



What is the Australian Government doing to support students with disability in schools?

Funding for school students with disability is continuing to grow

The Australian Government is growing its record level of funding for schools from \$18.7 billion in 2018 to an estimated \$33.0 billion in 2029.

The government is investing an estimated \$318.9 billion for school recurrent funding from 2018 to 2029. Of this, an estimated \$33.0 billion is being provided through the [Schooling Resource Standard](#) (SRS) student with disability loading.

On average, funding for students with disability is growing by 6.8% each year over this period.

Previously funding for school students with disability was inconsistent

Prior to 2018, funding arrangements for students with disability were inconsistent across the states and territories. Each state had a different definition of disability which meant a student with the same disability could be funded in one state but not another. This left students with the same disability being funded in one state but not another.

The previous student with disability loading provided a flat rate of 186% of the SRS funding amount for students with disability attending mainstream schools, and 223% for students with disability attending special schools.

The flat loading did not reflect the broad spectrum of students with disability and the difference in costs.

From 2018, funding for school students with disability is targeted

The [Quality Schools](#) funding arrangements focus on student need through the SRS, as recommended by the 2011 [Review of Funding for Schooling](#), led by Mr David Gonski AC. This Review recommended

the student with disability loading be based on a national definition of disability, with greater levels of funding for students with higher need.

Under *Quality Schools*, a base amount is provided for every student with additional loadings to support disadvantaged schools and facilitate educational achievement of priority cohorts, including the student with disability loading.

From 2018, the student with disability loading is based on the [Nationally Consistent Collection of Data](#) on School Students with Disability (NCCD). The NCCD gives us information about the number of students with disability in schools and the adjustments they receive. The NCCD groups school students with disability by the level of support they need to access and participate in learning.

Using NCCD data recognises the professional knowledge, practice and judgements of teachers and school staff who know best the educational needs of their students. Through the collection, the school team makes evidence-based decisions about students who are receiving support to access education because of disability and the level of support being provided for each student with disability. School teams conduct moderation and evaluate the evidence available to support each student’s inclusion in the NCCD.

Students with disability who are counted in the top 3 levels of the NCCD (supplementary, substantial and extensive) attract additional funding through the student with disability loading, regardless of the state in which they live. Funding is based on a per student primary and secondary amount at each of the 3 levels of additional support. The amount of the loading reflects the level of support students with disability need to participate fully in school, with higher funding for those who need higher levels of support.

The loading, funded in addition to the base amount as shown in the following table, will continue to be calculated as a percentage of the SRS funding amount each year.

Table 1: 2022 students with disability loading by NCCD level of adjustment

	<u>SRS funding amount in 2022</u>	<u>Supplementary</u>	<u>Substantial</u>	<u>Extensive</u>
Primary student	\$12,462	42% (\$5,234)	146% (\$18,195)	312% (\$38,881)
Secondary student	\$15,660	33% (\$5,168)	116% (\$18,166)	248% (\$38,837)

Note: The table shows the 2022 amounts under the full SRS and does not take into account a school’s transition arrangements to consistent Commonwealth shares of the SRS.

In addition to this loading, students with disability attract SRS base funding to their school or system and their school may also attract funding from other loadings depending on the students or their school’s circumstances.

The NCCD captures a fourth level of support, defined as ‘support provided within quality differentiated teaching practice’, which means a student requires monitoring and support from the teacher and school staff; for example, personalised learning, but this can be done without the need for additional funding.

Further work

In 2021 the government allocated an additional \$20 million over 4 years to strengthen and quality assure the NCCD across all sectors. This funding is being provided to target activities that will improve the quality and consistency of the NCCD. The government is working collaboratively with state and territory government and non-government education authorities to develop and implement projects to be funded by the NCCD Continuous Improvement Package.

The government has also established the [National School Resourcing Board](#) (the Board) to review elements of the funding model under the *Australian Education Act 2013* and assess compliance of approved authorities with its requirements. In 2019, the Board reviewed the student with disability loading and found that the government's contribution to building capacity to administering the NCCD and compliance activities was well received by stakeholders. Ongoing NCCD quality assurance activity will be informed by the findings of the review.

The Board's final report, [Review of the loading for students with disability: Final Report | 2019](#) was produced by taking into consideration resources used to support students with disability at each level of adjustment under the NCCD, previous research on funding for students with disability, including work commissioned for the Joint Working Group, and 33 public submissions.

Further information on the review, including the Australian Government's response, is available on the department's website at: <https://www.education.gov.au/review-loading-students-disability-swd>.