

15 June 2020

Mr Andrew Laming MP
Chair
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Emailed to ee.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Laming,

Education in remote and complex environments - impacts of and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic

The Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) welcomes the Committee's invitation to submit further evidence to its review of education in remote and complex environments, with reference to the experience of school communities to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In our first submission we presented evidence collected from our members relating to education provision in regional and remote areas, and provision for students from regional and remote areas attending metropolitan or inner regional schools.

To inform this second submission we conducted a survey of members on the impact of extreme events, including the COVID-19 pandemic, on their school communities. The results of that survey form the main body of our submission. We also attach as an appendix the summary report of a survey project undertaken by MMG Education in partnership with AHISA. That project entailed the development of an instrument to survey teachers, students and parents in participating AHISA members' schools on their responses to remote learning. The summary report includes an overview and a summary of findings highlighting areas of very high performance of schools during remote learning and areas for review and consideration.

At the beginning of this submission we present a brief summary of key findings from AHISA's member survey and recommendations to government.

We would welcome any inquiries you may have about this submission. These may be addressed to AHISA's Chief Executive Officer, telephone (02) 6247 7300, email ceo@ahisa.edu.au.

Yours faithfully,

(Ms) Beth Blackwood

AHISA Chief Executive Officer



ABOUT AHISA

AHISA Ltd is a professional association for Heads of independent schools.

The primary object of AHISA is to optimise the opportunity for the education and welfare of Australia's young people through the maintenance of collegiality and high standards of professional practice and conduct amongst its members.

AHISA's 440 members lead schools that collectively account for over 443,000 students, representing over 11 per cent of total Australian school enrolments and 20 per cent of Australia's total Year 12 enrolments. One in every five Australian Year 12 students gains part of their education at an AHISA member's school.

AHISA's members lead a collective workforce of over 40,000 teaching staff and some 27,000 support staff.

The socio-economic profile of AHISA members' schools is diverse. Over 20 per cent of our members lead schools serving low- to very low-SES communities.

Almost 30 per cent of AHISA's members lead schools with boarding provision; some 70 per cent of members' schools have an Early Learning Centre.

AHISA believes that a high quality schooling system in Australia depends on:

- Parents having the freedom to exercise their rights and responsibilities in regard to the education of their children
- Students and their families having the freedom to choose among diverse schooling options
- Schools having the autonomy to exercise educational leadership as they respond to the emerging needs of their communities in a rapidly changing society.

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KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Recognition of the role schools play in extreme events

Some 77 per cent of respondents to AHISA's survey reported that their school community had experienced at least one extreme event in the last five years. The survey highlights that schools reflect and are sensitive to wider community social and economic crises, as well as extreme environmental and health crises and that government assistance to schools can help stabilise and assist communities to enable them to respond to those events.

Unfortunately, the survey results also reveal that the assistance offered by governments, or the manner in which that assistance is offered, can be highly damaging to schools and their communities and impede effective response to extreme events.

There are three overarching recommendations to government that can be drawn from the survey to support more effective responses from schools in extreme events. None of these involves a high cost to the taxpayer but they do require a commitment from governments to a more collaborative and consultative approach to policy/program development and implementation:

- Recognise that school communities are unique. Government directives for organisations generally and schools in particular must allow sufficient autonomy for schools to implement directives in a manner that is likely to have the most successful outcomes for the school community.
- If schools are directly affected by an extreme event, or are integral to an emergency response to an extreme event, establish an advisory group of principals to consult on directives involving schools, especially school openings and closure, so that these not only reflect the realities of school operations but are designed so that they can be efficiently and effectively implemented by schools. A joint letter written by national associations of principals to federal and state/territory ministers of education, issued on 23 April 2020 and calling for such consultation is included as an appendix to this report.
- Recognise that schools are important community hubs. School families will seek clarification of government directives or media reports from the school. If schools are to help relieve community anxiety during extreme events they must have access to information relating to schools in time to have plans to implement or respond to directives underway in order to pass on critical information to families. They must have that information before it is made public and before it is released to the media.

The importance of digital solutions

AHISA's first submission to the Committee's Inquiry into Education in Remote and Complex environments presented evidence from AHISA member surveys conducted in 2017 which confirmed the importance of internet access and digital technologies for regional, rural and remote schools as a key means to:

- Overcome the 'tyranny of distance'
- Expand educational offerings
- Meet the individual learning needs of students
- Meet the professional development requirements of staff.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted that affordable access to information and communications technologies, allied with access to reliable internet connection and appropriate

bandwidth, underpins continuity of provision and equity of access to education in extreme events for schools in all geolocations.

As can be read in the survey report on the following pages, schools have proven their capacity for innovation during the COVID-19 response and education provision will be improved as a result. In most – but not all – cases of the adaptations schools are planning as a result of the success of remote learning, digital technologies and internet access are the platform for change. However, the survey results also show that innovative approaches helped overcome a lack of digital resources and that there are many aspects of the success of remote learning that depend on supporting students to become independent and resilient learners or that depend on the strength of relationships within communities. This is especially evident in the responses of Heads who lead schools in outer regional, rural and remote areas.

Recognising the value of teachers

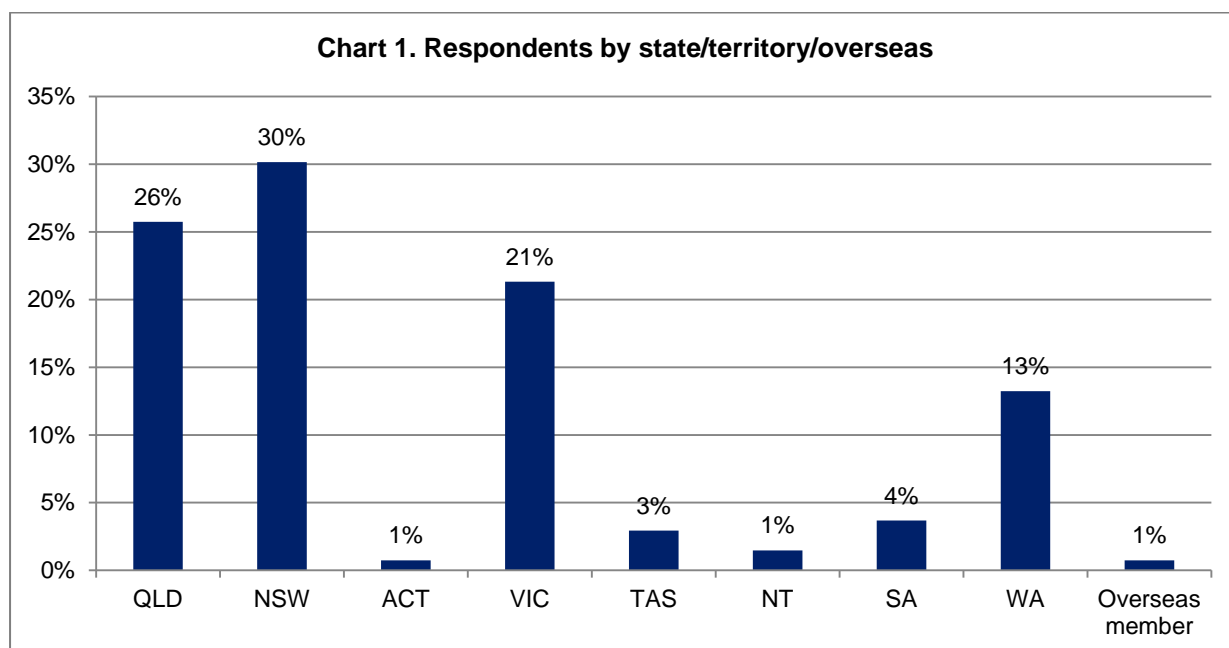
Several Heads commented in the survey that it would be beneficial for schools and teachers if there was a public campaign to recognise the contributions of teachers and to honour them for their dedication and professionalism.

AHISA recommends that the House of Representatives Education Committee seek to reopen its Inquiry into the Status of Teachers, which lapsed with the dissolution of Parliament on 11 April 2019. While the summary of issues presented by the Committee is a useful document, a full report with recommendations to government is once again timely.

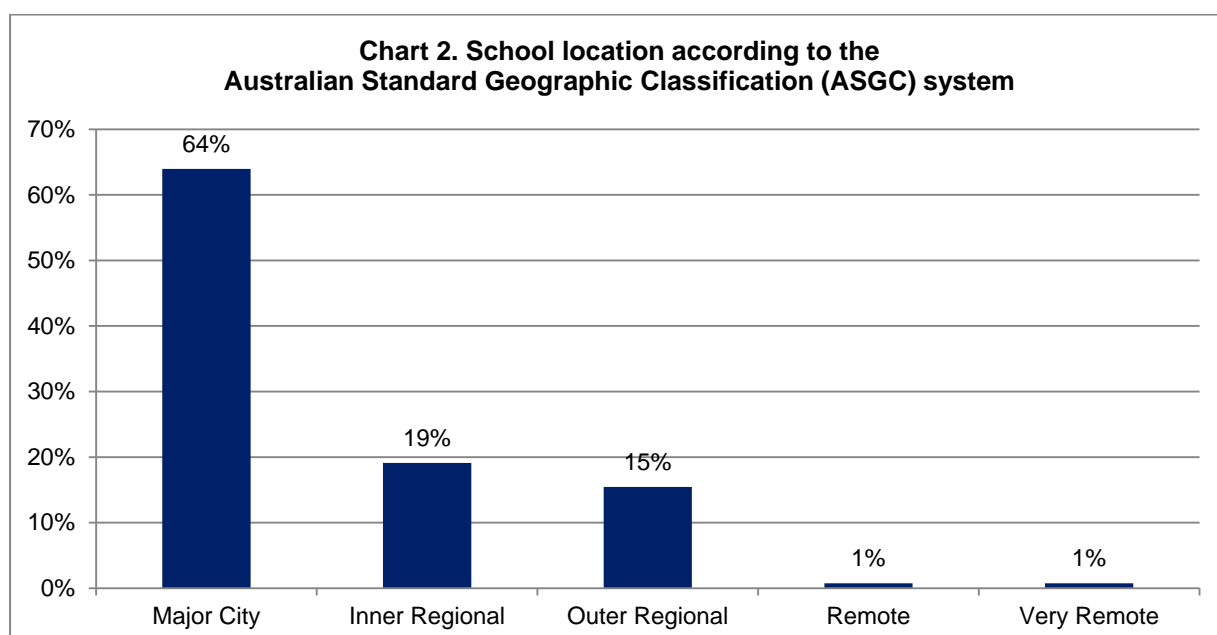
1. AHISA MEMBER SURVEY – PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS' SCHOOLS

Not all Heads participating in AHISA's member survey responded to every question. Unless otherwise indicated, the proportions of responses represented in charts should be interpreted as the proportion of total responses collected for each individual question.

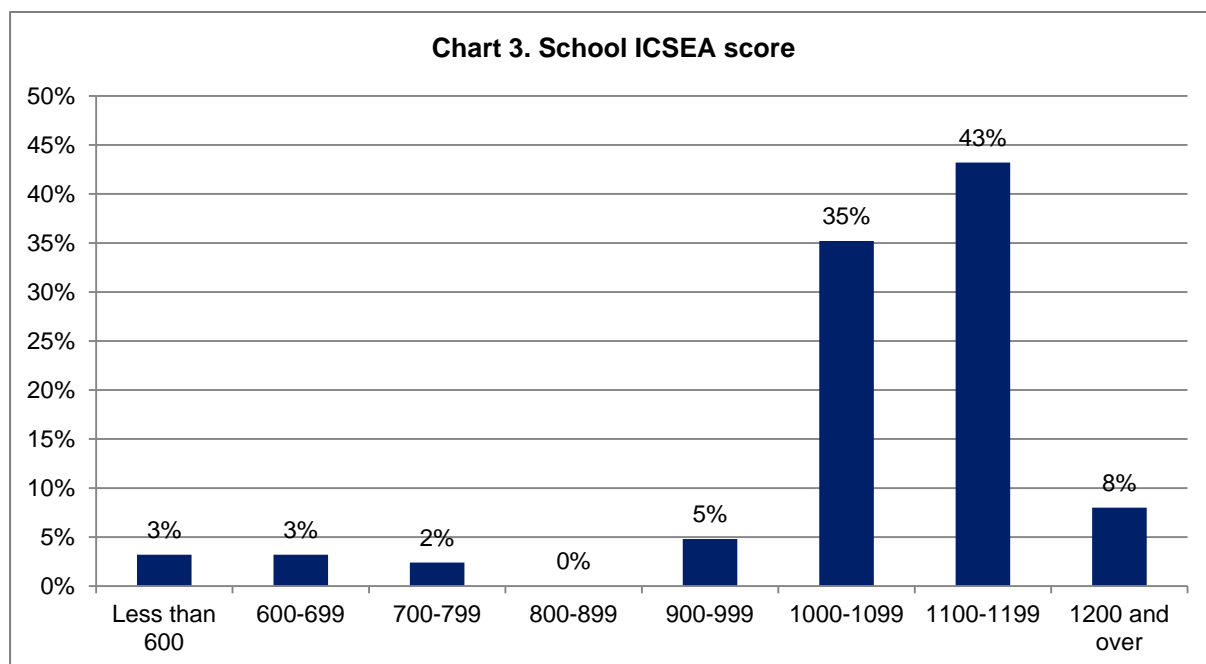
At least one member responded in each state and territory; one overseas member responded. Most respondents' schools are in the most populous states.



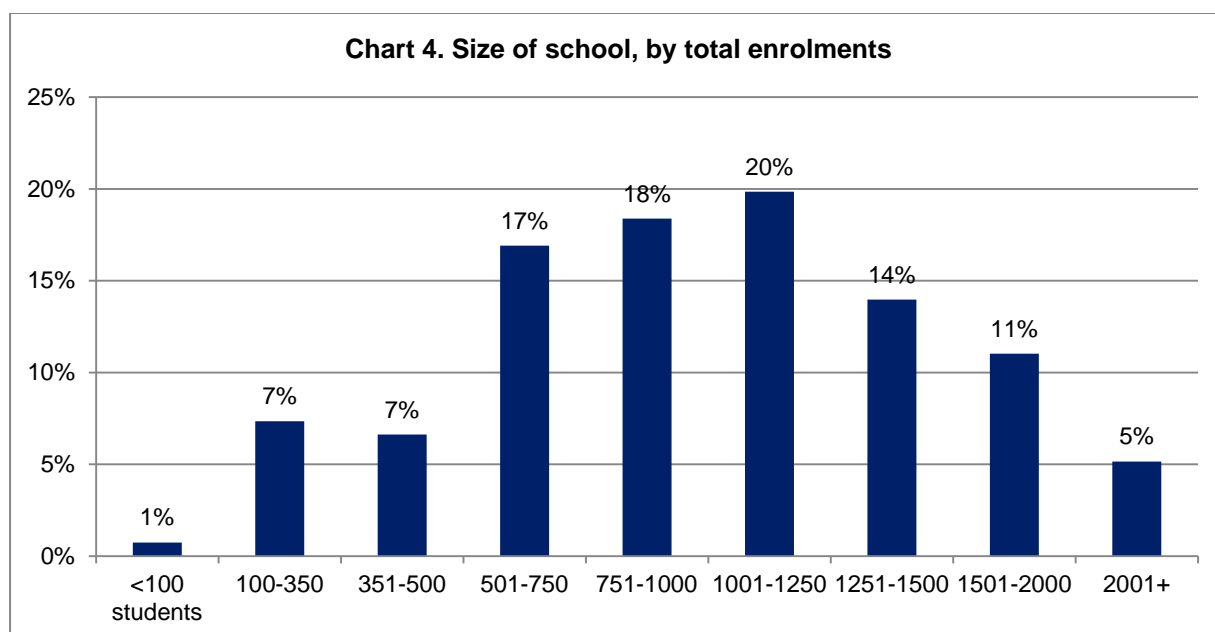
Most Australian respondents' schools are located in major cities.



Most respondents' schools are in the mid- to high ICSEA score range.



Half of respondents' schools had enrolments of over 1000 students.



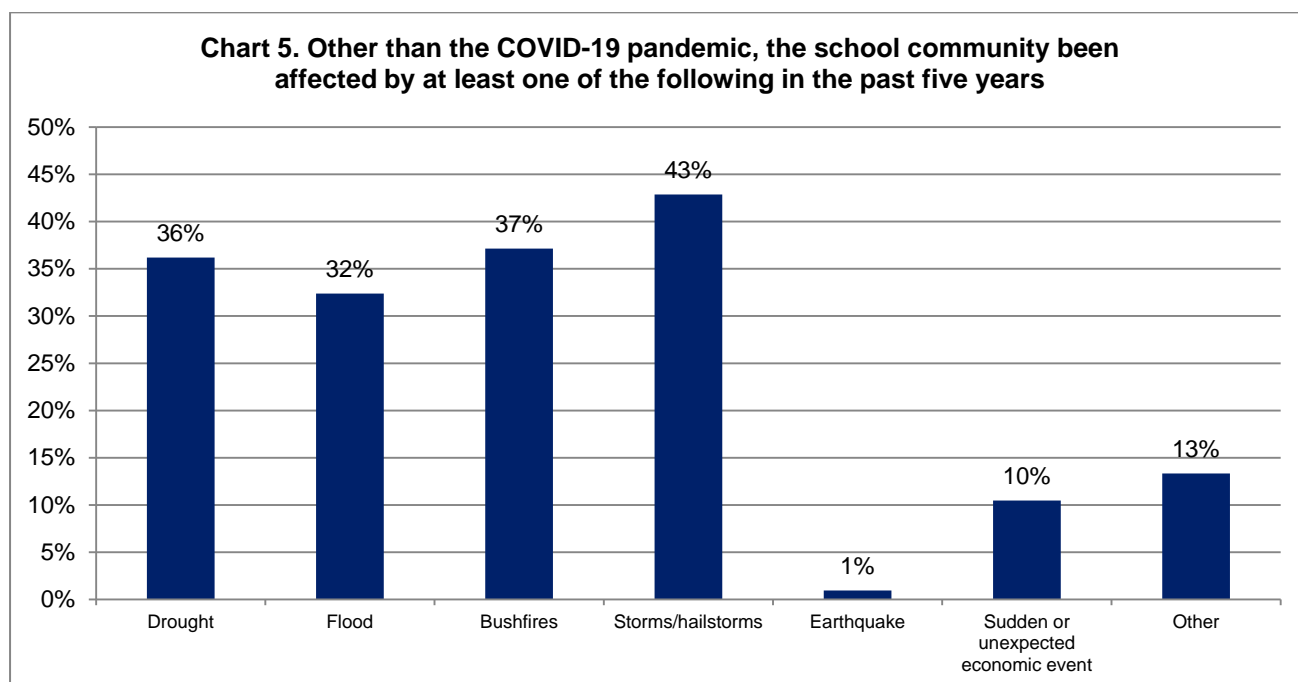
Some 86 per cent of respondents' schools offer full primary provision and 93 per cent offer full secondary provision. That is, most respondents' schools offer K-12 provision, and almost half have an Early Learning Centre.

2. THE CHALLENGE OF EXTREME EVENTS

Over three-quarters of survey respondents reported that their school community has experienced at least one extreme event in the last five years, revealing that schools reflect and are highly sensitive to wider community social and economic crises, as well as extreme natural events.

A range of extreme events were reported as having had a major impact on respondents' school communities, from events external to the community with long-term impacts (such a fire, drought, flood and economic downturns), external events with shorter-term impacts (such as loss of water, electricity failure or storms, forcing school closure), to internal community events such as accidental death or suicide of a student or members of a student's family, staff member or people closely related to the school community.

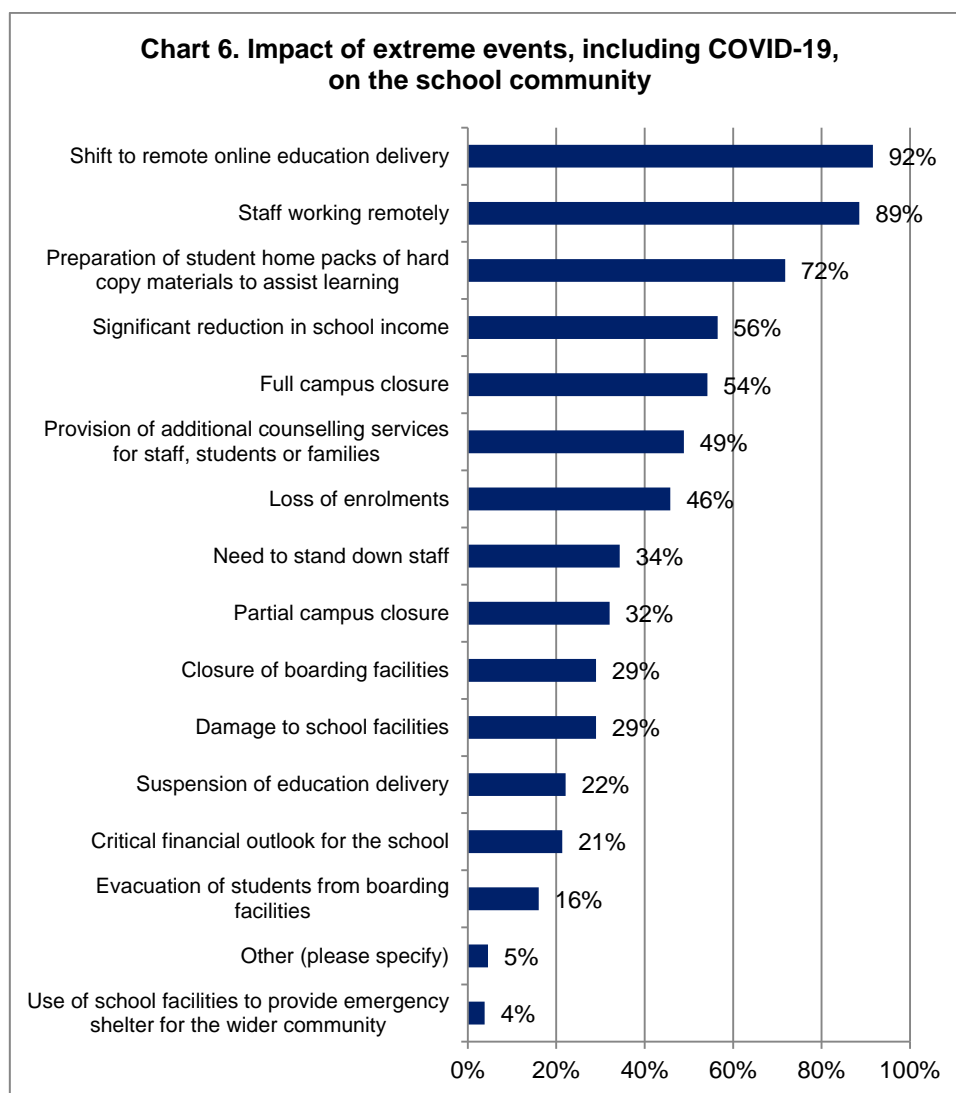
Some schools in regional or remote areas or schools with boarding students from regional or remote areas have been affected by multiple events. An overseas AHISA member reported their school as having been affected by a terrorist attack within their city.



Of interest is that some respondents commented that government policies or programs could initiate an extreme financial crisis for the school (such as changes to the federal general recurrent funding model) or inhibit school responses to its community in the case of extreme external events. As an example of the latter, one member reported that, "As a school in the outer regions of the city we had a number of families who were in drought, then faced fire and then had flood. Because we did not meet the criteria for regions that were ravaged by these events we were not able to offer any assistance through the various agencies or governments."

Heads of schools in regional and remote areas commented that their school is likely to experience extreme financial distress – even possible closure – with the shift to use of the Direct Measure of Income methodology for calculating the Capacity to Contribute under the federal government's general recurrent funding model for non-government schools. At a minimum, a significant number of students, and therefore their families, are likely to experience disruption to their education.

The following chart (Chart 6) indicates that extreme events – including the COVID-19 pandemic – are likely to trigger a range of actions and negative effects. Almost half of respondents reported their school provided additional counselling services for staff, students or families in the wake of an extreme event or events. Some 46 per cent of respondents' schools had lost enrolments following an extreme event or events, and 56 per cent had experienced a significant reduction in school income.



Schools are affected not just by loss of tuition fee income but by loss of income from facility hire, after-school care programs or specialist programs open to the wider community. Respondents also reported significant economic damage from the federal government's changes to early childhood learning and care provision in response to COVID-19 lockdowns. (Around half of respondents' schools have Early Learning Centres; the number offering vacation programs and out-of-school care is not known.)

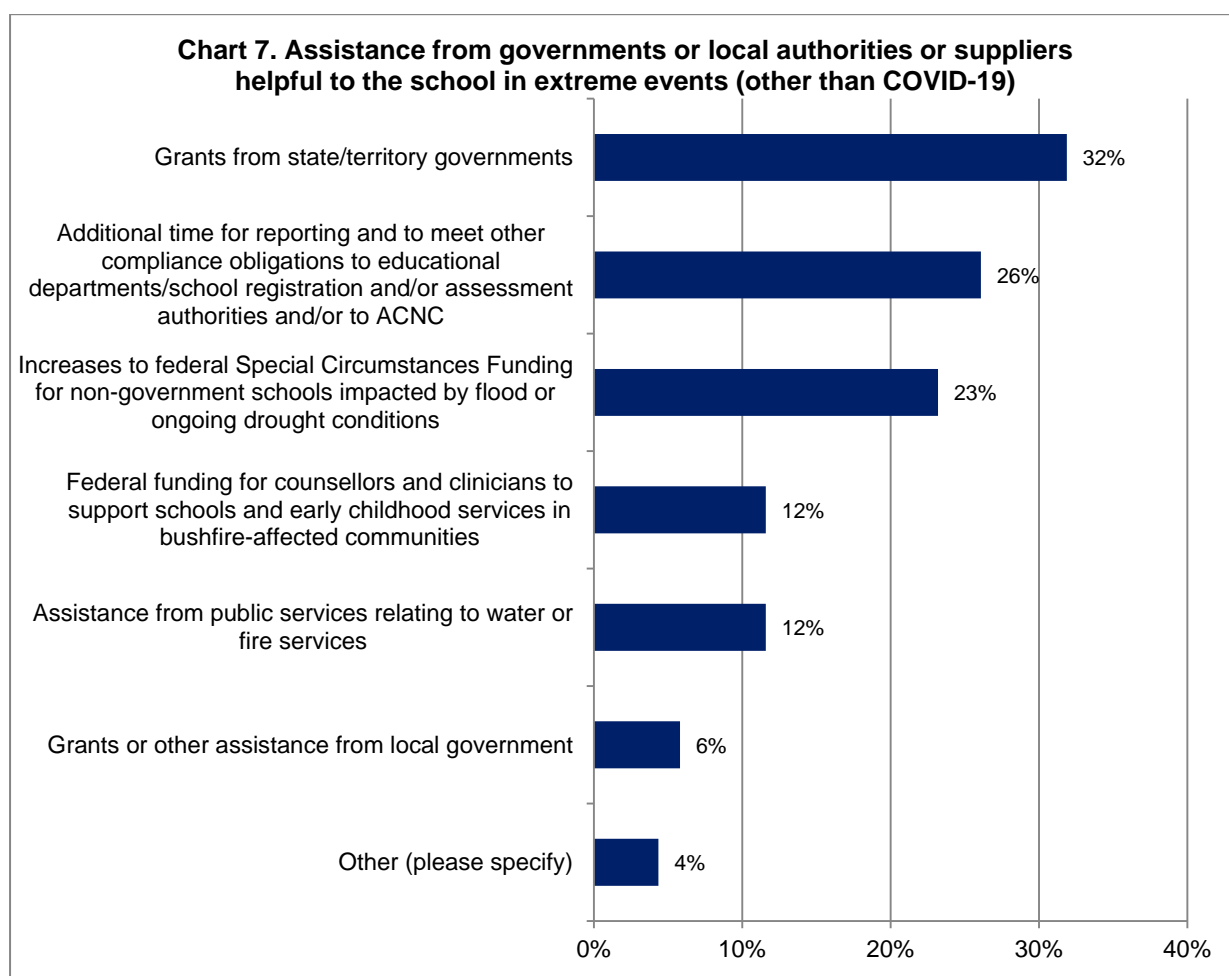
Some respondents reported that their school had avoided laying off or standing down staff by reducing hours worked, voluntary redundancies or staff redeployment – all challenging to implement. The need to address the long-term, ongoing anxiety of students, parents and staff was also reported as challenging.

3. ASSISTANCE IN RESPONDING TO EXTREME EVENTS

a. Extreme events other than COVID-19

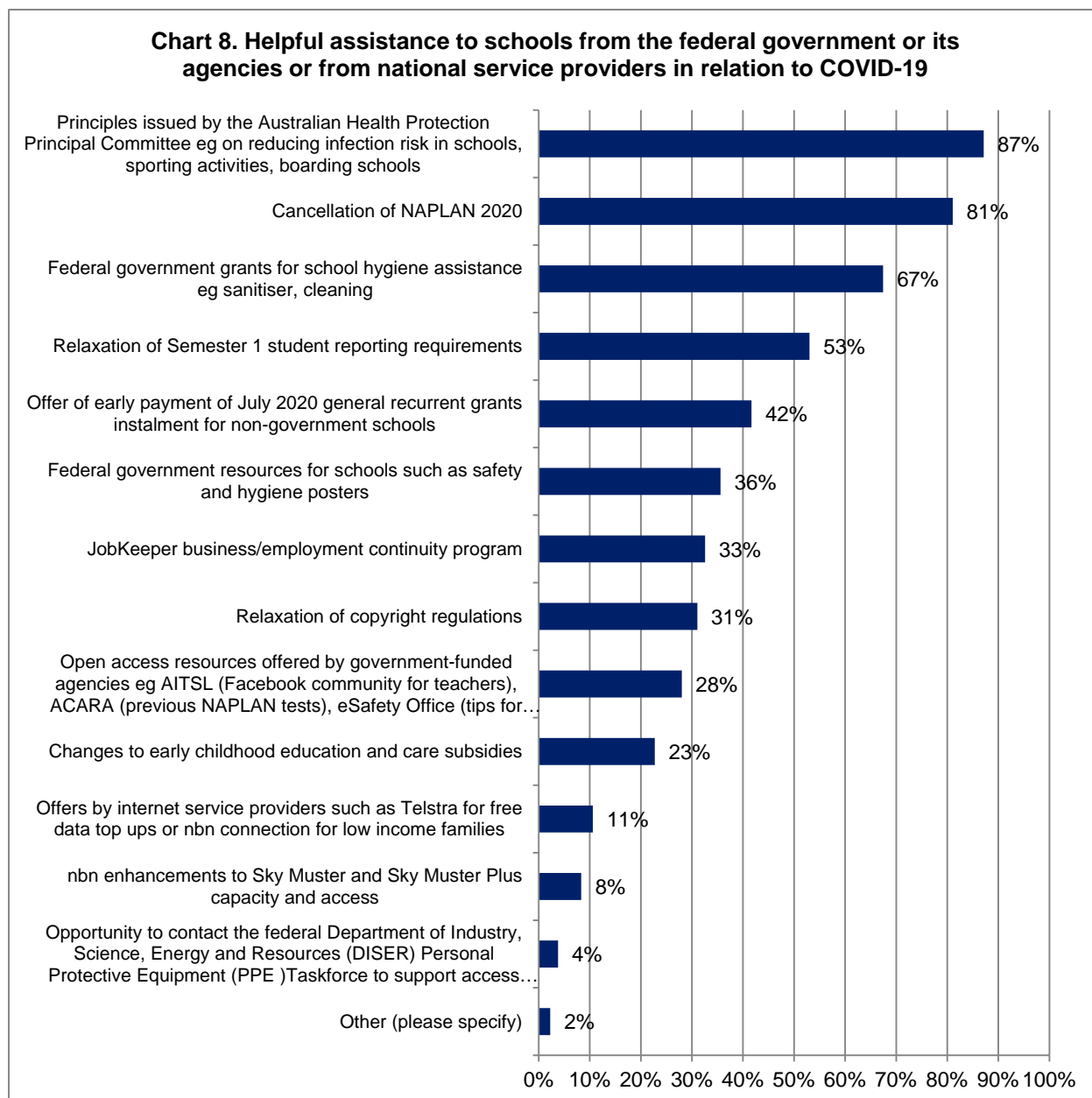
Some half of respondents completed the survey question regarding helpful assistance from governments, local authorities or suppliers in responding to extreme events other than COVID-19. For these respondents, both grants and additional time to meet regulatory and/or compliance obligations were rated as helpful. (See Chart 7 below.) However, a significant number of respondents reported that no assistance of any kind had been available, or had been limited by strict eligibility criteria. For example, schools forced to close due to poor air quality as a result of bushfires or damage from hail storms had not been able to apply for assistance. One respondent's school had not been able to apply for fee assistance for families affected by bushfires as the school had no boarding provision. In a limited number of cases, schools had been able to access financial assistance for students from their state or territory Association of Independent Schools.

One respondent commented that there is a need for a better understanding of the unique circumstances of individual schools, noting that a blanket response to policy or programs of assistance "makes negative assumptions about independent schools which has, quite frankly, been destructive, devastating and unfair".



b. Assistance in responding to COVID-19

Respondents were asked to nominate what assistance from the federal government or its agencies or from national service providers had been helpful to their school in relation to COVID-19. In addition to items in the following chart (Chart 8), which are ranked from most to least mentioned, several respondents commented that the Australian Taxation Office temporary cash flow boosts for small and medium businesses and not-for-profit organisations were of assistance, as was the guarantee of Abstudy payments for Term 2.



While Chart 8 demonstrates at least some value in all federal government initiatives related to COVID-19, several federal government actions had mixed effects. Even the principles statements issued by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee, which were clearly valued by a majority of respondents, posed problems for some schools due to the delay in their issue. One Head commented: "We are a regional boarding school and needed this information in the Easter holidays so we knew what was expected of us re opening boarding. It was clear that

there was limited understanding of regional boarding at both state and Commonwealth level. By the time information was received a third of students were back in boarding as they were children of essential workers (primary producers) or at risk.” There was recognition, however, that the federal government had in general performed extremely well in response to the pandemic.

c. Negative impacts of federal government initiatives on schools

Most frequently mentioned as having a negative impact on independent schools was the introduction of ‘free’ childcare, the real cost of which had to be borne by schools already under extreme financial pressure: As early learning centres in schools are typically not operated as separate financial entities, they were not always eligible for JobKeeper to help offset their significant loss of income. Out of school hours care provision was also affected:

“Early childhood funding control measures and reduction in ability to collect fees restricted our ability to maintain employment and services.”

“The College had to carry the 50% loss that the Government did not cover.”

“Whilst we love that parents have access to quality preschool education, it left our service unable to cover our staff costs as we were ineligible for JobKeeper.”

“The childcare package meant I had to make our preschool free otherwise I would have lost families.”

“The childcare funding changes affected our large Babies to Kindy, OSHC and Vacation Care programs and reduced our childcare income significantly. Most of our parents told us that they did not need free child care and couldn’t believe that it was free.”

The manner of implementation of otherwise useful assistance was also noted as having damaging or negative ramifications for schools by some respondents. The restrictions on non-government schools in relation to JobKeeper, and the difficulty in assessing eligibility, were mentioned by several respondents. Of particular concern was the politicisation of the federal government’s offer to bring forward payment of the July 2020 instalment of general recurrent funding for non-government schools.

The forward payment of recurrent grants had initially been proposed by the independent sector to the federal government as a helpful means to assist independent schools without additional cost to the taxpayer and relatively little additional administrative burden on the Department of Education, Skills and Employment. The potential advantages of this scheme were limited, however, by the way it was implemented.

Many Heads commented that the linking of the earlier payment to a timeframe for reopening school campuses as determined by the federal government – but at odds with the advice of their state government – was discriminatory and divisive. The manipulation and politicisation of this otherwise straightforward strategy (which also affected grants for hygiene supplies) was regarded as out of step with the spirit of cooperation that the federal government was otherwise promoting:

“Being held to ransom was truly distressing.”

“The decision to bring forward part of the federal recurrent grant was ‘wedge politics’ and unhelpful.”

“The comments by the Minister in relation to urging principals to re-open schools and provide early funding were entirely unhelpful as we must follow the advice of the state Chief Health Officer. This caused some division within our school community. While it is

never acceptable to use schools for political point-scoring, it is particularly problematic during a pandemic crisis when school principals are simply trying to follow the advice of their CHO.”

“It was a disgrace that in the midst of trying to maintain a positive and calm response for my community, the federal government decided that it was appropriate to hold funding over our heads . . . But the pettiness reached a lower point when we realised we would not get the hygiene assistance either.”

(The large number of survey respondents from the eastern states, which were most affected by this directive, is a possible explanation for the relatively low rating of this assistance strategy in Chart 8 above when, overall, significant numbers of independent schools accepted the Government’s offer.)

Other mentions of difficulties arising from federal government directives included:

- Inconsistency in the application of social distancing requirements for schools
- The directive for schools to return quickly to on-campus provision without regard to vulnerable adults
- Managing international students stranded overseas
- Closure of swimming pools.

One Head commented that messages about Indigenous communities closing with little warning caused panic in the community and the school had to rush to get students home: “Many didn’t take laptops so these needed to be posted. Lack of clear direction on the review of the Commonwealth *Biosecurity Act* in community has meant the most vulnerable have been disadvantaged.”

A number of Heads commented that state government directives were also problematic, especially when applied state-wide without consideration for regional differences:

“The imposition of intra-state borders without the provision of an exemption for regional boarding schools was very metro-centric, failing to take into account that certain boarding students were effectively denied equitable access to education.”

“Not having a regional focus for opening up regional Queensland. Queensland is a vast state and we are over 1000 kilometres from the hot spots in SEQ.”

Blanket proscriptions also inhibited some independent schools from assuring continuity in teaching and learning:

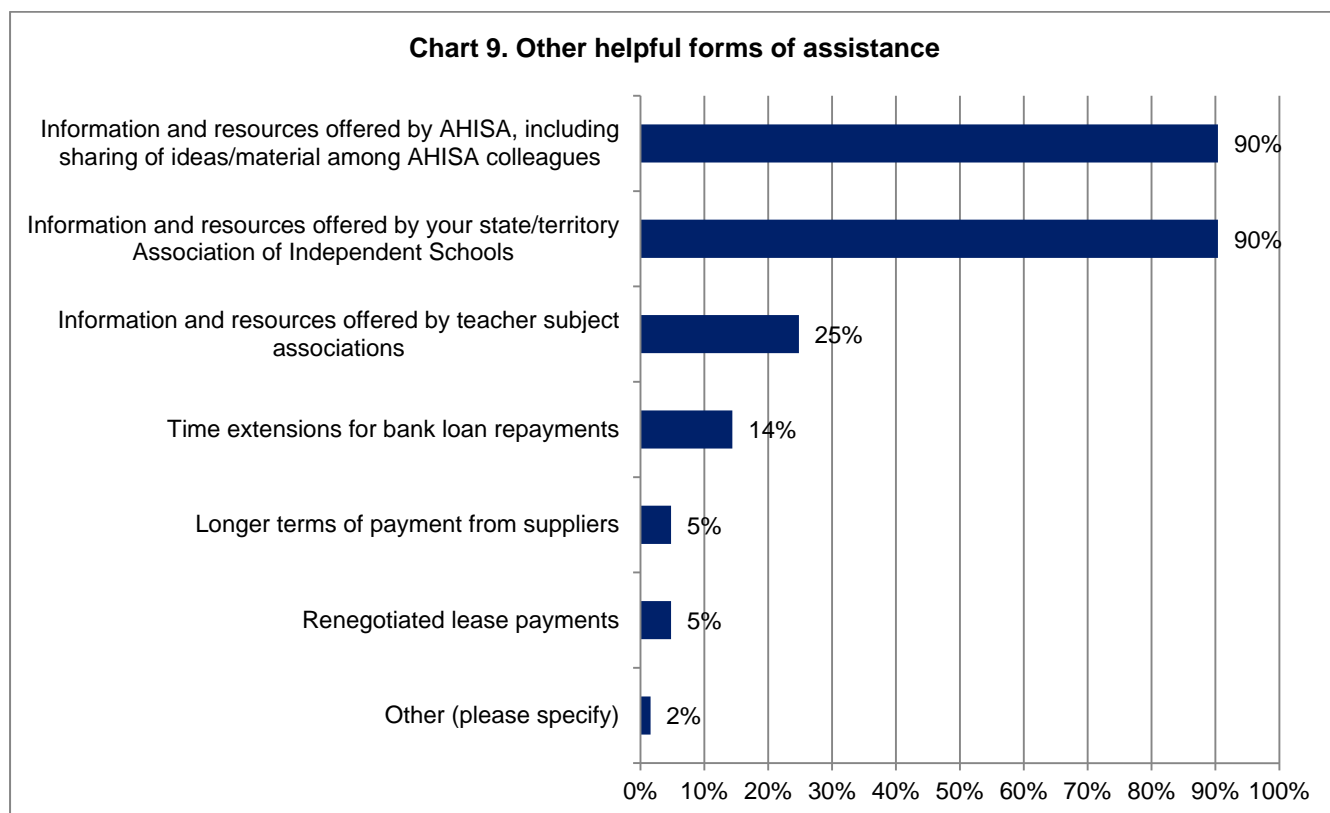
“The state government’s imposed requirement concerning the five student-free days at the end of Term 1 were not necessary for all independent schools. This imposition limited the school’s ability to continue teaching and assessing when we were prepared for online learning and did not require all five days at the end of Term 1 to further prepare for online learning.”

Another Head commented: “The state government required that school tours be cancelled. As this was a state and not federal decision, it was difficult to get the insurances to cover the costs.”

The issue of conflicting advice and/or directives from federal and state governments and the issue of communications generally were raised as having significant negative impacts for schools. These are discussed in Section 5, ‘Other ways governments can help schools manage extreme events’.

d. Helpful assistance from non-government sources

Heads were also asked what other assistance outside of government-related provision was helpful to their school in relation to COVID-19 responses.



The responses illustrated in Chart 9 above confirm the importance of reliable and targeted information and its timely delivery in assisting independent school leaders to meet the unrelenting demand for making major decisions affecting their school communities during an extreme event. School associations, professional networks and the support from within systems for those independent schools belonging to a system were mentioned frequently by Heads as providing invaluable support. Some Heads reported they also drew on a range of existing networks, including school sports associations or established informal networks of their own with other local principals.

A number of respondents commented on the value of advice or assistance from state/territory Chief Health Officers, or local hospitals for those in regional areas. One Head of a regional school noted that the local council had organised COVID-19 testing on site for all staff and volunteers, which had been appreciated.

Comments from respondents also reveal that access to hand sanitiser and other personal protection equipment such as gloves and sanitary wipes through state departmental or other government sources was helpful, indicating the usefulness of at least some government control over supply of and access to key items to enable safe opening and continued operation of institutions. This would also help ensure that the quantum of supply was viable: one Head noted that their school of over 900 students and 150 staff had received from the state government eight small rolls of toilet paper and 25 handbag-sized packs of disinfectant wipes.



Assistance from the corporate world or local businesses was also mentioned positively – for example, the waiving of fees for school use of Zoom. One Head reported the school had received support for food drops and fuel from local agencies to enable delivery of student work, activity booklets for young children and food to those in the school's extended community who were isolated, stranded or otherwise restricted by COVID 19.

One Head commented that data offers by some internet providers, such as unlimited downloads between 11pm and 3am, were not helpful to families for the purposes of remote learning.

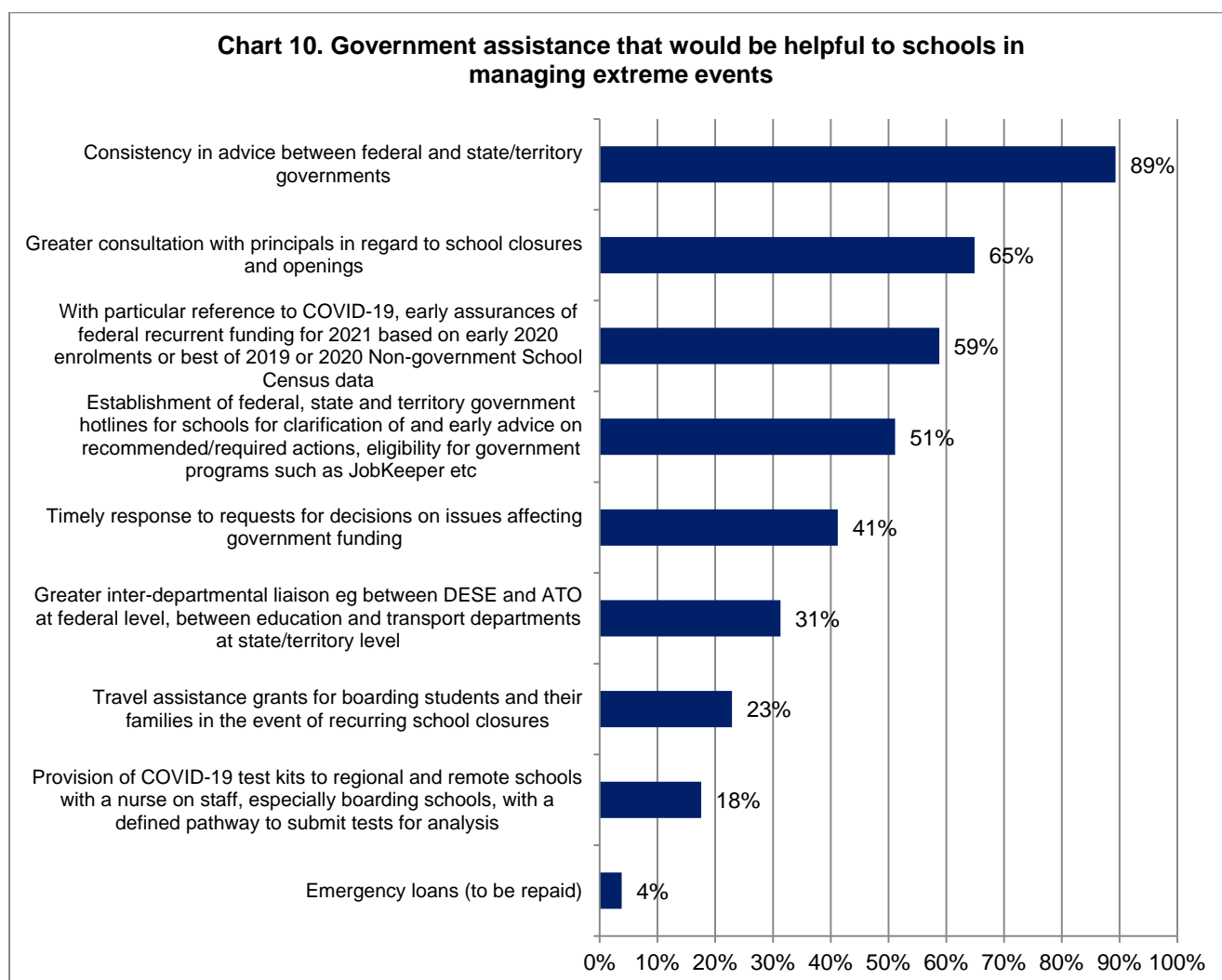
4. OTHER WAYS GOVERNMENTS CAN HELP SCHOOLS MANAGE EXTREME EVENTS

Heads were asked if there were other forms of assistance from governments or regulating authorities that *were not available but would have been helpful* in responding to the challenges of extreme events and were invited to offer recommendations to government.

As Heads are still leading their communities through the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the impact of government assistance – or lack of assistance – remains an immediate experience, most responses relate specifically to the COVID-19 experience of schools. Given the role of schools as key community institutions, however, many of the points raised around government communications are applicable to other extreme events.

In offering recommendations for improved or additional assistance to independent schools, many Heads commented that they were cognisant of the pressure under which government decisions were made and the context of those decisions. Several commented specifically on the quality of leadership shown by governments. As one Head noted:

“I have been very grateful for the leadership shown at state and federal level by our governments to get us all through the COVID-19 pandemic. I am very glad to live and work in Australia.”



a. **“Communication, communication, communication”**

As can be seen in Chart 10 above, consistency in advice issued by governments was most commonly identified by respondents as of assistance to schools in responding to extreme events. The issue of communications was also the theme most frequently touched on in respondents' comments regarding the negative impact on schools of government actions in response to COVID-19 and in open-ended responses on recommendations to government:

“The most frustrating issue for us was the lack of cohesion in federal and state directives and communications.”

“The biggest issue for us has been the conflicting advice between federal and state authorities which has left us trying to find ‘the best’ way forward and has had parents’ second guessing the school’s decision because they are anxious for their children.”

“There was significant confusion (state/federal) and many hours dealing with misinformation.”

“The lack of consistency in advice particularly for boarders made life very difficult.”

“The inconsistencies in the response at federal and state (Victorian) level was very challenging to understand and negotiate. It added considerably to the stresses of leadership of a school community.”

“The lack of consistency between federal and state governments has been extremely frustrating and deeply concerning; staff and the school community have felt like political footballs during the process.”

As well as greater consistency in government communications, better timing of announcements was mentioned as being significant in terms of assistance. Not only are principals one of the primary conduits of information into the community, they typically bear the brunt of dealing with any confusion around government directives. As one Head commented, it is important to recognise that when supported by appropriate decision making and communications by government, schools can “offer a strong, reassuring ‘ballast’ for the wider community”.

While Heads recognise that crisis management can affect the process of government decision making and the timeliness of announcements, Heads suggested that schools be apprised of directives prior to the media and general public and prior to any mandated implementation:

“Governments (both state and federal) to communicate with schools about school related issues prior to communicating to the general public via the media. This will provide schools time to implement the measures required and be prepared prior to public announcements.”

“Having immediate access to government briefings and media statements – to hear firsthand rather than second hand via news media.”

“Finding out about the cancellation of NAPLAN 2020 via *The Sydney Morning Herald* was difficult.”

“It would have been helpful if politicians had not held press conferences on the weekend to communicate decisions that would impact schools the following week.”

“At least 24 hours’ notice of changes, both state and federal.”

“A time delay between informing schools of a new policy (eg they will close/partially open/open) and announcing it to the public. Even 5-6 hours would help us manage the communications and maintain the confidence of our school communities.”

“Ensure schools have sufficient time to plan and implement necessary changes and be able to communicate with parents concerning how directives will be worked out at the local school level.”

Several Heads commented that government announcements made on a Sunday night created administrative difficulties for schools, which then had to deal with parent and teacher inquiries before school-based procedures were able to be decided on and put in place.

One Victorian Head mentioned that a long awaited announcement from the state government of exam dates was posted on the Premier’s Facebook page at 8.00pm on a Thursday evening: “All schools were left scrambling to establish a school calendar with practice exams etc scheduled whilst students and parents were left highly anxious.”

Other suggestions in relation to communications included:

- Prior consultation on response strategies to create a better fit with schools, especially on campus closures and openings and especially on issues regarding boarding, which Heads commented are not necessarily well understood by federal, state or territory governments
- The availability of official avenues to communicate back to government any adverse effects on schools of government initiatives
- Clearer and less ambiguous statements
- Closer alignment of federal and state directives or, if different directives are required, ensure those differences are communicated clearly
- State government directives to clearly identify which apply only to government schools or schools in all sectors
- Better definition of what is an essential service and whose children can attend on campus during a lockdown (One Head commented: “Parents who were frontline health workers were upset when other parents sent their children to school as they felt their own children were getting unnecessary exposure thus making them vulnerable.”)
- Establishing helplines/hotlines for schools, adequately staffed to ensure fast response times (One Head commented that although a state government helpline was established, contact was by email only and enquiries went unanswered.)
- Provision of sample letters to parents, back to school guides and checklists, and school policy and protocols drafts around pandemic outbreak management (One Head commented that early provision of checklists or guidance as to what would be necessary to be thinking of at key stages in responding to the pandemic would have been useful.)

One Head suggested that the federal government needed a direct communication platform to get information to schools, commenting that initially Commonwealth information had come to the school as a Registered Training Organisation for VET.

b. Health and safety factors

In addition to suggestions made earlier in Section 3, Heads recommended:

- Faster turnaround of results of COVID-19 tests for schools in regional and remote areas to support decisions on possible closures
- More support with environmental cleaning contracts and personal protection products.

c. Financial and operational support

With reference to extreme events in general, one Head commented that the school had not been eligible for any support for drought, bushfire or flood affected families: “I suggest that schools be able to put together a case for certain families who have been affected by the extreme event and apply on their behalf for some government assistance.”

With specific reference to the COVID-19 pandemic, additional suggestions to those already mentioned include:

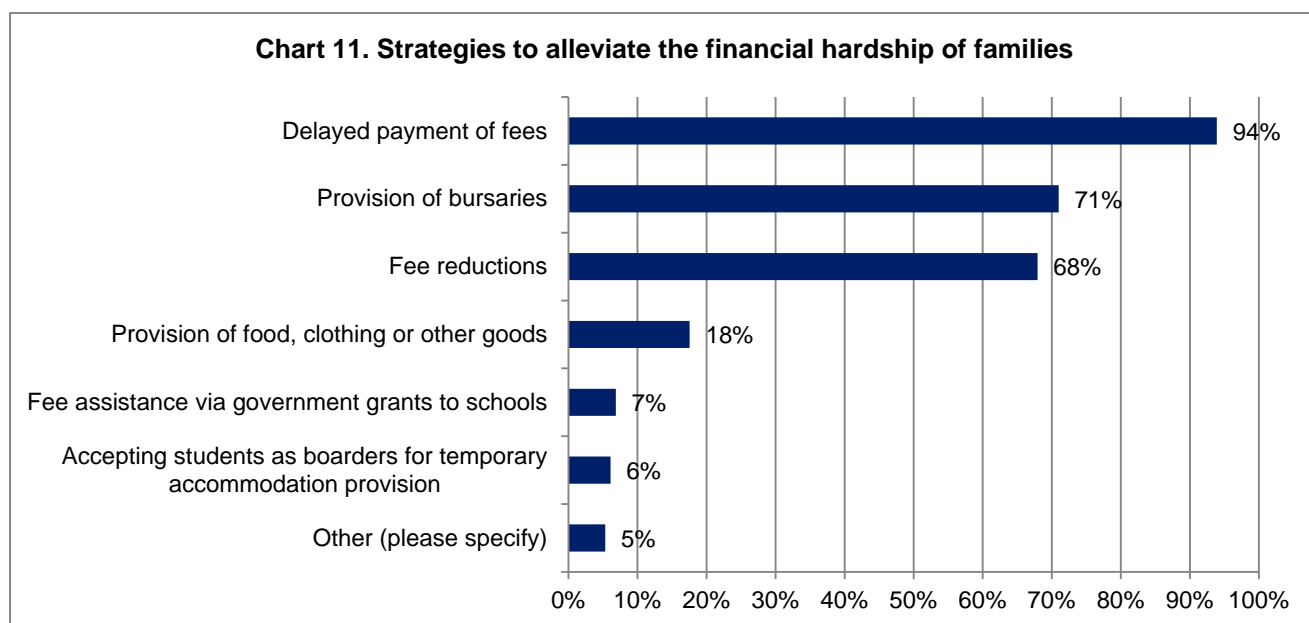
- Federal general recurrent funding certainty to be established early to enable school decision making regarding continuation of service and employment of staff
- One Head commented that early definition of who was classified as vulnerable to the coronavirus would have assisted in providing for their protection and determining which roles and classes in the school needed covering
- Funding for employment of support staff to allow teachers to provide both remote learning and on campus teaching for children of essential workers
- Assistance in accessing more reliable internet services, IT support and equipment
- Tax deductibility for donations to school-based COVID-19 relief funds to support families in the school community.

The issue of support for disadvantaged students was also raised, with recommendations that this be a consideration for inclusion in national planning or preparation in the event of a future pandemic. One Head gave the example of the need to consider how to ensure Indigenous boarders from remote communities are not disadvantaged due to their location, family circumstance and lack of access to facilities.

5. SCHOOL-BASED INITIATIVES TO ASSIST FAMILIES AND ADDRESS FINANCIAL CHALLENGES IN RESPONSE TO EXTREME EVENTS

a. School-based strategies to alleviate the financial hardship of families

Independent schools are adopting a range of strategies to ensure no student must leave the school due to financial hardship resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The three most common strategies adopted by schools to alleviate the financial hardship of families are: permitting the delayed payment of fees; the provision of bursaries to students; and fee reductions.



A number of Heads commented that their school's assistance was targeted directly to assist families in need, rather than in the form of across-the-board fee reductions.

Other strategies mentioned include:

- Offer of fee payment plans
- Establishment of a hardship fund to assist families on a needs basis
- Request for philanthropic support from the school community to assist other members of the community
- Reimbursement of fees for suspended services, eg co-curricular fees, transport fees
- Waiving of the school resource levy
- Provision of items which previously would have been billed to families, eg IT apps, software and hardware
- Loans of laptop computers to primary school families
- Provision of learning from home allowances for students to help families cover the cost of additional data usage on home digital devices.

Some Heads mentioned that their school had sought to promote the businesses of school families:

“Collation and publication of local parent-business directory.”

“Introduced a ‘buy for the bush’ capacity for our country.”

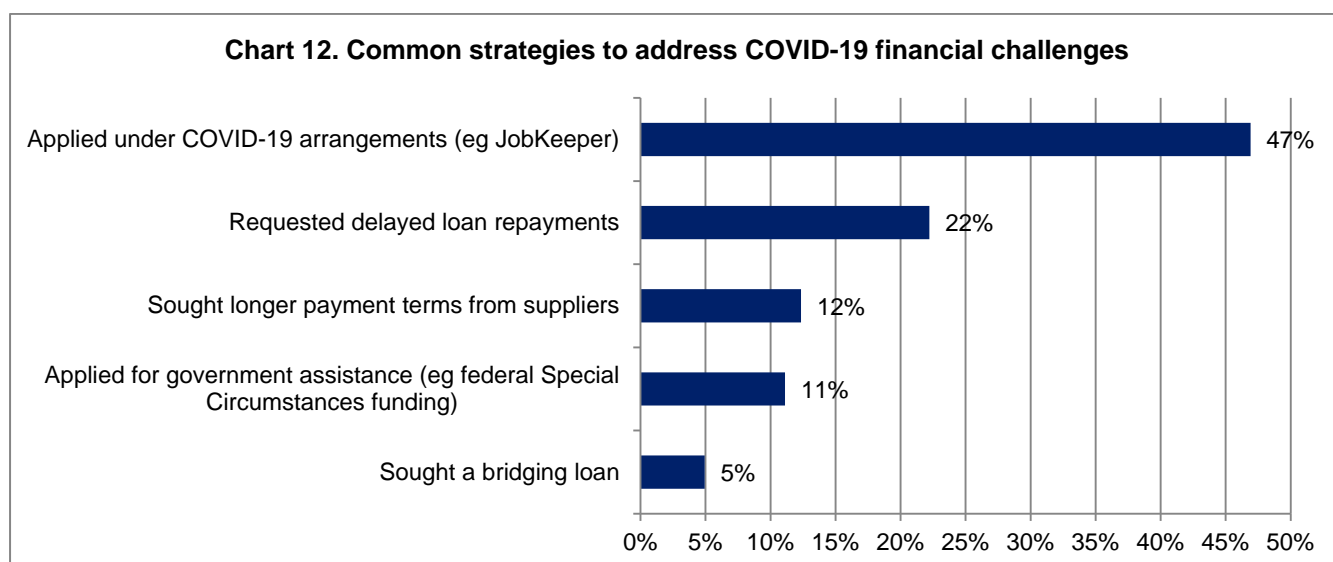
“Provided a school register for families to address work needed and/or work available. This was to connect our community in the hope that we could help each other.”

One school’s initiatives took support directly into students’ communities:

“We sent teachers, aides and ATSI support staff out to areas that were in lock down due to the Elders and vulnerable situations there. It was well received! We also put an 8-seater car together with laptops and dongles to allow access for those places without connectivity and whose students were isolated due to transport and status. We organised accommodation for those young people who were significantly transient.”

b. Strategies to alleviate institutional financial challenges

Schools have adopted a number of strategies to alleviate financial challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. While not all schools were eligible for JobKeeper, Heads of those schools that were eligible and which had applied for this support commented that it had assisted in retaining staff or reemploying those members of staff who had been stood down.



With 70 per cent or more of its income typically committed to staffing costs, it is very unusual for an independent school to have an unallocated surplus of funds. As would be expected, many Heads commented that their actions to meet financial challenges began with budget review and adjustment:

“Significant review and adjustment of the 2020 budget.”

“Internal decision-making concerning immediate cost cutting (including some redundancies for staff, especially related to the downturn in international students) and medium-term planning to accommodate financial losses over the longer-term.”

“Bringing in tighter expenditure controls and monitoring budget closely.”

“Cut all spending deemed non-essential.”

“Delayed BAS (business activity statement) payments.”

“Delayed upcoming projects.”



Some Heads reported they had introduced measures to reduce staffing costs, such as requesting non-teaching staff to reduce their hours or take leave without pay. Even so, Heads reported they had had to stand down some staff.

Renegotiating financial arrangements with the school's bankers or other lenders was a frequently mentioned strategy and may have taken the form of: increasing the school's loan capacity; reducing loans to interest only; establishing a bank credit facility should it be required; or initiating a new loan specifically to cover possible payroll cashflow issues.

One Head commented that financial assistance had been sought from the school's philanthropic foundation.

6. LEARNINGS FROM EDUCATION PROVISION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Included as an appendix to this submission is the summary report of a series of surveys of students, their parents and teachers in 16 AHISA members' schools. The surveys were developed and administered in conjunction with education consultancy MMG Education and contain significant insights into positive features of home and online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 lockdown. We recommend the summary report be read in conjunction with the comments of Heads collected via AHISA's member survey.

a. Key elements of successful provision of home and online learning and teaching during home isolation of students

Chart 13 below maps responses from schools in all locations to a question designed to identify those elements Heads consider important in underpinning their successful provision of education and care to students learning at home.

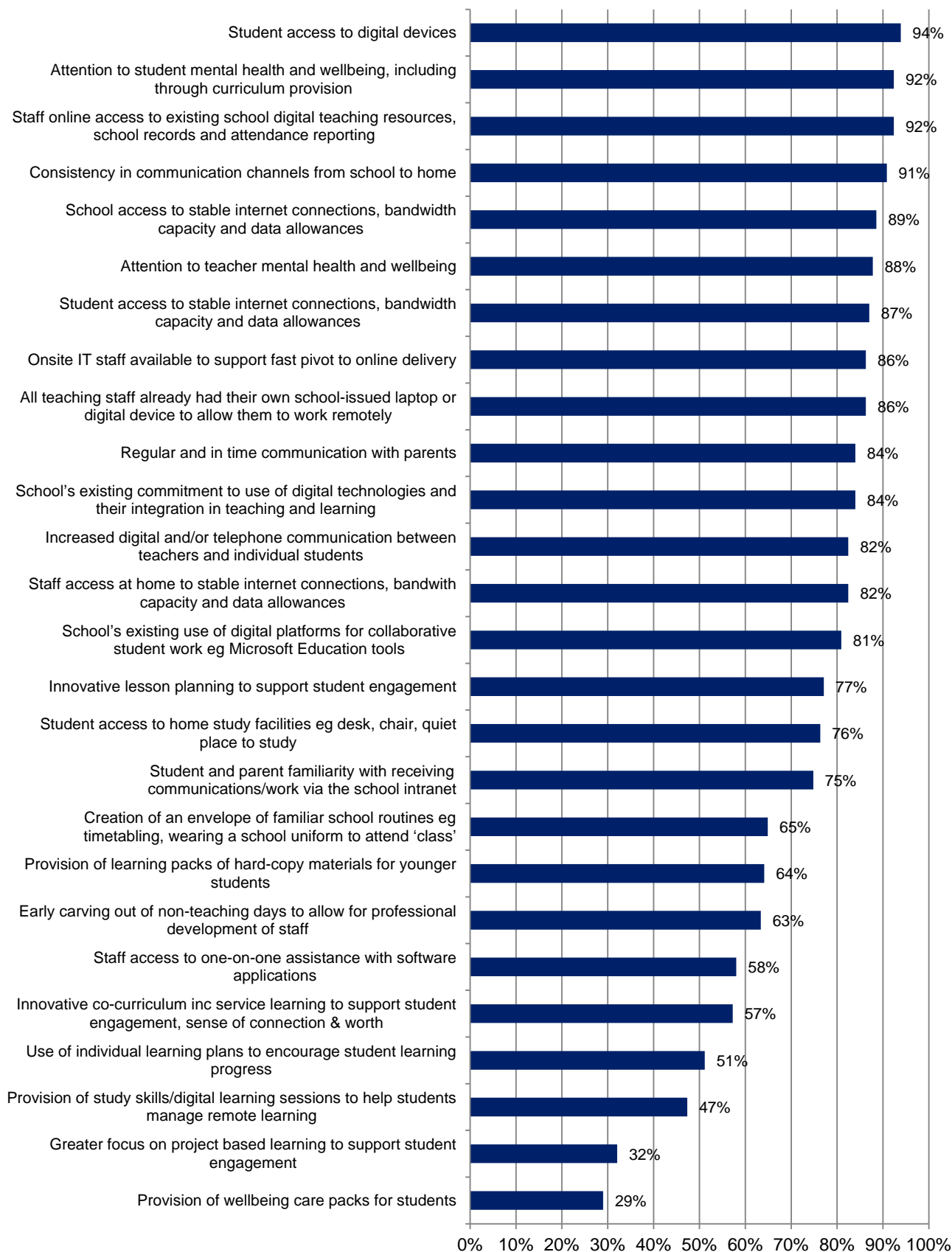
The chart reveals there are three key themes among those factors identified as supporting the success of home and online learning and teaching during home isolation of students:

- Information and communication technologies – including the elements of: hardware, software, internet access; technology skills of teachers, parents and students; existing school integration of digital technologies in education provision and communications/administrative functions
- Attention to wellbeing – of students and teachers
- Quality of communications – between teachers and students, home and school, school and staff.

A comparison of responses of Heads of schools in Outer Regional areas against the responses of Heads of schools in Major City locations (see Table 1 below) shows some significant variations, notably a greater emphasis in outer regional schools on project based learning and the co-curriculum to engage students, possibly reflecting different levels of access to digital technologies and the internet, or more opportunities for students in Outer Regional locations to engage in outdoor pursuits or assist parents on family properties. There also appears to be a greater reliance on telephone contact in Outer Regional schools to support relationships with students and parents.

While there were insufficient respondents from Remote and Very Remote locations to AHISA's member survey to allow meaningful comparisons, the comparison of Major City and Outer Regional schools suggests further research is required before it can be assumed that the experiences of Major City schools will be similarly successful if applied to schools in other geolocations. Poor internet connections and low bandwidth was mentioned as a challenge across schools in all geolocations, but particularly in regional and remote areas. Comments from Heads reveal, however, that schools were innovative in finding ways to maintain contact and education provision. For example, one school established pick up points across their region to enable parents to collect learning resources for students. Another school visited each of the areas in which students live to ensure direct communication for those without a device, domestic stability, safety and food provisions.

Chart 13. Key elements of successful provision of home and online learning and teaching during home isolation of students



Many Heads commented that their school's response had been multi-dimensional and complex and that many factors in combination had contributed to the success of home learning, including the collaborative and cooperative attitudes of everyone in the school community. This underlines the diversity of school communities and the importance of allowing schools autonomy and agency in the way government directives are applied to the community.

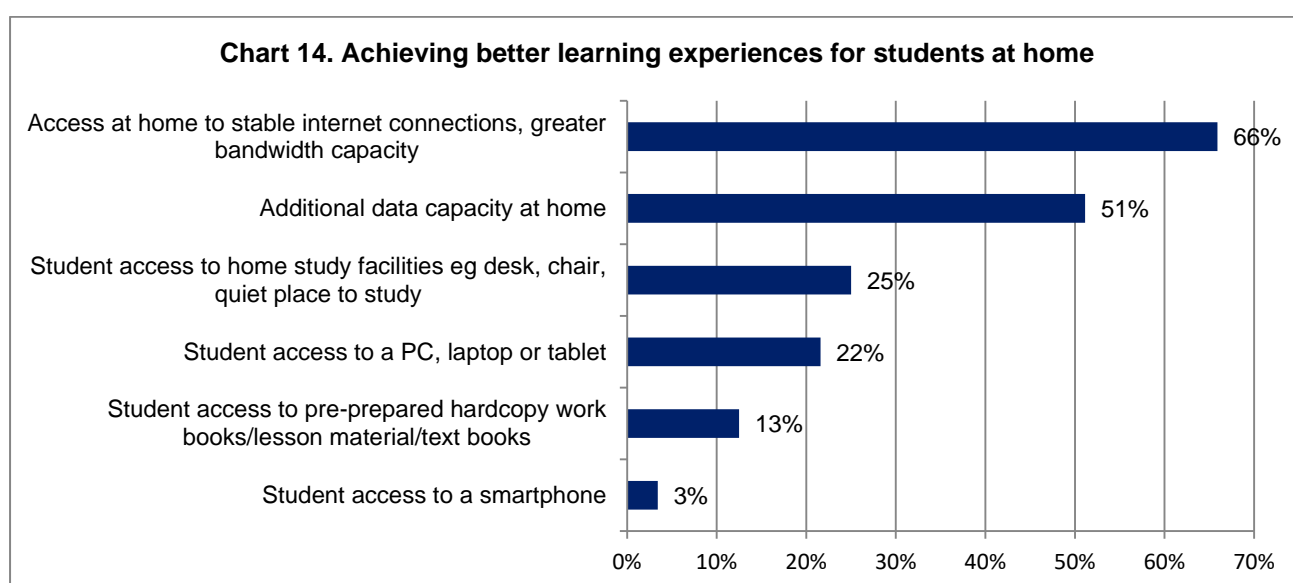
Table 1. Success factors in learning from home – Major City vs Outer Regional geolocations

	MAJOR CITY	OUTER REGIONAL
School access to stable internet connections, bandwidth capacity and data allowances	92%	80%
Student access to digital devices	95%	90%
Student access to stable internet connections, bandwidth capacity and data allowances	89%	75%
Student access to home study facilities eg desk, chair, quiet place to study	80%	55%
Staff access at home to stable internet connections, bandwidth capacity and data allowances	88%	65%
Staff online access to existing school digital teaching resources, school records and attendance reporting	93%	90%
School's existing commitment to use of digital technologies and their integration in teaching and learning	81%	90%
All teaching staff already had their own school-issued laptop or digital device to allow them to work remotely	89%	85%
Onsite IT staff available to support fast pivot to online delivery	86%	90%
Early carving out of non-teaching days to allow for professional development of staff	61%	85%
Staff access to one-on-one assistance with software applications	62%	35%
School's existing use of digital platforms for collaborative student work eg Microsoft Education tools	83%	75%
Student and parent familiarity with receiving communications/work via the school intranet	76%	55%
Creation of an envelope of familiar school routines eg timetabling, wearing a school uniform to attend 'class'	60%	70%
Attention to student mental health and wellbeing, including through curriculum provision	90%	95%
Increased digital and/or telephone communication between teachers and individual students	80%	85%
Attention to teacher mental health and wellbeing	88%	85%
Provision of learning packs of hard-copy materials for younger students	63%	60%
Provision of study skills/digital learning sessions to help students manage remote learning	45%	50%
Use of individual learning plans to encourage student learning progress	49%	45%
Innovative lesson planning to support student engagement	74%	75%
Greater focus on project based learning to support student engagement	25%	40%
Innovative provision of co-curriculum including service learning to support student engagement and sense of connection and worth	51%	65%
Provision of wellbeing care packs for students	27%	35%
Regular and in time communication with parents	81%	85%
Consistency in communication channels from school to home	92%	80%

In their comments, many Heads also referred to their high regard for staff in managing such a short turnaround time from face to face to remote learning. As one Head noted: "A high level of agility was demonstrated by all staff, not just teachers, to ensure our educational services were maintained." Mention was also made of students' commitment and engagement.

Heads were also asked whether there were any factors that might have helped achieve better learning experiences for students at home (see Chart 14 below). Stable internet connections and data capacity were nominated most often in this context. Several Heads mentioned that ITC issues were more problematic in larger families, especially when parents also needed computer and internet access to work from home.

One Head noted that the microphone capacity of students' laptops had been found to be inadequate for online learning in class meeting situations, indicating that schools may need to reconsider the specifications required for student hardware in the future, or the possibility of providing students with headsets when issuing school devices. Another Head commented that the school had identified a need to provide earlier support to students to become self-regulated learners, as this would have improved the experience of home learning for many students.



b. The value of hindsight

Heads were invited to reflect on whether there was anything they would do differently or consider could be improved should similar circumstances as those triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic arise again. While some Heads commented that it was too early to have a comprehensive view of how the school might have responded differently, and that their school was in the process of undertaking a formal review, key points emerged from the comments made:

- *Taking time initially for the professional learning and preparation of teachers for student home learning.* One Head also commented that it would have helped to have made expectations clearer to all staff of what was required of them during remote learning. Other Heads pointed to the need for time allowances for staff to prepare online learning lessons, or some time off to relax.
- *Clearer expectations of and more support for parents.* One Head commented the school would invest time in setting up more 'how to' and information videos for students and families to access on a range of issues. Another mentioned the early setting of clear boundaries for parent-teacher communication out of class hours. One Head commented the school would have started online communications to parents via Teams or Zoom earlier.

- *Timetabling changes.* A number of Heads commented they would change the online learning timetable to reduce screen time and improve student mental health. One Head commented: “If this happens again we will go straight to an adjusted timetable rather than trying to stick with the original (campus based) timetable. We have saved the timetabling variant so we can revert back if necessary.”
- *Reconsider assessment.* One Head commented: “A key learning for me is about teachers' attitude towards assessment. In hindsight, I wish clear guidelines were given to teachers right at the beginning about how much to assess. Students were ‘catching up’ on in-class assessments on their return to face to face lessons, and this placed them under pressure to complete assessments and keep up with new learning.”
- *Tailor different approaches for different age groups and Year levels.* A number of Heads commented that their school would reconsider provision for primary and junior secondary students, with reference to allowing for more face-to-face interaction between teachers and students. One Head noted a need for greater use of take home hard copy packs of learning materials for primary students, while another commented the school would provide more digital learning sessions for younger students and those with poor executive functioning. One Head commented the school would provide simpler instruction and a scaffolded program for Year 7-8 students.

Other comments included:

“Set more uniform criteria for the delivery of online lessons from the beginning.”

“Immediately consider running co-curricular assemblies and other such aspects of the school day online.”

“Move more quickly to a combination of synchronous (real time) and asynchronous learning: Initially we were using the latter predominantly and students/ parents were not coping with the workload and inflexibility.”

“Stipulate school uniform from the outset.”

Heads also reflected on the overall nature of ‘schooling at home’. One Head queried whether the pressure to continue to maintain school-based learning structures or frameworks at home was warranted, and whether an opportunity to explore new pathways may have been lost. Another Head noted that remote learning had highlighted that there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution to providing students with optimum learning experiences. Another queried whether assessment regimes were driving education provision “at the expense of real learning”.

There was also speculation as to how long remote learning could have been maintained and still kept students engaged. One Head commented: “We are grateful that we could return to campus after seven weeks of online learning – that seemed to us to be the maximum length to hold our kids and keep them engaged.” Another Head commented on the difficulty of engaging early learners online, and managing the anxiety of senior secondary students.

The question of how to better manage the uncertainty created by mixed messages from governments was also mentioned. Clearly the communication issues mentioned previously added to the complexity of leading and managing schools. Some Heads commented they would introduce measures to help support information gathering and decision making, such as establishing networks with other Heads or employing a consultant “to chase answers on our behalf”. One Head commented they would have sought early advice from registration, funding

and other authorities, and from insurers, to determine which body or government to listen to on which issue.

Some Heads commented that the speed with which schools had to shift to remote learning and teaching arrangements leaves little room to pinpoint what might have been done differently unless there had been more time available. One Head commented:

“It was such a compressed and challenging time with little information that could be relied upon in the early days of COVID-19 that we had to act in a particular way that was contextually appropriate. I wouldn't change anything.”

Even though school leaders may now be able to envisage what ‘might have been’ – had time or knowledge of what was to come allowed – their view of what was achieved remains highly positive. As one Head commented: “Our success surpassed our expectations.”

c. Adoption and adaptation

AHISA members were asked if there were any features of education provision during COVID-19 home isolation that their school was considering retaining or adapting for education provision in the return to on-site school attendance. Nearly 70 per cent of respondents took the opportunity for open-ended comment to describe one or more remote learning experiences they were adopting or adapting, revealing an enthusiasm and appetite for building on the opportunities offered by COVID-19 off-campus provision. The many points made have been synthesised and grouped within key themes.

STUDENTS

Heads were clearly excited by students' capacity for self-directed learning evidenced in remote learning, especially senior secondary students, as reflected in the areas where changes will be made or kept:

- Greater flexibility in arrangements for senior secondary students, including class times and days required to attend on campus
- Alternative programs for students who struggle to be onsite five days a week (but two or three days have allowed them to engage in the full educational program)
- Flexibility of student attendance and greater use of online services for some students, including those at still at high risk or who have health issues or major medical issues
- Daily remote learning for students who are unwell
- Some aspects of virtual courses developed for student well-being will continue.
- More use of asynchronistic teaching and personalised learning plans
- Giving students greater opportunity to work at their own pace
- Giving students greater choice over their learning
- More independent study time
- Extending some research projects through online methods and continuation of an online reading scheme
- Changes to academic assistance models (one Head specified their school's 'Remote Learning Coaching' trial had worked well for students who struggled with engagement)
- Remote learning preparation program for students prior to joining the school as boarders

- Increased provision of digital devices to students to develop their confidence in using these in their domestic situations.

TEACHERS

Heads commented on the collegial learning and support amongst teachers and the speed with which they acquired or honed digital skills. The intention to keep building on those skills was reported by many Heads.

- More teacher development in online learning
- More staff to be trained in software to support online learning and teaching
- More training for staff across all year levels to implement effective assessments using IT assessment scaffolds
- Provision of more opportunities for staff to work from home, with the possibility of being able to deliver some classes or parts of classes online
- Provision for staff who may otherwise have to take Sick Leave or Carers Leave to work remotely
- Online learning for relief lessons.

COMMUNITY

Many Heads mentioned that connections with and among staff, students and parents were heightened during remote learning and that schools would seek to continue to promote the strengthened sense of community.

In particular, there were many mentions of shifting to online parent-teacher or parent-teacher-student meetings and online parent information sessions as these had proved very popular with parents. As one Head commented in the survey:

“Surprisingly big positive impact on communications with parents – they love webinars instead of information evenings, online parent-teacher evenings instead of racing in to the school campus after work, and are more willing to ask questions etc.”

So effective did online parent-teacher meetings prove to be during remote learning that a list of different models for online parent-teacher meetings was collated from responses to a request on one of AHISA’s email networks and made available to all members.

Other Heads commented that more contact would be made with parents by phone rather than email. One Head reflected that COVID-19 restrictions had enabled better work/life balance for many children and their parents and the school was considering how to support improved family time.

PEDAGOGY, CURRICULUM & TIMETABLING

Heads generally reported schools would be building remote learning pedagogy into their teaching and learning. Specific mentions included:

- Reserving invaluable face to face time for activities that have greatest impact and moving some lower impact activities online
- Greater use of short videos for ‘flipped’ teaching and learning (that is, course content is delivered online for students to view as pre-class homework and class time is reserved for deeper engagement)

- Teachers using voice over on PowerPoints for students to re-visit their learning at a later date
- Building a bank of instructional videos for students (for example, of science experiments)
- Videoing key lessons for remote access.

Heads commented positively on how project based learning had helped engage students during remote provision and supported their growth as independent learners. One Head commented that the school was considering the introduction of a project based learning module into each subject.

As well as specific timetabling adjustments for senior secondary students mentioned above, Heads expressed interest in greater flexibility in timetabling more generally. As one Head expressed it, the school would adopt a 'COVID-19 timetable'.

INCREASED USE OF ICT

With all teaching staff having acquired new IT skills and experimented with online learning delivery, most Heads reported their school was planning greater adoption of technology in some form to improve student learning experiences or as a strategic means of protecting education provision in the event of future lockdowns. Take up of technology-based options that were mentioned include:

- In addition to online parent-teacher meetings and parent information sessions, as discussed above, use of online meetings for school Boards, Parents & Friends committees, alumni groups and to deliver aspects of the enrolment process
- More online meetings to communicate with absent students or students with special needs and their families
- Online Chapel and assemblies
- Use of software platforms to allow for 'chat room' questions from students in class
- Post assessment tasks online
- Greater use of online assessment
- Use of pre-recorded videos for information and assistance
- To facilitate increased subject offerings to small cohorts of students
- Development of the LMS (learning management system) to support and build on the engagement of students and parents during remote learning
- More learning resources to be digitally based
- All lesson objectives and outlines to be stored in a common online space for students to access anywhere at any time
- Provision of high quality recording facilities in select classrooms to record lessons
- Increased use of video conferencing.

NEW INITIATIVES

It is apparent from Heads' comments that schools have gained confidence from the COVID-19 online learning and teaching experience to consider transforming aspects of their provision across campuses, across schools and even across national and international borders. Examples include:

- Extending provision at one of the school's campuses which currently goes only to Year 10 through a hybrid offering of Year 11 and 12 (partly onsite/partly distance)
- As a multi-campus school, deliver classes across campuses via Zoom
- Expanding subject offerings through on-line delivery
- Provision of remote learning options for students in regional and remote locations for whom boarding is not an option due to their financial or family circumstances
- Education delivery for international students
- Provision of evening tutorial sessions in specific subjects for students at specific ages
- Sharing resources and classes with other schools.

Without question, schools have demonstrated during the COVID-19 remote learning and teaching experience their extraordinary agility and capacity for innovation. School leaders are keen to maintain and build on these capabilities. As one Head commented: "An amazing momentum was built and we are looking at a range of innovations as a result." ■

23 April 2010

Australian Government Minister for Education, the Hon Dan Tehan MP, dan.tehan.mp@aph.gov.au
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WA Minister for Education and Training, the Hon Sue Ellery MLC, Minister.Ellery@dpc.wa.gov.au

Please be advised this letter will be distributed to members of our associations and posted on associations' websites.

Dear Ministers of Education

The federal and state and territory governments, working through the National Cabinet, are to be congratulated for all their endeavours towards a shared response to the manifold challenges posed by CoVid-19.

Our organisations represent leaders of Australian schools.

Principals are trained educators and community leaders. We recognise that the critical relationships in the education of Australia's children are those between school and parent/carers, teacher, and student and those of collegiality and cooperation between teachers, schools, and sectors.

We know and understand our school communities, and are highly experienced in managing the provision of education to students while taking into account their health and wellbeing. The agile response of schools to meet the educational needs of students and professional needs of teachers during Term 1 2020 is ample proof of the capacity of schools to manage rapid and significant transformation in education delivery.

We are aware of the stresses within families and understand the uncertainties and fears of parents and of teachers. We therefore urge governments to ask for and listen to our voice in their decision making about schools and that they incorporate our understanding and experience of what works best in schools into their planning for the safe return to school for students, teachers and their families.

We call on the local and federal Ministers of Education to work alongside us, together with health experts, in the initial formulation of policy development. This needs to occur prior to governments announcing any further strategies with regard return of students to school.

We recognise that the regulatory responsibility for schools lies with eight different jurisdictions, all with different pandemic challenges and risks. Decision making around the return to full on-site school operations will of necessity be localised. It is therefore vitally important that National Cabinet seeks greater alignment between national and jurisdictional communications on schooling issues. This may

entail the federal government refraining from generalised directions to parents which are at odds with the specifics of jurisdictional planning.

Conflicting advice erodes the trust that is required for the proper functioning of government and communities. As it is Principals who are left to manage uncertainty and loss of confidence, we therefore recommend for immediate action:

1. Federal and state and territory ministers of education establish advisory groups of principals from all school sectors or, at the least, representatives of the four peak national principals' associations
2. State and territory ministers agree to uphold and adhere to one national statement of advice on reducing the potential risk of COVID-19 transmission in schools; differences in advised practices create uncertainty and undermine parents' and teachers' confidence as well as the confidence of the wider community.

School principals know what will and will not work for students, teachers and parents. We are ready and willing to advise governments to ensure the successful transition to full on-site delivery of school education.

Yours faithfully

Mr Andrew Pierpoint
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AHISA MEMBER SCHOOLS 2020 Parents, Students & Staff Home-Based Learning Executive Summary Report

May 2020

ASSOCIATION OF HEADS OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS OF AUSTRALIA
COLLEGIAL SUPPORT FOR EXCELLENCE IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

MMG ♦ Education |



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Introduction & Response Rates

MMG Education (MMG) in collaboration with AHISA developed three unique survey instruments aimed at providing school leaders with informed feedback from their parents, students and teaching staff regarding home-based learning.

The MMG Home-Based Learning Database is extensive and allows MMG to benchmark scores against other schools and stakeholder groups.

The MMG database includes information gathered from 16 independent schools with the following number of respondents:

- Parents – 7,570 respondents (average response rate 60%)
- Students – 4,283 respondents (average response rate 44%)
- Teaching Staff – 729 respondents (average response rate 72%)

The research included quantitative and qualitative questions. The survey was completed online over a one week period during April/May, 2020. At that time all schools had implemented home-based learning.

The following tables show the views from parents, staff and students.

MMG thanks the AHISA Chief Executive Officer, Ms. Beth Blackwood for her advice and input for this initiative.

Research Methodology

The questionnaires were developed by MMG in close collaboration with AHISA and input from MMG's Psychologist.

Both quantitative and qualitative insights were obtained. The questionnaires were completed online and schools had the opportunity to add questions of specific interest to them.

In relation to the quantitative questions, key areas are:

- Overall Home-Based Areas (2 items)
- Communication (4 items)
- Resources (3 items)
- Teaching & Learning (9 items)
- Student Wellbeing (6 items)
- Staff Wellbeing (2 items)
- Workload (2 items)
- Concerns (20 items)

In relation to qualitative questions, key areas are:

- Positive aspects
- Further improvements
- Initiatives used to engage students
- Areas to further assist staff

Participating schools have been provided with the following three reports.

- Overall report (70-100 pages)
- Full Open Ended extracts from quantitative findings (60-150 pages)
- The School results benchmarked to MMG's Database findings (18-22 pages)

SCHOOL & RESPONDENT PROFILES

School Profiles

School	Student Number Band	Gender	ICSEA Band
School 1	1000-1500	Co-Ed	1000-1099
School 2	Less than 1000	Co-Ed	1100-1199
School 3	1000-1500	Co-Ed	1100-1199
School 4	>1500-2000	Co-Ed	1100-1199
School 5	>1500-2000	Co-Ed	1100-1199
School 6	Less than 1000	Co-Ed	n/a
School 7	1000-1500	Single Gender	1000-1099
School 8	>1500-2000	Single Gender	1100-1199
School 9	>2000	Single Gender	1100-1199
School 10	1000-1500	Co-Ed	1000-1099
School 11	1000-1500	Co-Ed	1100-1199
School 12	1000-1500	Single Gender	n/a
School 13	Less than 1000	Single Gender	1100-1199
School 14	Less than 1000	Single Gender	1100-1199
School 15	1000-1500	Co-Ed	1000-1099
School 16	Less than 1000	Co-Ed	1100-1199

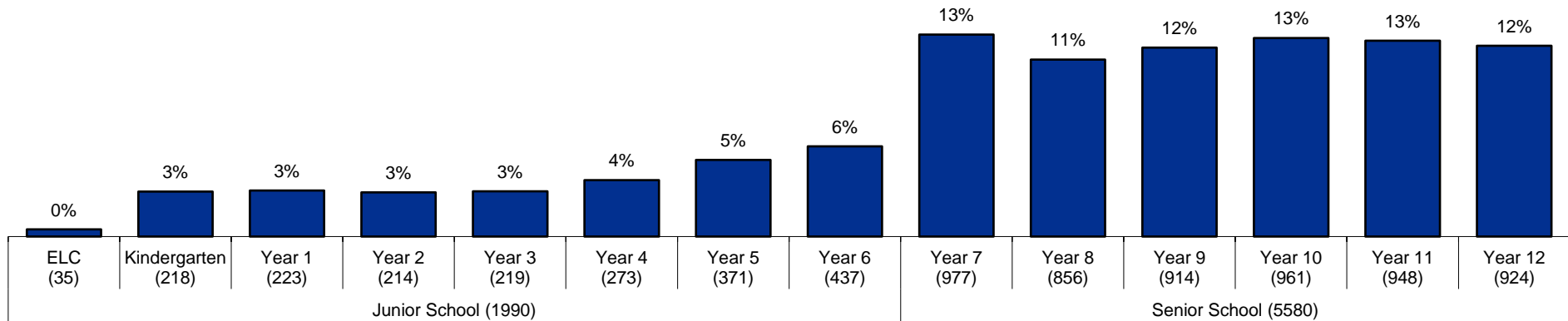
- Parents – 7,570 respondents (average response rate 60%)
- Students – 4,283 respondents (average response rate 44%)
- Teaching Staff – 729 respondents (average response rate 72%)

The table above shows the student number, gender and ICSEA for the 16 schools that participated in the home-based learning survey.

Respondent Profiles – Year Group

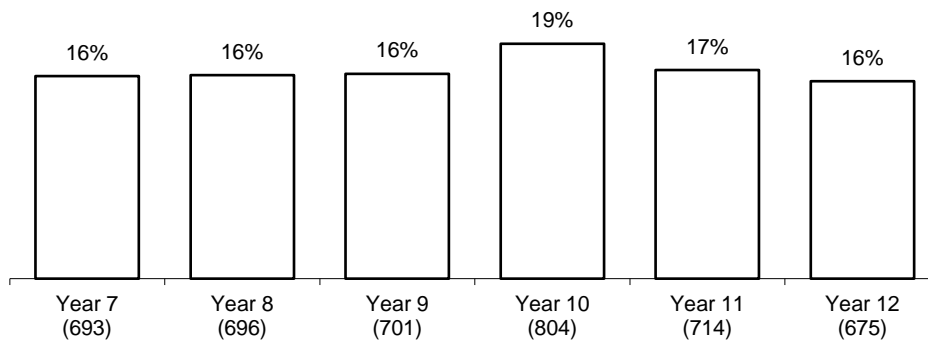
– Parents, Students & Staff

2020 AHISA/MMG HBL Parents - Child's Year Group (n=7570)



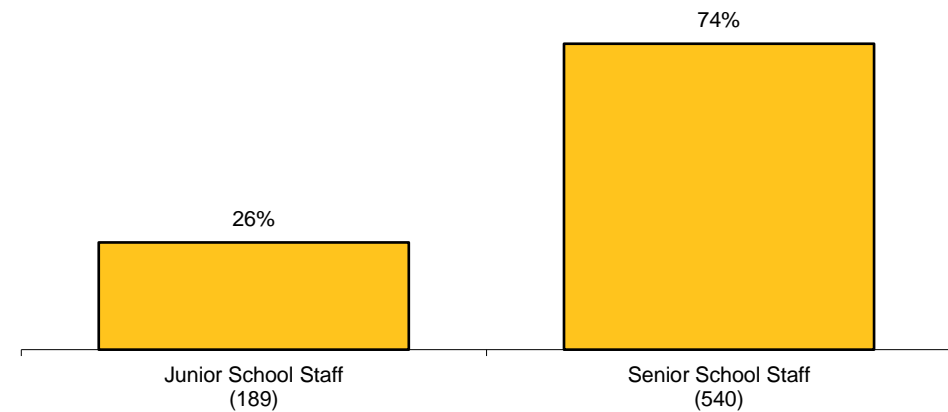
MMG Par Q1a 05/20

2020 AHISA/MMG HBL Students - Year Group (n=4283)



MMG Stu Q1a 05/20

2020 AHISA/MMG HBL Staff - Staff Role (n=729)

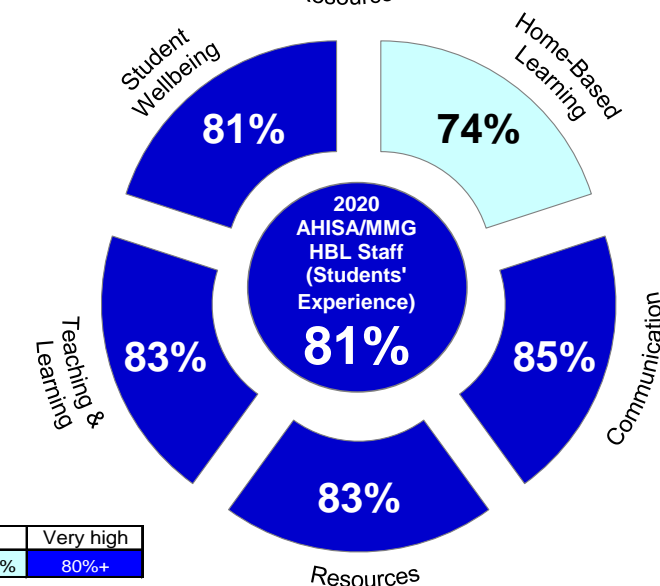
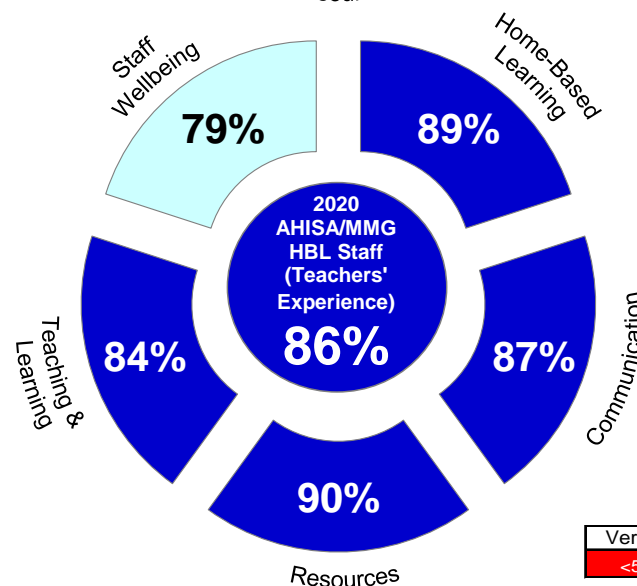
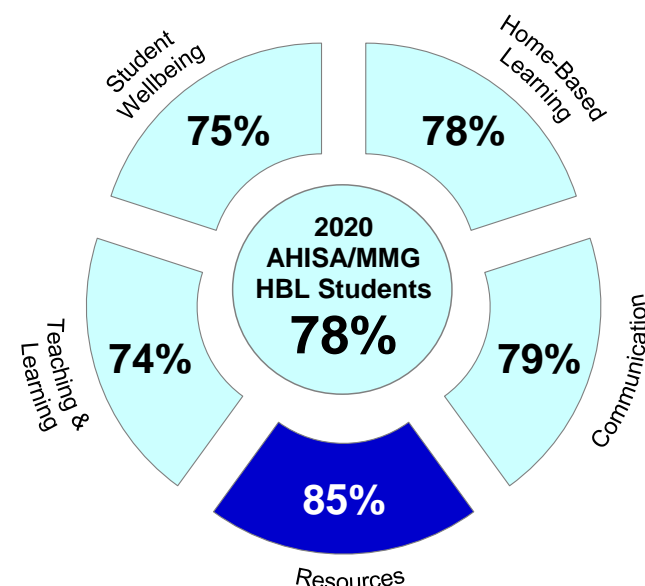
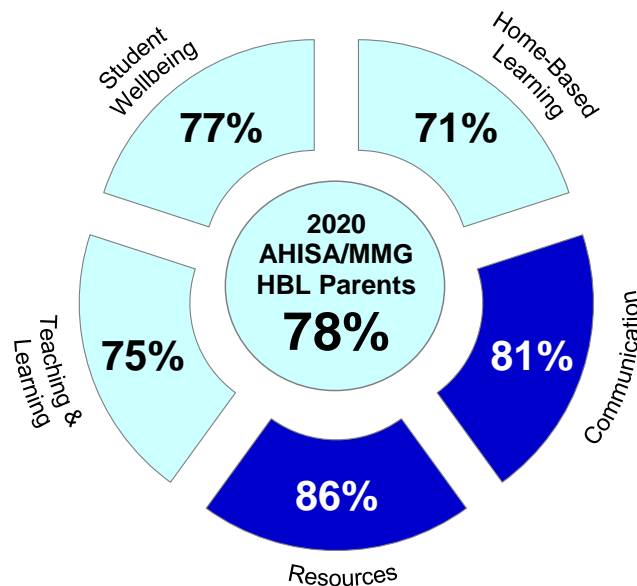


MMG Sta Q1a 05/20

OVERVIEW OF KEY AREAS

Overview of Key Areas

- Parents, Students & Staff



Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very high
<50%	50%~<60%	60%~<70%	70%~<80%	80%+

Overall Observations

1. Feedback from parents and staff that schools have generally managed the transition process well with fast and effective response to the situation
2. Strong preference for a return to classroom-based learning and face-to-face contact with teachers, enhanced with adoption of appropriate teaching and learning initiatives and resources identified from off campus teaching experience
3. Increased respect for the teaching staff from parents and students acknowledging their care, efforts and support
4. Teaching staff noting that engagement with students online has provided additional opportunities to get to know their students and build stronger relationships
5. Students in Years 7-12 noted the value of teachers setting up tasks and then with minimal lecturing allowing them to independently work
6. The importance to capture, evaluate, log and leverage into school-based teaching learnings from the off-campus experience
7. Increased opportunities to engage with students on a one-to-one basis
8. Views that learning support/enrichment students require more attention in an online teaching environment
9. Opportunities to utilise off-campus online teaching for specialised subjects and/or subjects where the school can not effectively resource
10. Increased engagement from some students who were reluctant to engage and ask questions in a classroom environment
11. The positive role school IT staff played with regard to the transition to home-based learning
12. The importance of professional development training and support for staff in the effective use of technology

Summary of Insights & Learnings

Below are extracts of views identified from the analysis of both the quantitative findings and review and modelling of open-ended qualitative responses and represent MMG's insights from these.

1. The identification of two distinct student groups and the need to tailor engagement and teaching strategies accordingly e.g.
 - Students who found it difficult to remain on task and work without direct supervision from their teachers
 - Students who found that by working at their own pace they could work more effectively and with less distraction
2. Students in Years 10-12 not feeling confident that they can continue learning from home without impairing their progress
3. The positive aspects noted by parents and students relating to the development of independence, time management and organisational skills and further leveraging these into the curriculum
4. Teaching staff learning new skills that can be integrated into their classroom teaching environment and the positive impact this has had on role satisfaction
5. The importance to evaluate and integrate learnings into the classroom-based environment
6. The need to provide increased feedback to parents
7. Timetabling – Needs to be flexible, well communicated and a tailored to home-based learning environment
8. Further development of strategies to assist students to stay on task
9. Ensuring the lessons are appropriately challenging, engaging and interesting
10. Notifying parents if child does not attend an online class
11. Monitoring of student workload and balance across subjects
12. Helping students remain connected with friends
13. Using different teaching techniques & include different types of activities in delivery of teaching to keep students engaged
14. Maintaining regular contact with students regarding wellbeing issues/stress/anxiety
15. Sharing of teaching and learning experiences, initiatives and strategies
16. Reduce 'screen time' and provide balance with off screen activities
17. Assisting and supporting staff in managing increased workload – reduce meeting time and admin tasks

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS – AREAS OF VERY HIGH PERFORMANCE & AREAS FOR REVIEW & CONSIDERATION

Areas of High Performance

Detailed below are areas of high performance where 30% or more of a particular stakeholder group (shown in brackets) noted 'strongly agree'.

Home based Learning Statements

- Students adjusting well to home-based learning (Parent)
- Students being clear as to what is required from them regarding participation (signing in/out, work expectations, etc.) (Student)
- Teachers adjusting well to home-based learning (Staff)
- The schools overall effectiveness in implementing home-based learning (Staff)

Communication

- Provision of sufficient information in regard the resources required for home-based learning (Parent/Student/Staff)
- Knowing whom at the school to contact in regards to home-based learning concerns/queries (Parent/Student/Staff)
- Overall effectiveness of communication in regard to home-based learning (Parent/Staff)
- Being kept well informed on home-based learning updates and changes (Staff)

Resources

- Students' access to technical resources (computer, internet, webcam, etc.) (Parent/Student)
- Students' access to physical resources (quiet space, desk, chair, etc.) (Parent/Student)
- Students' access to required learning materials (texts, computer software, etc) (Student/Staff)
- Support from the schools IT staff (Parent/Staff)
- Teachers' access to technical resources (computer, internet, webcam, etc.) (Staff)
- Teachers' access to physical resources (quiet space, desk, chair, etc.) (Staff)
- Teachers' access to required learning materials (texts, computer software, etc.) (Staff)

Areas of High Performance Cont.

Teaching & Learning

- Teachers doing all that is possible to keep students engaged (Parent)
- Ability to ask teachers questions and/or raise concerns regarding home-based learning (Parent/Student/Staff)
- Teachers' responsiveness to matters raised with regard to home-based learning (Parent)
- Home-based learning content challenging & engaging (Staff)
- Teachers adjusting classroom tasks to the home-based learning environment (Staff)
- Teachers' ability to share/exchange home-based learning experiences & learnings with other staff (Staff)
- Teachers' confidence in using IT resources (Staff)
- Teachers' responsiveness to students' needs (Staff)
- Teachers' responsiveness to parents' needs (Staff)
- Teachers using a variety of teaching techniques to make home-based learning interesting & engaging (Staff)
- Provision of individual attention/feedback to students (Staff)

Student Wellbeing

- Knowing whom at the school to contact with regard to child's wellbeing (Parent)
- Child knowing whom at the school to contact with regard to their wellbeing (Parent)
- Being kept well informed about how the school is handling wellbeing matters in the home-based learning environment (Parent)
- Students keeping well connected with friends (Student)
- The school being proactive in adapting to students' wellbeing needs (Staff)
- The school being proactive in adapting to staff's wellbeing needs (Staff)
- Initiatives in place to support students in wellbeing matters (Staff)
- Initiatives in place to support staff in wellbeing matters (Staff)

Areas for Review & Consideration

Detailed below are areas for review where 20% or more of a particular stakeholder group (shown in brackets) noted 'strongly disagree/disagree' or noted higher levels of 'concern/difficulty'.

Home based Learning Statements

- Confidence that students can keep learning from home without significantly impairing their progress (Parent/Student)

Teaching & Learning

- Students' ability to remain on task during their home-based learning (Parent/Student)
- Sufficient feedback provided to parents from teachers regarding their child's home-based learning (Parent)
- Maintaining high academic standards (Parent)
- Reduced direct supervision (Parent)
- Distractions at home (Student)

Student Wellbeing

- Students' ability to effectively balance their schoolwork with recreational/free time (Parent/Student)
- Students' ability to keep well connected with their friends (Parent)
- Too much screen time (Parent/Student/Staff)
- Managing students' stress/anxiety/wellbeing (Student/Staff)

Staff Wellbeing

- An increased workload placed on staff as a result of the transition to home-based learning (Staff)
- Balancing classroom and online teaching simultaneously (Staff)
- Staff wellbeing (Staff)

Top 10 Positives Aspects of Home-Based Learning - Parents, Students & Staff

The tables below detail the top 10 most positive aspects noted by parents, students and staff in relation to home-based learning.

Parent Positive Aspects – Top 10	Student Positive Aspects – Top 10	Staff Positive Aspects – Top 10
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Independence, organisation, time-management and responsibility 2) More family time together 3) Support from staff and communication from the School 4) Being able to help/see what my child is learning 5) Adapted to & enjoying online classes 6) Can work at own pace 7) Reduced travel time 8) More engaged and task focused 9) Less distractions from other students 10) More sleep/time to rest 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Working at own pace 2) Time for other interests and hobbies 3) Not having to get up so early 4) Being comfortable at home 5) Being able to spend time with family 6) Not have to travel 7) Can do more work - more focused 8) Fewer distractions 9) Engaging with friends 10) Responsibility & accountability for own learning 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Adopting new/innovative ways to teach 2) Development of stronger IT skills 3) Positive connections fostered/maintained with students 4) Developing self-efficiency/independence in students 5) Greater flexibility to create and deliver quality lessons 6) Increased communication/collaboration between staff 7) Planning & execution by school leadership 8) Assisted with my own wellbeing/less stressful 9) Working at home with my children 10) Reduced travel time

Top 10 Concerns/Difficulties

- Parents, Students & Staff

The tables below detail the top 10 concerns (parents & staff) and difficulties (students) in relation to home-based learning.

Parent Concerns – Top 10	Student Difficulties – Top 10	Staff Concerns – Top 10
1) Maintaining high academic standards	1) Too much screen time for school related work	1) Additional workload placed on staff
2) Too much screen time for recreation (games, videos, social media, etc)	2) Being able to interact with other students in class	2) Too much screen time for students in relation to school-related work
3) Reduced direct supervision	3) Distractions at home	3) Balancing classroom and online teaching simultaneously
4) Ability to focus and remain on task	4) Ability to focus and remain on task	4) Staff wellbeing
5) Being able to interact with other students in class	5) Managing stress/anxiety	5) Students' mental wellbeing
6) Amount of feedback on my child's progress	6) Maintaining high academic standards	6) Students' ability to stay well connected with friends
7) Ability to stay well connected with friends	7) Internet connection or bandwidth	7) Distractions for students at home
8) Too much screen time for school related work	8) Ability to stay well connected with friends	8) Students' ability to focus and remain on task
9) Being able to ask questions and get help from teachers	9) Getting enough physical exercise	9) Maintaining high academic standards
10) Distractions at home	10) Too much screen time for recreation (games, videos, social media, etc)	10) Reduced direct supervision

Top 10 Further Improvements to Home-Based Learning - Parents & Students

The tables below detail the top 10 further improvements noted by parents and students in relation to home-based learning.

Parent Further Improvements – Top 10

- 1) More face-to face online teaching content of classes
- 2) Regular contact/check in with teachers
- 3) More feedback on progress
- 4) More engagement and interaction with students
- 5) Platform and system related - access, reliability
- 6) More online team/small group activities
- 7) More communication to parents on expectations
- 8) Prioritise and reduce workload and tasks for students
- 9) Regular & clear communications
- 10) Timetabling & scheduling - adjustment, flexibility

Student Further Improvements – Top 10

- 1) More interaction and engagement activities/work
- 2) Balance/reduce workload
- 3) More fun & interesting activities
- 4) Clearer instructions and explanations
- 5) Group and team meetings
- 6) More variety in methods of teaching
- 7) Checking on students to assist
- 8) Less screen time
- 9) More time to chat with friends and classmates
- 10) More time to complete tasks

Top 10 Initiatives to Engage in Home-Based Learning - Students & Staff

The tables below detail the top 10 initiatives, ideas & teaching techniques noted by students and staff that were used by teaching staff to engage and keep students interested in their home-based learning.

Student – Top 10
1) Videos - interactive, relevant, entertaining
2) Engaging students in interesting activities
3) Group activities - meeting, conference calls
4) Providing opportunities for interaction & questions
5) Providing clear instructions & explanation
6) Regular checks to see how students are going
7) Using different teaching techniques
8) Educational Apps - Quiz-let/Stile/others
9) One on one check-ins
10) Teach in a fun and interesting way

Staff – Top 10
1) Activities to engage and interact with students
2) Creation and use of videos
3) Team and group activities
4) Online educational games
5) Smaller teaching groups for discussions
6) Q&A sessions
7) Variety of teaching resources
8) Providing responsive & positive student feedback
9) Checking and following up work
10) Teach in a fun and interesting way

Top 10 Areas to Further Assist Staff - Staff

The tables below detail the top 10 areas noted by staff where the school could further assist them in the delivery of home-based learning

Staff Areas of Further Assistance – Top 10

- 1) Clear communication & being kept updated
- 2) Continue support to staff
- 3) Training & instruction sheets for staff
- 4) Staff workload - balance, acknowledgement and equity
- 5) Sharing ideas and initiatives
- 6) More time for planning and lesson preparation
- 7) Connectivity matters
- 8) Staff wellbeing
- 9) Home based resources
- 10) Access to IT support

MMG Database – Applications & Resources Used by Staff

App /Resource	Website Ref	App/Resource	Website Ref
Ayoha – mind mapping	www.ayoha.com	KicOnline	Kardinia site
Blogs		Mayers
Character plays	www.playscripts.com/find-a-play	Microsoft Whiteboard	
Checkpoints	www.cambridge.edu.au › checkpoints	OneNote	www.onenote.com
Chunking		Padlette	A devise for holding Phones, ipads, etc
Clickview clips	www.Clickview.com.au	Polls	
Cold calls		PowerPoint quizzes	
D2L	www.d2l.com/en-apac	Pre recorded videos	
Dressing Up		Q&A sessions	
Edpuzzle	www.edpuzzle.com	Quizizz	quizizz.com
Edrolo	edrolo.com.au	Quizlet	quizlet.com
Education Perfect	https://epforlearning.com/	Recording sessions	
Exit Points	Rhyming roll calls	
GimKit	www.gimkit.com	Screencast	screencast-o-matic.com
Google Hangouts	hangouts.google.com	Shared screens	
Google Jamboard	gsuite.google.com/jamboard	Social Stream Chat	goes through schoolbox
Google Meet	meet.google.com	Stile	stileeducation.com
Hapara dashboard	https://hapara.com/	Treasure Hunt	treasurehunts.com.au
Kahoots	kahoot.com	WordWall	wordwall.net
Khan academy quizzes	https://www.khanacademy.org/	YouTube	

The table above shows a collection of applications and resources noted to be used by teachers

END OF REPORT

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