

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect)

NEEDS BASED FUNDING ARRANGEMENT

December 2025

INTRODUCTION

Aspect Spectrum Australia (Aspect) has prepared this Needs Based Funding Arrangement to outline how it, as the Approved System Authority (ASA), distributes Commonwealth and States recurrent funding to each of Aspect's registered schools.

OPERATING BACKGROUND

Aspect is Australia's largest autism-specific service provider, with one of the biggest autism-specific school programs in the world. Aspect schools offer dynamic, individualised learning for students with a caring and nurturing approach.

Aspect offers:

- Nine independent autism-specific schools across Australia.
- 110+ satellite classes based in mainstream primary and high school settings.
- Education for around 1,300 autistic children.

Aspect schools are specifically designed for children on the autism spectrum and focus on equipping students with skills to become as independent as possible to help them transition into the wider community. Each Aspect School consists of a main campus and satellite classes based in host schools – typically Public Schools or Catholic Schools.

Under the *Australian Education Act 2013* (Cth) (Act), Aspect is an Approved System Authority (ASA) for eight schools in New South Wales (NSW) and one school in South Australia (SA). The list of Aspect schools is as follows:

NSW:

- Aspect Central Coast School
- Aspect Hunter School
- Aspect Macarthur School
- Aspect Riverina School
- Aspect South Coast School
- Aspect South East Sydney School
- Aspect Vern Barnett School
- Aspect Western Sydney School

SA:

- Aspect Treetop School

Aspect's goal is to provide the best opportunities across Aspect Schools for students on the autism spectrum through evidence-informed practices, the Aspect Approach that are person-centred and family-focused. This plays a vital role in meeting the diverse needs of autistic students while preparing for and enabling inclusion in mainstream settings.



Aspect operates centralised services, functions and programs to support the work of the Aspect schools and to provide executive management and efficiencies for all Aspect schools. These centralised services enable Aspect schools to benefit from increased quality, economies of scale, and alignment/reallocation of resources for common educational outcomes, to improve educational outcomes for all Aspect school students.

NEEDS BASED FUNDING MODEL OVERVIEW

To support Aspect's tailored approach to education and ensure resources are used efficiently and effectively while achieving expected educational outcomes, Aspect schools' financial planning and other functions are managed centrally, while still recognising the differences in their needs and community expectations for each Aspect school. Aspect, as an ASA, receives recurrent funding from the Commonwealth and NSW governments for allocation to its NSW schools. For the school in SA, Aspect receives recurrent funding from the Commonwealth and SA governments for allocation. State and Commonwealth funding is pooled to support the ongoing operating expenses of Aspect schools and enable all Aspect schools to deliver quality education in a way that is financially sustainable.

The Board of Directors of Aspect (Board) has authority and responsibility for allocating recurrent funding to the Aspect schools, for the benefit of Aspect students, in accordance with this Needs Based Funding Arrangement. The Board considers there are benefits for certain services, programs and projects to be centrally provisioned and corporate-wide programs to be invested in for the best interest of the school population, and reduce

unnecessary duplication. These central services are detailed in the Aspect centralised services agreement, which is periodically reviewed. Costs for centralised services and programs are deducted from the recurrent funding each school attracts (in accordance with the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) model). The amount deducted for centralised services, functions and programs, and any additional loadings each year is adjusted based on Aspect's annual budget approved by the Board. Additionally, as special schools, Aspect schools' have a Capacity to Contribute (CTC) of zero per cent and are not restricted from using recurrent funding for capital improvements and projects for the purposes of delivering education at Aspect schools, in accordance with the Board's approved plans.

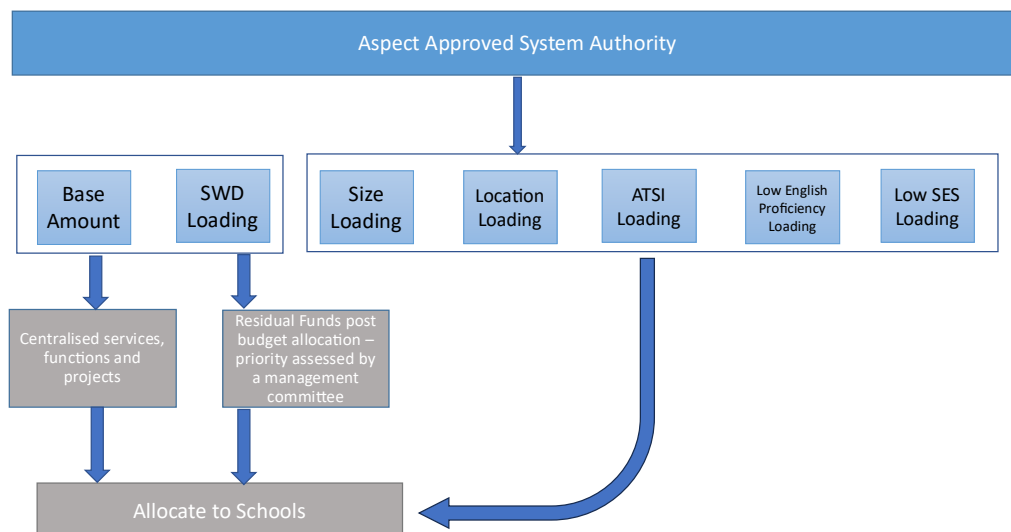
ALLOCATION OF FUNDING

Section 78(5) of the Act stipulates the following requirements:

A needs-based funding arrangement that complies with this subsection:

- (a) provides an amount per student that:*
 - (i) represents the recurrent resources required to support a student with minimal educational disadvantage to achieve expected educational outcomes; and*
 - (ii) takes account of efficiencies that can be realised while improving educational outcomes; and*
- (b) in addition to the amount per student mentioned in paragraph (a), provides loadings to students and schools with additional needs in order to support student achievement, including loadings for the following:*
 - (i) students with disability;*
 - (ii) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;*
 - (iii) students with socio-educational disadvantage;*
 - (iv) students who have low English proficiency;*
 - (v) schools based on location;*
 - (vi) schools based on size; and*
- (c) is publicly available and transparent.*

ASPECT ALLOCATION DIAGRAM



In accordance with section 78(5) of the Act, Aspect allocates an amount per student for each school that has been determined by the Board to:

1. allow a student with minimal educational disadvantage to achieve expected educational outcomes; and
2. take account of efficiencies that can be realised while improving educational outcomes.

Any surplus funds (not used or applied during the course of the year) are retained solely from private income, including school fees and donations.

LOADINGS AND OTHER GOVERNMENT FUNDING ALLOCATION (EXCEPT FOR STUDENT WITH DISABILITY LOADING)

For the following funding streams as part of the Needs Based Funding arrangement, Aspect fully distributes to each school for which Aspect is the ASA the amount of financial assistance that the school attracts under Division 2 of Part 3 of the Act. These income streams include:

- the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander loading;
- the socio-educational disadvantage loading;
- the low English proficiency loading;
- the school location loading;
- the school size loading.

As all Aspect students have a disability, disability loadings are included with the base funding in the amounts allocated to each School as part of their operating budgets. Funds are allocated in this manner to ensure there is sufficient funding to the Aspect schools to

pay for each schools' staffing costs and other operating expenses, and for the benefit of all Aspect students.

Where other government funding is received from time to time (which is not covered by Division 2 of Part 3 of the Act), it is fully distributed to the relevant school.

BASE AND STUDENT WITH DISABILITY LOADING ALLOCATION

As all Aspect schools are special schools (and all Aspect students have a disability), they attract significant funding for students with disabilities (SWD loading). The base funding and SWD loading is adjusted downwards to pay for Aspect's centralised services, functions and programs (including corporate overheads, administration and compliance costs), in accordance with the Board's annual budget. Then, the amount deployed to each school from the remaining base and SWD loading will be determined by the Board prior to the start of the school year (and adjusted if necessary throughout the year), to meet that school's operating budget, which is developed to take into account the cost and income drivers, private income and the particular need of each Aspect school.

Aspect schools' operating budgets (which affects the base and SWD allocation) are constructed based on a consistent evidence-informed Aspect Approach, which is largely driven by the number of students at each school. Other factors that may impact Aspect schools' operating budgets for each year include:

- staffing costs;
- property, facility, forecasted maintenance and equipment costs;
- private sources of income; and
- the increase (or decrease) in recurrent funding attracted by each Aspect school during the *Transitional Pathway* period (as Aspect schools are transitioned over time from previous funding models to the new funding model).

The extent of these costs and income is specific to each Aspect school and the needs of that school community, which vary from time to time.

Staffing allocations are typically reviewed by Aspect head office and set in conjunction with each Aspect school, and will consider that school's particular circumstances and needs (such as forecast enrolments and student population profile), to adjust the staffing allocation appropriately. Staff wages will also vary based on factors like the length of service of each staff member, their experience and qualifications.

When determining an appropriate allocation from base funding and SWD loading, Aspect will also consider forecast property, rent, maintenance and equipment costs for the year. Aspect may also take into account the funding attracted by each Aspect school during the *Transitional Pathway* period (noting some Aspect schools may receive a higher percentage of SRS funding during this period).

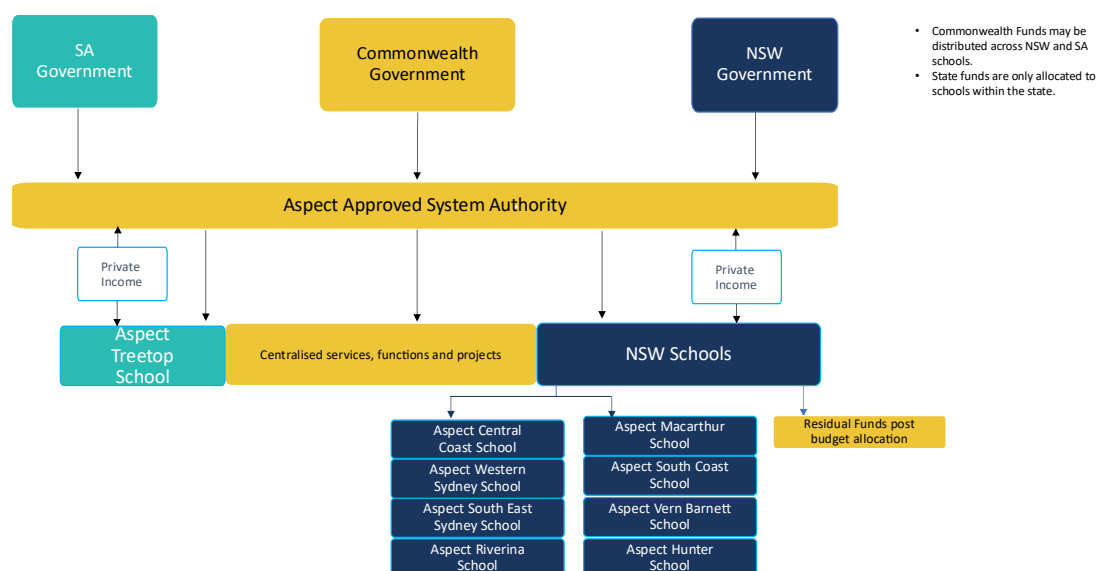
Aspect head office works with each individual school to understand its needs and the needs of the school community, to ensure the highest quality of education is delivered to all Aspect school students. Once all Aspect schools have been allocated sufficient funds from

the base funding and SWD loading to meet their needs (consistent with their operating budgets for that year), any surplus recurrent funding remaining will be deployed in the year it is received to those Aspect schools that are determined to have the greatest need in that year, as an additional loading. Additional loadings that may be available in a year will be determined by the Education Oversight Strategy Committee and Aspect Schools Funding Deployment Committee, consistent with the Terms of Reference approved by the Board.

A component of the base and SWD loading as adjusted is paid to each Aspect school as a loading for students with disabilities, as required by section 78(5) of the Act. The payment of the base funding and loadings to the Aspect schools is in instalments during the year, following receipt of funding in tranches by Aspect from the Commonwealth and State governments.

The overall distribution of recurrent funding to Aspect schools equals the sum of the amounts attracted by each Aspect school under Division 2 of Part 3 of the Act less the amount determined by the Board as required to fund the central provision of services and centralised programs. The amount of funding distributed to each school is then expressed as an amount per student, as required by the Act.

FUNDING FLOWS



The Board is of the view that this Needs Based Funding Arrangement provides for funding to flow equitably to each Aspect school over time, is for the benefit of all Aspect students and will meet student need in accordance with the requirements in the Act.

FINANCIAL DATA DISCLOSURE

In accordance with Section 36 of the *Australian Education Regulation 2013* (Cth), Aspect schools disclose annually their audited financial performance and position to the Commonwealth Department of Education through the Financial Questionnaire (FQ) and Block Allocations Report (BAR). In addition, Aspect as a registered charity discloses its audited statutory report to the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC) annually, which is available publicly.

To meet reporting requirements (including both State and Federal requirements), each Aspect school also publishes an annual report on school performance (including financial performance).

REVIEW

This document was approved by the Aspect Board in December 2025. It will be reviewed at least annually and otherwise at the discretion of the Aspect Board in response to the changes in Aspect Schools' operating environment.