum. Each of the three Learning Services across the state identified staff from mainstream primary and secondary schools to be trained as IT Network Leaders from the existing pool of specialists such as special education advisors, support teachers, speech and language pathologists, special school teachers and autism and physical impairment co-ordinators. The networks provided an avenue for sharing best practice and teaching resources between staff and clusters of schools. DoE also engaged external IT consultants led professional learning programmes, such as a workshop focused on supporting students with complex communication needs.

Building skills in special education (Output 5)

The nature and level of staff participation in OnlineTraining Ltd (OLT) modules reflected the challenges identified by DoE and classroom teachers. The DoE approach was first to train facilitators who could then lead cohorts through seven selected module topics: Motor Co-ordination Difficulties; Autism Spectrum Disorder, Speech and Language Communication; Managing Difficult Behaviour; Understanding Dyslexia and Significant Difficulties in Reading; Understanding Vision Loss; and Understanding Hearing Loss. More than 1000 staff completed OLT modules with the highest enrolments in difficult behaviour, autism and dyslexia.

In 2014, and continuing in 2015, each government school was allocated a full time equivalent of support teacher staffing. The support teachers completed modules and were trained as facilitators for the OLT modules to assist staff to complete a disability module. They also have
responsibility for selecting modules appropriate to the needs of the school and to lead staff through the modules.

**Training in Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6)**

DoE provided training for all school staff on the DSE 2005 in two ways, through a series of face-to-face workshops targeted at specific groups of staff, and with the development and provision of online learning modules for the DSE 2005 in collaboration with the University of Canberra.

In collaboration with its Professional Learning Institute, DoE designed and provided a four-day professional development programme for all support teachers in each region. The workshop programme included training on ways support teachers could help build the capacity of their colleagues, approaches to differentiating the curriculum through personalised learning, inclusive classroom practices, and school-wide positive behaviour supports.

A professional learning module titled Inclusive leadership for Students with Special Need, based on an enquiry model of learning, was conducted at all principal forums through 2012-2013 to build the knowledge of school leaders of their obligations under the DSE 2005. The presentation outlined the components and requirements of the DSE 2005, considerations and issues for principals and interactive scenario based group work. The presentation materials and process were designed for principals to use with their school staff.

DoE took a leading role in funding (sourced from the Early Years Unit) and developing an online learning module for the DSE 2005 Early Childhood Prior to Fulltime School Course in collaboration with the University of Canberra. Given delays in the delivery of some modules, DoE first introduced lessons 1-3 of the Educational Leaders Module, which was aligned to the implementation of the NCCD with all school leaders and staff involved in the NCCD required to complete the lessons. All DSE 2005 modules are now available to all DoE school staff and by the end of 2014 more than 4,792 people had completed a module relating to their sector or area of work.

**Supporting student transitions (Output 12)**

The DoE transitions project aimed to support students with disability through key stages of school and post-education experience. Part of the DoE transition project also allocated funds to provide teacher relief for participation in professional learning and time support to design transition plans for students. In 2013 funding support was provided across the DoE Learning Services and 72 schools for teacher relief to develop transition plans for students entering school, moving from primary to secondary school or college, from school to post school education or employment options, as well as for transitions within school programmes.

In 2012 and 2013 DoE worked in partnership with the TASCARE Society and a web design company to develop an online web-based resource, Knowme. The website allows parents and families to consolidate in one location all relevant information about their family member with a disability, and can be easily updated and shared with teachers and other professionals as appropriate.
Knowme has been constructed in such a way as to limit the burden of administration, improve accuracy of information often required in transition stages, and reduce repetitive demands on parents, carers and providers of services for key information about students and their families. Once a new user has registered for an account and TASCARE has approved it manually, the account user, usually a parent, can create their child’s profile, upload pictures and files for sharing, and grant access to others as guests, such as specialists, doctors, carers, school and agency staff.

**Supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)**

Almost all Tasmanian schools participated in the implementation of the NCCD in 2013 and 2014. The NCCD process commenced in 2014 — with complementary activity provided in Output 6 — requiring principals and key staff involved in the NCCD to complete lessons 1-3 of the DSE 2005 Educational Leaders module. Professional learning to support this included understanding and making judgements on the levels of educational adjustments, collection of evidences of adjustments, and use of the purpose-built DoE Student Support System, which was designed and implemented in the first year of the MSSD. The system now used by all schools, was adapted to assist with the implementation of the NCCD. DoE developed and added a data collection tool as a new module to the system and provided training in its use. The implementation of the Quality Assurance Framework developed in 2014 by the Joint Working Group nationally supported quality assurance with the principal as the only designated officer who can approve and send the NCCD data.

**21.1.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>460-510</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>380-400</td>
<td>1,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teachers/aides</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1,274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>30-60</td>
<td>2,727</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>4,792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>80-100</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DoE exceeded all benchmarks. Achievement for Output 2, training in the use of assistive technology was very high with 1,689 teachers participating. Numbers of staff participating in activities for Output 5 and 6 were also extremely high with 1,274 teachers or teacher aides participating in some form of professional learning in special education including the OLT modules, and 4,792 staff trained in the DSE 2005 through the enthusiastic uptake of the University of Canberra online modules.
21.1.4 Impact of the MSSD initiative

Summary of outcomes

The MSSD initiative raised expectations and enthusiasm across the schools about what is possible for students with disability in mainstream classrooms. DoE was keen to build on its track record of innovative approaches to some of the challenging issues facing schools that have long required persistence and multiple forms of intervention in Tasmania. The strength of the Tasmania DoE outputs, individually and collectively, was the strategic approach based on local experience supplemented by external expert advice.

Introducing assistive learning technologies has given many students with disability new opportunities to engage with learning and interact more effectively with peers in the classroom. MSSD funding enabled DoE to provide students with a variety of appropriate applications and assistive technology, particularly for vision and hearing impairment that might otherwise have occurred incrementally over a longer time frame. Indeed, the injection of funds to support wider use of iPads, with the immediate observable impact on student learning, led some schools to purchase further devices using their own school in addition to MSSD funds.

Outputs 1 and 2 benefited all students including key outcomes identified by DoE such as: teachers using the iPad as a tool to create their own class presentations; students receiving instant feedback on learning; improved classroom behaviour; improved literacy outcomes in relation to reading levels; and the high levels of student input as a result of interactivity built into the apps. The provision of iPads was particularly successful due in part to the following key elements:

- demonstrated need within the student’s learning plan
- multidisciplinary ICT assessment/profile developed
- consultation with parent/carer
- statewide moderation process for allocation
- iPads provided as a personal learning device for use between home and school.

The intensive involvement of professional development opportunities had an impact on the approach of schools to scoping and sequencing their activities under the MSSD initiative. For example, external IT consultants co-constructed and led professional learning for school staff on a range of issues around accessibility for students with disability. DoE used the MSSD initiative to maximum effect by ensuring that the quality of the external experts in all areas has been exceptionally high. The strategy gave teachers greater confidence in their approach.

The DoE approach to implementing the OLT modules had particular advantages in Tasmania as it was directly linked to the operation of the Student Support System database built in the early stages of implementation and now being used in all schools. One module within the system was also used as a data collection tool for the NCCD. The Student Support System database system also houses individual education plans for students for whom an individual education adjustment has been made, as well as assessments by school consultants such as psychologists.
and speech pathologists. During the 2013 reporting period 5000 individual learning plans for students were entered, with 6000 contact logs with family / parents and 5000 disability specific records. The system data now plays an important role in assisting schools with strategic planning for support services for students with disability.

**Lessons learned**

The major learning from the MSSD experience for DoE was that the best result comes when everyone is responsible for the outcomes, particularly where school leaders take responsibility for linking the initiatives to their school needs. A related unanticipated outcome was that the initiative highlighted the need to identify a high-level staff member to take the role of support teacher in every school.

The introduction of iPads and similar devices demonstrated the importance of authorities such as DoE taking advantage of limited term opportunities such as MSSD to experiment and test innovations and implementation strategies. While iPads are now accepted as a normal feature of most classrooms, which would have occurred independently of MSSD, the pace of innovation was certainly accelerated in Tasmanian government schools: starting with students with disability was in a sense a managed pilot project that gave schools and teachers the confidence to expand the use of technologies and reframe their approaches to learning for all students.

The lesson from the transitions project came in the form of written case studies provided by each Learning Service of individual student transition programmes. They highlighted that successful transitions occur where clear processes are in place, school staff and family members work collaboratively, communication processes are well defined and opportunities for class teachers and support staff to develop new knowledge and skills are provided at appropriate times.

As in other jurisdictions, some special interests lobbied to attract attention on specific areas of disability. The lesson from the Knowme initiative with TASCARE was that having an independent organisation that operates without government funding as a partner reduced the risk of the government being seen as aligned with any one form of disability.

**Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative**

A distinctive element in the DoE’s approach was to ensure it did not do anything that could not be self-perpetuating. For example, there was a major increase across sector staff at all levels over the three years of MSSD activities in the demand for more professional knowledge and expertise. DoE generated this demand in part by targeting all professional development at raising the critical mass of people with the capability to change the ways schools worked with students with disability. It also prompted a rapid and sustained increase in the number of people embracing online tuition as an option for professional learning. The availability of professional online learning obviously tapped into the demand for flexibility in delivery and a growing preference for autonomous and self-directed style of learning.
However, DoE took the view that there is still a place for structured face-to-face experiences to bring people together, particularly providing them with the opportunity to engage directly with national and international experts. The OLT licence has been extended for three years and all schools will continue to be involved in four days of professional development annually which will be aimed at generating an ongoing stream of facilitators for the OLT modules to embed these learning experiences into normal school practice.

Sustainability will come from the capacity building and experience that has equipped school leaders and staff for the future. For example, DoE activities on transition plans for individual students and small groups of students with disability required a relatively small amount of funding for the provision of teacher relief, and appear to provide value for money. Most were aimed at preparing students for their transition to a new education environment, with others related to ongoing and continuous transition needs for students with severe disabilities to participate in some mainstream education settings. Each of these transition plans depended on a wide range of people collaborating, planning and monitoring the progress of the approaches.

DoE did not continue Output 12 on transitions as such in 2014, but it did create an impressive programme to raise awareness of the Knowme app. The Knowme app involved very modest set up costs and does not require ongoing financial support. It is noteworthy that planners from the National Disability Insurance Scheme working with a Tasmanian cohort of students with disability as school leavers, have been exploring the use of the tool more broadly as a way of storing and sharing information about students, with direct support and involvement of parents.

The immediate priority for DoE is to sustain the momentum of MSSD outputs particularly with ongoing capacity building through professional development and a support teacher in every school. This will facilitate the rollout of a personalised school curriculum and ensure that the technologies introduced during the MSSD will become embedded in practice. Given the increased level of teacher knowledge and skills in all schools to cater for all students, DoE also intends to work with special schools to consider their purpose and reframe their roles as centres of expertise.

21.2 Tasmania Catholic

The Tasmanian Catholic Education Office (CEO) has a community of 37 schools and almost 16,000 students across Tasmania. It supports over 300 students who have a diagnosed disability as well as many other students who fit the criteria of the DDA.

A total of $595,184 in MSSD funds was allocated to Tasmanian Catholic schools covering six MSSD outputs. In the initial phase of the MSSD initiative funds were allocated fairly evenly between Outputs 1, 2, 5, and 9. In the extension phase CEO discontinued Output 1, providing assistive technology, and spread most of the additional funds on training for special education (20%), training on the DSE 2005 (20%), support for developing or modifying lesson plans (20%) and on the implementation of the NCCD (30%).
21.2.1 Implementation strategy

The implementation of the MSSD initiative generally went to plan for the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office (CEO) but with some modification aimed at improving the outcomes and broadening their impact.

Based on the results of an environmental scan and needs analysis of students with disability and their schools within the jurisdiction, including a copy of the current state plan for social inclusion and education of students with disability, the CEO selected four outputs in the initial implementation stage of the MSSD initiative, following consultation with leadership teams, educational consultants, principals and teachers. The choices were made primarily on the basis of their alignment with the CEO strategic plan. CEO then identified existing and new projects that would potentially make a maximum and sustained impact on the knowledge base across schools.

21.2.2 Approaches to the outputs

Providing assistive technology (Output 1)

CEO activity for Output 1 focused initially on providing iPads to individual students with disability to encourage communication with teachers and peers and to allow enhanced access to learning in mainstream classrooms. CEO purchased 100 assistive technology items and provided these to students at 23 schools but by the end of 2013 the rollout had broadened to a bigger cohort of students to help mainstream groups, including students with learning needs. This activity was completed at the end of 2013 following the planned introduction of software and relevant training for selected apps, such as Text Help Gold, iReadWrite.

While CEO did not purchase any new devices under the MSSD initiative in 2014, many schools made some provision for purchasing additional devices under their own budgets and student purchase plans.

Providing assistive technology training (Output 2)

CEO provided supportive and personalised training for teachers in the use of the assistive technology purchased for Output 1. During 2013 the focus for Output 2 was on making sure that the teachers understood how to incorporate the students’ use of the iPads into the classroom. This was implemented through a mixture of regional professional learning opportunities, one-on-one support, and whole of school instruction to build skills in using the devices and software to more easily access the curriculum.

The roll out of iPads and other tablet technology within the Tasmanian Catholic Sector advanced at a much faster rate than anticipated during the MSSD initiative. In 2014 support continued on effective use of iPads in the classroom with 115 staff participating in related training with the MSSD support. Teacher assistants were also included in training as they are often the close supporter of the students with disability in the classroom. Primary schools were
able to access a CEO blog and register for a regular newsletter dedicated to using iPads and apps.

**Building skills in special education (Output 5)**

CEO recognised the limited opportunities in Tasmania for teachers to undertake further study in special education unless undertaking university courses by distance education. An online training licence was purchased for the OnlineTraining Ltd (OLT) modules and CEO tutors were trained to guide teachers in building their skills to engage with students with disability and provide for accommodations in the classroom. CEO set out an approach to encourage teachers undertaking the training to share the knowledge they gained in their particular schools in face-to-face tutorials and with email support.

Increasing the understanding and skills of teachers to work effectively with students with disability in their classrooms included working on planning sequences incorporating adjustments. CEO also provided whole of staff professional development at a school level in response to the needs as expressed by the principal in the first instance, and then either by the Special Learning Needs coordinator or direct staff requests.

**Training in Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6)**

In the extension period into 2014, CEO included Output 6 training in the DSE 2005, partnering with the Department of Education Tasmania, and Independent Schools Tasmania to purchase the licence for the University of Canberra modules. This was aimed at supporting school leadership teams and staff to understand their obligations under the legislation.

**Supporting teachers to modify lesson plans (Output 9)**

To address the increasing number of students with a diagnosis of Autism CEO focused Output 9 on engaging a specialist advisory teacher with expertise in autism whose primary roles was to work one-to-one with teachers. CEO saw the need for teachers to have an expert working alongside them to provide the support and knowledge and also to build capacity with schools through professional development opportunities. In addition, CEO supported teachers to develop and modify their lesson plans to suit the needs of students diagnosed with Autism. Training and support was also provided to parents through Parents of Children with Autism support groups.

**Supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)**

In 2014 CEO included Output 13, supporting the implementation of the NCCD. This focused on whole staff training, leadership training and Disability Coordinators training. CEO developed a package of material for schools to use in its first collection of data, and also for the CEO teacher induction process, which was then refined in line with the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) website developed for the NCCD.
Participation in the NCCD process grew from 30 percent of schools in 2013 to cover all schools in 2014. CEO decided it was essential that all children should be in the count and that it was necessary for all schools to participate. CEO has put in place many electronic captures of the adjusted work. The planning has been set on the server, which alerts teachers to children who require attention and copies of Individual Education Plans are scanned and uploaded to the plan. By the end of 2014 some schools were still using paper-based collection of data evidence, two larger primary schools had introduced e-capture and 90 percent of the colleges are keeping data electronically.

21.2.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

CEO exceeded its benchmark for all outputs with particularly high achievements against benchmarks for activities in Output 5 and 6. This was a reflection of the successful strategies undertaken including training staff in special education using the OLT online modules and the University of Canberra modules on understanding the DSE 2005.

Table 21-2: TAS Catholic MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>85-100</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>125-150</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>255-280</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>30 - 37</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is also noteworthy that all 37 Catholic schools in Tasmania were given support in the implementation of the NCCD through the MSSD initiative.

21.2.4 Impact of the MSSD initiative

Summary of outcomes

MSSD enabled CEO to focus on needs it had identified but lacked resources to tackle other than by incremental changes over a longer period of time. A notable point of distinction in the CEO approach was the deliberate shift to greater devolution of responsibility for action at the classroom level and less reliance on lead teachers. Consequently, there appears to be greater ownership of integration across the schools.

The roll out of assistive technologies (Output 1) was completed in the initial phase of the initiative and then taken further by the CEO. The training (Output 2) was extremely successful in that it ‘raised the bar for teacher understanding and how to go about finding appropriate technology for students with disability.’ Classroom teachers saw opportunities to use assistive technologies and selected applications that emerged in the process of evaluating their effectiveness for students with disability.
The immediate practical outcomes from the management of this activity were similar to those experienced in other sectors. Devices purchased by CEO became the property of the schools for the sole use of individual students with disability and their families, and the transition from grade to grade was problem free. A flexible approach was adapted to the more problematic issue of student transition from primary to secondary school reflecting a consistently strong set of values that put the interests of the individual student first. MSSD funds applied wisely enabled CEO and the schools to entertain options that may not have been possible under the usual arrangements.

CEO considered that the use of the OLT modules could have been more successful in some respects (Output 5). The number of teachers participating was lower than anticipated initially but is now increasing as it is taken up in regional areas. The CEO experience is that OLT works better where there is a local school group working together. The face-to-face experience provides extra information and provides the additional benefit of a quality assurance element.

The uptake of the DSE 2005 training modules (Output 6) was extremely high with almost all schools participating by the final year. The success of the implementation was due largely to the CEO requirement that leadership teams had to complete the first set of modules. All principals completed the modules and many ensured that all staff members followed suit. By August 2015 CEO aims to have all staff complete modules 1-3. CEO will have a five year shared licence with the Tasmanian Department of Education and is confident that all staff will have participated by the end of 2016.

MSSD also made it possible to afford an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) consultant on a regular basis to work alongside teachers, ‘elbow to elbow’, and to provide professional learning first to teachers and then to principals. This took learning from working with ASD students to develop strategies for all children in the classroom. As a result, CEO decided that with increasing numbers of ASD students the consultant role is essential and it will find ways to provide teachers with the support needed. The ASD consultant will continue in 2015 under CEO budget made available for specialist support.

**Lessons learned**

The CEO is confident that assistive technologies and appropriate training would have happened without the MSSD but, as often happens, there is usually a lag time adapting these innovations for students with disability and even with improved access the speed of take up is typically slower. In contrast, the MSSD initiative helped students with disability keep pace and in some instances become leaders in the application of technologies at the school level.

Online training made a stronger start in the northern regions and provided immediate access to quality professional learning. It also had the effect of building capacity in schools very quickly since the first cohort of teachers participating in online learning were then able to take the role of tutors by the final year of the initiative. With the OLT licence continuing these teachers will play a key role in providing support for all school staff, not just those focused on students with disability.
Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative

The sustainable effects of MSSD for Tasmania Catholic schools align with the more general strategy of devolving greater responsibilities to schools. Along with this, special learning needs staff are being given more recognition and their new roles will become embedded in school operations.

CEO will continue using technology to encourage teachers to be creative in their pedagogy and also to make administration easier. CEO is confident there will be greater awareness by the average classroom teacher that they have a responsibility to enable students with disability to learn. The sector has gained in its collective knowledge and skill development through MSSD at a number of levels. It has enabled teachers to explore potential assistive technologies and to practice incorporating it into their professional lives.

The NCCD process pointed to the lack of a user-friendly system to collate available information about students with disability in 2013. In contrast, schools now have access to data for funding applications and can deliver professional reports on secure files held centrally. The shift from paper to electronic form has been one of the most significant and sustainable changes to emerge from the MSSD and NCCD initiatives.

21.3 Tasmania Independent

Independent Schools Tasmania (IST) supports each of the 37 independent schools in the state. The total number of students enrolled in independent schools in Tasmania Prep to Year 10 is 7627. 420 students with disability (SWD) receive additional State and Australian government support to access the curriculum in the mainstream setting. There is one special school, Giant Steps, registered as and supported by IST. Additional funding has also been provided by the Department of Education Tasmania. Currently, IST employs 1.6FTE special education staff to support all independent schools. Less than 30 percent of independent schools in Tasmania have a qualified Special Education coordinator on staff.

A total of $505,402 in MSSD funds was allocated to independent schools in Tasmania covering five MSSD outputs. The majority of this funding (33%) was allocated to skills training in special education through the use of OLT modules (Output 5), with 25 percent allocated to training in the use of assistive technology (Output 2), 18 percent to teachers learning how to develop or modify lesson plans to suit the needs of students with disability (Output 9), and 17 percent to supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13).

21.3.1 Implementation strategy

Prior to the MSSD initiative IST had established an annual programme of regular access to professional learning for member schools and a minimum of three Special Education Network Meetings delivered in regional areas. At least one of these was planned and delivered collaboratively with Catholic Education colleagues. The five MSSD outputs selected by IST built
on this pattern and focused initially on providing guidance and support for school level change in areas of greatest need.

Aware of the limitations of its capacity to manage the outputs IST targeted MSSD resources on groups of selected groups of schools for maximum impact. On the basis of its own research and advice from consultants, IST identified a limited number of schools requiring additional support related to each of the selected outputs. The main elements in the initial plans were:

- Training in assistive technology targeted at a small group of isolated schools with difficulty accessing professional learning (Output 2).
- Knowledge and skills training in special education following a planned sequence of OnlineTraining Ltd (OLT) modules with specialist tutor support for participating teachers (Output 5).
- Provision of a special education consultant and school-based professional learning to support teachers to develop and improve Individual Learning Plans (ILP) for students with disability (Output 9).

IST also recognised that its activities would need to make the best possible use of the expertise available. It therefore invested financial resources, time and energy into building the collective strength and calibre of project officers responsible for the activities at the school and network level.

The training in assistive technology project (Output 2) concluded in 2013, and two new outputs (6 and 13) involving a set of complementary activities were added for the 2014 MSSD extension phase.

21.3.2 Approaches to the outputs

Providing assistive technology training (Output 2)

IST identified three schools with significant need for support in the area of assistive technology. These schools collectively support more than 65 students with special needs. Located in the north and north west of the state they experience difficulty accessing regular professional learning support due to their limited staff numbers and difficulty making release time available for teachers.

A project officer was engaged to train and support all 18 teaching staff in the three schools. The training programme aimed to strengthen teacher capacity and improve the use of existing technology available. It included a combined professional learning session for the three participating schools each term supplemented with two school-specific sessions delivered each term. While the training was targeted at classroom teachers, parents were encouraged to participate in some sessions.

Additional support was offered in the form of in-class modeling of best practice, participation in cross-sector network sessions and conference attendance. Specific assistive software applications and programme resources were provided as required with up to $5,000 per school
allocated for this purpose. Support from the MSSD initiative was also directed towards developing a strong network to sustain skills in assistive technology.

Although these activities concluded in 2013 the impact of the initiative on the introduction of assistive technologies continued. IST reports considerable success despite some obstacles, such as limited prior knowledge and skill, initial lack of confidence and competence of teachers with the technology.

**Building skills in special education (Output 5)**

Output 5 was selected on the basis of a survey run by IST in October 2010 that confirmed the challenges facing small schools, often isolated, and unable to provide teachers with additional qualifications in Special Education. Eight schools were identified as having significant gaps in support for teachers of students with special needs. An expert consultant was engaged to provide specialist tutor support with site-specific training for the teachers to build their skills in special education along with a planned sequence of self-paced OnlineTraining Ltd (OLT) modules (e.g. Autism Spectrum Disorder, Speech, Language and Communication, Needs and Managing Behaviour). IST specialists also developed a toolbox of resources specifically designed for these teachers.

IST officers added a significant quality control element to the online module programme to ensure teachers and teacher aides fully engaged with the course materials. Participant input was directly observable online and the project officer and teams were able to monitor responses to the learning tasks. The team then provided tutorial support for individuals via email followed by a face-to-face networking sessions with a special education expert.

A high level of course completions was achieved, and strong participant satisfaction across the sector with the online modules. The benchmark for Output 5 in the initial phase was set at eight teachers but doubled to 16 in the first reporting period: by the end of 2013 the project had supported 11 schools and 81 teachers with 32 ‘Completion of Course’ certificates awarded. The overall outcomes included improved teachers’ knowledge, understanding and skills for working with students with ASD, and greater confidence to support inclusive practice. A significant example of impact from Output 5 was the enrolment of an entire school staff in the module for Autism. Further outcomes occurred in the extension phase that built on the solid base of collective gains in skills and knowledge for both support staff and teachers. In 2014 the programmes were offered to all IST schools.

The quality of support from project officers monitoring teacher engagement with the online modules was critical to the success of Output 5. Because the project officer was able to identify participants who were making significant progress, as well as those who required additional advice and support, the process of improving practice was timely and effective.

**Supporting teachers to modify lesson plans (Output 9)**

Working in collaboration with Catholic Education Tasmania, IST employed a qualified and experienced consultant to support teachers to develop or modify lesson plans to accommodate
the learning needs of students with disability, while at the same time meeting the needs of all other students in the classroom. IST identified three schools with high demands and minimal resources requiring support. The strategy of targeting MSSD funds provided an opportunity for all 45 staff to be involved.

Support was also provided for teachers to attend additional professional learning provided by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). Training for teacher aides and learning support teachers has enhanced their skills and understanding across a range of topics related to students with disability.

Output 9 added considerable value to IST schools as it evolved. Special Learning Needs Network sessions organised by IST played a significant role with anticipated high attendance and support from school principals, classroom and subject teachers, and special education teachers. IST is building its knowledge of the capacity and capability of people who have expertise and have the potential to sustain involvement in training staff.

These regional networking sessions facilitated by IST project officers had a ripple effect with 15 additional schools participating at their own expense. By 2014 the activities of Output 9 were extended to cover all areas of the state with an emphasis on professional learning opportunities targeted at the whole of staff level. The outcomes generated and supported by Output 9 activities include networks and collegial partnerships that provide the basis for ongoing complementary activities.

**Training in Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6) and supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)**

The extension of the MSSD initiative enabled IST to provide complementary activities with Output 6, training for all school staff to improve understanding of their obligations under the DSE 2005 and Output 13, supporting schools with the implementation of the NCCD. IST Project Officers designed a resource package of activities combining these two outputs and using a range of complementary professional learning information and activities. In 2014 IST introduced all schools to the online modules on DSE 2005 developed by the University of Canberra supplemented by in-school support to contextualise understanding.

The approach focused first on principals and business managers as key points of influence in their schools, and also ensured that prior to development meetings with the project officers in schools, every participant was required to provide a certificate of completion. By December 2014 all teachers in independent schools, and many teacher aides and ancillary staff, had completed required training modules.

From the outset of the MSSD initiative, and particularly for Outputs 6 and 13, ‘catering for diversity has been the lens for these activities’, making strong links to the Australian Curriculum. This provided a compelling rationale to support the implementation of the NCCD process which, combined with cross-sector collaboration throughout the initiative, has been a major benefit for IST schools in Tasmania.
21.3.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

Table 21-3: TAS Independent MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>68-80</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>450-750</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>75-120</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>25-36</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IST achieved or exceeded all the benchmarks set.

21.3.4 Impact of the MSSD initiative

Summary of outcomes

In the funding period IST achieved specific outcomes in targeted schools in the area of assistive technology. With the development and consolidation of networks, these gains were broadened to other IST schools.

IST also established a solid base of collective gains in skills and knowledge. The level and quality of skills training in special education has exceeded expectations with a high level of online modules completed, strong participant satisfaction across the sector, and a clear demand for more professional learning opportunities. IST school staff improved their understanding of their obligations under the DDA and the DSE 2005 (Output 6), and principals and teachers have contributed to the implementation the NCCD.

Lessons learned

Targeted approach to support

The strengths of the IST led initiatives included the targeted but flexible approach to adding value to the activities to meet the needs of schools with limited resources and opportunities for professional learning. Importantly IST worked within capacity and focused on the greatest needs first. Overall, IST considers it was successful in meeting the objectives of the MSSD initiative: ‘it was well-paced and supportive’.

The challenge of working with small rural schools continues, but it appears that the efforts of IST have paid off with some useful lessons for other sectors. One of these was the impact of a small association injecting funds into a small number of targeted groups of schools identified as being most in need of professional learning and support. This created a hub of activity attracting other schools, keen to participate at their own expense, and appears to be setting the foundations for sustainable links.

The targeted approach appears to have worked more generally to the advantage of the IST group since almost all the 37 schools have linked to the MSSD initiative through newly
generated projects, networks and partnerships. This organic growth has evolved with the increased confidence of school staff gained during their work with the Project Officers. Had the IST taken a different approach and spread the MSSD funds across the whole group of schools it may well have resulted in a set of local and isolated responses to the challenges.

With the benefit of hindsight IST considers the targeted approach for Output 2 would probably have been even more effective had participation been broadened to include another group of three schools that were further progressed in the use of IEPs and SMART goals. This would have had a number of benefits, for example: mentoring, devolved leadership, an expanded network of support and reduced reliance on external support officers, and their workload.

Adding value to the online learning experience

The single biggest immediate impact of the MSSD initiative on IST schools comes from the provision of online learning for school staff. The numbers completing modules, and continuing on to more, far exceeded expectations. Since every school was required to complete the DSE 2005 eLearning modules, staff approached further online learning opportunities with greater confidence.

Quality control

Throughout the initiative IST has been alert to the issue of maintaining quality control across the activities. The diagnostic monitoring of teacher engagement with online modules has ensured support and effective outcomes for all participants. Quality control was particularly effective at the point when network members become training facilitators. To ensure accurate and consistent content, IST Project Officers co-facilitated initial professional learning sessions until they were satisfied that the new facilitator was sufficiently competent and confident to operate independently.

Engaging high calibre project officers

The achievements for IST were possible only through the assistance provided by MSSD funds. The success of the activities can be attributed in large measure to the high calibre of the project officers and their consistent engagement with schools over the life of the projects. Some of these officers will continue working on the activities beyond 2014.

Integrated approach to implementation

A distinctive feature of the IST strategy was the integrated approach to the implementation of the three main outputs: online training to build skills in special education (Output 5). By ensuring close links between these activities IST added considerable depth and breadth to the outcomes. For the many small IST schools, attendance of teachers at network sessions was a significant commitment: there are strong signs that the level of interest and mutual support will be maintained.

Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative

IST considers that the strategies it adopted under MSSD are likely to lead to longer-term reform, and that a number of key activities will be sustained and possibly expanded. IST’s Special
Education staff and the Manager Education Services provided support and advice for schools on ways of sustaining MSSD activities. This will involve limited support for teachers who have gained new skills through involvement in MSSD projects to continue their development, and staff will be encouraged to share learning, resources and other materials with colleagues at Special Education Network Meetings. Using 2015 SFSF funds, additional IST teachers will be given opportunity to visit project schools. In this way projects supported by MSSD will be sustained through collaborative learning opportunities.

The online training under MSSD outputs has proven to be highly cost effective and will be maintained with some cost recovery for IST support. It is anticipated that schools will increasingly adopt ownership for planning and facilitating after-school professional learning opportunities and the showcasing and sharing of successful resources and activities, skills, outcomes beyond the MSSD initiative. More broadly, IST has successfully trialled a new approach to gaining maximum impact of interventions with limited resources by injecting funds into a small number of targeted groups of schools.

IST anticipates significant growth in the number of teachers with special education qualifications in mainstream schools, particularly if teachers can gain accreditation for the OLT modules. There is a genuine and growing interest in teachers recognising a need to know more and wanting to work more effectively with students with disability. As a result, IST officers and schools, individually and collectively, now have considerably increased capacity and more sophisticated skills to deal with the complexities of the tasks and to further improve the provision of education for students with disability in mainstream schools and classes.
22 Northern Territory

22.1 Northern Territory Government

A restructure in the Northern Territory Department of Education (DoE) in 2012 created the opportunity to design a new service model for support for students with disability – the Response to Intervention Service Model (RTI) – and the MSSD initiative was aligned with this.

The implementation of MSSD was led by a team within the Student Support Division, comprising a manager and specialist professionals, in collaboration with schools, families, and other agencies. Strategies were informed by the DoE’s Strategic Plan and policy for students with disability, as well as data from consultations associated with the new service model.

A total of $2,942,202 in MSSD funds was allocated to support the DoE Implementation Plan, 2012-2014, covering nine outputs. Almost 30 percent of this funding was allocated to provide assistive technology and training teachers in the use of the technology in the classroom, and 24 percent on working with allied health professionals. Another 36 percent of the fund supported teachers to adapt the curriculum and lesson plans, and work collaboratively in teams to better meet the needs of students with disability.

22.1.1 Implementation strategy

DoE implemented Outputs 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10, in 2012-2013, to strengthen capacity in schools and the system. In 2014, DoE included support for the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13). MSSD activity focused on whole school planning, school level project implementation with systemic support, targeted programmes in assistive technology and speech, language and communication, and professional learning to strengthen teaching capability as well as school and regional capacity. Furthermore, the DoE encouraged exploration, experimentation and innovation, with an expectation of sustainable practices.

22.1.2 Approaches to the outputs

Providing assistive technology (Output 1) and providing assistive technology training (Output 2)

The DoE implemented Outputs 1 and 2 as a joint strategy, by establishing a competitive grants system for assistive technologies for the targeted group of students and facilitating professional learning. All government schools in the Northern Territory were provided with a subscription to the Spectronics online service. Spectronics is an Australian company specialising in inclusive learning technologies that provides access to point-in-time professional learning, resources and forums, for both teachers and families of students with disability.

Undoubtedly, the strength of this approach was the professional learning and in-school support delivered throughout the Northern Territory by the MSSD funded consultant, Professional Learning – Special Education. 85 schools were successful in obtaining grants (of up to $10,000
each) for devices/equipment, having met a set of eligibility criteria, including a school action plan for assistive technology. There was widespread participation in the professional learning programme that encompassed areas such as interactive whiteboards, iPads, apps and specific software. This reached 515 school staff in approximately 60 percent of schools. In addition, workshops by Spectronics were held across the Northern Territory, targeting the diverse needs of students using iPads and other technologies in the classroom. Individual technology grants (up to $1,500 each) were awarded to support 56 students across 28 schools in the Northern Territory. Six schools were provided with amplification systems to augment curriculum engagement for primary indigenous students with conductive hearing loss.

**Coordinating with health/allied health professionals (Output 4) and supporting teachers to modify lesson plans (Output 9)**

The DoE integrated these two outputs in a system-changing approach whereby the team of speech, language and communication teacher and speech pathologist (the SLC team) implemented a service model of ‘whole classroom-whole school’, combining speech pathology assessment of student learning needs with professional learning, including the modelling of practical classroom strategies. These were complemented by the posting of classroom resources on a SharePoint website for ongoing teacher learning.

An online learning course Understanding Students with Speech, Language and Communication Needs was launched in 2013. In addition, the SLC advisory teacher supported 577 teachers by team teaching and modelling strategies to help modify lessons for students with communication disabilities.

The SLC team created new ways of working with classroom teachers in differentiating within the curriculum, transforming practices. By translating assessment data into effective classroom practices, the team created the link between assessment and programmes, so that teachers could deliver both individual and whole class speech therapy programmes that were sensitive to students’ needs. In some remote communities, students were assessed in their first language, with the assistance of local first language speakers.

**Building skills in special education (Output 5)**

In a jurisdiction such as the Northern Territory, with culturally diverse schools scattered across vast geographic areas, one challenge is equity of access to professional learning. Consequently there was a focus on the design and delivery of four online professional learning courses from the OLT suite of courses, in collaboration with the Association of Independent Schools and the Catholic Education Office in the Northern Territory. The course Introduction to Special Education was commissioned by the Northern Territory Government and designed locally, the only course of its kind in Australia, featuring Northern Territory examples and case studies relating to six key disabilities.
Training in Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6)

A professional learning course in the DSE 2005 assisted staff in their understanding of the DSE 2005 and their obligations. School Leaders accessed specific DSE 2005 professional learning sessions, and all staff were able to access an online Moodle course for government and non-government schools. 136 DoE teachers and support staff participated in the Moodle course and subsequently trained other school staff. 500 staff members also engaged in learning about the Standards through specific NCCD workshops/professional learning activities.

Supporting teachers assess learning and adapt curriculum (Output 8)

One of the features of the implementation of Outputs 2, 4, 9 and 10 by DoE was the expert support delivered to school staff, resulting in enhanced teacher capability in assessing the learning levels of students with disability and applying this data to differentiate within the curriculum. Teachers demonstrated growing expertise in designing Education Adjustment Plans (EAPs) with parents, school managers and external agencies, and benefited from additional curriculum support to engage students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Supporting collaborative teaching practices (Output 10)

Activities concentrated on professional learning through networks to enhance collaborative teaching practices, and advancing school independence in improving learning outcomes. Six Regional Professional Learning Communities for special education teachers were established/expanded, incorporating network meetings to share learning and practice, and professional learning days to enrich practice. This brought together staff from 97 percent of urban schools across the Northern Territory, 100 percent of rural and 88 percent of remote communities in the regions. MSSD funds enabled staff to travel to regional centres to access these important opportunities, reducing their professional isolation, and connecting them to a network of professional practice and support. 1058 teachers participated in 2014, with resulting benefits to 140 schools and over 2116 students.

Supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)

The DoE implementation of the NCCD began in 2013 with 54 schools. Online training courses with Northern Territory case studies, assisted special education teachers to identify students with disability, develop skills in collecting data and design Educational Adjustment Plans (EAP). A designated NCCD support advisor assisted each participating school in 2014. The Student Needs Profiling Instrument and EAP template were reviewed, to ensure alignment with NCCD processes and language.

22.1.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

Table 22-1: NT Government MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>60-80</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Performance benchmarks were exceeded for all outputs and in some cases such as Outputs 5, 9, 10, and 13 far exceeded expectations.

### 22.1.4 Overall impact of the MSSD initiative

#### Summary of outcomes

For Outputs 1 and 2, providing assistive technology and training staff in the use of the devices in the classroom, the outcomes were readily seen, firstly in schools having devices/equipment/software which were appropriate to student needs, and secondly in school staff gaining new skills through access to ongoing professional learning and support through the Professional Learning Consultant and the staff of Spectronics. A significant shift in teacher and behaviour in relation to the use of devices/equipment/software was evident.

Assistive technology was valued in the classroom, for facilitating and enhancing the learning opportunities and outcomes for students with disability. Teachers learned new skills and discovered new pathways in teaching practice, which enriched the learning experience for all students. Beyond the classroom, assistive technology created opportunities for students with disability to participate on the same basis as other students, such as at school assembly and beyond the school gate. These initiatives were described as ‘life changing for students, their families, teachers and schools’.

The impact of the work on Output 4, working with health professionals, and Output 9, supporting teachers to modify lesson plans, went beyond this to other DoE work units (Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting, (ESL), specialists in Linguistics and Hearing), and agencies such as the Northern Territory Department of Health. Effective coalitions formed, for instance, between the SLC team and Wellbeing and Behaviour; special pedagogies such as ESL. The SLC team collaborated with linguists to investigate the important role of phonological awareness in literacy development in remote communities in Arnhem Land, as part of the implementation of the Northern Territory Indigenous Education Review, A Share in the Future – Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory (2014).

For Output 10, developing collaborative practices, impact was evident in two main areas: firstly, in special education teachers taking on responsibility for the organisation and promotion of their Learning Communities, previously undertaken by Student Support Division; and secondly,
in the dissemination of information/learning from these Communities to school communities, accompanied by an increase in collaborative practices between special education teachers and classroom teachers.

The support provided in 2014 for the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13) had immediate benefit to DoE, firstly in providing a system overview and assisting in the assessment of the usefulness of data, and secondly in having an informed approach to identifying the key elements to be incorporated into future core business.

Lessons learned

Quality people engaged

The quality of professionals engaged for the Initiative was outstanding, as was their integrity and expertise in leading and driving the initiative with a team approach. Despite initial delays in recruiting to specialist positions in this remote part of Australia, the team created momentum and enthusiasm, sustained activities over vast distances and culturally diverse settings, added substantial value to system capacity, and shaped attitudes and practice.

Collaborative, culturally appropriate approach

The DoE collaborative approach engaged leadership teams, established regional teams, created teams within schools, across agencies and with local communities. This led to changing ways of delivering support services, as well as enhancing the quality of those services, within the framework of the Response to Intervention Service Model.

Highlights in 2014 included collaborative work between the DoE and the Northern Territory Department of Health, delivery of professional learning online in partnership with the Association of Independent Schools and the Catholic Education Office in the Northern Territory, and collaboration between the Student Support Division and principals in regard to National Partnerships and the special education agenda in the Northern Territory.

Of note is the work on utilising culturally appropriate assessment tools to design realistic strategies for students with disability to access the curriculum. Through a collaborative approach between the MSSD Speech, Language and Communication team and Indigenous staff and community members in several remote communities, culturally appropriate assessments were developed on site, which enabled students to undertake assessment tasks in their first language. This initiative impacted on: student access to the curriculum; family engagement; as well as recognising the skills of Indigenous staff and community members; and empowering schools.

Powerful professional learning

At the heart of the DoE MSSD initiative was professional learning which was delivered online and through professional learning networks to build regional capacity. The OLT online courses were enthusiastically received across the Northern Territory. From a humble beginning with three online learning tutors in 2012, there are now 65 trained tutors.
Empowerment

The MSSD team was empowered to work where it could achieve the most impact - with groups of teachers in Networks, within schools and across schools and agencies – by modelling, collaborating, value-adding, creating learning opportunities. Teachers and support staff were empowered. There were consequent shifts in attitude, focus, strategies and teaching practice. For example, in a remote school in central Australia, empowering the teacher resulted in a change in approach, which in turn resulted in students with disability becoming more independent learners.

Regional capacity building

The great challenge in the Northern Territory is to deliver quality education services across a diverse area, and with schools scattered across a vast geographical area. To address the risk of limited impact of MSSD across this great expanse, DoE shifted its focus in 2013 to regional capacity building. Professional networks were fostered. Programmes were tailored to reflect the context of the regions and the level of expertise of special education teachers, some of whom did not have training in the field. This has made a difference to the system. Indeed this approach was viewed as a key strength in the initiative, as it aligned with the DoE strategy, and enabled professional learning to be tailored to meet the diverse needs of the regions.

Leadership

The leadership role of principals and school executive teams was regarded as paramount for the sustainability of MSSD outputs. Findings from 2012-2014 indicate that the most impact in schools occurred when there was active involvement of the Principal and Assistant Principal/other members of the leadership team in MSSD activities, and when there was a sound relationship built with members of the DoE MSSD team. Underpinning this involvement was a demonstrated understanding of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and a school’s legal obligations, as well as applying this framework for building staff capacity and addressing students’ needs.
Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative

The legacy is clear:

- The Response to Intervention Service Model is now an established framework for the delivery of support services to students with disability.
- The whole school approach is being taken into the future, as is school ownership of the Special Education Teacher networks, and collaborative ways of working across teams.
- In the classroom teachers are using an evidence base to plan and implement educational adjustments.
- Assistive technology is embedded in classrooms and all schools continue to have access to Spectronics for online support, advice and resources. In some schools, teachers have taken on the role of Assistive Technology expert.
- The positions of Speech, Language and Communication teacher and Speech Pathologist from the MSSD initiative have been continued with DoE funding until 2016.
- The project, Phonological Awareness Assessment in the Early Years, is underway. A collaborative project involving Student Support Division, Curriculum, ESL, remote schools and the University of Melbourne, the objective is to develop an assessment tool in phonological awareness, normed for Northern Territory students, to improve early intervention for all students.
- Online learning built ‘a community of practice across regions … and embedded this practice in schools’. There are plans for new learning courses being included in 2015, as well as a government licence for a TV station link for the online react signing lessons to be accessible for teachers and students to review.

Impact summary

The DoE MSSD strategy created ways of working collaboratively that made a difference for students with disability and empowered schools. School leadership teams acknowledged their responsibility and accountability, staff were actively involved in professional learning and networks, families and other agencies were engaged, to enable students with disability to have the level of adjustment they needed to participate in education on the same basis as other students.

There was significant learning and new opportunities in online learning, and in a model of service delivery based on tiers of intervention that were grasped, developed and embedded in practice, creating an exciting learning culture and a system-wide change process. The DoE incorporated these changes into the narrative of education in the Northern Territory, strengthening schools and the system and creating optimism for the future.

22.2 Northern Territory Catholic

The Catholic Education Office (CEO), Diocese of Darwin, services 17 schools across a vast geographic area, from Bathurst Island in the Top End, to remote central Australia. At the outset of the MSSD initiative, the sector was undertaking a broad consultative review process as part
of planning its strategic directions, thus enabling strategies adopted by the CEO for the MSSD initiative to be aligned with the CEO Strategic Plan 2013-2017.

The CEO implemented the MSSD initiative through a team approach, comprising two Inclusion Support Service Advisors, a Speech Pathologist and Psychotherapist on an individual, small-group, campus and whole school basis. A total of $238,356 in MSSD funds was allocated (2012-2014) to support Territory-wide CEO MSSD activities, covering three outputs with 65 percent of the funds being allocated to support teachers to develop or modify lesson plans, 15 percent on training teachers in special education, and nearly 20 percent supporting schools with the implementation of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability.

22.2.1 Implementation strategy

The strategy of the CEO was to implement a change process at the school level, to build system wide capacity to improve educational outcomes for students with disability. Through the CEO Strategic Plan consultation process with schools, three key MSSD areas of need emerged:

- identification of students with disability
- access to specialists and professional learning opportunities for remote schools due to their isolation from services
- developing the skills of teachers, particularly in strategies to improve outcomes for students with disability, including challenging behaviours.

The decision was made to implement the strategy throughout the 5 Indigenous Catholic Community Schools and 11 urban schools targeting training for practising teachers to build their skills in special education (Output 5), and supporting teachers to develop or modify lesson plans to suit the needs of students with disability (Output 9). In 2014, an additional Output (13) was included to support schools with the implementation of the NCCD.

22.2.2 Approaches to the outputs

Building skills in special education (Output 5)

The CEO Inclusion Support advisory staff delivered training in schools and through online professional learning courses, to address the professional learning needs of larger urban schools as well as small, remote schools. Professional learning programmes were facilitated in schools in assistive technology, speech and language assessment, positive behaviours, and implementing inclusive practices in the classroom for students with disability. Three online learning courses were offered, in collaboration with the Northern Territory Department of Education and the Association of Independent Schools. A total of 402 staff from the 16 schools, participated in these professional learning programmes.
Supporting teachers to modify lesson plans (Output 9)

The CEO Inclusion Support Advisors supported teachers to develop or modify lesson plans to meet the learning needs of students with disability, with 80 percent of schools participating, and 256 students benefitting from activities in this output. Teachers developed skills in designing Educational Adjustment Plans (EAPs) with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) goals for students. It was also evident, through evaluations by principals, leadership teams and classroom teachers, that schools were taking more ownership in planning for students with disability.

Supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)

During the final phase of the MSSD initiative, there was a major focus on training teachers in understanding the DSE 2005, using the data collation system designed for Northern Territory Catholic Education, and developing profiles of students to accurately ascertain their level of need. There was 100 percent school participation in 2014, with a total of 83 profiles of students being developed during the 12 month period. This training was delivered at Network meetings, including Principals and Inclusion Support Coordinators from schools. Follow up assistance to schools was provided during a trial period in 2014, prior to the roll-out phase to all schools in 2015.

Professional learning activities through the MSSD initiative had a noticeable impact in the understanding of school responsibilities in, and ownership of, inclusion of students with disability, and noticeable cultural shifts for some schools in inclusive practices as well as improved inclusive practices at the classroom level. Of note was the increased capacity of schools to cater for students with social-emotional-behavioural needs, including those acutely affected by trauma, and networks for remote schools and their linkages with other related services.

22.2.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

Table 22-2: NT Catholic MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>70-80</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>180-200</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>150-160</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>210-230</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The CEO benchmarks were substantially exceeded largely due to the systems and processes being in place to maintain the momentum.
22.2.4 Overall impact of the MSSD initiative

Summary of outcomes

Integrated approach to implementation

There was a planned approach by CEO to enrich and change practice, and to guide and support schools in building capacity, with the view to embedding a change process, and thus to enable longer-term sustainability of the CEO MSSD Implementation Plan.

By integrating the activities in Outputs 5 and 9, there was a positive impact at both classroom and school level. Teachers developed skills and confidence in making educational adjustments for students with disability, supported by on-the-ground support from the CEO Inclusion Support team. In addition, relationships between the Support team and Principals were strengthened, resulting in Principal buy-in across the sector and a shift in thinking and practice in terms of acknowledging schools’ responsibility and making adjustments for students with disability.

Professional learning

The professional learning courses stimulated great interest and resulted in changes in teacher attitude and practice, lifting the level of professional dialogue, and empowering teachers to plan and make adjustments in the classroom. In addition, teachers were observed to bring more rigour to their practice, using evidence to make informed decisions on education adjustment plans.

Sensitivity to cultural safety

Through an approach that recognised the significant role that adults and teachers have in children’s lives, the CEO Inclusion Support Services psychotherapist supported teachers in making adjustments within the classroom to meet the complex and often urgent social-emotional needs of students. This approach recognised the place of cultural safety in students’ ability to engage with the curriculum. Within this framework, teachers developed skills and confidence to build relationships with students and make educational adjustments so that, in time, students could re-engage with the curriculum. This example illustrates the importance of building system capacity to respond to the impact of trauma on students in Northern Territory school communities, as well as recognising the longer term ramifications of this for school attendance, engagement in learning, and student mental health and wellbeing.

Empowered practitioners

At the outset, the Inclusion Support Services staff were empowered to work with schools in creative ways, in Outputs 5 and 9. The focus shifted from coordinating services, to greater ‘on-the-ground’ support. As a result of this practical focus on supporting teachers to develop and modify lesson plans, there were changes in the roles of these consultants. The Inclusion Support Services team worked with schools in a proactive way, in comparison with the previous reactive style of service. They worked in classrooms with teachers, delivering training in inclusion support at a whole school level, empowering principals and Inclusion Support Co-ordinators to
build school capacity. In schools, Inclusion Support Co-ordinators’ roles also changed, to make a greater contribution to the professional learning of staff in other schools through sharing of teaching practice at network meetings. This was a considerable shift. It is unclear at this point in time of its impact on sustainability.

**Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative**

By empowering Inclusion Support Services staff in the implementation of the MSSD initiative the CEO encouraged changes in thinking, processes and practices and raised expectations in relation to embedding changed practices. The ensuing activities were expected to increase the level of teacher skills to more effectively include students with disability and to position the strategies for Outputs 5, 9 and 13 to be integral to the system’s core business.

The impact of the CEO approach was two-fold: empowerment of Inclusion Support Services staff at a central level and Inclusion Support Coordinators in schools, and increased school capacity and capability of classroom teachers.

Despite the progress reported by the CEO in Progress Reports 1-5 in relation to increasing system and school capacity, the ongoing effects of the MSSD initiative are unclear. Yet, one legacy is clear: the way of working in the activities of Outputs 5, 9 and 13 created a team approach by the centrally based Inclusion Support Services personnel and the Inclusion Support Coordinators in schools, which has been sustained as the core way of delivering support services and professional learning.

### 22.3 Northern Territory Independent

The **Association of Independent Schools in the Northern Territory (AISNT)** implemented the MSSD initiative with leadership from the Manager of Education Programmes, who was appointed for twelve months in 2013.

At the outset of the MSSD initiative, the AISNT considered both the limits on its capacity to deliver support, given the small size and diverse nature of the sector, its available resources, and the outcomes that could realistically be achieved to have a sustainable impact at a sector level. This led to a decision to target professional learning, with a view to equity and access to the MSSD initiative across the Northern Territory.

The AISNT provides support services to 21 independent schools with a total of 6,500 students, from Melville Island in the remote Top End, to urban schools in Darwin, to the Anangu lands in remote central Australia. Member schools include Christian, Lutheran, Steiner and independent (stand-alone) schools, including independent Indigenous schools.

#### 22.3.1 Implementation strategy

A Manager of Education Programmes led and managed the implementation of the MSSD plan for selected Outputs 2, 5 and 6, with a total of $150,232 MSSD funds allocated (2012-2014) to
support Territory-wide MSSD activities, covering four outputs with 62 percent being used for building teacher skills in special education.

The focus of the AISNT Implementation Plan was on:

- training in assistive technology for teachers and teacher aides (Output 2), for instance, to assist teachers to better utilise technology for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder to better access the curriculum
- skills training in special education, and in particular developing teacher capability in designing and implementing Educational Adjustment Plans for students with disability (Output 5)
- delivering online professional learning courses in Understanding and Managing Behaviour, Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder and Inclusion of Students with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (Output 5)
- schools developing an understanding of their obligations in relation to the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6).

22.3.2 Approaches to the outputs

Providing assistive technology training (Output 2)

This output targeted training and modelling of applications (apps) for iPads and tablets, to enable students with disability to better access the curriculum. The training was delivered through the Special Education Network Forums and workshops held in schools, with the priority being assistance for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Special Education coordinators, school leaders, classroom teachers and support staff, participated in Special Education Network Forums throughout the MSSD initiative. Individual and whole school professional learning plans were developed, based on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (with reference to students with disability). Using these plans, the Manager of Education Programmes, AISNT, delivered professional learning workshops on assistive technology and classroom strategies for students with disability.

Building skills in special education (Output 5)

There were two modes of delivery for this output. Firstly, at a school level, in planning and implementing Education Adjustment Plans, and recording of student progress, and secondly, through online learning courses.

A feature of the online learning was the collaborative way in which it was planned and delivered – in conjunction with the Northern Territory Department of Education and the Catholic Education in the Northern Territory. Courses were delivered in Understanding and Managing Challenging Behaviours; Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder; and Inclusion of Students with Speech, Language and Communication Needs.
Training in Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6) and supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)

This work was closely aligned with activity in relation to Output 5, in that the AISNT Education Officer delivered support to individual schools in regard to planning and making adjustments in accordance with the DSE 2005. The participation of school leadership teams in this training, through Forums and in school workshops, resulted in the development of systems in schools to document processes, data and information on students with disability. This support ensured a smooth transition to the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data in 2015 (Output 13).

22.3.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

Table 22-3: NT Independent MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>120-150</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>185-200</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>120-150</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>185-200</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>120-150</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>185-200</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Benchmarks were met for all outputs, with particularly good reach of schools for the support with the implementation of the NCCD, with 19 of the 22 member independent schools supported in 2014.

22.3.4 Overall impact of the MSSD initiative

Summary of outcomes

Special Education Network

The greatest success was the expansion of the Special Education Network Forum and its impact on school capacity. Prior to the MSSD initiative, an annual Forum was held for Special Education coordinators in schools. Through the MSSD initiative, participation was expanded to include classroom teachers, principals and other members of school leadership teams, Inclusion Support Assistants and Special Education Assistants. This resulted in the MSSD initiative gaining momentum, evidenced by broader collegial support across schools and regions, leadership teams in schools influencing and implementing whole school approaches, and schools applying their knowledge to meet their legal obligations to students with disability. Significantly, this approach distributed leadership in Special Education across the Northern Territory, brought closer collaborative working relationships with the Darwin-based support staff in AISNT, and increased the number of requests from schools for follow-up AISNT consultancy services.

Integrated approach

The decision by AISNT to select Outputs 2, 5 and 6, with inter-related activities, added a greater reach across the Northern Territory and greater depth of outcomes. For instance, the expanded participation in the Special Education Network Forum led to a stronger network across regions.
of the Northern Territory, as well as consolidating connections across schools within regions. It is recognised that this kind of professional learning and support has added significant value to the sectors’ capacity. One of the systems within the sector, the Christian School system, has since appointed a Coordinator to facilitate that particular network of schools.

This integrated approach created a change in emphasis in professional roles. For instance, the role of the Education Officer AISNT took a stronger role in facilitating professional learning online, providing additional support for teachers participating in online professional learning, mentoring classroom teachers and in particular modelling practice for classroom teachers and encouraging teachers to be more independent in decision-making regarding educational adjustments. Roles of classroom teachers and Special Education Coordinators changed in some schools, particularly in relation to increased collaboration between classroom teachers and special education coordinators, as well as teachers demonstrating a shift in their thinking and confidence in relation to making educational adjustments for students with disability.

**Online learning**

A key benefit of the extension phase of the MSSD initiative was that schools responded in the last 12-month period, particularly to professional learning in assisting students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and with challenging behaviours. The course completion rate for teachers in 2014 was 84 percent and clearly for an activity with a modest investment of MSSD funds, this mode of professional learning brought considerable benefit for this small, diverse sector. Prior to the provision of online learning, many of the smaller schools were not in a position to support travel for professional learning in regional/urban centres. This initiative enabled equity of access for teachers from remote communities.

**Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative**

The greatest effect of the MSSD initiative is the Special Education Network Forum. This established a team approach within a Northern Territory-wide framework, and an effective and efficient way of sharing learning, information and teaching practice in the future.

At the school level, there was generally an increased capacity to make educational adjustments for students with disability, enhanced understanding of legal obligations, greater independence in decision-making, and a clearer understanding of the support that can be accessed through AISNT.

It is anticipated that, given the turnover rate of staff in remote schools in particular, as well as an uncertain funding environment, there will be challenges ahead in sustaining gains made. However, the sector has confidence in the framework that has been established, in the sustainability of the Special Education Network, the team approach in schools, the ability to build on the current capacity in schools, and ongoing access to professional learning through online courses.
Impact summary

The MSSD initiative strengthened professional knowledge and skills in special education in AISNT schools. Greater numbers of students with disability were identified as a result of schools gaining special education skills and developing capability in differentiating the curriculum at the classroom level. In addition, teachers now place substantial value on the online courses, as evidenced by completion rates and course evaluations.

The AISNT is concerned for the future in terms of the sustainability of this initiative in a climate of uncertain funding. At the same time, there is confidence in the framework established and anticipation that with ongoing provision of online professional learning courses as well as greater information sharing and collaborative work, that the gains will be sustained.
23.1 ACT Government

The ACT Education and Training Directorate (ETD) includes 86 public schools and more than 42,000 students. Approximately 2,200 students access disability education programmes, most in mainstream classrooms and around 460 in specialist schools. Provision for students with disability includes four specialist schools, a combined mainstream and specialist school, learning support units, learning support units, and autism and learning support centres. All students with a disability have an Individual Learning Plan developed in partnership with families to address their learning needs. The Senior Manager, Disability Education, located in the Student Engagement section of the Directorate, led the implementation of MSSD initiatives.

A total of $4,031,752 of MSSD funds was allocated to ETD schools covering three outputs. The majority of these funds (73%) was allocated to supporting school principals and school leadership teams to strengthen teachers’ capability to assist students with disability (Output 7), 18 percent allocated to support the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13), and 8 percent allocated to provide training in the DSE 2005 (Output 6).

23.1.1 Implementation strategy

The ACT Strategic Plan for Disability Education provided the basis for aligning the three outputs supported by the MSSD. The ETD system-school relationship is based on an established inclusive approach that evolved further in response to the opportunity presented by the MSSD initiative. There was a growing awareness that a new approach was needed so the MSSD initiative presented a timely opportunity to steer ETD towards some risk-taking and re-thinking of assumptions underpinning the operation of support services for teachers and students with disability and schools. The major outcome of this was development of the Disability Education Coordination (DECO) project (Output 7) which became the flagship for a range of related initiatives in the ACT system.

23.1.2 Approaches to the outputs

Training in Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6)

ETD participated in the collaborative project with other jurisdictions and the University of Canberra to develop the online learning package focusing on DSE 2005, specifically the modules focusing on school leadership and on senior secondary education. ETD provided training for school staff in understanding the DSE 2005, and how to meet those obligations, using the University of Canberra DSE 2005 eLearning modules with support of the school-based DECOs. The eLearning package was rolled out over 2013 and 2014 as more modules became available.

The DSE 2005 eLearning module was aligned with existing OnlineTraining Ltd (OLT) disability education inclusion training courses: staff who enrol in an OLT course are expected to complete...
the DSE 2005 module, which can count towards registration maintenance with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute.

In order to meet the needs of students with a disability ETD also established Disability Education Partners (DEP) from school leader classification teachers based in school networks who were tasked with assisting school leadership teams in making reasonable adjustments and differentiating the curriculum. In response to requests from schools for more information the modules were supplemented by presentations prepared by ETD Disability Education staff. ETD staff and DECOs worked together to develop a set of resources to promote the DSE 2005 eLearning modules supported by the MSSD initiative including the resource kit ‘Understanding Learning Difficulties: a Practical Guide’ which was provided to all representative teachers and school psychologists.

A learning difficulties professional learning community resource is located on the Directorate's online learning environment. This portal provides ETD staff with a place to share teaching and learning interventions and access to evidence-based resources for students with learning difficulties. It also provides digitally captured teaching practices and discussions from within ACT schools, presentations, links and supports.

**Supporting school leadership to build teacher capability (Output 7)**

The ACT ETD approach to Output 7 coincided with a major innovation to support school leaders in strengthening teachers’ capability. Where previously ETD had a case-study approach with approximately one ETD specialist support person per 90 students, the MSSD initiative provided an opportunity to introduce a new model by appointing designated school-based DECOs (from existing school staff) to support school leadership development directly targeted at improving opportunities for students with disability in each school.

The new model was built around the DECOs working with ‘Network Student Engagement Teams’ (NSET), in four geographic regions across the ACT, each with 20 – 25 schools and its own specialists. ETD also funded the appointment of a project officer to provide training and support for DECOs. In addition to leading and managing the overall implementation of the DECO project, the project officer designed and organised professional learning activities, facilitated networks, raised the general level of confidence in people’s ability to work with students with disability, and developed a community of learners.

The roles and responsibilities of the DECOs include supporting the implementation of Disability Standards for Education 2005, which effectively underpins all their work. Each school developed specific elements of the DECO role to develop staff capacity based on specific school and network priorities.

All 86 ETD schools engaged in DECO projects, which centred on 65 funded projects ranging from complex multi-school projects to small single site activities. An intense period of activity in 2013 culminated in the launch of a portal at a highly successful DECO conference attended by over 110 participants. With the support of the DECOs and NSET a number of Professional Learning Communities were created and strengthened to share expertise, knowledge and resources. In
order to assist DECOs with sharing resources online they were provided with professional learning to enable them to use the ETD online learning platform as a means of promoting and reporting on their projects in digital format.

In addition to the DECO activities, ETD implemented other projects to enhance leadership support for teachers. Leadership teams were offered comprehensive targeted professional learning that included best practice and current research developments in learning difficulties from a range of key experts within ETD. OLT courses were specifically targeted at school leadership teams that were able to act as mentors and tutors within their schools.

Supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)

By the end of 2014, almost all ETD schools had participated in the NCCD data collection process. This included sending a representative to participate in the NCCD moderation professional learning day, which provided a systematic approach to identifying students with disability and the level of adjustments required.

23.1.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

Table 23-1: ACT Government MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>350-400</td>
<td>1,992</td>
<td>1,995</td>
<td>2,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>School Leadership</td>
<td>58-67</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ETD well exceeded all benchmarks for the three outputs including a major increase in their benchmark targets included in their revised implementation plan for the extension of the initiative.

23.1.4 Overall impact of the MSSD initiative

Summary of outcomes

The sharing of knowledge, teaching practices, expertise and specialist resources has increased across ACT public schools primarily through the combination of DSE 2005 eLearning package, network meetings and Inclusion OLT courses. The DSE 2005 eLearning package was considered ‘pivotal in increasing staff knowledge and practices and making known the obligations under the DSE 2005 in schools throughout the Directorate’.

By mid-December 2014, 1010 employees within ACT Education Training Directorate (ETD) had completed the online Disability Standards for Education module. This represented approximately 25 percent of staff across the Directorate. Evidence of the impact of the modules collected by ETD showed consistently high levels of increased understanding and awareness amongst participants of the challenges faced by students with disability in schools. There was also evidence of a strong appreciation of legal responsibilities under the Disability
Discrimination Act 1992 and a marked change in attitudes towards making adjustments for students with disability among leadership teams.

The networks and professional learning communities established through MSSD are now sharing good practice and addressing common challenges and pursuing new opportunities. ETD reports they have increased staff expertise, and enabled systematic and consistent approaches to processes to support students with disability such as Individual Learning Plans Transition Action Plans, Adjustment Matrix, communication and support services.

Professional Learning Communities have facilitated the sharing of expertise, knowledge and resources along with mechanisms such as the Directorates’ online learning environment, online forums and specialist cluster meetings which have been formalised to help DECOs develop networks to support students with disability. DECO staff continue to play a significant role as key points of contact both internally and for school communications with external agencies. They have been a vital link between school and government, and in the dissemination process to teachers, students, families, and the community, and in the implementation of the NCCD in the ACT.

All ACT ETD schools were encouraged to participate in the 2014 data collection, with a mandatory participation rate set at 66 percent and 95 percent of ACT schools participating in 2014. In 2014 schools were requested to send a representative to participate in half day NCCD moderation professional learning day. All ACT public schools will participate in 2015 when ETD expects to meet its goal of 100 percent participation.

Lessons learned

The most distinctive element for the ACT ETD was making the DECO role fundamental to enacting the MSSD partnership. The DECO programme proved a catalyst for a number of related strategies to come together in a coherent framework and with a fresh outlook. The process of developing school profiles at the commencement of the MSSD initiative generated an audit across the system that in turn prompted cross-fertilisation of experiences and ideas through, for example, DECOs visiting other schools and working together on innovative approaches in the use of assistive technologies and flexible learning spaces.

Perhaps the most significant and timely of these approaches was the programme of innovative project grants from MSSD funds to support school and network action plans for students with disability. Opportunities for further development emerged from the new framework and there was a notable emphasis on school-initiated activities and away from traditional professional development: ETD described the projects as ‘genuine ground-up initiatives’.

There were some unexpected positive outcomes from the MSSD activities. The most fundamental change for ACT ETD was that the MSSD initiative enabled, and in a sense ‘authorised’, teachers to connect with each other about their approaches to working with students with disability. More than this, the ETD believed that teachers developed more ‘organic’ networks that emerged beyond the formal arrangements and reflected the more
powerful outcome of taking ownership of the connections and the MSSD strategies in their schools.

The establishment of self-sustaining networks of teachers was also an unexpected benefit, particularly the increase in schools combining within networks to provide professional learning, delivered either by ETD staff or by external agencies. Moreover ETD did not expect the scale of the networks that emerged and the activities extended beyond what it had hoped for. With the net cast wider to involve a much larger number of people ETD expects the activities and the networks to be self-sustaining in the foreseeable future and to become more comprehensive in scope.

Involvement of teachers with the DECO team also triggered interest amongst high quality staff. ETD was able to enhance engagement with school principals who understood that the MSSD initiative provided new opportunities for teachers to take a role in school leadership. MSSD has been a vehicle for these higher-level roles and simultaneously raised the profile of inclusiveness at the school executive leadership level. A related and again unanticipated outcome was the notable improvement in the quality of applicants for leadership support positions. This reflected a major growth in the critical mass of teachers with the experience and professional development skills needed to support new initiatives.

**Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative**

The MSSD initiative prompted new thinking at ETD about the formal processes and protocols related to students with disability across the system. The main success factors were the quality of programme leadership, clear vision and a strong sense of team commitment to change at the Directorate level.

The sustainability of the DECO programme is at the forefront of the ETD plans for the future supporting professional learning communities and ongoing developments in the use of online learning. Cluster, network or themed-based activities are occurring more frequently across all school networks as a result of these activities, which ETD predicts will continue to increase support for students with disability in schools. The DECOs reported greater satisfaction in their role and indicate they are more able to provide support and build structures for the students with disability in their schools. DECOs are now ideally placed in schools to reduce the issues of multiple contacts, which can cause difficulties for families of students with disability who have typically had to explain their needs to multiple contacts across support agencies.

ETD intends to continue raising awareness of the standards by the DSE 2005 eLearning module by aligning the six disability education OLT online learning training courses. It has committed to continuing access to the DSE 2005 eLearning modules until 2018 with a licence agreement with the University of Canberra and staff who enrol in an OLT course are also expected to complete an eLearning module.

Prior to the MSSD initiative ETD had its own licence for the OnlineTraining Ltd (OLT) inclusive education modules and did not include these activities directly as one of its selected outputs. The licence will continue, and the activities supported by a dedicated OLT leader. ETD plans to
maintain its investment focusing particularly on whole school approaches and designing new opportunities to keep the connections operating. It has the internal staffing capacity to ensure the ongoing delivery of the DSE 2005 training in 2015.

Overall, ETD regards the strategies developed under MSSD as a major shift in the way support is provided to school leaders and is considering a detailed plan of action to maintain momentum beyond the MSSD terms of agreement. This transition plan will manage the communications with schools and draw the NCCD process into the future operations of the ETD.

ETD is confident the DECO role in schools will still be in place in the next five years or so. The roles are likely to evolve further, but the initiative has proven such a success that in almost all cases it has become an expectation of school leadership and has also become firmly fixed in the minds of parents of students with disability who see the DECO as the primary point of contact in schools. ETD anticipates that the connection of DECOs to the data collection work will result in a move away from the language of compliance and accountability and turn more sharply towards the role of schools in making reasonable adjustments a cultural shift with the student at the centre.

### 23.2 ACT Catholic

The ACT Catholic Education Office (CEO) supports 56 schools and 6 early learning centres across the Archdiocese of Canberra (ACT) and Goulburn (NSW). The CEO educates over 21,000 students with almost 400 of these students identified as students with disability.

A total of $799,055 of MSSD funds was allocated to ACT Catholic schools covering nine MSSD outputs (2012-2014) with the largest proportion of total funds going into Output 5, skills training in special education (29%), and Output 8, support for staff to assess students learning level and adapt the curriculum (19%). For the extension phase 47 percent of the additional funds were allocated to Output 13, supporting the implementation of the NCCD.

#### 23.2.1 Implementation strategy

The CEO combined nine initiatives around eight outputs using a multi-tiered approach of complementary activities to improve the capacity and capability of schools and teachers. Prior to the MSSD initiative the CEO used a service approach to work with schools to enrich practice on issues concerning the needs of students with disability, but had little or no capacity to engage directly with teachers in the school setting.

CEO made a strategic decision to shift professional learning back to schools and align the MSSD outputs with existing CEO processes. One of the major motivating factors was to ensure that the impact of the MSSD outputs could be sustained beyond the life of the MSSD initiative: the emphasis was therefore on building teacher capacity through the professional learning of individual teachers, leadership teams and learning support officers.
23.2.2 Approaches to the outputs

Providing assistive technology and training in assistive technology (Output 1 and 2)

By the end of 2013, all Catholic schools in the Archdiocese were provided with assistive technologies, complemented by a closely integrated series of training activities delivered by central services. In 2012 assistive technologies, mostly iPads, and site licenses (eg Read and Write Gold) were rolled out to all ACT Catholic schools. All ACT Catholic schools participated in an iPad/TextHelp Trial to explore the use of iPads in school environments and determine their suitability for improving student outcomes. The iPads, and TextHelp were used initially as stand-alone tools to enable students with disability to use and improve their literacy skills. The text to speech features of both these assistive technologies allowed students to hear auditory prompts as they engaged with text, thus giving students a sense of accomplishment as they completed assignments and tasks, often with reduced reliance on a teacher or learning support assistant.

The bulk of the training provided by the Archdiocese to strengthen the skills of teachers in the use of assistive technologies took place during 2012. The rollout was supported by comprehensive professional learning for school-based personnel and delivered by a Certified Trainer from Spectronics Inclusive Learning Technologies. Training was mainly conducted through on site whole school professional learning. Between March 2013 and January 2014, Inclusive Practices Officers focused their attention on ensuring the effective and consistent use of these assistive technologies to support students with disability.

Working with health professionals (Output 4)

CEO engaged a speech pathologist from Therapy ACT to support classroom teachers and other school-based staff in addressing not only the individual needs of students, but supporting teachers in their programme design and delivery for students with language and communication needs. The model also involved the speech pathologist delivering specialist training and support to Learning Support Teachers and Subject Coordinators. As the project evolved the speech and language pathologists refined their approach to improve school-based sustainability through targeted mentoring. They also responded to the professional learning needs prompted by teacher participation in the speech language and communication online module undertaken as part of Output 5.

In 2013 the approach was changed to ensure effective succession planning beyond 2013. A comprehensive handover process conducted by Therapy ACT resulted in minimal disruption to the project. The speech pathologists continued to support classroom teachers and other school-based staff in identifying and addressing students’ speech and communication needs. In the extension phase for 2014 the focus was on more intensive mentoring across fewer schools.

Skills training in special education (Output 5)

The CEO approach to Output 5 had two elements: online learning modules to develop skills, and scholarships for postgraduate studies.
Three cohorts of teachers completed the Speech, Language and Communication Needs online module. This was made possible with the support of tutors from Disability Programmes Directorate of New South Wales Department of Education and Communities.

The second element of Output 5 involved scholarships offered to teaching staff to complete a Postgraduate Certificate in Inclusion and Wellbeing. Through the Australian Catholic University the course was designed for teachers who aspire to work in the disability field either as a Learning Support Teacher or in the classroom. The initiative included a community of practice where participants were able to engage in conversations around the purpose of research in addressing the needs of students with disability. Participants also conducted school-based research projects on a diverse range of topics and shared their findings with school colleagues and the CEO.

**Leadership to strengthen teachers’ capability (Output 7)**

The CEO approach to supporting school principals and school leadership teams to strengthen teachers’ ability to assist students with disability was delivered at the school level. A process was developed to support disability awareness training among principals and their leadership teams, which was designed as a starting point for addressing and improving all areas of access and participation of students with disability in Archdiocesan schools. It aimed to promote a positive change in the attitudes of principals and leadership teams towards the access and participation rights and the specific adjustments required for students with disability.

Through the leadership programme, Catholic Education Learning Support Officers supported principals as they took on prime responsibility for revising school-based processes to ensure the needs of students with disability were addressed. Participants addressed key themes such as leading a change process, appropriate resourcing, prioritising the needs of students, and providing appropriate support to classroom teachers.

**Supporting teachers assess learning and adapt curriculum (Output 8)**

The CEO supported school staff to assess the current learning level of students with disability, adapt the teaching curriculum to suit their current level of ability and report on student progress against adapted curriculum. The activities also linked to school-based professional learning around the DDA resulting in a broadening of capacity building whereby teachers are also responsible for fostering a whole school response to meeting the needs of students within an inclusive environment. Teachers were supported in addressing issues such as meeting the legislative requirements, Individual Education Plan development, identifying and making reasonable adjustments, and inclusive practices.

The output enabled schools to access a variety of services including time release for teachers to work individually with specialist consultants, to develop their understanding of the DDA, and support in planning for students with disability. The release of teachers also enabled them to work and learn together to create additional benefits associated with learning communities. A number of schools invited specialists to build teacher capacity in inclusive practices and
developed collaborative processes between teachers as well as improving parent teacher planning processes.

**Engaging paraprofessionals (Output 11)**

In order to engage Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) at a more effective level in the classroom, the CEO offered scholarships in Certificate III School Support designed and delivered by a private Registered Training Organisation. The scholarships were offered to LSAs who were not eligible for government based traineeships and would otherwise be excluded from this level of professional learning. All eight LSAs completed the Certificate III course in School Support in 2013, and most continued on to a Diploma level course in their own time.

**Support for student transitions (Output 12)**

Under Output 12 the CEO developed a transition support programme for school communities and appointed a Transitions Officer (Senior Officer Learning Support) to manage the project. Commencing in 2012, the main purpose of this role was to work with a range of schools providing advice to school staff on the development of individual planning processes including the system Inclusion and Wellbeing Matrix, SMART Goals and Individual Education Plans. The role also involved the delivery of relevant school-based instruction, work-based experience and guidance services.

The Transitions Officer provided support at every educational transition stage, bringing a team of people together to plan, and implement a local transition protocol for individual students. The teams included students, parents, school staff from the students’ current school (and where appropriate from receiving schools), other CEO Officers and external specialists.

At the culmination of the work in this area the Transition Officer had worked with staff across the Archdiocese to develop support documentation for schools.

**Implementation of Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (Output 13)**

The introduction in 2014 of Output 13, involved a variety of activities including:

- development and delivery of training days for school principals, learning support teachers and other staff in the data collection process
- online training on Disability Standards for Education 2005 (using University of Canberra modules)
- participation in a moderation day to develop consistency of judgment around students’ levels of need.

### 23.2.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

Table 23-2: ACT Catholic MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All benchmarks were met or exceeded with particularly high levels of achievement for Output 8 where professional learning expanded to group or whole school activities.

**23.2.4 Overall impact of the MSSD Initiative**

**Summary of outcomes**

The biggest overall impact of the MSSD initiative in the ACT Archdiocese was on teacher capacity and the experience of classroom teachers and teacher assistants working side by side to reframe the way the schools operated to address the needs of students with disability. For example, where previously the CEO ran training courses solely for teacher assistants, as a direct result of the MSSD stimulus it reviewed the approach. It also changed the focus from individual leaders to working with school leadership teams.

Embedding assistive technologies in schools across the Archdiocese was one of the most significant outcomes of the MSSD experience. As a result of the professional development activities the:

...teachers understand that assistive technologies do not ‘advantage’ students with disability, but rather, they provide an opportunity for students with disability to access and participate in learning experiences ‘on the same basis’ as other students in the class.

CEO reported that training in the use of iPads in the classroom identified new ways of thinking about the role of the teacher as the focal point of activity. It noted that while the benefits of working with assistive technologies was not particularly obvious in the early stages of experimentation, as the strategies became more obviously productive they gained widespread acceptance amongst late adopters.

In addition to the increase in the use of assistive technologies to support teaching practices key outcomes included:

- an increase in the frequency of assistive technologies identified in planning processes and documentation for students with disability
- a more sophisticated use of assistive technologies by students to express their learning in other ways
• schools extending the possibilities available to create independence and interdependence in students with disability
• many schools had a shift in the way they used their resources to ensure that students with disability have access to assistive technologies.

Schools also reported they were using the technologies to create new ways of making curriculum content accessible to all learners, that students were completing tasks with less reliance on a teacher or learning support assistant, and that more generally there were higher levels of student engagement.

A clear benefit of the on-site professional learning with school staff has been the continuation of the learning experience beyond the input from CEO Inclusive Practices Officers. As with almost all authorities the Diocese was not expecting teachers to be so keen and willing to engage in online professional learning. It underestimated the desire to learn more about students with disability with little concern about the additional work involved. The Diocese realised early on that the bulk of teachers genuinely wanted to meet the needs of students with disability in the most professional way possible.

This shift in the mode for delivering professional learning around assistive technologies has also led to far more collaboration and discussion among teachers as they build their capacity in the field of assistive technologies. CEO reported that teachers understand that assistive technologies do not ‘advantage’ students with disability, but rather, they provide an opportunity for students with disability to access and participate in learning experiences ‘on the same basis’ as other students in the class.

Other key outcomes reported from the CEO projects included:

• an increase in teacher awareness around the specific needs of students with speech, language and communication difficulties
• more meaningful use of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) in the classroom
• planning processes that are more responsive to the strengths and needs of students with disability
• greater collaboration between teachers, students and their parents/caregivers
• teachers using research and evidence to inform their decision making processes
• principals ensuring students needs are addressed from point of entry and through all transitions
• mentoring and support from allied health professionals leading to changes in teacher practices
• a reduction in the need for CEO Learning Support Officers to be present at transition meetings.

**Lessons learned**

The three-phase model set out in the CEO implementation plan appears to have worked well with some notable shifts in practice as the project proceeded. In particular, the adoption of the
NCCD process provided a focal point and framework to build the broader capacity (and capability) of principals and leadership teams. This also led to more devolution of leadership responsibilities throughout the school communities.

The CEO saw the MSSD initiative as a highly influential intervention on a number of levels. It has supported a significant shift in the approach to providing support to schools by decentralising the activities of the key support officers who now spend a majority of their time in schools. The officers are now better informed about the issues schools face and have become more significant points of contact. Given the rapid growth in the demand for support services the distribution of expertise also turned out to be a highly effective and efficient response to capacity building for the schools. The devolution of leadership that followed from this has the potential to enhance other developments in the Archdiocese.

The overall strategy for the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn centred on the provision of targeted professional learning in order to build the skills of teachers, school leadership teams and learning support officers to best meet the needs of students with disability within the requirements of the DDA and the DSE 2005. The extension year allowed the Diocese to review all that had evolved to that point. A significant observation was that with the introduction of NCCD schools now saw that their activities were part of a bigger process of intervention and change.

**Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative**

A distinctive feature of the Archdiocesan approach was the whole group or cohort focus for the learning support teachers and learning support assistants. This created a collective shift in confidence and interest in pursuing further study through other avenues. The CEO regards this as a defining feature of its strategy that it supported with an integrated model of professional learning for the whole workforce linking the key outputs. For example, it provided teachers with time release to design Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) for students with disability which, given the immediate improvements, has encouraged principals to continue the practice supported by school budgets.

The popularity of the training programmes, and the initiative generally, provided senior leadership at the Archdiocesan level with a compelling case to justify support beyond the MSSD. Not least of these effects was the commitment to a two-year licence to continue online training (OLT) to meet the unmet demand. The Diocese negotiated directly with OLT rather than waiting to form a consortium, and in 2015 will offer five different modules to 12 cohorts of school staff: it expects an increase in the following years as new staff are appointed in schools. The Archdiocese also made a timely and significant appointment of a highly experienced expert to deliver and facilitate the modules in the ACT including training coaches following the model used in the Northern Territory.

The experience of introducing assistive technology will lead to further development of these skills through training and enable teachers to embed emerging learning technologies in mainstream frameworks used across their schools. Schools are currently making direct requests to CEO for additional whole of school professional development programmes to build staff
capacity in the design and application of software specifically for students with disability within the context of understanding their relevance for all students.

Looking to the future, with a five-year horizon, the CEO is assuming that inclusive practice will be the norm. Teacher self-efficacy will have improved through the knowledge and skills gained from the MSSD initiatives and CEO does not expect that learning support will be needed, certainly not in its form prior to MSSD.

CEO took the view from the outset of the MSSD initiative that the level of interconnectedness of the projects would be a key measure of success. This was a fundamental element in the strategy of output selection to ensure the eight projects would provide the maximum gain from the effort and funds spread across the activities and that the impact would be sustainable. The activities, separately and collectively, were driven by the belief that, ‘We were not running projects, we were embracing a model of inclusion’.

23.3 ACT Independent

The Association of Independent Schools of the ACT (AISACT) represents all eighteen independent schools in the ACT, which together educate over 14,000 students in ACT, including over 350 students with identified disabilities. Member schools are autonomous and governed by their own school board.

A total of $288,608 of MSSD funds was allocated to independent schools in the ACT covering six MSSD outputs, with the majority of funds allocated to the provision of assistive technologies (40%) and in skills training in special education (37%).

23.3.1 Implementation strategy

AISACT identified MSSD outputs that were particularly relevant to schools based on the results of a survey conducted prior to the MSSD initiative. This survey reviewed the provision of support for students with disability in all ACT schools. AISACT undertook additional consultation with the sector during the initial implementation phase. With limited in-house capacity to support professional development opportunities to address the needs of students with disability, AISACT partnered with ACT Catholic Education Office (ACT CEO), the Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales (AISNSW), and the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities (NSW DEC) to provide training for teachers across three of the five outputs. The major elements of the AISACT strategy were:

- grants to subsidise the purchase of a range of assistive technology devices and software (Output 1)
- training for selected schools on
  - integrating iPads into the classroom for selected schools (Output 2)
  - skills in special education (Output 5)
  - Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6)
- training for Learning Support Assistants in school support (Output 11)
- training and support for the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13).

23.3.2 Approaches to the outputs

Providing assistive technology (Output 1)

AISACT supported the teaching and participation of students with disability by providing 11 schools with grants to subsidise the purchase of a range of assistive technology devices and software. The grants provided for applications and resources as well as laptops, iPads and tablets, and a range of technologies schools nominated to assist students with literacy, vision, hearing and auditory processing needs, and autism spectrum disorders.

Providing assistive technology training (Output 2)

Output 2 activities commenced in the 2014 MSSD extension phase as a new element with the delivery of a two-day workshop by Spectronics on ‘Integrating iPads into the Classroom’ to 45 teachers.

Building skills in special education (Output 5)

AISACT partnered with the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities to deliver four OLT online training courses including face-to-face sessions to implement Output 5. In 2012–2013 over forty teachers participated in four online learning modules: Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorders; Speech, Language and Communication Needs; Understanding Behaviour; and Motor Coordination Difficulties.

A workshop on Developing and Implementing Individual Education Plans and Making Adjustments was delivered to twenty teachers from nine schools. The workshop was part of their partnership activities with AISNSW. Participation in the online courses was underpinned by required attendance at forums and face-to-face training.

Training in Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Output 6)

In 2012-2013, ninety-six school staff participated in professional learning workshops on the application of standards (Output 6) presented in partnership with the Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales. These sessions were conducted on site as a whole of school approach involving all relevant staff members. Output 6 activities concluded in 2013.

Engaging paraprofessionals (Output 11)

AISACT supported a group of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) to undertake training with Catholic Education Office staff for a Certificate III programme in School Support (Output 11). Further professional learning opportunities were provided in the form of workshops on a range of topics relevant to the support roles of the paraprofessional staff. These activities concluded in 2013.
Supporting the implementation of the NCCD (Output 13)

The introduction in 2014 of Output 13, supporting schools with the implementation of the NCCD, under the MSSD initiative involved sector wide and individual school support. Strategies included providing training and financial support for schools to participate in professional learning, and the implementation of an advisory service to support schools reporting on students with disability. Thirty-eight participants attended a training day on the NCCD delivered by AISNSW, including a refresher on the DDA and DSE 2005, and training on identifying and classifying eligible students, making adjustments, record keeping and reporting. AISACT provided related support and advice throughout 2014.

23.3.3 Performance against benchmarks and achievement

Table 23-3: ACT Independent MSSD benchmarks (B) and achievement (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Dec 2013 (B)</th>
<th>Mar 2014 (A)</th>
<th>Dec 2014 (B)</th>
<th>Feb 2015 (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>10-13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>82-95</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Staff</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Teacher Aides</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>6-14</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AISACT met or exceeded the agreed benchmarks for the outputs.

23.3.4 Overall impact of the MSSD initiative

AISACT considers that its training activities for each output would not have occurred without the MSSD initiative since, as a small organisation with limited resources, was not in a position to provide professional development programmes. The initiative was timely, as principals had been expressing a need to build more capacity related to different pedagogies to address growing demands to meet the needs of students with disability.

Summary of outcomes

Because it was explicitly focused at a growing cohort of students, the MSSD initiative gave a very specific direction to the AISACT projects. AISACT acted on the immediate imperatives of responding to the new context of students with disability in the classroom with the following outcomes:

- Outputs 1 and 2 had the immediate effect of introducing a range of additional technology based strategies to support learning for students with disability and participating teachers are now able to customise assistive technologies to individual needs.
- Through the online training partnership AISACT increased the number of teachers with skills in developing and implementing Individual Education Plans and making adjustments.
• Strong professional support networks emerged from the group skills training experiences and these were maintained during the funding period by the publication of an annual calendar of meetings and additional events organized by AISACT.

• As a direct result of the certificate programme in school support, Learning Support Assistants are now widely recognised across the sector as key contributors to improving learning outcomes for students with disability in the classroom.

New directions

AISACT took the opportunity to cultivate the networks that developed informally from the structured professional learning programmes and events. The initiative was received with enthusiasm by the participants and created even more demand for training in working with students with disability in mainstream settings.

The new informal networks generated within the sector clearly added significant value to participating AISACT schools. Working alongside staff in other sectors facing common challenges led to recognition of the mutual advantages in pooling expertise and resources. Similarly, the development of a Learning Support Network to support the teaching and participation of students with disability emerged as an unanticipated strength.

Sustainable effects of the MSSD initiative

The immediate actions in the post-funding period included the involvement of all schools in 2015 in the NCCD process. With that critical mass established, AISACT predicts the sector will be in a strong position in 2016 when the NCCD becomes mandatory. Nonetheless, AISACT recognised that responsibility for the ongoing management of NCCD activities is likely to shift regularly due to staff turnover in schools. A briefing for school principals, scheduled for March 2015, outlining their responsibility in signing off on NCCD reports will provide them with a high level summary of their accountabilities. In 2015, as a direct consequence of this, NCCD activities will become fully embedded in schools.

With a recent increase in AISACT office capacity there will be a review of the nature of professional learning appropriate to the sector in the immediate future and beyond. AISACT considers it has demonstrated a ‘massive increase in types and levels of support that it can provide to Member schools and will look to further partnering with other jurisdictions to leverage its capacity for providing professional learning to members’.

AISACT is also investigating the level of demand for certificate courses in 2015 and considering options. Given its small size and limited capacity to provide professional learning directly, AISACT will continue to work from a brokering model to bring training opportunities to the sector.

While AISACT has not had a history of running large professional learning programmes the MSSD initiative provided a launching pad for a potential shift towards a sector wide approach supported by collaborative arrangements with other providers.
The targeted nature of the initiative led to an increased capacity of schools to better meet the needs of the students with disability. AISACT plans to continue this work in the future to support its members on a path of continuous improvement.
APPENDICES

The appendices have been organised in the following sections:

A: MSSD outputs
B: Case studies
C: Case study abstracts
D: Information seminars
E: Activities 2015 and beyond
F: Activities for other settings
G: Tools and resources
H: MSSD Network – Scootle
I: Evaluation progress reports
Appendix A: MSSD outputs

Appendix Table 1: Outputs and performance indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MSSD Outputs</th>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 - Providing assistive technology (e.g. computer software, low vision aids, communication tools) to support the teaching and participation of students with disabilities. | • Number and/or numerical range of assistive technology items provided to schools to support the teaching of students with disabilities.  
• Number and/or numerical range of schools provided with assistive technology items. |
| 2 - Providing training for teachers to strengthen their skills in the use of assistive technology in the classroom. | • Number and/or numerical range of teachers that participated in training in the use of assistive technology. |
| 3 - Developing support centres which serve as a centre of expertise in the educational needs of students with disabilities and provide expert support to a group of other schools that may not have this expertise. | • Number and/or numerical range of support centres providing support to the school system.  
• Number and/or numerical range of schools supported by support centres. |
| 4 - Schools coordinating with health/allied health or other professionals to strengthen schools’ support for students with disabilities. | • Number and/or numerical range of health/allied health or other professionals engaged to strengthen schools’ support for students with disabilities.  
• Number and/or numerical range of schools supported by health/allied health or other professionals. |
<p>| 5 - Providing training for pre-service and/or practicing teachers to build their skills in special education. | • Number and/or numerical range of pre-service and/or practicing teachers that participated in training to build their skills in special education. |
| 6 - Providing training for all school staff to improve understanding of their obligations under the Disability Standards for Education 2005 and how to meet those obligations. | • Number and/or numerical range of school staff that participated in training to improve their understanding of their obligations under the Disability Standards for Education 2005 and how to meet those obligations. |
| 7 - Supporting school principals and/or school leadership teams to strengthen teachers’ ability to assist students with disabilities. | • Number and/or numerical range of principals and/or school leadership team staff supported to strengthen teachers’ ability to assist students with disabilities. |
| 8 - Supporting school staff to assess the current learning level of students with disabilities, adapt the teaching curriculum to suit their current level of ability and report on student progress against adapted curriculum. | • Number and/or numerical range of school staff supported in assessing students with disabilities, adapting curriculum to their needs and reporting on student progress against adapted curriculum. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MSSD Outputs</th>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 - Supporting teachers to develop or modify lesson plans to suit the needs of students with disabilities.</td>
<td>• Number and/or numerical range of teachers supported to develop or modify lesson plans to suit the needs of students with disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - Supporting teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities through collaborative teaching practices (aka team teaching).</td>
<td>• Number and/or numerical range of teachers supported to meet the needs of students with disabilities through collaborative teaching practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - Engaging paraprofessionals (aka teacher’s aides) to strengthen their skills in supporting students with disabilities.</td>
<td>• Number and/or numerical range of paraprofessionals (aka teacher’s aides) better placed to support students with disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 - Providing additional support for students with disabilities to transition effectively between stages of schooling and/or from school into further education, training or employment.</td>
<td>• Number and/or numerical range of students with disabilities provided with additional support to transition between stages of schooling and/or from school into further education, training or employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 – Supporting schools with the implementation of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data for Students with Disability.</td>
<td>• Number and/or numerical range of schools assisted with the implementation of the Nationally Consistent Data Collection for Students with Disability.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Table 2: Funding allocated per phase per output

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Initial phase (2012-2013)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Extension phase (2014)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total (2012-2014)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - Assistive technology</td>
<td>$8,401,431</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>$1,777,172</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>$10,178,603</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 - Training in technology</td>
<td>$10,053,009</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>$1,181,856</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>$11,234,865</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 - Support centres</td>
<td>$29,138,359</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>$15,912,464</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>$45,050,823</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - Allied health</td>
<td>$9,977,157</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>$3,412,282</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>$13,389,439</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 - Skills training</td>
<td>$27,461,845</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>$8,607,216</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>$36,069,061</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 - DSE 2005</td>
<td>$6,567,036</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>$8,714,261</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>$15,281,297</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - Leadership</td>
<td>$35,466,801</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>$16,608,918</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>$52,075,719</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 - Adapting curriculum</td>
<td>$26,612,226</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>$14,908,367</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>$41,520,593</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 - Modifying lesson plans</td>
<td>$17,667,201</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>$464,020</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>$18,131,221</td>
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<td>10 - Team teaching</td>
<td>$9,016,478</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>$3,448,728</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>$12,465,206</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 - Paraprofessionals</td>
<td>$12,283,621</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>$1,063,655</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>$13,347,276</td>
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<td>12 - Transition</td>
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<td>2.0%</td>
<td>$1,403,782</td>
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<td>$5,427,233</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>100%</td>
<td>$100,000,000</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>$296,668,616</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Appendix Table 3: Proportion of sector funding allocated to each Output

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Gov</th>
<th>Cath</th>
<th>Ind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - Assistive technology</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - Training in technology</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - Support centres</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - Allied health</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - Skills training</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - DSE 2005</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - Leadership</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 - Adapting curriculum</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - Modifying lesson plans</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - Team teaching</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - Paraprofessionals</td>
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<td>2.1%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 - Transition</td>
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<td>6.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 - NCCD</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.0%</td>
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## Appendix Table 4: Distribution of MSSD outputs by jurisdiction

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Output</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>ACT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - Assistive technology</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - Training in technology</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - Support centres</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - Allied health</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - Skills training</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - DSE 2005</td>
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<td>●</td>
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<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - Leadership</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 - Adapting curriculum</td>
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<td>●</td>
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<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - Modifying lesson plans</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - Team teaching</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 - Paraprofessionals</td>
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<td>●</td>
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<td>●</td>
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<td>12 - Transition</td>
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<td>13 - NCCD</td>
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<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix Table 5: Distribution of MSSD outputs by sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outputs (2012 – 2014)</th>
<th>Gov</th>
<th>Cath</th>
<th>Ind</th>
<th>N*</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - Assistive technology</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>8 - Adapting curriculum</td>
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*N=24 authorities
Appendix Table 6: Distribution of MSSD outputs by jurisdiction and sector

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<th>ACT</th>
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## Appendix B: Case studies

### Appendix Table 7: List of case studies by sector and output

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<th>Gov</th>
<th>Cath</th>
<th>Ind</th>
<th>Output</th>
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<td>NSWG_1</td>
<td>Special Schools as centres of expertise</td>
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<td>Lawyers supporting training in DSE 2005</td>
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<td>VG_2</td>
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<td>Supporting students with Autism</td>
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<td>VG_4</td>
<td>Using real time captioning to support students with hearing impairments</td>
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### Appendix Table 8: Participating schools and organisations in case studies

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<td>Albury West Public School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casuarina Steiner School, Coffs Harbour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claremont College, Randwick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coreen School, Blacktown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corowa High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darcyville Regional Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eileen O’Connor Support Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Hill Public School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hills School, Northmead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jindera Public School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavington Public School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marsden High School, West Ryde</td>
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<tr>
<td>Murray High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orange Public School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit College, Lakemba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springdale Heights Public School</td>
</tr>
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<td>St Therese’s Primary School, Denistone</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Thomas More Primary School, Brighton Le Sands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurgoona Pre-School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tumbarumba High School</td>
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<td>Wagga Wagga Diocese Schools</td>
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#### VICTORIA

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<td>Bell Primary School, Preston</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belvoir Wodonga Special Development School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erasmus School of Primary Education, Hawthorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Hill College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manor Lakes College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monmia Primary School, Keilor Downs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacred Heart Primary School, St Albans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St John’s Lutheran School, Newtown</td>
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<td>St Mary’s College, Seymour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunshine Special Developmental School</td>
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<td>Wangaratta District Special School</td>
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<td>Wodonga South Primary School</td>
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#### QUEENSLAND

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<td>Longreach State School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nambour State School</td>
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<td>Southport State School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Columbine's, Caboolture</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Mary’s College, Kingaroy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunshine Coast Region Education DETEQ</td>
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<td>Woree Primary School, Cairns</td>
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<td>Emmaus Catholic School, Woodcraft</td>
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<td>Gordon Education Centre</td>
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<table>
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<th>NORTHERN TERRITORY</th>
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<td>Port Sorell Primary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge Primary School</td>
<td>Sacred Heart Catholic School, Geeveston</td>
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<td>Mt Carmel College, Sandy Bay</td>
<td>Southern Support School</td>
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<th>AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Braitling Primary School, Alice Springs</td>
<td>Ludmilla Primary School, Darwin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casuarina Street School, Katherine</td>
<td>Sandover Group Schools, Central Australia</td>
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<td>Gillen Primary School, Alice Springs</td>
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<thead>
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<th>AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education and Training Directorate</td>
<td>Turner School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Creek School, Nicholls</td>
<td>University of Canberra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Shepherd Primary School, Amaroo</td>
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</table>
Appendix C: Case study abstracts

1. **OnlineTraining Ltd professional learning modules**

Online professional learning modules designed by the UK based organisation OnlineTraining Ltd (OLT) (www.oltaustralia.net) played a significant part in the success of the MSSD initiative. The modules were adapted in collaboration with 15 participating authorities to support their strategies for building staff skills in special education. The OLT modules were also widely used to underpin principal and school leadership development. The case study identifies the major elements of the OLT design and delivery that were key to its success and examines the ways in which the modules were adopted and adapted to suit the diverse contexts of Australian education authorities. An example of the use of one module delivered in the New South Wales government sector, Understanding Dyslexia and Significant Difficulties in Reading, provides insights into the organisational arrangements, experience and outcomes for school staff participating in the training programme.

2. **University of Canberra DSE 2005 eLearning**

This case study looks at the design and implementation of the DSE 2005 eLearning initiative developed by the University of Canberra in collaboration with ten funding education authorities covering a range of sectors and jurisdictions. The initiative is the largest online professional learning programme ever produced collaboratively in Australian education. Over the three years of the MSSD initiative fourteen authorities used the online resources to provide professional development to their staff on their obligations under DSE 2005. The case study examines the impact of DSE 2005 eLearning in the participating authorities and the major elements that succeeded in improving the knowledge, attitudes and professional practice of school staff regarding barriers to education for students disability and ways of creating better learning environments for students with disability.

3. **Special schools as centres of expertise**

The New South Wales Department of Education and Communities (DEC) allocated MSSD funds to help special schools be centres of excellence by developing local networks of regular schools with which they could share their knowledge, expertise and specialist resources. DEC helped by providing and supporting quality assurance mechanisms, peer mentoring, involvement by universities and other organisations, regional personnel expertise, and templates for document proposals and midyear reports. Several projects attest to the effectiveness of localised activity, including professional learning programmes for case managing students with anxiety disorder: using iPads to improve student engagement and learning; and professional learning workshops. Participating schools found the professional learning valuable, relevant to their needs and gave them practical insights into how to better meet the needs of students with disability in regular schools.
4. Changing the roles of special education teachers

As part of its Every Student, Every School initiative, the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities (DEC) sought to have a specialist Learning and Support Teacher (LST) in every mainstream government school in the state. This required extensive reorganisation of human resources, skills development for staff deployed as LSTs — coaching, mentoring and coordination — as well as specialist teacher skills and knowledge. DEC used resources provided by the More Support for Students with Disabilities (MSSD) initiative to achieve this. The case study examined the role of LSTs in one primary and one secondary school.

5. Using student data to guide change

This case study examines a regional New South Wales high school’s response to improving the learning of students. The school has 180 students with a range of abilities. The focus of the More Support for Students with Disabilities (MSSD) activities is on adaptations to the curriculum, and teaching and learning approaches for students with special needs. The impetus for change was the school’s involvement in the trial of the national data collection for students with disability, combined with the implementation of the New South Wales statewide initiative Every Student Every School that has been championed in the region. The key observations relate to the role of leadership in change, the use of the data by class teachers, the development of staff collaboration and the sustainability of change.

6. Allied health project

The Allied Health Project is one of five More Support for Students with Disabilities (MSSD) activities being implemented by the Catholic Education Office in the Archdiocese of Sydney. The project promotes collaboration between allied health professionals (speech pathologists and occupational therapists) and school personnel (teachers and support staff) to plan and implement teaching and learning strategies aimed at improving the educational experience and outcomes for students with disability. It involves speech pathologists and occupational therapists working across a range of schools in the Sydney Archdiocese.

7. An integrated Diocese wide strategy

The Catholic Education Office within the Wagga Wagga Diocese has implemented four programmes, as part of the Catholic Education Commission New South Wales response to the MSSD initiative, in 2012-13. These projects are having a significant impact on schools and in particular students with special learning needs. The projects address the needs of all primary and secondary schools in the Diocese. This case study examines some of the key decision-making processes in developing these projects and evaluating their impact.

8. Training for school teams

This case study followed developments in two schools supported by consultants from the Association of Independent Schools New South Wales (AISNSW) working with teams of staff to analyse school needs for students with disability, and implement an action plan. Their work included organising professional learning, supporting school teams to prepare a situational
analysis for their school and a draft plan, providing a common format for plans, and mentoring school teams as they finalised and implemented their plans. As a result, there was a strong sense of empowerment at schools, planning and Individual Education Plan (IEP) processes were much improved, and parents were more confident about how the school was meeting their children’s needs. The effectiveness of the process hinged on the capacity and capabilities of the consultants in developing a close working relationship with schools whilst ensuring that accountability for the direction of change continued to reside with each individual school.

9. Lawyers supporting training in the DSE 2005

The Association of Independent Schools in New South Wales (AISNSW) has drawn on the services of two lawyers with knowledge and experience related to the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) and the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (DSE) to deliver professional learning for school leaders. This has emerged as an important component of its suite of More Support for Students with Disabilities (MSSD) activities. Participants in the professional learning forum received a detailed overview of the DDA/DSE 2005 referenced against case law and were provided with opportunities to reflect on what was learned in order to plan for adjustments in their own setting.

10. Down Syndrome Inclusion Support Service

A Department of Education and Training (DET) partnership with Down Syndrome Victoria (DSV) provides a case study of a strategy of targeted expert support for teachers to integrate students with Down syndrome into the regular school setting. DSV is a not-for-profit support group whose membership is made up of the parents of students with Down syndrome. The focus of the programme is on providing appropriate pedagogy and curriculum for students with Down syndrome beginning school to ensure a best start approach.

11. Leadership development in special schools

The Victorian Department of Education and Training supported leadership development for special schools through two projects: a leadership programme tailored specifically to meet the needs of specialist school principals; and a professional learning programme for specialist school leaders and staff on preventing and responding to extreme and challenging behaviours. This case study is focused on the Specialist Schools Leadership Program, a course designed in partnership with the Principals’ Association of Specialist Schools (PASS) and the Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership to build the knowledge and skills of principals as educational leaders. Distinctive elements of the course included: strengthening the existing community of practice; embedding change in school operations; and support from a workplace mentor for ongoing professional learning and the implementation of change projects.

12. Supporting students with Autism: Building systemic and school capacity

The Victorian Government Department of Education and Training (DET) developed five projects as part of the MSSD plan to support students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): the appointment of school-based Autism Inclusion Support Coordinators; and the provision of regional Autism Teacher Coaches. Autism Inclusion Support Programmes (ISPs), embedded in 15 schools across Victoria, focused on creating effective whole school practices and inclusive
environments that respond to the needs of students, assisting schools to engage with each other as well as with a range of key disability and regional stakeholders. Nine Autism Teacher Coaches across the state established ASD specific communities of practice and implemented sustainable practice models throughout metropolitan and regional locations. The coaching group met regularly to promote effective practice experiences between regions, providing collegiate support and collaboration and resource sharing opportunities. A trial period involving more than 6,500 teachers in nearly 700 schools demonstrated the benefits of the whole school community working together to ensure that inclusive practices are in place for students with Autism.

13. Using real time captioning to support students with hearing impairments

In partnership with the Victorian Deaf Education Institute (VDEI), the Victorian Government Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) is trialling and evaluating real time captioning technologies to improve student learning outcomes for hearing impaired students and supporting their integration into mainstream classrooms. This case study describes the introduction of real time captioning and assistive technology systems in a school with the support of a regional deaf facility co-located on campus.

14. Achieving inclusiveness through ABLES

In collaboration with The University of Melbourne, the Victorian Government Department of Education and Training (DET) developed the Abilities Based Learning and Educational Support (ABLES) framework using the Australian Victorian Essential Learning Standards (AusVELS). ABLES directly supports Output 8, supporting school staff to assess the current learning level of students with disability, adapt the teaching curriculum to suit their current level of ability, and report on student progress against adapted curriculum. Student needs addressed by ABLES range from intensive support due to a moderate or severe disability, to those that require programme adjustments. Two western suburban schools in Melbourne, a Special Developmental School and a P-12 College, illustrate the application of ABLES in schools with students with disability. Both schools have distinctive elements in their approach to inclusiveness and improving the experience of students with disability.

15. Enhancing teacher leadership through targeted professional development

The Lead Teacher strategy developed by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) is the cornerstone of its approach to enhancing teacher capacity and leadership in Catholic schools to support students with disability. The strategy provides targeted whole of school professional learning combined with opportunities for lead teachers to study at postgraduate level. The objective was to create opportunities for leadership teams, lead teachers, and school staff to work collaboratively to ensure appropriate adjustments and inclusive practices for students with additional learning needs. It also involves the provision of training for lead teachers to enhance collegial access to specialist knowledge and relevant policy and legislation and to develop teaching programmes that support the participation and learning of students with disability.
16. Teacher scholarships to build expertise

The Department of Education and Training Queensland (DETEQ) has established a priority to build staff capabilities and overall system capacity to respond to the challenges of the rising incidence of Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASDs). The More Support for Students with Disability (MSSD) initiative has supported the development of a teacher scholarship programme to provide teachers who can model enhanced teaching techniques for students with ASDs, and to share and apply their knowledge and learning within the school, cluster and wider educational community. A total of 90 DETEQ school staff have been selected in three cohorts over 2012-2014 as scholarship recipients for part-time study in the Graduate Certificate in Autism Studies (GCAS) at Griffith University. On completion of the study programme successful scholarship recipients are required to commit to continuing to teach for a minimum service period of two years in a Queensland government school.

17. Far North Queensland Autism Centre of Expertise

The Centre of Expertise is one element of an interrelated approach adopted by the Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETEQ) to build capacity to meet the needs of students with disability in state schools. Since 2005, Far North Queensland region of DETEQ has given priority to building staff capabilities and school capacities to respond to the challenges of the rising incidence of Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASDs). This case study reports on how a strategic partnership between parents of students with ASDs, specialists from Griffith University and key regional staff has led to the formation of the Far North Queensland Autism Centre of Expertise (ACE). Four key steps in this journey are described: the early advocacy by parent members of the Cairns Autism Spectrum Group (CAGS) provided impetus for changed practices regarding students with ASDs in this region; regional leadership established a formal priority for an autism forum; a partnership was formed with the University for pilot projects in three schools; and an extensive school and community consultation process conducted by regionally-organised groups.

18. Building a culture of professionalism

Strategies to engage teacher aides aimed at strengthening their skills have been a feature of a number of MSSD projects. Queensland Government Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETEQ) have used the Quality Schools, Inclusive Leaders (QSIL) programme to clarify best practice approaches for using teacher aides. This case study provides an example of good practice in a remote state school with 23 teachers and support staff, and nine teacher aides. It illustrates the importance of building a culture of professionalism across all aspects of the school operations to develop personal competencies in teaching students with disability. The approach of the school is distinctive in that the focus goes beyond providing skills training and using teacher aides as a resource. The school has capitalised on the experience and expertise of teacher aides, and builds them into its succession planning: they are a core element in developing personal competencies for all staff.
19. A cross-sector partnership to produce professional learning materials for DSE 2005

Catholic and Independent authorities in Queensland are collaborating on the provision of professional learning to improve school staff understanding of their obligations under the Disability Standards for Education 2005. More Support for Students with Disabilities (MSSD) have supported a set of seminars conducted by an expert external consultant organised by Independent Schools Queensland and operated in Catholic facilities in key regional centres. The key messages from these seminars were then built upon and contextualised for schools in a set of multimedia professional learning materials being developed by Brisbane Catholic Education Diocesan Office. These materials have been made available on their intranet website for the professional learning of a diverse range of staff, with a view to stimulating enhanced school practices and improved outcomes for students and parents.

20. Building school capacity in transition-focused education

This case study reports on the capacity building approach to improve post-school outcomes of youth with additional needs. The initiative adopted by the Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) School Service Centre North Team addresses transition issues amongst students in 14 Catholic Colleges. Centre staff work with lecturers from Griffith University in implementing four guiding principles, including a systematic process of engagement with staff, parents and students in each College underpinned by data-gathering and tailored strategies to assist designated youth with transition issues. The Kohler Taxonomy for Transition Programming (1996) is used as the applied framework for identifying, organising and reporting on College practices. Contrasting approaches used by two Colleges are described and analysed in this case study – one emphasising case management by a small team and the other focusing on skills development by many teachers and support staff.

21. Lead and Buddy schools

The South Australia government established a number of ‘lighthouse’ schools prior to the More Support for Students with Disabilities (MSSD) initiative to strengthen teachers’ abilities in assessment and curriculum adaptations. These schools are expected to work with other schools to share knowledge and enhance capabilities. Known within South Australia as ‘lead and buddy schools’, the model is premised on the lead schools having pre-existing strengths in leadership, differentiated curriculum delivery and strong learning programmes augmented by professional learning and resources provided by the Department of Education and Childhood Development (DECD). This case study looks at two lead primary schools in a small network, sharing roles and resources to support staff in buddy schools to assess learning levels of students with disability, adapt the curriculum accordingly and report on student progress.

22. A Lead High School

To support school leaders and staff to strengthen teachers’ abilities in assessment and curriculum adaptations, the South Australia government sector has established a number of lighthouse schools. These schools are expected to work with other schools to share knowledge and enhance capabilities across multiple sites. Known as ‘lead and buddy schools’, the model is premised on the lead schools having pre-existing strengths in leadership, differentiated
curriculum delivery and strong learning programmes which are being augmented by professional learning and resources provided by the South Australian Department for Education and Child Development (DECD). This case study provides a detailed overview of developments that have occurred in one of the lead schools in the northern suburbs of Adelaide. The major elements of the case study include the organisational arrangements established by the school for learner support, the use of assistive technologies and the approaches that the lead school adopted for staff professional learning and engaging families, particularly those of children with disability enrolled at the school.

23. LitCon Special

To support schools and teachers to plan for and monitor literacy development for students with disability, the Gordon Education Centre in regional South Australia developed and trialled an online tool, LitCon Special. Drawing on the Australian Curriculum, LitCon Special provides teachers with the means to map student development along a fine-grained continuum in reading and viewing, speaking and listening. This case study outlines key elements of the design and development of LitCon Special, the approach to implementing it, and outputs and outcomes. It concludes with some observations about the potential for collaboration with jurisdictions that are developing similar learning and support tools.

24. Team teaching: Speech pathologists and teachers in the classroom

Catholic Education South Australia (CESA) engaged TALK Speech Pathology to provide consultancy services to a number of Catholic primary schools in South Australia. The role of speech pathologists included assisting junior teachers in planning literacy sessions that bridge oral language activity and literacy skills; and providing expertise in oral language development. Class teachers contribute their understanding of pedagogy, curriculum development and classroom organisation. Working together in the classroom speech pathologists and teachers have established a highly effective approach to planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluating and reporting on educational outcomes for students with disability. The teachers involved in the CESA project were expected to share knowledge and strategies through ongoing planning and professional learning sessions with other early childhood teachers at their school.

25. A collaborative approach to building teacher knowledge, skills and confidence

The Association of Independent Schools South Australia (AISSA) has used More Support for Students with Disabilities (MSSD) funds to enable schools to access a range of specialist support and allied health professionals to strengthen the support for students with severe, multiple and complex disabilities. The project has a specific emphasis on building capacity in regional and rural schools. In consultation with the AISSA Special Education Adviser, schools are able to access funds to engage specialists such as a Speech Pathologist, Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Behaviour Support Specialist and other professionals to work in partnership with teaching and support staff. The specialist provides a school-based, targeted intervention that builds school capacity to best cater for students with very complex needs. Each intervention package is tailored to complement the existing learning goals for the individual student.
26. The Big Plan: Transition support for students

Through its Distinctive Schools Service Centre model, the Department of Education Western Australia (DoE) recognised the senior campus of an education support centre as a distinctive school that could support other school communities with transitions beyond school for final-year students with disability. The case study looks at The Big Plan project, which helps students plan for their future in a way they find meaningful. The project increased students’ engagement, and increased on-campus support and participation in a greater range of activities in school hours.

27. Distinctive Schools supporting learning technology innovations

The Distinctive Schools model initiated by the Department of Education (DoE) Western Australia includes support centres offering networks to address diverse educational needs of students with disability. They provide expertise and project leadership to groups of other schools that may not have this expertise. This case study describes the approach of an Education Support Centre (ESC) — a Distinctive School — working with Partner Schools in metropolitan and regional Western Australia. The approach adopted is a model for enabling students with disability to participate fully in the Australian Curriculum with tablet technology, predominantly working up to and within the achievement standards of Foundation to Year Two for Mathematics.

28. Developing a regional Special Education Network Centre

The Catholic Education Office of Western Australia has adopted a long-term plan for the development of support centres of expertise for schools, staff and community to address the needs of students with disability and shape their future opportunities. The More Support for Students with Disability (MSSD) initiative has supported the initial stage of the planned statewide development in the Kimberley Districts with the development of a Special Education Network Centre (SENC). The Centre is providing training for teachers and assistants, programmes tailored to the needs of individual students, and a range of life-skills and self-care activities. The Centre also offers opportunities for parents to meet with a wide range of allied health and specialist educators. The appointment of a skilled special education needs leader has been a key element in the successful establishment of the Centre.

29. Transition to Adult Life Programme

The Catholic Education Office (CEO) More Support for Students with Disabilities (MSSD) ‘Transition to Adult Life Project 2012/2013’ caters for students with disability in Years 11/12 during 2012 and Year 12 in 2013. The project aims to ensure students with disability are able to identify suitable life and vocational choices from a series of programmes and work placements. It is expected that the programmes will enable students to: identify work rights and responsibilities; demonstrate safe practices in the workplace; collect evidence of vocational skills; produce a log book from each work placement; collect evidence of skill development for post school service providers; demonstrate age appropriate social skills; and experience leisure and recreational options. This case study describes the efforts of one school to broaden support for students with disability as they prepare for life beyond school.
30. Supporting student transitions

This case study looks at two elements of the Transition Project of the Department of Education (DoE) Tasmania. The ‘Knowme’ application (app), developed in collaboration with Tascare, is an online resource where parents or carers can provide consolidated and comprehensive information about their family member with disability to share with teachers and other professionals. The app has the potential to greatly improve the provision of appropriate care to cater for the transition needs of the student. DoE has also supported the development of individual transition programmes for students with disability entering formal schooling in prep, transitioning from primary to secondary, to college (years 11 and 12), and post school options. This element of the Transition Project has been implemented through collaboration between the DoE Learning Services and individual schools. It also supports challenging transitions that often occur within school programmes for students with complex needs.

31. From NCCD data collection to active monitoring strategies

The Tasmanian Department of Education (DoE) used a purpose-built Student Support System database to develop a number of complementary initiatives to help schools to use information collected under the model for the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD). A case study school demonstrated the value added to schools in this process. The school understood from the outset that these strategies would only be useful if they involved both teachers and parents working together. The school then took the process one step further turning Individual Education Plans into active working documents with ongoing monitoring and review to ensure a comprehensive and meaningful strategy is in place for each child.

32. Technology training for teachers

The introduction of iPads for students with disability to use in classrooms and support for teachers in the use of this technology has been one of the key activities undertaken by the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office (CEO) under the MSSD initiative. Teachers experienced in the use of iPads have trained other staff as well as parents in the use of this technology, including how to choose the most appropriate applications (apps) to provide the best learning outcomes for the students. This has overlapped with the CEO’s programme supporting staff to develop or modify lesson plans that suit the needs of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

33. Building capacity in assistive technologies

The Northern Territory Department of Education (DoE) provided assistive technology to support the teaching and learning of students with disability, and teacher training in integrating this technology in the classroom. A professional learning consultant was recruited in October 2012 with responsibility for researching and sourcing appropriate resources based on an evaluation of the needs of students, and facilitating professional learning programmes in the use of assistive technologies. Support was targeted at providing access to the curriculum for students with speech, language and communication needs.
34. **Speech pathology support services**

Following consultations with key stakeholders, the Northern Territory (NT) Department of Education (DoE) identified the need for improved access to consultancy services for teachers and school support staff working with students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and speech, language and communication needs. DoE initiated a specialist consultancy service aimed at integrating speech pathology services with classroom-based approaches for targeted students. The provision of specialist expertise was expected to build school capacity and more generally strengthen support for students with disability across the NT. This case study reports on the development of the speech, language and communication initiative of ‘whole classroom – whole school’ across the NT and the consequent shifts in the focus from specialist support for individual students to building teacher capability and school capacity.

35. **Using sound field systems to engage students with hearing impairment**

The Northern Territory (NT) Department of Education (DoE) provided augmented and assistive technology to enhance the sound environment of classrooms with significant proportions of children with hearing impairment. The case study school in central Australia has a history of over 30 years of supporting students with hearing loss/impairment. An Assistive Technology grant in late 2012, through the More Support for Students with Disabilities (MSSD) initiative, enabled the school to install sound field systems in all the junior school classrooms, from Transition to Year 2/3, to assist students with hearing impairment to hear the teacher and participate with other students in classroom activities.

36. **Building leadership capacity through collegial networks**

The MSSD initiative provided an opportunity to introduce a new model for specialist support roles by appointing designated school-based Disability Education Coordinators (DECOs) to support school leadership development directly targeted at improving opportunities for students with disability in each school. The new model is built around the DECOs and ‘Network Student Engagement Teams’ (NSET), in four geographic regions across the ACT, each with 20 – 25 schools and its own specialists. The networking approach has been central to the strategy of changing understanding about the nature of support for teachers and increasing capability across the schools.

37. **Sharing good pedagogy with eBooks and digital capture**

The ACT Education and Training Directorate (ETD) designed and implemented an innovative and highly effective approach to sharing knowledge, teaching practices, expertise and specialist resources across ETD schools through access to an online learning environment that enables school-based staff to view resources from school-based projects and to collaborate and share good pedagogy in Disability Education. The collaborative professional learning modelled good practice in the use of communications technologies to encourage teachers to use and embed assistive technology in the classroom. The project included the development of a community of learners built around a virtual library of digitally-captured stories in eBooks, discussions and teaching moments stored on a web cloud.
38. Using NCCD as a framework for capacity building

The ACT Catholic Education Office (CEO) approach to the implementation of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) gave priority to the integration of Output 13 with the other eight outputs. The complementary activity included support and training to increase skills in the use of evidence-based practice to improve the learning of students with disability, and encouraging distributed leadership to ensure continuity in the adoption of new practices. The distinctive feature of the NCCD process in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn was that, rather than simply adding or modifying existing activities, the CEO used the NCCD as a framework for building the broader capacity of schools beyond leadership teams.
Appendix D: Information seminars

Appendix Table 9: Information Sharing Seminars 2013

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<th>Location</th>
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## Appendix Table 10: Information Sharing Seminars 2014

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## Appendix Table 11: Selection of MSSD activities - continuing or consolidating

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<td>Building leadership capacity</td>
<td>NSW CEC</td>
<td>continue to offer training through DSE 2005 eLearning modules</td>
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<td>QLD DET</td>
<td>QSIL programme will continue to support 42 school leadership teams from across the state through a model of coaching, mentoring and work force planning</td>
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<td>WA DoE</td>
<td>continue support centre services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>continue support for Distinctive Schools and networks with partner schools in targeted priority areas</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ACT ETD</td>
<td>ETD is confident the DECO role in schools will still be in place in the next five years or so.</td>
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| Responding to obligations under DSE 2005 | QCEC  | DSE 2005 training will continue in 2015 |
|                                         | WA DoE | DSE 2005 training continue to be supported through the University of Canberra DSE online resource |
|                                         | ISQ    | provide teacher aide workshops and related programmes and will maintain its website training resources |
|                                         | SA DEC | DEC has a licence agreement for DSE 2005 eLearning until 2018 |
|                                         | WA CEO | ongoing professional development in DSE 2005 |
|                                         | AISWA  | continue to provide training on DSE 2005 |
|                                         | ACT ETD | ETD has committed to continuing access to the DSE 2005 eLearning modules until 2018 with a licence agreement with the University of Canberra, and staff who enrol in an OLT course are also expected to complete an eLearning module |
|                                         | NSW CEC | enhancement and refinement of NCCD data collection tools |
|                                         |         | provision of consultancy support |
|                                         | NSWAIS | opportunity to participate in a NCCD refresher workshop in 2015 |
|                                         |         | support with collection of data process |
|                                         | AISWA  | continue support for NCCD. |

<p>| Building skills in special education  | QLD DET | provision of OLT modules |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuing/Consolidating MSSD Activities</th>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CESA</td>
<td>• continue to provide access to OLT training including new courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AISSA</td>
<td>• ongoing provision of professional learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WA CEO</td>
<td>• continued support for professional training, technology and adapted curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TAS IST</td>
<td>• online training has proven to be highly cost effective and will be maintained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ACT ETD</td>
<td>• ETD plans to maintain its investment focusing particularly on whole school approaches and designing new opportunities to keep the connections operating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AISACT</td>
<td>• continue this work in the future to support its members on a path of continuous improvement to meet the needs of students with disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with specialists and support staff</td>
<td>QLD DET</td>
<td>• continuing appointments in each region of a Regional Coordinator, Project Officer Online Training, Guidance Officer Mental Health, and Complex Case Support Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CESA</td>
<td>• continue to implement strategies and processes developed by the ASD project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA DEC</td>
<td>• continue Team Around the Child service delivery model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                                         | NT DoE    | • Response to Intervention Service Model will continue.  
|                                         |           | • positions of Speech, Language and Communication teacher and Speech Pathologist from the MSSD initiative have been continued with DoE funding until 2016. |
| New directions for special schools and support centres | SA DEC | • continue to match assistive technologies to the learning needs of visually impaired students and provide training as required for students, teachers, aides and parents  
|                                         |           | • sustain the work of the Adelaide West/SERU support centre. |
### Appendix Table 12: Selection of MSSD activities – extending or expanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extending/Expanding of MSSD Activities</th>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building leadership capacity</td>
<td>QLD DET</td>
<td>• target an additional 42 schools leadership teams to encourage further in-depth involvement in strategies to improve learning for students with disability through a model of coaching, mentoring and work force planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding to obligations under DSE 2005</td>
<td>NSW DEC</td>
<td>• further rollout of additional DSE eLearning modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ISV</td>
<td>• additional ISV member schools to use the eLearning modules in 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QLD DET</td>
<td>• involve all Queensland State Schools in NCCD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CESA</td>
<td>• five more schools will be supported to undertake the data collection for the first time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WA DoE</td>
<td>• an NCCD school support handbook will be available to all schools online via Connect Community post 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• NCCD professional learning will be placed online via Connect Community as a school development package for use by schools in 2015 and beyond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TAS CEO</td>
<td>• aim to have all staff complete modules 1-3 by August 2015. CEO will have a five year shared licence with DoE. Aims for all staff to have participated by the end of 2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building skills in special education</td>
<td>NSW DEC</td>
<td>• further development of professional learning materials to support personalised learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• collaboration on new online learning courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• further courses on dyslexia and assessment training to run in 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• further scholarships to gain a postgraduate qualification in special education will be offered in 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QCEC</td>
<td>• for 2015 most authorities will have in place professional development strategies to induct new staff into the DSE 2015 requirements and some plan to develop refresher resources and workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WA DoE</td>
<td>• Add <em>Managing Behaviour</em> course to suite of OLT training courses available to WA school staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum Adjustments Packages are being developed to assist teachers with adjustments to the curriculum and learning environments. This is being trialled for wider access. Professional learning will be designed to accompany the package, and will be made available to schools in 2015.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extending/Expanding of MSSD Activities</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TAS DoE</td>
<td>• education assistant online learning package will be made available from January 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NT DoE</td>
<td>• OLT licence extended for three years. All schools will continue to be involved in four days of professional development annually which will be aimed at generating an ongoing stream of facilitators for OLT courses to embed these learning experiences into normal school practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ACT CEO</td>
<td>• new online learning courses are included in 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with specialists and support staff</td>
<td>TAS CEO</td>
<td>• provide an ASD consultant in 2015 to support teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IST</td>
<td>• additional IST teachers supported to visit project schools to provide collaborative learning opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QLD DET</td>
<td>• employment of a Guidance Officer Mental Health in each region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• introduce mentors to support teachers to build inclusive practices in their classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CESA</td>
<td>• further six schools to participate in Oral Language Teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WA CEO</td>
<td>• additional regional consultant support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New directions for special schools and support centres</td>
<td>NSW DEC</td>
<td>• incorporate a further 10 or 11 specialist centres across regional and remote areas in New South Wales in 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• trial professional learning course developed by speech pathologists on collaborative intervention for significant reading and language difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• speech pathologists based at the NSW Centre for Effective Reading to work with schools in rural and remote areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA DEC</td>
<td>• LitCon Special developed by Gordon Education Centre continues to grow from strength to strength with six other settings assuming the role of support centres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extending/Expanding of MSSD Activities</th>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Details</th>
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</table>
|                                      | WA DoE    | • commercialise the LitCon Special software and develop a similarly detailed numeracy planning tool  
|                                      |           | • broadening access to a Distinctive School’s student centred evidence based model that guides the student, families and schools through transition processes - to involve twelve schools across three education regions (two rural and remote regions)  
|                                      |           | • additional opportunities for partner schools to build capacity using blended professional learning and online resources  
|                                      |           | • increase opportunities for schools with capacity to support needs to become new Distinctive Schools  
|                                      |           | • local network projects will be developed and trialled in 2015 and made available system wide in 2016  
|                                      | TAS DoE   | • work with special schools to consider their purpose and reframe their roles as centres of expertise. |
Appendix F: Activities for other settings

Appendix Table 13: MSSD case studies with potential for use in other settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case study</th>
<th>Details</th>
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</table>
| Special schools as centres of expertise  
(Case Study 3 - NSW DEC) | NSW DEC allocated MSSD funds to special schools to develop networks across schools to share their knowledge, expertise and specialist resources. The case study shows how special schools can draw on their expertise to develop resources and capabilities to provide expert support to regular schools that do not have such expertise. The model allows for the particular expertise of each school to be harnessed and broadly disseminated. DEC added value through its quality assurance mechanisms, including peer mentoring, involvement by universities in the development phases, support of regional personnel, and templates for project proposals and midyear reports. |
| Changing the roles of special education teachers  
(Case Study 4 - NSW DEC) | There is good potential for the Learning and Support Teacher LST role — that of specialised coaches working collaboratively with classroom teachers — to be adopted in other contexts, to address the requirement of the Disability Standards for Education 2005 that schools make adjustments to cater for the specific learning needs of students with disability. |
| Training for school teams  
(Case Study 8 - AISNSW) | For other schools to benefit from AISNSW’s approach, they would need to:  
- recognise the need for better school and teacher capabilities to improve educational outcomes for students with disability  
- have access to skilled consultants who can engage stakeholders in professional learning and change processes  
- ensure buy-in to the change process  
- allocate time for planning, implementation and reflection. |
| Leadership development in special schools  
(Case Study 11 - VIC DET) | The focus of capacity building across the established network of the PASS organisation has strengthened connections and the focus on a collective approach to professional learning that should sustain the changes in approach. The overall strategy of engaging and supporting existing professional networks has strong potential for adoption in other contexts. The main elements could be readily adapted to suit the needs of participants and the environments in which they work. |
| Supporting students with Autism: Building systemic and school capacity  
(Case Study 12 - VIC DET) | The Autism Inclusion Support Coordinator and Autism Coach initiatives are both worthy of further investigation by education authorities contemplating broader and sustainable systemic change. In particular, the strategy is likely to be effective in reaching beyond specific special schools or mainstream schools with long-term effects on regional areas. Building systemic capacity requires cohesive work across a range of components including training, individual student support and supportive and innovative leadership. |
| Using real time captioning to support students with hearing impairments  
(Case Study 13 - VIC DET) | The participants at the case study school believed that both the identified barriers will be less significant as the technology continues to improve, although it is not clear at this point how soon this will occur. New voice technology is a likely option in the longer term although it has not yet reached the level of sophistication needed so that the class teacher replaces the real time captioner entirely. There is high potential for the actions of this school to be adopted in other settings. This is based on some key assumptions, such as the capacity of |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Case study</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieving inclusiveness through ABLES (Case Study 14 - VIC DET)</td>
<td>Implementing the ABLES framework has been a major investment for DET based firmly on a substantial research and development programme representing a step change in approach. The case study schools provide clear examples of this step-change reflected in the school initiatives. With this level of commitment at both state and local levels the strategy is clearly sustainable. Both the ABLES framework and the implementation approaches of each of the case study schools can be readily adapted to a wide range of contexts. The level of investment is critical as is the commitment to research and ongoing development over a significant time frame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building a culture of professionalism (Case Study 18 - QLD DET)</td>
<td>The systematic approach developed by DET to leadership development, and the measures aimed at engaging teacher aides can be readily adopted elsewhere. The example of the case study school illustrates the potential for any system or school to enhance the roles of teacher aides and embedding their contribution in a whole school approach to workforce planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A cross-sector partnership to produce professional learning materials for DSE 2005 (Case Study 19 - QLD CEC)</td>
<td>The design features of the professional learning materials make it likely that they will be used by increasing numbers of schools and their staff. If they effectively address school concerns then more jurisdictions will want to negotiate with Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) to take them up and use them in their schools in their own ways. BCE has indicated that, in addition to independent schools in Queensland, they have received considerable interest in the materials from schools located elsewhere across Australia and even from international jurisdictions. These are early indications of considerable interest in adoption in other contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead and Buddy schools (Case Study 21 - SA DECD)</td>
<td>Given that the lighthouse approach to supporting reforms is not new to schools or school systems, there is strong potential for adoption or adaptation of the model in other contexts. Under a range of contexts and different titles, the model is operating in other jurisdictions as part of the MSSD Initiative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LitCon Special (Case Study 23 - SA DECD)</td>
<td>LitCon Special has significant potential for adoption or adaptation in other settings. Beyond the continued accelerating use in South Australia (including cross sectoral collaboration with the Catholic sector), there is a growing awareness of it elsewhere, particularly in Victoria where a similar mapping, planning and reporting tool is also being developed. As LitCon Special transitions from a national partnership project to a product and professional learning service for schools, there will need to be a pricing and servicing model that assures its ongoing viability. This will need to respond to growing demand for access to the tool and associated professional learning, without compromising the quality of service delivery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Big Plan: Transition support for students (Case Study 26 – WA DoE)</td>
<td>The Big Plan project that helps students plan for their future in a way they find meaningful, has strong potential for sustainability. It operated within current staffing levels, with initial seed funding. As a grass-roots initiative driven by schools to address their needs, with support and leadership from the senior campus education support centre. There is no reason why system support for local networks such as the distinctive school network could not help other schools adopt The Big Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a regional Special Education Network Centre</td>
<td>The network model developed at the school has clear potential for application in other regions within Western Australia, and particularly in regional and remote locations where access to special education support is limited. The</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case study | Details
--- | ---
(Case Study 28 – WA CEO) | The main elements needed for successful adoption include an experienced and skilled coordinator to provide:
- clarity on procedures about eligibility and guidelines to access support and placement
- professional learning and direction to build staff capacity and confidence to cater for students with disability in their classrooms
- focused and appropriate Individual Education Plans and Curriculum Action Plans
- leadership for a supportive student services team.

Supporting student transitions (Case Study 30 – TAS DoE) | This case study looked at two strategies for transition: the Knowme app, and individual transition planning. Knowme significantly streamlines communication between parents and the people involved with students with disability, and to manage major transition periods right through to transition to post-school education and employment. The app has been widely praised by parents and families, and beyond the modest set up costs it does not require ongoing financial support. With a collaborative approach, the process of developing and implementing transition plans for individual students and small groups of students with disability can be readily adapted. It requires a relatively small investment for potentially significant impact. With the proviso that there is sufficient support for staff release for professional development and collaboration this approach has potential for adoption in other settings.

Technology training for teachers (Case Study 32 – TAS CEO) | The introduction of iPads and ensuring their effective application to meeting the needs of students with disability requires a planned approach to technical and professional learning. These and the related elements in this case study can be readily adopted in other contexts. Much of the success will depend on the underlying strength of the inclusive environment and guiding principles provided by the system and school leadership.

Speech pathology support services (Case Study 34 – NT DoE) | This initiative, where DoE initiated a specialist consultancy service aimed at integrating speech pathology services with classroom-based approaches for targeted students, has the potential to transform specialist speech, language and communication consultancy services in a range of contexts. The service model will be of particular interest to administrators, school leaders, teachers, specialist staff, and families across regional and remote Australia. It has lessons for other systems in the planning and delivery of specialist services to diverse schools and regions, in developing professional learning communities, and sustaining stakeholder collaboration on learning outcomes for these students.

Using sound field systems to engage students with hearing impairment (Case Study 35 – NT DoE) | Installing and using sound enhancing technologies in schools can be adopted or adapted in other contexts. Aside from the costs of the initial outlay, there are no major obstacles to introducing these forms of assistive technologies. The sound enhancement technology has the obvious advantage of directly targeting a specific set of issues for students with hearing impairment preventing learning and reducing the quality of the classroom experience.

Building leadership capacity through collegial networks (Case Study 36 – ACT ETD) | A high level of enthusiasm amongst the DECOs and teachers was sustained for the initial three years of the project. A foundation for sustainability of the networks beyond the life of the MSSD initiative has been established with the network and communities of practice well on the way to becoming permanent fixtures of the ETD approach to students with disability. The end result is that each school network has a team to work with rather than a series of single support experts. The development of a broader base of expertise and the devolution of leadership to the local level is likely to be the critical element in
<table>
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<th>Case study</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the long term. The model developed by ETD has potential for adoption in other contexts, particularly in smaller jurisdictions or divisions of larger jurisdictions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G: Tools and resources

The criteria for selecting the following examples of tools and resources are those designed or enhanced through the MSSD initiative, accessible to school staff and specialists, and are likely to be ongoing. This does not include workshops and seminars and the like conducted during the life of the initiative to address specific issues and needs.

Appendix Table 14: Selected tools and resources from MSSD initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority/Org</th>
<th>Tool/Resource</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Canberra</td>
<td>DSE 2005 eLearning Online Package</td>
<td>• eLearning courses for disability education, developed to meet the requirements of the DDA developed in partnership with 10 funding agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OnlineTraining Ltd</td>
<td>Online training for special education needs</td>
<td>• some jurisdictions used MSSD funding to work with OLT to revise and customise the material to ensure validity in the context of Australian schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| NSW DEC              | Personalised Learning and Support Signposting Tool (PLASST) | • online assessment tool to be used by teachers to support or inform four distinct areas of activity: collaboration, consultation and negotiation; assessment; responding to identified needs; and monitoring and evaluation adjustment and interventions, to assist with personalising learning and support for students
• collected data on more than 24,000 students by over 6,000 teachers. |
| NSW DEC              | Acoustic resources                                | • two linked resources accessible via the existing OLT course focussed on supporting student with a hearing loss available to all teachers in all NSW government schools:
  o an application for mobile devices to measure the acoustics in classrooms
  o an online module for teachers that provides information and advice on how to improve the acoustics in the classroom |
| NSW DEC              | Online resources                                  | • upgraded and further developed online resources to support leadership teams
• developed improved website and enhanced specialist information for schools about disability and related health conditions and implications that such conditions had for learning |
| NSW DEC              | Effective reading resources                       | • Additional resources developed collaboratively by speech pathologists, psychologists and neuropsychologists were added to the NSW Centre for Effective Reading website:
  o a series of seven professional learning modules for classroom teachers to skill teachers in supporting |
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<tr>
<th>Authority/Org</th>
<th>Tool/Resource</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW DEC</td>
<td>NCCD collection resources</td>
<td>• added new functions within its electronic enrolment and registration application to accommodate the collection of data for the NCCD; provided a central Help Desk support available to schools; and a DEC intranet site containing information and links for the NCCD.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| NSW CEC | Online planning tool | • access to an online planning tool for personalising learning developed and refined over a number of years  
• assists teachers to create effective personalised plans for students with disability and through this process assist staff in implementing requirements and obligations under the DDA and the DSE 2005, and features data gathering and planning across six domains: curriculum, communication, mobility, safety, personal care and social, and feeds into the NCCD. |
<p>| NSW CEC | Inclusion and wellbeing resources | • developed fact sheets, ‘How-To’ guides, video tutorials and info-lines to support the use of evidence in making sound decisions around the inclusion and wellbeing of students |
| NSW CEC | Online resources on post-school options | • online resources produced with local information about post-school options and services for students with disability |
| VIC DET | Transition kit for students with hearing impairment | • VDEI developed and delivered the ‘Transition into Primary School’ kit containing resources aimed at early intervention centres, receiving schools, deaf children and their parents. |
| VIC DET | ABLES framework | • developed the Abilities Based Learning and Educational Support (ABLES) framework aimed at assisting teachers to assess and report on student progress and learning achievement |
| ISV | Teacher Observation Form | • designed the Teacher Observation Form to keep track of students’ behaviour |
| ISV | Screening tool | • purchased screening tools for team of health professionals and experts working with children with disability to provide reports with strategies for the classroom teacher, including recommended educational adjustments. |
| QLD DET | Centralised data collection tool | • developed to support schools in the NCCD |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority/Org</th>
<th>Tool/Resource</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QLD DET</td>
<td>Centralised student focused planning tool</td>
<td>● to help coordinate individual support plans for students with disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QCEC</td>
<td>Transition tool</td>
<td>● monitors and tracks student progress throughout the years of senior schooling including data on students’ structured work placements, training, accreditation and assessment and other disability related employment and training needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QCEC</td>
<td>DSE 2005 Training Package</td>
<td>● designed ‘Understand your obligation’ - a set of short, clearly contextualised videos on key aspects of Catholic schooling policies and procedures affecting students with disability and made available to staff on the Brisbane Catholic schools website portal as well as in hard copy to QLD Catholic schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISQ</td>
<td>DSE 2005 Training Package supplementary resources</td>
<td>● developed supplementary resources to support compliance with the provisions of the DDA, made available on the ISQ website through a dedicated webpage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISQ</td>
<td>NCCD webpage</td>
<td>● developed a dedicated webpage containing resources and research materials on the ISQ website to provide support and clarification for schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA DECD</td>
<td>LitCon Special</td>
<td>● Literacy planning and assessment tool for teachers of students with intellectual and/or significant cognitive disabilities. LitCon Special links to a student’s Negotiated Education Plan and the Australian Curriculum and enables access to improved data mapping of student progress in the literacy continuum. The programme was migrated from a Microsoft Excel database to an online version hosted at a secure DECD site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AISSA</td>
<td>DDA resources</td>
<td>● online templates, guidelines and other resources were developed and made accessible via the AISSA website</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| WA DoE       | Range of online school resources | ● Distinctive Schools developed a range of online school resources and provided blended professional online learning modules available through the Department’s One Classroom website, such as: My future My Life (Transition Planning); using iPad Application; Protective Behaviours Scope and Sequence tool; and Learning Disabilities Toolkit.  
● the Toolkit helps teachers determine student learning disabilities and educational needs. |
<p>| WA DoE       | NCCD resources | ● proformas were made available for collecting, summarising data and checklists of what constituted no adjustment, supplementary adjustment, substantial |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Authority/Org</th>
<th>Tool/Resource</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TAS DoE</td>
<td>Knowme app</td>
<td>• developed an online web-based resource, Knowme, allowing parents and families to consolidate in one location all relevant information about their family member with a disability, that can be easily updated and shared with teachers and other professionals as appropriate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| TAS DoE      | Student Support System | • designed the Student Support System database system houses individual education plans for students for whom an individual education adjustment has been made, as well as assessments by school consultants such as psychologists and speech pathologists  
• adapted to assist with the implementation of the NCCD with the development and addition of a data collection tool as a new module of the Student Support System. |
| TAS COE      | NCCD data tool      | • addition of a relevant page in the COE SLN database for collection of information required for the NCCD, giving schools access to data for funding applications able to deliver professional reports on secure files held centrally. |
| IST          | Toolbox of resources | • developed a toolbox of resources for teachers engaged in the OLT modules  
• designed a resource package of activities on DSE 2005 and NCCD using a range of complementary professional learning information and activities |
<p>| NT DoE       | Assessment tools    | • culturally appropriate assessment tools were developed on site which enabled students to undertake assessment tasks in their first language, through a collaborative approach between the MSSD Speech, Language and Communication team and Indigenous staff and community members in several remote communities. |
| NT DoE       | ‘Whole classroom-whole school’ service model | • service model developed combining speech pathology assessment of student learning needs with professional learning, including the modelling of practical classroom strategies, complemented by posting of classroom resources on a SharePoint website for ongoing teacher learning. |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Authority/Org</th>
<th>Tool/Resource</th>
<th>Details</th>
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</table>
| ACT ETD      | DSE 2005 eLearning support materials | • developed a set of resources to promote the eLearning modules including a resource kit ‘Understanding Learning Difficulties: a Practical Guide’ provided to all representative teachers and school psychologists.  
• online portal provides staff with a place to share teaching and learning interventions and access to evidence-based resources for students with learning difficulties including digitally captured teaching practices and discussions from within ACT schools, presentations, links and supports. |
| ACT CEO      | Postgraduate certificate in Inclusion and Wellbeing | • designed through the Australian Catholic University designed for teachers who aspire to work in the disability field either as a Learning Support Teacher or in the classroom. |
Appendix H: MSSD Network - Scootle

The MSSD Network was set up within the Scootle Communities platform to stimulate discussion and support ongoing information sharing for educators interested in exchanging ideas, experiences, activities, and opportunities, to support students with disability in our schools.

Scootle is an online platform supported by the Australian Government Department of Education (https://www.scootle.edu.au). Scootle includes a Community section where teachers can join a professional learning network on a specific area of interest, join discussion groups, read and write blogs, ask questions and share expertise. It also includes learning resources from the National Digital Learning Resources Network managed by Education Services Australia on behalf of all Education Ministers. All school staff from Australian Government, Catholic and Independent schools can access it.

The MSSD Network – Scootle Community is open to all Australian educators. The screen shots below depict the MSSD Network on the Scootle Communities portal. The description of the MSSD Network reads:

This is a community of educators stimulated by the More Support for Students with Disabilities (MSSD) initiative to build the capacity of Australian schools and teachers in educating students with disability and learning difficulties. This community is an opportunity to share information and resources from the lessons learned to date from the MSSD activities, and to support schools and teachers to sustain and build on the valuable progress made so far.

From this page (see Image 1) members can click to see the profile of other members or access the other pages of the network including the feed, blog, wiki, events, media and discussion.
On the MSSD Wiki page there are links to the Department of Education MSSD landing page and to the evaluation case studies. Members of the Community are able to add their own pages to share links and resources.

The screen shots below (Image 2 and 3) depict examples of resources uploaded to the network in the initial phase.
Accessing MSSD Network

To access the MSSD Network any teacher in Australia can sign up to Scootle for free and click into Communities from the home page. They can then search ‘MSSD’ in the top centre search bar and the MSSD Network will show in the search results under Networks. See Image 4 below.
Recommendations for the MSSD Network — Scootle Community

1. Appoint a suitable person to be allocated the administrator rights of the MSSD Network.
2. Facilitate discussions within the network.
3. Post key questions on specific outcomes of the project.
4. Post reflective or informative blog posts to generate interest and discussion.
5. Develop further key words used for metadata to assist people to find the network within the Scootle portal.
6. Add further resources and annotated website links to the wiki space.
7. Promote the MSSD Network through available communication lists of participants in the MSSD initiative.
8. Promote the MSSD Network in jurisdiction communications or newsletters.
9. Add the MSSD National Showcase to event section of the MSSD Network.
10. Promote the MSSD Network on the Department of Education website with a link to where it can be accessed.
Appendix I: Evaluation progress reports

Progress Report 1 (August 2012)

The initial progress report provided the following key elements:

- an update on the evaluation methodology
- a tabular presentation and descriptive analysis of MSSD initiative implementation to date
- discussion of the proposed approach to undertaking the case studies, including an outline of a number of potential case studies
- a brief discussion of information sharing strategies.

Progress Report 2 (January 2013)

Progress Report 2 included the following key sections:

- an update on the evaluation methodology
- a national overview of the status of the initiative
- a descriptive summary of the implementation to date of the MSSD initiative by education authorities

Mid-Term Report (October 2013)

The mid-term report built on the initial analysis of the implementation plans prepared by education authorities to evaluate their progress to June 2013. It focused primarily on PhillipsKPA’s analysis of the progress reports submitted to the then Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) by education authorities reporting until the end of March 2013, with further insights from a round of follow up consultations with representatives from each authority. The report included the following key elements:

- an update on the evaluation methodology
- a national overview of the status of the initiative
- a descriptive summary of the implementation to date of the MSSD initiative by education authorities
- a summary of the outputs and learning derived from the information seminars
- an overview of online resources related to the MSSD initiative
- an update of the status of the evaluation case studies.

A companion document detailed the online resources developed in response to the MSSD initiative, as outputs of MSSD activity or identified as being relevant to the MSSD initiative.
Progress Report 4 (June 2014)

Following the extension of the MSSD initiative into the 2014 school year and the extension of the evaluation project until 2015, Progress Report 4 included the following three sections:

Part 1 — Overview of the evaluation including revisions to the approach in response to the extension of the MSSD initiative, changes in context, developments in the jurisdictions.

Part 2 — Education authority updates 2013 – 2014. These are focused largely on activities in the reporting period from May 2013 to February 2014, performance against benchmarks, challenges and emerging opportunities, observations on directions for the final phase of the MSSD initiative, and potential outcomes.

Part 3 — Appendices including education authority consultations, planning for 2014 information sharing seminars, MSSD outputs by sector, updated case study lists and selected abstracts, sector benchmark tables, and tables showing number of schools, teachers and students with disability supported, organised by sector.

Progress Report 5 (October 2014)

This report provided a summary of the major activities and outcomes of the evaluation project up to October 2014. Progress Report 5 included:

- a summary of progress in the case studies and reports
- a summary of the outcomes of the 2014 information seminars
- a preliminary synthesis of the nature and impact of the case studies
- an analysis of stakeholder perspectives on the MSSD initiative
- an update on progress on the development phase of the MSSD Network – Scootle Community.

Final Report (June 2015)

This report covers the major activities and outcomes of the evaluation project from 2012 to 2014 and brings together observations from five progress reports provided from 2012 to 2014, including the reporting period from October 2014 to the receipt of authority progress reports in February/March 2015.
Disclaimer

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