



35th SYNOD

Report from

Schools and Residential Colleges Commission



This report has been updated as at 15 October 2020

Mrs Noela Lister – Chair
Mr Kristian Wale OAM – Member

Ms Jessica Lipsett – Member
Mr Nigel Fairbairn – Member

Mr Neil Ballment – Member
Mr Stuart Christ – Ex-officio

Report

Our schools and colleges continue to provide an amazing opportunity for the Church to engage in the lives of thousands of families across the state, bringing the love of Christ into their lives. In schools alone (excluding ecumenical schools) we have approximately 8500 students and approximately another 1300 in residential colleges. The Schools and Residential Colleges Commission is working with the Synod Office and our schools and colleges to bring greater accountability and alignment of the schools to the church. The school's strategy implementation will be the key piece of work in the 2020–2022 synodal term.

About the Schools and Residential Colleges Commission

The Schools and Residential Colleges Commission (the Commission) assists and advises the Synod Standing Committee (SSC) of the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod (the Synod) in fulfilling its obligations relating to the oversight of schools and residential colleges in which the Synod has an interest by way of ownership, or power of appointment to relevant boards or by way of ecumenical collaboration (the schools and colleges).

The Synod participates directly in schools and residential colleges to:

- ensure safe environments where children and young people can explore and discover their God-given dignity and progress their individual potential.
- support the growth and development of children and young people who are discerning the meaning, identity, belonging and purpose of their lives such that they can participate in a just society and lead creative and compassionate lives.
- achieve excellent outcomes for students by ensuring effective teaching and learning with appropriate mentoring and coaching.
- encourage leadership by students, staff and governing bodies that is engaged, developed, valued and demonstrated with humility and integrity.
- allow exploration of faith in respectful and engaging ways by providing venues for the development of children and young people in the light of the Christian story guided by the Uniting Church in Australia *Basis of Union* (1992).

Focus since the last Synod

- **Schools Strategy.** The Schools Strategy was the key piece of work in 2019–2020. Guided by and linked to Project Plenty, it sets a direction for schools for the future.
- Providing regular **networking** opportunities for Board Chairs, Principals, Chaplains, and Business Managers through face to face meetings and Teams Meetings.
- Facilitating **information sessions** for all board members to enhance their governance knowledge.

- Maintaining rigorous **recruitment, selection and appointment** processes for all affiliated Boards and Councils to ensure they are skills based and fit for purpose.
- Improved visibility and clarity of **financial performance**. We have implemented standardised reports and metrics within our schools to allow the Schools and Residential Colleges Commission to properly advise both the Finance Investment and Property Board and the Synod Standing Committee of the financial performance of the schools. Where needed, we have worked with the school to implement improved business understanding and recovery plans.
- Developed sample **template constitutions** for schools. Changes in constitutions over time has meant an inconsistent view on the relationship with the broader Uniting Church in Queensland. The template constitution is a starting point in any constitutional change discussion to ensure that the interests of the church, particularly with regard to risk and mission, are preserved and strengthened.

Achievements

- Collaborated with schools and residential colleges during the COVID-19 crisis to ensure they were compliant and responding to developing situations appropriately.
- Watched the dedication and professionalism demonstrated by all staff at the schools as they responded to changing teaching requirements. They have shown to be adaptable and resilient under stress.
- Ensured the same Financial Reporting Framework is used across Property Trust Schools and thus facilitated the financial oversight by SRCC of these schools.
- Worked collaboratively with Finance Investment and Property Board to review and support development strategies by the schools and colleges.
- Developed a Delegations Matrix for Property Trust Schools to clarify the structure under which they operate.

Project Plenty

Schools Strategy

School leaders have expressed a desire to develop mutually beneficial partnerships and to leverage the data, research capabilities, skills and opportunities across the school's network to enhance long term sustainability. The Commission, with the guidance of Liz Henderson, has worked with school communities to better understand the strategic context in which schools operate as a first step to identifying those strategic opportunities (See Attachment A).

Challenges/risks

- Schools and residential colleges will need to return to a “new norm” when the COVID-19 pandemic subsides. They will need to respond proactively to any potential financial impact. The Commission will continue to support them through this process.
- Continuing to source more than fifty quality Board members with the appropriate skills to fit each board for all of the affiliated Boards and Councils is an ongoing concern. Having visibility to the skills within the church and from across the wider church is a challenge we face.
- The potential contribution from our schools to the mission of the church in Queensland is much more significant that is currently being realised. While as a total, the schools and colleges employ thousands of people and turn over approximately \$250 million, the Commission is currently supported by a single Executive Officer.
- The Commission has worked with schools and the Project Plenty team to develop the Schools Strategy which when implemented will strengthen the schools and also between the schools and the broader mission of the church.

For consideration

Mark Bensley, the Executive Officer for the Commission has left to take on the challenge of head of Gideons Australia in Canberra. The search for a new Executive Officer is progressing and should be finalised soon.

Proposals to the 35th Synod

It is proposed that the 35th Synod receive this report.

Contact for report questions

Name **Noela Lister**
Position Chair of SRCC
Email Noela.lister@jonel.com.au
Phone 0419331177

Table 1 - Board Composition and enrolments of portfolio Schools and Colleges as at July 2020

Entity	Board Members		Student Enrolments						Entity	Board Members		Student Enrolments					
	Maximum (Current)	Synod Appointed Current	Mar-18	Aug-18	Mar-19	Aug-19	Mar-20	Jul-20		Maximum (Current)	Synod Appointed Current	Mar-18	Aug-18	Mar-19	Aug-19	Mar-20	Jul-20
Calvary Christian College	14 (8)	0	946	934	842	840	867	867	Emmaus College	N/A	N/A	1390	1383	1415	1400	1485	1463
Scots PGC College	10 (8)	8	392	394	406	398	395	396	Jubilee Primary	N/A	N/A	623	626	640	629	660	660
The Lakes College	9 (7)	7	831	831	811	881	951	945	Unity College	N/A	N/A	1435	1403	1465	1434	1474	1459
Trust School Sub-totals	33 (23)	15	2169	2159	2059	2119	2213	2208	Ecumenical Sub-totals			3448	3412	3520	3463	3619	3582
Moreton Bay College	11 (10)	6	1109	1119	1136	1137	1153	1161	Cromwell College	24 (14)	5	249	247	263	260	249	225
Moreton Bay Boys College	11 (10)	6	475	475	484	487	498	495	Emmanuel College	16 (9)	1	337	337	342	334	344	344
PMSA Board	13 (7)	4															
Clayfield College	9* (7)	0	586	586	510	515	490	441	Grace College	15 (10)	4	125	125	117	112	96	54
Brisbane Boys College	9* (6)	0	1502	1502	1485	1483	1439	1443	John Flynn College	13 (11)	6	250	249	253	252	251	245
Somerville House	9* (6)	2*	1414	1414	1277	1242	1308	1309	Kings College	15 (15)	2	298	265	286	285	320	302
Sunshine Coast Grammar School	9* (8)	0	1299	1299	1245	1271	1316	1301	Raymont College	N/A	N/A	99	99	112	110	122	108
Letters Patent School Sub-totals	35 (27)	16	6385	6395	6137	6135	6204	6150	Residential Colleges Sub-totals	83 (59)	18	1358	1322	1373	1353	1382	1278
TOTALS	68 (50)	31	8554	8554	8196	8254	8417	8358									

Table 2 - Membership of the Commission as at August 2020

Participant	Role	Commencement date	Term expires
Mrs Noela Lister	Chair	25.11.2013	25.11.2022
Mr Neil Ballment	Member	1.5.2015	1.5.2021
Mr Kristian Wale OAM	Member	15.8.2018	15.8.2021
Ms Jessica Lipsett	Member	7.5.2019	7.5.2022
Mr Nigel Fairbairn	Member	6.7.2020	6.7.2023
<i>Vacant position</i>			
Mr Stuart Christ	Director, Church Enterprises	N/A	
<i>Vacant – currently recruiting</i>	Executive Officer	N/A	
Ms Melissa Hulbert	Minute Secretary	N/A	



Attachment A - Schools Strategy

Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod Schools Strategy 2020-2025

Commissioned by the Schools & Residential Colleges Commission

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The opportunity to work together is presenting schools with an ability to address the increasingly resource constrained and competitive market conditions

The Opportunity

- The education sector in Australia is experiencing change. The UCAQ Property Trust and Letters Patent school leaders have recognised the opportunity to create and formalise a shared UCAQ Schools vision and articulate strategic opportunities in a collective “Schools Strategy, eg: what we can do together” to navigate and thrive over the next five years.
- This document outlines the vision, goals and strategic initiatives as developed over the series of workshops held between June and October 2019 with school leaders (both executive and governance) and the Schools and Residential Colleges Commission. These workshops were part of Project Plenty- a synod-wide strategy and vision consultation process. This strategy emanates from and is aligned to Project Plenty.

Internal Operating Environment

- Within the UCAQ schools, long term financial viability remains a priority with the spectre (and in some locales, the reality) of economic downturn shifting parents away from independent schools to the state sector.
- The need for non-enrolment revenue diversification while managing increasing investment and ongoing costs in a “fee sensitive climate” remains a critical challenge, as does managing legacy support systems. Leadership succession planning is also a strategic challenge facing schools.

External Operating Environment

There are a number of key external national trends shaping the future of education more broadly and the UCAQ Property Trust and Letters Patent school specifically.

These include:

- Aging teacher cohorts
- Flat lining student enrolment numbers
- Increasing compliance; and
- Growing parental expectations to co-parent their children

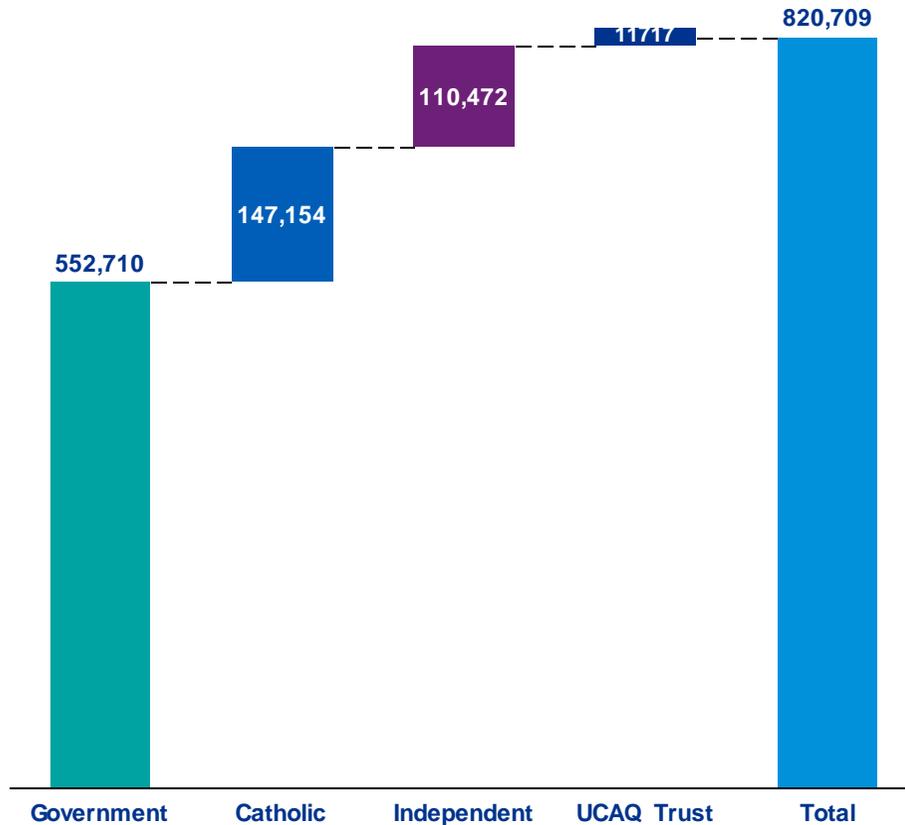
Young adults cite mental health and stress as two key concerns, prompting schools to provide resilience and soft skills training to support their students’ formal learning. This has an enormous impact on teacher workloads as they are expected to provide for a student’s individualised wellbeing journey. Teacher retention is a noted issue and the time spent on administration and documentation over and above the time spent teaching in the classroom is a key driver behind teacher departures.

Summary

School leaders have repeatedly expressed a desire to develop mutually beneficial partnerships, and to leverage the data, research capabilities, skills and opportunities across the schools network to enhance long term sustainability. Understanding the strategic context in which schools operate is the first step to identifying those strategic opportunities. These opportunities have been defined in the subsequent pages.

The Queensland education sector is growing, but the market share of the Synod schools is not

Total Enrolled Students Queensland by School Type
2017-2018



Key observations

- Government schools account for 67% of total enrolments in Queensland. Government school numbers have grown year on year nationally and this growth trend has been mirrored in Queensland.
- Independent schools' accounts for ~14% of the overall market share. UCAQ Property Trust, Ecumenical and Letters Patent Schools holistically comprise ~8.5% of total enrolments in Queensland. PT schools + The Moreton Bay Colleges + PMSA + Ecumenical schools – 11717.

Source: <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4221.0>

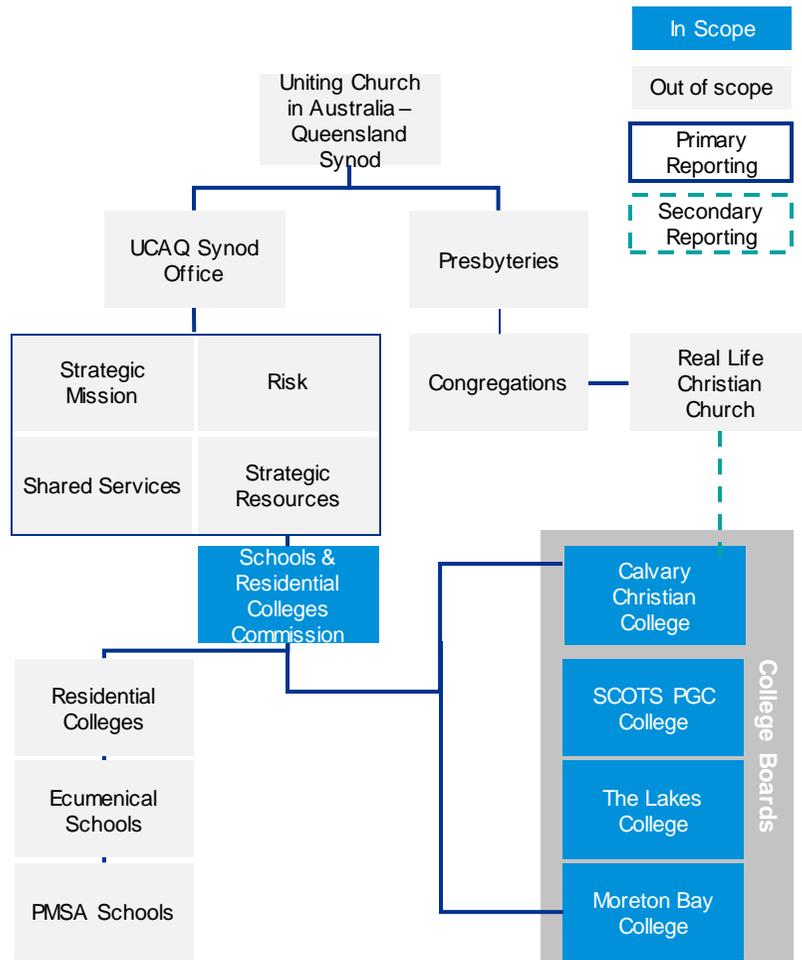
UCAQ Schools and Residential Colleges Commission – School Enrolment Data

A number of market trends are impacting the education sector and UCAQ schools

Market Trends	Description	Challenge	Key observations
 <p>Competition for Talent</p>	<p>Attracting and retaining quality teaching staff is intensifying. The existing teaching cohort is ageing with declining replacement rate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Popular rise of flexible working environments ▪ Governance and reporting burdens ▪ Growing future leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The challenges identified by the schools during the Principals Gathering 2019 and Project Plenty consultations are also occurring more broadly in the education sector nationally.
 <p>Wellbeing</p>	<p>Schools are increasingly expected to provide for a students individualised wellbeing journey including pathways to clinical support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incidence of mental health events amongst staff and students ▪ Providing appropriate intervention and treatment services ▪ Increased requirement for resilience and soft skills training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student centricity is placing increased burden on the existing resources of schools.
 <p>Individualised Learning</p>	<p>Uncertainty in the future of employment is placing increased focus on schools to prepare students for life long learning focused on meeting the attributes of the individual student</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased pressure on resources ▪ Providing credentialed pathways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mental health and general wellbeing of both staff and students is increasing the emphasis on values based education and employment.
 <p>Technology</p>	<p>Technology is disrupting traditional teaching models where the physical presence of the student or teacher is substituted through digital solutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social isolation ▪ Maintaining the quality of student outcomes ▪ Cost barriers to accessing technology 	
 <p>Funding Models</p>	<p>Enrolment-centric revenue models alone do not provide the resources to provide for the increased complexity and breadth of services in the school community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local socio-economic factors impact on the ability to increase tuition fees ▪ Prioritising individual vs. collective educational experience 	

Source: McCrindle, Education Future Report 2019, McCrindle, accessed 7 October 2019, <https://mccrindle.com.au/insights/publications/reports-and-summaries/education-future-report-2019/>
 Mission Australia Youth Survey Report 2018, accessed 10th Oct 2019, <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/what-we-do/research-impact-policy-advocacy/youth-survey>,
 PeopleBench, 2018-2019 State of the Sector Report, www.peoplebench.com.au

The SRCC functions as a linkage between the Synod and the Schools, though the schools are subject to additional layers of governance through boards and councils.



Schools and Residential College Commission (SRCC)

Purpose

- As the Schools and Residential Colleges Commission our purpose is to serve Uniting Church Schools and Residential Colleges and our wider Church through sharing information, providing well researched advice and advocating externally
- To strengthen governance across our portfolio, relationships among affiliates, and the emphasis on mission

Who we are

- The commission is comprised of 8 members, 1 of which is accounted as a FTE of the Synod Office
- Other commission members are appointed and act on a voluntary basis
- All members of the commission are selected for the specific competencies that they bring to their role

What we do

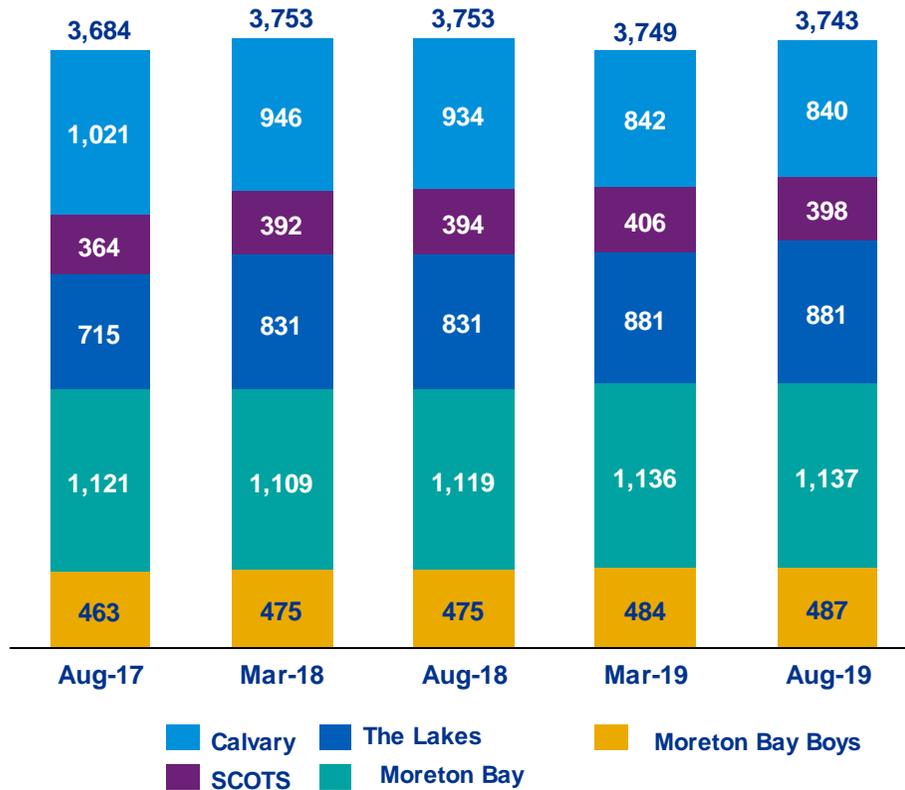
- Acting as a conduit between the Synod and schools and residential colleges for matters of governance, finance and property matters
- Providing well researched advice
- Seeking opportunities for collaboration and information sharing across the portfolio; and
- Advocating at state and federal level for Christian schools and Uniting Church affiliated schools in particular

How we're funded

- The Schools Commission is centrally funded as a direct oversight function of the Synod Office
- The Commission relies on the support of the Synod Office to deliver its core accountabilities

Collectively growth of total student enrolments has slowed*

Total Enrolled Students
2017-2019



UCAQ Property Trust and Letters Patent School

Purpose

- Collectively the schools are the delivery mechanism of the Uniting church’s mission to provide education in a faith-based context.

Who we are

- The Calvary Christian College is a ‘planted’ school with two campuses- one primary and one Prep to Year 12; owing its roots to the missional aspirations of the Real Life Christian Church.
- SCOTS PGC is a co-educational day and boarding school established where country values inspire excellence.
- The Moreton Bay Colleges comprise two single gender campuses which seek to develop students in an inclusive Christian learning environment.
- The Lakes College is a co-educational school based on the Christian traditions of the Uniting Church.

What we do

- In local context each school provides both a primary and secondary schooling pathways, focused on delivering exceptional student outcomes.

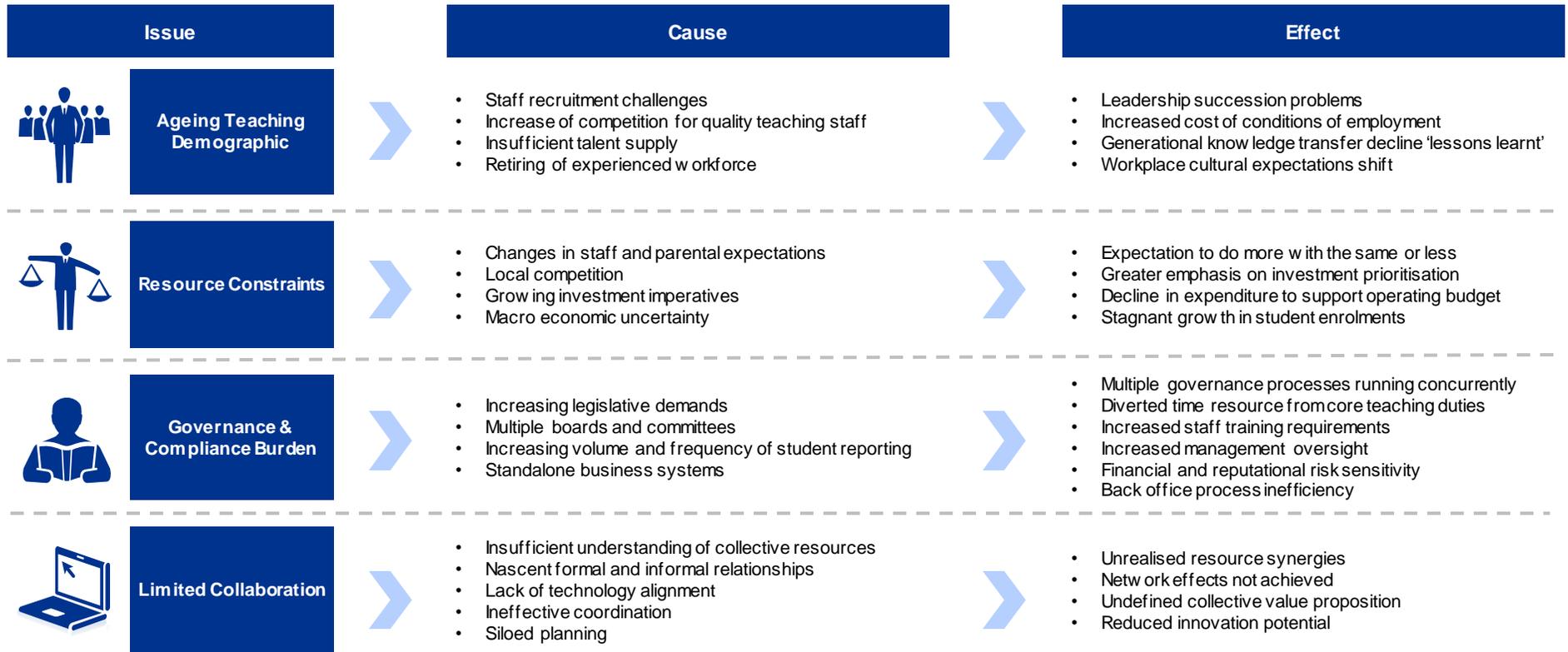
How we’re funded

- The primary funding source for each of the schools is through government recurring grants and supported through tuition fees, though funding through government contributions is variable and currently under review.

Source: UCAQ Schools and Residential Colleges Commission – School Enrolment Data

* The Lakes College has seen steady increases.

The core issues identified by schools have a cause and effect relationship which provides the foundation for strategic initiative development.



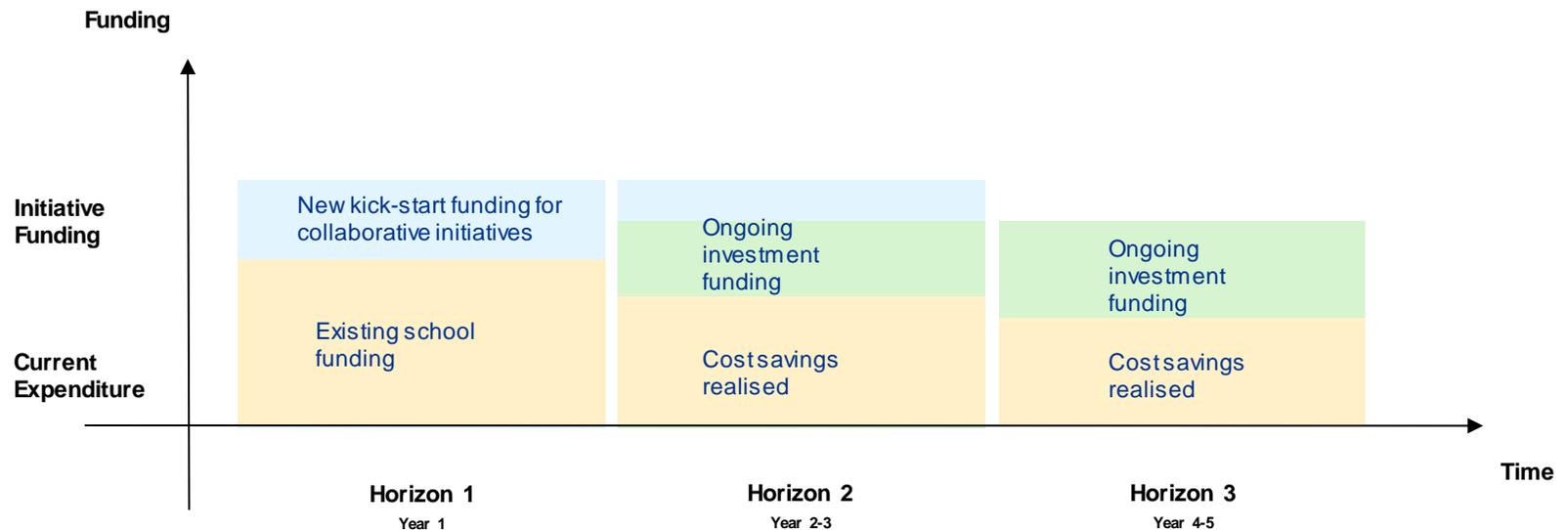
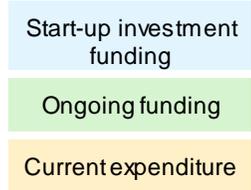
Long term sustainability

- Achieving long term sustainability is at the core of delivering on the staff and student value proposition that the UCAQ Schools take to market.
- Each UCAQ School has experienced the impact of education trends and market changes to varying degrees.
- Responding to the challenges raised by these issues presents strategic opportunities for UCAQ Schools to achieve collective long term sustainability.

The financial ambition of the School Strategy is to achieve a sustainable funding position and provide for a increased value proposition for students and staff

Illustrative Financial Ambition for Schools Strategy 2020-2025

- Start-up funding sources will be identified in a funding strategy eg: grants and school contributions
- Start-up funding is a separate consideration to achieving current expenditure cost synergies
- Start-up funding profile will decline as ongoing funding sources scale in line with initiative maturity
- Current expenditure decreases as cost synergies are realised
- Start-up funding no longer required
- Ongoing funding reduces as per student/staff costs reduce
- Current expenditure remains unchanged



*For illustrative purposes only. Not to scale

Together, the schools have identified a set of design principles on which to develop a collective strategy that delivers on the strategic ambition

Principles



Vision

The strategy must align with the Uniting Church's vision and give effect to the values and priorities of the Church.



Ability to leverage resources

We are enabling schools to leverage one another's resources.



Knowledge sharing

There is a spirit of generosity in sharing knowledge and resources to support schools individually and collectively.



Flexible and open to change

Our goals are flexible, organic and open to change.



Reinvestment

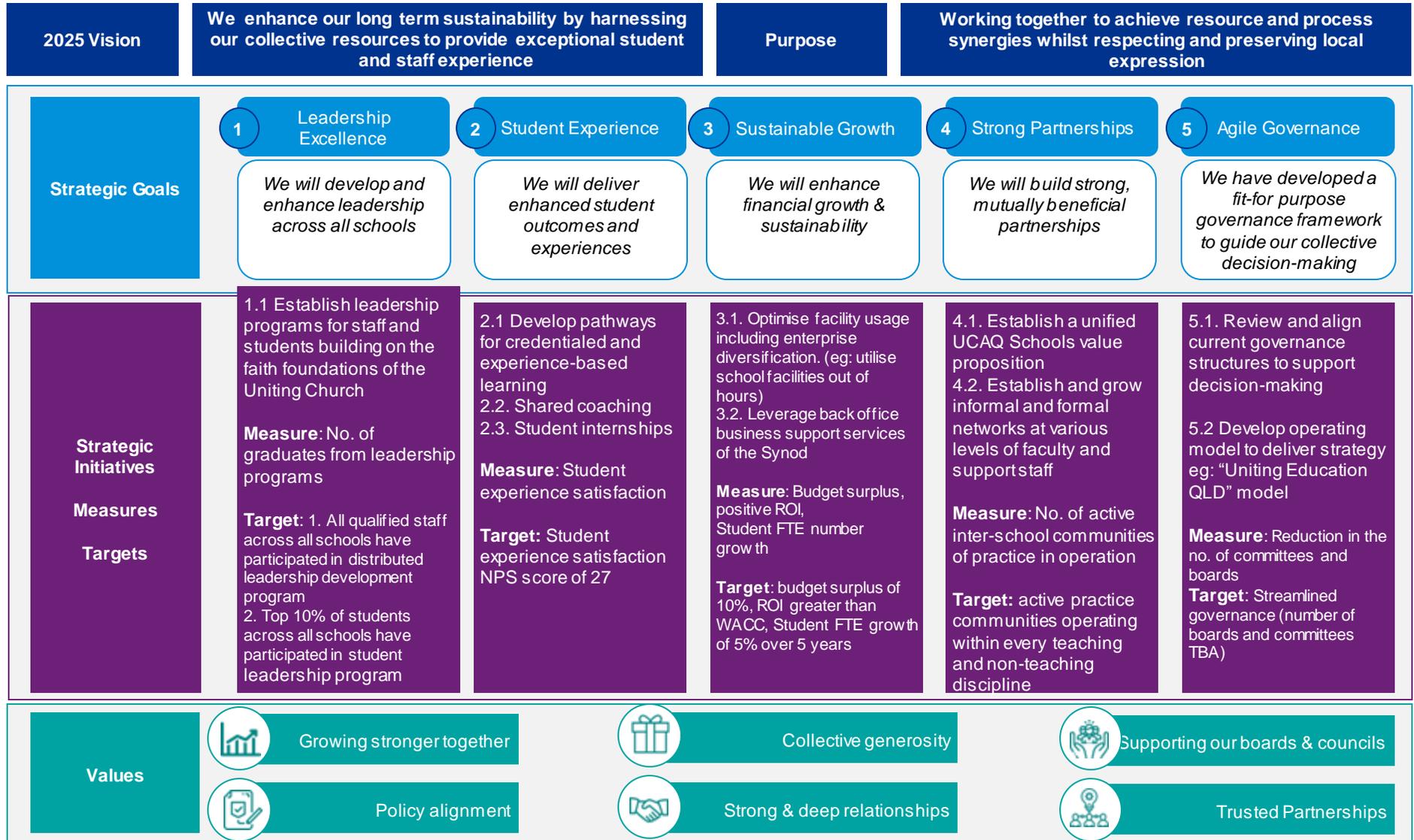
We aim to keep financial resources within the Uniting Church ecosystem.



Resource allocation

School resources are allocated to enable the delivery of services

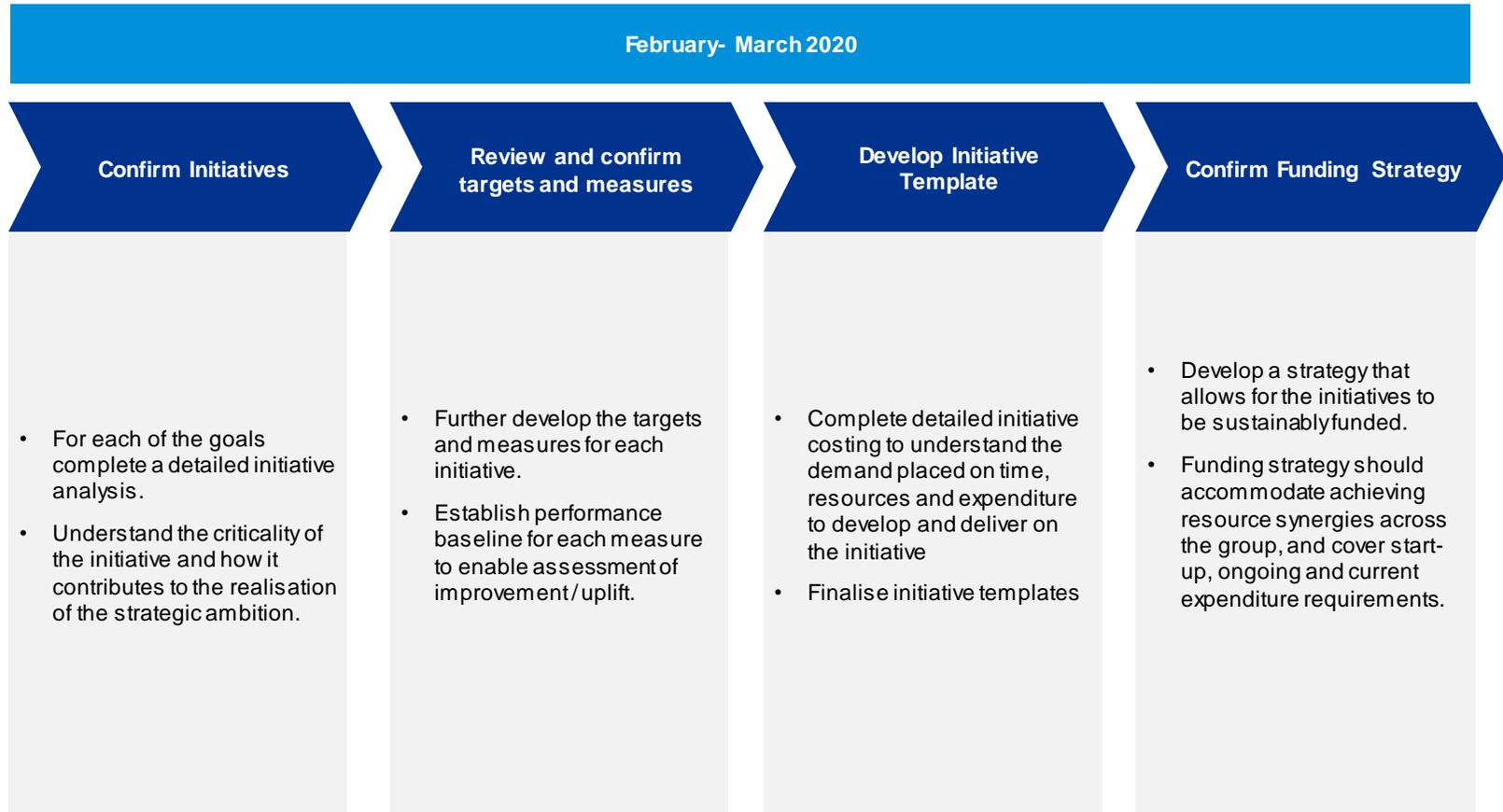
This strategy is a statement of how we intend to address our challenges and grow together



Proposed strategic initiatives to be implemented over five years

	Horizon 1 Jan 2020 – Jan 2021 0-12 Months	Horizon 2 Jan 2021 – Jan 2023 1-3 years	Horizon 3 Jan 2023 – Jan 2025 3-5 years
Goals	<p>We will develop and enhance leadership across all schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish student leadership program Establish inter-school leadership camp Develop & pilot distributed teacher leadership development program Deliver shared coach programs (existing) Share Mental Health and Resilience programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership success plans at every school Grow and extend teacher leadership development program Deliver shared coaching programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review leadership success plans at every school Review teacher leadership development program Deliver shared coach programs
	<p>We will deliver enhanced student outcomes and experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate joint student exchange / experience programs Seeking alternate funding sources to support the delivery of student outcomes Work with Synod to access UCQ and WMQ for student internships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and refine joint student exchange programs Develop and pilot credentialed pathways including RTO accreditation Develop business cases for alternative funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and refine credentialed pathways Implement business cases for alternative funding Review and refine student internships
	<p>We will enhance financial growth & sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully cost out all Strategic Initiatives and develop funding strategy Investigate digital transformation opportunities Implement data collection, analysis and insights processes Develop business case options for shared functions (eg: a shared grant writer) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll out shared functions/middle office processes Implement selected business cases New revenue from use of school facilities, new enterprises (allied health providers) Explore shared branding and marketing support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New revenue from use of school facilities, new enterprises (allied health providers)
	<p>We will build strong, mutually beneficial partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Synod to develop values framework based on the faith tenets of the Church Develop an employee directory Develop inter-school moderation and teacher exchanges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot development of inter-school communities of practice Continue to build informal networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow inter-school communities of practice Continue to build informal networks
	<p>We have developed a fit-for purpose governance framework to guide our collective decision-making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing governance structures, roles and accountabilities Develop operating model/business case for "Uniting Education QLD" model Leverage compliance & regulatory expertise in Synod 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement an agile governance structure Leverage compliance & regulatory expertise in Synod 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous improvement of governance roles and accountabilities Leverage compliance & regulatory expertise in Synod

To proceed to the execution of the Schools Strategy the following immediate next steps are required



Appendix

Example for Strategic Goal 1: We will develop and enhance leadership across all schools

1.1 Establish leadership programs for staff and students

Rationale

- Schools identified that there is an opportunity to provide leadership pathways for staff and students.
- Within the UCAQ there are existing resources to leverage and a collective willingness to provide staff and students the opportunity to develop as part of their experience with their respective school.

Key benefits sought

- Leveraging the existing resources within in schools to enhance collective value proposition
- Developing student attributes to prepare them to thrive in uncertain situations
- Providing organic leadership succession within existing faculty
- Increasing organisational capacity
- Reducing severity of risk associated with staff retention
- Inculcating values framework consistent with school and church ethos

Key delivery risks

- Lack of defined funding strategy
- Time prioritisation for continuity of training for staff and students
- Non-alignment scope, content and delivery purpose

Initiative Development and Delivery Costs

- Cost to develop and deliver initiative: \$X over X period
- <Insert reference to initiative cost structure>

Key capabilities required

Funding Strategy 	Curriculum 	Resource Allocation 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost per participant \$XXXX • Contribution from school \$XXXX • Subsequent year funding model – user pays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined progression pathway • Delivery platforms • Core or non-core education • Credentialing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal delivery • Outsourced delivery • Collaborative resource sharing

Targets

- All schools participation
- Resource efficiency
- Grow student leadership pathways
- Improve staff succession pathways

Measures

- Year 1 pilot audience of X students and X Staff
- % staff and student completion
- NPS > XXX
- School board and council endorsement for subsequent phase implementation

Current capability maturity



References and resources used to inform content

Resources

- Principal feedback.
- Independent School Council of Australia, The Changing Face of Australian Schooling 2018, ISCA, accessed 7 October 2019, <<https://isca.edu.au/>>.
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