



NSW State Budget 2026-27
Pre-budget Submission to NSW Treasury

22 December 2025

Who we are

The Parents and Citizens (P&C) Federation of NSW ('[the Federation](#)') is a representative voice for parents/carers and students in public education in New South Wales; established in 1922 and incorporated in 1976 by an Act of the NSW Parliament.

The Federation is one of the largest volunteer-based organisations within Australia - representing over 2,000 P&Cs and 10,000 office bearers, 791,000 public school students and their parents/carers.

The P&C Federation is committed to ensuring every child has access to a quality, free and secular public education. This is only possible through government funding that is adequate, equitable and genuinely needs-based.

About our submission

The Federation thanks the NSW Treasury for the opportunity to make a submission.

Our advocacy draws on decades of experience, affording us the vantage point of change and trends beyond the political and budget cycle. Our submission draws on the insights, concerns and recommendations of our Board and vast member base from right across NSW, many of whom are concurrently navigating a number of systems overseen by the NSW Government - not just education.

Our submission:

- is addressed generally to the NSW Government and Treasury noting that we are seeking investment from key areas of government where policy and investment choices have a material impact on the state's delivery of inclusive, quality public education. Beyond Education and Early Learning these include Health, Sport and Transport.
- addresses multiple goals of the NSW Government's *Performance and Well-being Framework* beyond the obvious 'skilled'¹
- aims to bolster the delivery of [Our Plan for NSW Public Education](#) developed by the NSW Department of Education ('the Department') from which we will selective reference
- calls on the specialised advocacy and research capacity of a select group of community and civic society organisations. These include the NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS); [Music Right from the Start](#) national initiative; the Committee for Sydney, Resilient Sydney and the NRMA.
- calls on findings and recommendations from: several NSW parliamentary inquiries; our engagement with members of the NSW Parliament and ongoing dialogue with the Department of Education.

¹ NSW Treasury - [2025-26 NSW Budget Papers](#) – Performance and Well-being Statement

Introduction

The Federation recognises the very significant and historic commitment to full and adequate funding that has been finally made to the government school sector. Along with other advocate organisations we celebrated the historic Commonwealth and New South Wales State Government March 2025 agreement to fund public schools in NSW to 100% of the School Resourcing Standard (SRS). The fact remains however, that these funding changes will take many years to be implemented².

We commend the NSW Department of Education for its efforts in developing [Our Plan for NSW Public Education](#) and recognise the various focus areas as ones that our Board and members support. We also recognise the significant school building and upgrade program that is in full swing. The commitment to reducing teacher vacancies is also welcomed.

We are however, concerned about longer-term trends that go to the heart of public education.

The principle enshrined in the *Education Act 1990*, that public education be free, has been eroded over time. Despite this principle, there remains a significant and growing financial cost to parents.

Families across NSW contribute through voluntary school contributions, elective subject payments, fundraising, and service fees collected by P&C Associations. While the scale of these contributions fluctuates depending on the financial capacity of individual communities, the outcome is clear: the costs of public education are increasingly borne by parents and carers. Inequity is entrenched even within the public education system.

Many parents in many NSW public schools are routinely asked directly by local Principals to make financial contributions to the education of their children. According to a 2025 Budget Estimates inquiry,³ in 2024, the combined collection exceeded \$115 million.

The 2024 financial contributions were collected under the terms of government policy,⁴ and included:

- *voluntary contributions* of \$30,771,404
- *subject contributions* \$40,801,483 and
- *school sport contributions* \$43,495,404.

2024 was not a one-off with a similar scale of contributions requested for many years prior.

While the combined scale of these contributions pales by comparison to the States' multi-billion education investment, the collective impost on parents is large and unreasonable.

The Federation thanks the NSW Government and the NSW Department of Education for the concerted efforts in late 2024 and 2025 to not just clarify, but rein in, the use of the voluntary contributions policy. We expect and hope to see a dramatic reduction in requests to parents in the 2026 school year but acknowledge that the root causes of some categories of these

² P&C Federation Media Release (March 2025) - [Historic Day for Public Education | P&C Federation](#)

³ Budget Estimates (2025) Education & Early Learning Committee held 27 August 2025 – refer Answer responding to Question on Notice 67 at p 101 of 102.

⁴ <https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2020-0472-12>

requests remain. This submission will highlight some of those requests for parental funding, calling on the Department and NSW Government generally to address the gaps.

Each year P&Cs earn and make very substantial financial contributions to their local school communities (above and beyond the direct requests to parents noted above. In 2023 for example, P&C Associations raised over \$138 million, all of which, by virtue of a P&C Association's constitution, is reinvested back into their respective school communities.

P&C fundraising tends to come from one of three sources:

- community-based fundraising activities (fêtes, discos, sausage sizzles etc);
- P&C run school services (cafeterias, uniform shops, band programs and Out of School Hours Care); and
- grants (government or corporate) including the very large [Community Building Partnership Grant Program](#) which routinely sees P&Cs seeking to upgrade government property and facilities. In the 2025 program P&Cs were collectively awarded \$6 million in grants.

Fundraising is a traditional P&C function, as much a community-building exercise as it is fundraising; originally intended to enable local parent representative organisation to provide extra support and very local additions to the school.

A genuinely free, high quality public education depends on government providing the full resources and facilities required for teaching, learning and support in every school. Parent and community contributions should not be relied upon to meet core educational or operational needs, but be reserved for truly extracurricular opportunities or unique local projects that enrich, rather than replace, what government must fund.

While the tightening of the voluntary contributions will significantly restrict the ability of principals to invoice parents for certain items it doesn't directly address the reason why some principals are turning to parents and P&Cs in the first place.

This submission tackles a number of areas that have seen a large and growing financial impost on parents and/or the erosion of important elements of a well-rounded education. These range from quality, sequential music education to school representative sports. The Federation recognises that a number of these issues relate to programs outside of the direct control of the Department of Education.

We have also taken the opportunity to highlight the opportunities for public schools to facilitate other government programs that support the health and well-being of students. In particular, we have recommended the expansion of the NSW Health mobile dental program currently delivered into a number of schools.

The delivery of quality and inclusive public education has direct relevance to seven of the eight themes of Treasury Performance and Well-Being Framework below. This is a measure of the significance and value of the public education system in NSW - critical not just for current and future students but the prosperity and progress of the state as a whole.

NSW Performance and Well-Being Framework

Wellbeing themes	NSW Outcomes	Wellbeing themes	NSW Outcomes
Healthy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People receive timely, quality care in hospitals and the community. People are supported to make the best decisions for their health. People are enabled to lead active lifestyles. 	Secure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communities are safe. People have access to justice and protection under the law. Children and families are safe and supported. Communities are prepared for and resilient to disasters and emergencies.
Connected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government services are accessible, effective and integrated. People, businesses and communities are connected through safe and reliable transport. People and businesses have access to digital services. 	Skilled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All children benefit from quality early childhood education and care. All school students are supported to reach their full potential. Vocational education delivers the skills that people and businesses need.
Sustainable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A secure and sustainable transition to a circular economy and Net Zero. Natural resources are used productively and sustainably. The environment and our heritage is protected, enhanced and enjoyed. Communities and businesses reduce emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. 	Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government is coordinated, transparent and trusted. Aboriginal people's voices are heard at the centre of government. Creative and cultural sectors are sustainable and growing. Communities are diverse, engaged and cohesive.
Prosperous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State finances are robust and sustainable. Markets are fair and competitive, and workplaces are safe. A vibrant and diverse economy that supports improving living standards. Everyone has access to productive and rewarding jobs. 	Housed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality housing solutions are sufficient and affordable. Places are well-designed and sustainable. Vulnerable people have access to suitable housing.

"Beyond teaching life-long necessary skills such as literacy and numeracy, schools help children and young adults develop social-emotional skills, provide safe and inclusive environments and a sense of community and support for both students, parents and families. Education is a crucial factor that drives innovation, access to jobs and future prosperity..."

NSW Treasury [NSW Performance and Well-being 2025-26 - Skilled Chapter 3](#)

Key Recommendations for Investment

<i>Investment request</i>	<i>Performance & Well-being alignment</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest \$150 million to extend energy-efficient air conditioning to <u>all</u> NSW public schools by 2030 to ensure students and teachers have the same level of thermal comfort as other places of learning and work 	<i>Skilled Healthy Sustainable</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support more students to participate in school representative sport by reducing the rising and unreasonable transport costs that are stopping many from participating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$500,000 to formally expand the School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS) to allow free or subsidised travel to inter-school representative support. - \$500,000 to expand the Western Region Sport and Active Recreation Transport Program to enable more public schools to participate including in other regional and remote areas currently out-of-scope 	<i>Skilled Healthy Connected Sustainable</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage more kids to be independent and active - supporting them to walk or ride safely to and from school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$5 million to employ 250 more School Crossing Supervisors ("lollipop people") who manage road crossings especially in regional and rural town centres - \$2 million in 2026/27 Get NSW Active grant program, open to local councils across NSW to deliver projects that enable walking or riding to primary schools (beyond the school gate into the urban environment) 	<i>Skilled Healthy Connected Sustainable</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest \$45million to expand the public mobile dental program currently successfully operating in primary schools in eleven Local Health Districts 	<i>Health Skilled Secure Community</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest \$1.75 million to ensure all NSW primary school students have access to high quality, sequential music education, essential for a well-rounded education 	<i>Skilled Community Prosperous</i>

Key Ask 1.

Invest \$150 million to extend energy-efficient air conditioning to all NSW public schools by 2030 to ensure students and teachers have the same level of thermal comfort as other places of learning and work

This investment will:

- Ensure that every school is a *verified healthy and inclusive learning environment by 2030*⁵ enabling students and teachers access to the type of thermal comfort prescribed by Safework NSW⁶.
- Reduce the fundraising pressure on P&Cs right across NSW – for air cooling and heating equipment purchases for Department of Education properties
- Reduce the administrative burden currently carried by principals and P&Cs – people often without the specialist expertise required to conduct research and build business cases (and frequently without success).
- Leverage the expertise, project management capacity and purchasing-power of government for efficient investment, project management and delivery of energy-efficient ‘smart systems’⁷
- Address the concerns of multiple Members of Parliament concerned about the lack of adequate cooling (and heating) facilities in many NSW public schools.

This investment requires:

- \$150 million to re-establish a form of the *Cooler Classrooms* program (originally established in 2018-19). That program committed \$500 million over five years to install air cooling and mechanical ventilation systems in permanent learning spaces and libraries for up to 1,000 (of 2,000+) existing NSW Government schools. More than 5 years down the track, many schools have received air cooling upgrades. But many have not.
- Immediately establish a new prioritisation policy that substantially reduces the unreasonably narrow and high temperature threshold for air-conditioning⁸, formally acknowledging the compounding impact of humidity on thermal comfort and site-specific challenges such as building orientation⁹¹⁰.

⁵ NSW Department of Education: [Our Plan for NSW Public Education](#)

⁶ Safework NSW - optimum comfort for sedentary workers of 20°C – 26°C and relative humidity levels between 40% and 70% [Maintaining thermal comfort in indoor work environments | SafeWork NSW](#)

⁷ NSW Government, Infrastructure NSW (insw) (2020) *Final Business Case Evaluation Summary – Cooler Classrooms – Tranche 1*

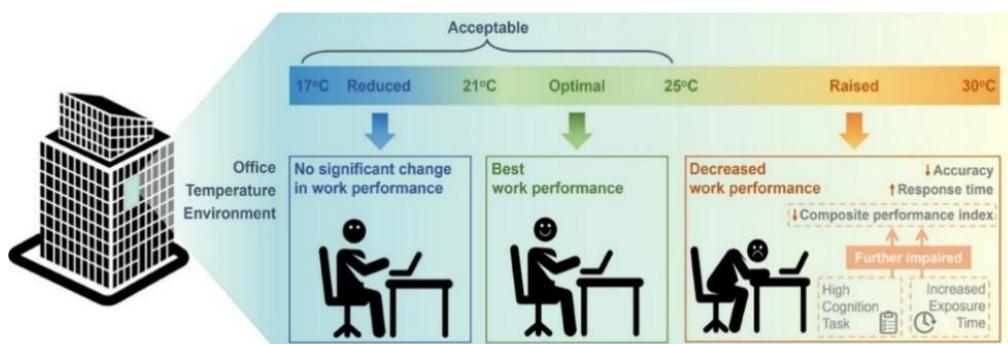
⁸ NSW Government policy: in areas with a mean **maximum January temperature of 30°C and above**, schools will qualify for air conditioning & cooling systems, supported by Schools Infrastructure NSW. All demountable classrooms in NSW are air-conditioned. In all other cases schools are required to apply as part of the standard department processes.

⁹ Australian Government, Bureau of Meteorology (October 2016) - [Apparent \('feels like'\) temperature - Social Media Blog - Bureau of Meteorology](#) (accessed 22/12/25)

¹⁰ Sherwood,S. (Jan 2024) UNSW via The Conversation: [Yes, it's getting more humid in summer. Here's why](#) accessed 22/12/25

The case for this approach:

- The **climate is warming with higher temperatures baked in.** Climate change poses a significant threat to the environment and the health and wellbeing of the people of New South Wales¹¹¹² Heat is the most significant climate risk to health and wellbeing in Greater Sydney. Heatwaves are expected to double in frequency and duration over the next 50 years¹³ ¹⁴
- **Learning spaces that are too hot and humid hinder teaching and learning.** SafeWork NSW¹⁵ notes that thermal discomfort can seriously impact a worker's overall morale and work performance with the potential for prolonged exposure to lead to fatigue, lowered concentration and productivity.
- **Even moderately raised room temperatures (over 25 degrees) degrade work performance,** and quickly (after just one hour), with the these negative effects greatest for skilled tasks. International research identifies temperatures between 21 to 25 degrees as optimal (refer image)¹⁶. This is without considering the compounding negative interaction with humidity.



- **Heat compromises learning but air-conditioning makes a difference.** A recent study of nearly 14.5 million students across 61 countries found that long-term exposure to high temperatures in schools, reduces students' ability to learn and retain knowledge, with complex tasks such as mathematics more affected than simpler ones like reading; increasing mental health risks and broader educational inequalities.¹⁷ The same research examined adaptation strategies, including air conditioning, and found they could offset 73% of heat-related cognitive loss.

¹¹ NSW Treasury – Sustainable [bp2-performance-and-wellbeing-statement-chapter9-sustainable-nsw-budget-2025-26.docx](#)

¹² [National Health and Climate Strategy](#) | Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

¹³ [City of Sydney - a resilient city - City of Sydney](#) at p68

¹⁴ Committee for Sydney, *Burning Money: The Rising Costs of Heatwaves to Western Sydney*, 2024, https://sydney.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Burning-Money_FA_WEB_R2.pdf

¹⁵ [SafeWork NSW Maintaining thermal comfort in indoor work environments](#) | SafeWork NSW

¹⁶ Xi Lin, Chao Guo, Paweł Wargocki, Shin-ichi Tanabe, Kwok Wai Tham, Li Lan,

The effects of temperature on work performance in the typical office environment: A meta-analysis of the current evidence, Building and Environment, Volume 269, 2025, 112488, ISSN 0360-1323,

¹⁷ UNSW (2025) – article [Rising temperatures affecting students learning across the world](#) review of Vasilakopoulou K, Santamouris M (2025) Cumulative exposure to urban heat can affect the learning capacity of students and penalize the vulnerable and low-income young population: A systematic review. PLOS Clim 4(7): e0000618. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pclm.0000618>

Key Ask 2.

Support more students to participate in school representative sport by reducing the rising and unreasonable transport costs that are stopping many from participating

This investment will:

- Arrest the decline in the participation of schools in traditional, high-quality, interschool competitions¹⁸
- Reduce a portion of the \$40+ million cost that parents are paying each year for their children to participate in 'school sport'
- Support the identification and encouragement of gifted and talented sportspeople amongst NSW's public schools¹⁹
- Reduce the current and growing inequity between private and public schools; between metro and regional schools (especially those with access only to privatised transport options)
- Support active and healthy lives, community identity and social cohesion

This investment requires:

- \$500,000 to formally expand the [School Student Transport Scheme \(SSTS\)](#) to allow free or subsidised travel to inter-school representative support. This may include a grants program similar to that below.
- \$500,000 to expand the [Western Region Sport and Active Recreation Transport Program](#) to enable more public schools to participate including in other regional and remote areas currently out-of-scope.

The case for this approach:

- Interschool sport requires access to free or cheap transport (whether it be provided by private or public transport operators). NSW's [School Student Transport Scheme \(SSTS\)](#) provides free travel on NSW public transport, including trains, buses, ferries and light rail for travel between home and school. In general, this **does not cover sport-related travel**. While some public school students selected for representative teams may be able to get travel support through programs like Transport for NSW's [Western Region Sport and Active Recreation Transport Program](#) it is a restricted program.

¹⁸ Dept of Education NSW – School Sports Unit – accessed 19/12/25 [School Sport Unit: School Sport history](#)

¹⁹ Dept of Education NSW – High Potential & Gifted Education – accessed 19/12/25 [HPGE policy information](#)

- School sport transport in NSW public schools is often paid for directly by schools or **parents**. The 2025-2026 Budget Estimates hearings confirmed that parents are collectively paying more than \$40 million for their children to participate in 'sport'. The Federation understands that much of this is payment for transport (and is above and beyond other significant financial contributions parents and (separately) P&Cs are making to school.²⁰
- The privatisation of bus services in NSW has compounded this problem with rising prices, unreliability and general route access often reduced and private hiring costs prohibitive^{21 22}
- Many schools and parent communities simply cannot afford interschool transport costs leading some to cancel regular weekly games. This has been widely reported on in the media and often includes metropolitan school with relatively good access to public transport²³.
- Many parents cannot afford for their children to participate in team sports on the weekend due to the prohibitive costs of registration, uniforms and travel
- Addressing these issues has broad community support with many in the community recognising the value of school sport not just for students but for the broader community²⁴
- The decline in school sport due to transport issues is exacerbating inequity, as public schools with fewer resources struggle to provide the same opportunities as private schools (many of which have their own sports facilities) but even between public schools.



SMH 4 September 2024 - [Levelling the playing field on school sport](#)

Haylee Kerans with Summer Hill Public school students at the basketball court at Darrell Jackson Gardens (Image - Louise Kennerley)

²⁰ NSW Parliament Budget Estimates Hearing – Education and Learning. Hearing date – 27 August 2025). *Question on Notice No. 67* at p 101 outlines 3 separate financial contributions by parents in 2024: Voluntary contributions totalled \$30,771,404; Subject contributions totalled \$40,801,483 and School sport contributions totalled \$43,495,404

²¹ NSW Legislative Council – Portfolio Committee No. 6 (September 2022) – *Privatisation of bus services*

²² Manly Observer (October 2022): [Can't catch a break: school trips appear forgotten in local bus privatisation deal](#) - *Manly Observer*

²³ SMH (September 2024), Baker, J: [Public schools 'killing off sport' as private school facilities grow](#)

²⁴ SMH (September 2024) – Letters to the Editor: [Levelling the playing field on school sport](#)

Key Ask 3.

Encourage more kids to be independent and active - supporting them to walk or ride safely to and from school

This investment will:

- Increase the confidence of more parents to allow their children to ride or walk to school without adult supervision
- Arrest the decline in the general activity and incidental exercise of children. Currently only 25% of school children walk or ride to and from school (down from 75% 40 years ago)
- Support the NSW Government's Active Kids initiatives
- Increase the work flexibility and productivity of working parents and carers who feel compelled to drive or accompany their children to the school gate because of road safety concerns
- Reduce the frustration of regional and rural school communities (parents, carers and P&Cs) with road safety local knowledge; currently unable to break through strict and narrow Transport for NSW eligibility requirements
- Reduce the risk to the NSW Government of unqualified and uninsured volunteers performing the role of School Crossing Supervisors

This investment requires:

- \$5 million to employ 250 more School Crossing Supervisors ("lollipop people") who manage road crossings especially in regional and rural town centres
- Widening of eligibility policy to enable more school communities with high safety concerns to provide 'school crossing supervisors'
- An additional \$2 million in the 2026/27 [Get NSW Active](#) grant program, open to local councils across NSW to deliver projects that enable walking or riding to primary schools (beyond the school gate into the urban environment)

The case for this approach:

- Children walking to and from school remain an identified vulnerable road safety cohort with a greater risk of being killed or seriously injured on NSW roads. The NSW has a number of strategies to ensure school children are safe including the School Crossing Supervisor Program (costing \$22.75 million in 23/24). There are more than 970 supervised schools with over 1500 trained school crossing supervisors monitoring more than 1220 crossings²⁵
- Despite Government programs and 'get active' campaigns many parents remain reluctant to allow their children to walk or ride to school without adult supervision.

²⁵ Transport for NSW (published August 2025): [NSW Road Safety Progress Report 2024 | Transport for NSW](#) at p35-36

According to the NSW Government only 25% of NSW school children currently walk or ride to and from school, down from 75% 40 years ago²⁶.

- Parent and local community experience of road safety around schools is more attuned to 'near misses' than official data may note. A NRMA 2025 report²⁷ surveyed over 550 parents and carers of primary school aged children regarding school zone safety issues in NSW and the ACT. Almost half (46%) were aware of an incident or near miss at or near their child's school during school hours in the last 12 months. Of these, 41% witnessed the incident. Nearly 30 % of parents and carers surveyed said that road safety concerns was one of the reasons their child travels to school with an adult.
- Restricted investment and eligibility criteria²⁸ are unreasonably restricting access to measures like School Crossing Supervisors ("lollipop people") especially in regional and rural town centres. According to our members, the current policy does not take into account the specific challenges faced by smaller, regional schools that may not meet the required student population or traffic volume thresholds to qualify for professional crossing supervisors.
- The lack of paid crossing supervisors in schools where local people understand the road safety risk is forcing a reliance on unpaid, untrained and uninsured volunteers (who may not be covered by injury compensation in the event of an accident) and whose capacity to maintain control on a public crossing is hampered by their lack of 'official status'.
- Road safety and encouragement of an active, independent lives for children requires better urban design – outside the school gate and beyond the school crossing. Many urban planning expert reports have called for the encouragement of active travel to school by supporting safe walking and riding options²⁹
- Parents need to know the entire route to and from school is safe not just in the immediate school vicinity. Councils should work with local P&Cs to design better and safer routes. The Federation notes and endorses the NSW Government's \$10 million investment³⁰ in the [Get NSW Active 2026-27](#) but is calling for an additional \$2 million to ensure more schools are able to access.

²⁶ Ministerial media release (Jan 2024): [New program gives kids control of their own school run | NSW Government](#)

²⁷ NRMA Open Road (Feb 2025) [School's in: Keeping children safe around schools](#)

²⁸ Transport for NSW – *How to apply for a crossing supervisor* website: [School crossing supervisors | Transport for NSW](#) accessed 19/12/25

²⁹ Resilient Sydney -led by [City of Sydney - a resilient city - City of Sydney](#) at p78

³⁰ Ministerial media release January 2024 ibid.

Views of road users who are parents and carers (NRMA)*

“... children are one of our most vulnerable road users and it’s unacceptable to simply install a speed camera in school zone and say the job is done.”

What our members are saying

The NRMA surveyed over 550 parents and carers of primary school aged children regarding school zone safety issues in NSW and the ACT.²

Almost half (46%) were aware of an incident or near miss at or near their child’s school during school hours in the last 12 months. Of these, 41% witnessed the incident.

Top 5 safety concerns in school zones

1. Speeding through a school zone (56%)
2. Lack of parking near schools (50%)
3. Double parking or stopping illegally to drop off/pick up children (42%)
4. Children of a young age crossing the road unsupervised (39%)
5. Low visibility of children in school zones due to traffic congestion (29%)

Top 5 measures to make school zones safer

1. Kiss and drop zones (52%)
2. Increased parking (50%)
3. Alternative school access that’s not on a main road (36%)
4. Road infrastructure changes — pedestrian fencing, speed humps etc. (30%)
5. More school crossing supervisors (29%)

60%

of parents and carers surveyed said their child travels to or from school without adult supervision for some or all of the journey.

28%

of parents and carers won’t let their child travel to or from school without an adult due to road safety concerns.

Travelling solo to school

A safe route to school was the reason why 37% of parents and carers made the decision to allow their child to travel to or from school without an adult.

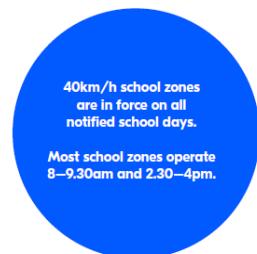
“While school zones in NSW have become safer, with the number of children killed or injured steadily declining over the last 20 years, more can be done to improve the safety around schools.”

Keeping kids safe around schools

The numbers of children killed or injured on NSW roads in school travel times has been steadily declining over the last 20 years.¹

In 2024, no child aged 16 years and under was killed in an active school zone (preliminary data as at 20 January 2025). In the first half of 2024, three children (including two pedestrians) aged 16 years and under were injured in an active school zone, two seriously injured and one minor/other injured.

Between 2019 and 2023, two children (both pedestrians) aged 16 and under were killed in an active school zone.¹



Children aged 16 years and under injured in an active school zone between 2019 – 2023¹

44

seriously injured
(including 37 pedestrians)

55

moderately injured
(including 42 pedestrians)

36

minor/other injured
(including 27 pedestrians)

* NRMA Open Road (Feb 2025) [School's in: Keeping children safe around schools](#)

(Report highlights below and NRMA member survey data at right)

Key Ask 4.

Invest \$45m to expand the public mobile dental program currently successfully operating in primary schools in eleven Local Health Districts

This investment will:

- Reduce the impact of current inequitable access to dental services in NSW
- Prevent the hospitalisation of children 0-14 due to untreated tooth decay and cavities
- Develop life-long positive dental health and hygiene reducing incidences of future health complications

This investment requires:

- Invest \$45 million to expand the existing and impactful [NSW Health Primary School Mobile Dental Program](#)³¹ prioritising those schools within the current eleven local health districts that have not yet accessed the program (Note NCOSS have asked for \$54.5 million) for dental programs in primary schools and remote communities. Their specialist is on leave so I may have to run with a lower amount)

The case for this approach:

- Dental conditions are now the leading cause of preventable hospitalisations in NSW, with most of these due to complications from untreated tooth decay and cavities.³²
- Young children aged 0-9 are one of the key cohorts likely to go to hospital. Tooth decay and activities is the main dental health reason that children go to hospital (19x more than dental injury and 13 x more than teeth and gum infections).
- The Mobile Dental Health Program has been running since 2019 and is delivered by experienced NSW Health staff, using a combination of fully equipped dental vans and portable dental equipment set up on school grounds. It therefore leverages the local school as a trusted centre of broader support for children and families and supports efficient and helpful referral into other government services

³¹ [NSW Health Primary School Mobile Dental Program](#), recognised as an identified 'material measure' in the Health Budget³¹

³² NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS) (October 2025) [Prevention Pays: Cutting the cost of dental hospitalisations - NCOSS](#)

NSW Health Primary School Dental Program

The program targets a priority group (children), in priority parts of the state (with poor access to affordable dental services) to tackle the primary dental health issue in children (tooth decay and cavities) delivered by trusted professionals from the NSW Department of Health



Image credit - Megan Dunn: students get dental check up this morning

Source: Free dental checks launched at schools - Nicola Barton (July 29, 2019)
[Free dental checks launched at schools • The Western Weekender](#)

Key Ask 5.

Invest \$1.75 million to ensure all NSW primary school students have access to high quality, sequential music education, essential for a well-rounded education

This investment will:

- ensure equity of access to continuous, sequential, music education for all public school primary students, as is required in NSW as core curriculum under the *Education Act 1990*³³
- reverse the trend towards seeing music as a one-off extra-curricular event, delivered by external providers often at the direct expense of parents (who can afford it) towards sequential and consistent learning, with a teacher who knows their students
- kick start the state's *10 Year Plan for Music Education* as recommended by a recent parliamentary inquiry (the committee)³⁴ by expanding the reach of current successful programs cutting down on the expense of initial program design and implementation
- reduce the administrative and financial burden on P&Cs that are frequently delivering band programs (including instruments)
- reinforce the broader state goal for a thriving arts, culture and creative sector³⁵

This investment requires:

- \$750,000 to enable 625 generalist primary school teachers to participate in the *Music in Me* program, a well-respected program which provides mentoring to those lacking confidence to deliver music education in the classroom. The program pairs experienced K-6 music teachers (mentors) work with participating teachers (mentees) in their classroom, to build their confidence, skills and practices in delivering valuable music experiences for students.³⁶ Costs are currently borne by the 'mentee's' school.
- \$1 million funding for equipment, instruments and other physical resources required to deliver quality music education; available on application to public schools (all stages) with a demonstrated need and commitment to foundational core curriculum music and creative arts delivery

³³ NSW Government: [NSW Curriculum structure | NSW Curriculum | NSW Education Standards Authority](https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1990-008#pt.3) and <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1990-008#pt.3>

³⁴ NSW Parliament (2024) JCS– [Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales](#) Recommendation 12, to develop a music education plan accepted by the NSW Government. Department consultation commenced November 2025

³⁵ NSW Government [Creative Communities | NSW Government](#)

³⁶ NSW Government Department of Education – Creative Arts K-12 – website [Music in Me](#) accessed 22/12/25

The Federation is an active member of [*Music Education: Right from the Start*](#) - a national, collaborative initiative committed to ensuring that every Australian student can access the music education they are entitled to through the Australian Curriculum. Our involvement with this network of organisations has informed our selection of these items.

The Case for this approach

- The creative arts are undervalued in education, leading to broader and systemic **neglect in investment**³⁷, undermining the promise of a well-rounded education that enables every student to reach their full potential.
- In the absence of a capable and confident teaching workforce **private organisations are stepping in to deliver arts and music education, particularly in NSW primary schools**³⁸ undermining the critical role of the trusted classroom teacher
- The effective outsourcing of music education is almost always financed by parents, raising significant equity concerns especially in communities where there is low financial capacity. The inquiry found many students in NSW are missing out on quality arts and music education due to economic, geographic, cultural and social barriers.³⁹
- In many schools the student experience of music education is primarily through band program and tutorials, funded by P&Cs. As our submission to the inquiry noted, while many P&Cs are happy to do this as an 'extra' for the school it is not reasonable for government to expect this⁴⁰
- This problem will take many years to fix. While the NSW Government has recently committed to developing a 10-year *Music Education Plan* and has commenced consultation the Federation is concerned that action and investment may be too small and too slow.
- The recommended investments expand current successful programs cutting down on the expense of initial program design and implementation. These programs build teacher capability and confidence
- Focuses on primary schools as the foundation for skills, confidence and future learning
- Properly positions extra-curricular music, which happens outside regular classes as something that can offer valuable experience, but not as a substitute for a strong curriculum music foundation which every student has access to.

³⁷ NSW JSC Inquiry – Finding 2

³⁸ NSW JSC Inquiry – Chapter 3 *Arts and Music Teacher Workforce*

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ P&C Federation NSW (2024) – submission to the [*Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales*](#) available from website [*Advocacy | P&C Federation*](#)