Perfect Presence Pilot Evaluation

Executive summary

IPS Management Consultants

Acknowledgement

This report was created on Wadjuk Noongar Country.

IPS Management Consultants acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, water, and community. We pay our respects to Elders both past and present, and we extend that respect to all First Nations people.

We are grateful to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities we have the privilege of working with, for sharing stories, values, beliefs, and culture.

Working In Partnership

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### Context

There has been a consistent trend of decreasing attendance rates for students in New South Wales (NSW) secondary schools, with the average attendance rate of 89.5% in 2017 reducing to 81.6% in 2022 (NSW Department of Education, 2020; NSW Department of Education, 2022e; NSW Department of Education, 2023b). Based on the assumption that increased student engagement with learning leads to increased attendance, the NSW Department of Education (the Department) launched the Perfect Presence Pilot Program (the Program) in July 2021.

### The Program

The Program is an early intervention pilot program designed to assist students showing early signs of disengagement from school. The Program targets students with an attendance rate between 70% and 90% and two to four suspensions, working with them to increase their connection to school and learning. As of August 2023, 108 NSW schools have been identified by the Department as eligible for the pilot Program. 77 of these have opted in to having the Program delivered at their school, and the program has been delivered to 63. The Program is delivered by external providers, who work closely with schools to co-design Program content addressing student engagement in the categories of behavioural engagement, cognitive engagement, and emotional engagement.

The Program contributes to the Department’s *Plan for NSW Public Education*, connecting students with the support they need for wellbeing and development so they are better motivated to attend school and are better equipped to learn. The Program is also directly linked to Closing the Gap’s Socio-economic Outcome 5 that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their full learning potential. The Closing the Gap Target is to increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attaining year 12 or equivalent qualifications to 96% by 2031.

The review of the service landscape found that while there are existing student engagement services that share some attributes with the Program, it is unique in its combination of targeting a disengaged student cohort via co-designed learning activities that are delivered by an external provider over a prolonged period.

### Evaluation

IPS Management Consultants (IPS) was engaged by the Department in December 2022 to conduct a formative evaluation of the Program. The evaluation explored the effectiveness and efficiency of provider engagement with schools (including the co-design process), evidence of student success as the result of engagement in the Program, the administration of the Program, and opportunities for Program expansion.

The evaluation was informed by documents and data provided by the Department, and engagement with key stakeholders through interviews, focus groups, and online surveys. Stakeholders included providers delivering the Program, schools who had participated in the Program, schools who opted not to participate in the Program, students who participated in the program, and the parents and carers of these students.

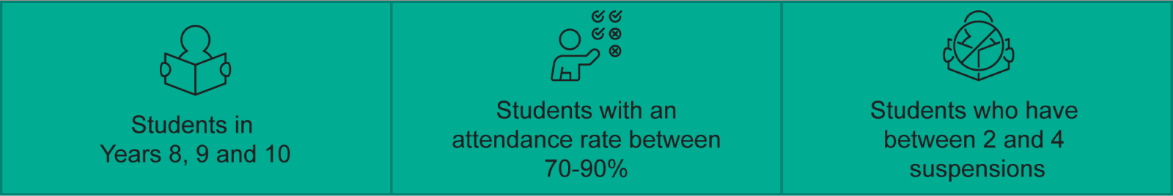
### Key findings

#### Program eligibility

##### School and student eligibility

At the beginning of the Program pilot in 2021, system level data was used to identify eligible schools within 25 principal networks, that had high levels of student disengagement as determined through limited attendance rates and high rates of suspensions. The Program was initially implemented with rigid criteria for student selection, which are outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Initial criteria of the Program



Source: NSW Department of Education, 2022b

Notably, these criteria have become less utilised as the Program has developed. Schools report that student selection is now mostly determined based on their knowledge of individual student personalities and needs and their suitability to participating in the Program, as opposed to a reliance on systems data in measuring attendance and suspensions. Some participating schools recalled using only systems data to inform student selection, which resulted in unsuccessful outcomes and disengaged students.

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| A purple circle with black and white logo  Description automatically generated | “There were a few students who would benefit from the Program and might not meet one or two criteria, but they participated and had good results.” Participating school |
| A black and green circle with a black background  Description automatically generated | “The school needs to be able to inform who participates. Having just system level data is not the clearest process to identify student need.” Department staff |

Systems data does have value and was reliable during the Program’s initial pilot phase, however, it may not be the most accurate single measurement for ongoing identification of the needs of students and schools. Most stakeholders believe that using systems data alone is not appropriate for student and school selection in the Program, considering student individuality and diverse school contexts.

##### Demographics of participants

As of August 2023, 1,462 students have been invited to participate in the Program. Using de-identified student data, the demographics of participants are broken down according to Aboriginality, whether participants are living with a disability, and the scholastic year in which they participated in the Program.

Figure 2: Participants based on Aboriginality

Source: NSW Department of Education, 2023. N=1,462

Figure 3: Participants living with a disability

Source: NSW Department of Education, 2023. N=1,462

Figure 4: Participants by scholastic year they participated in the Program

Source: NSW Department of Education, 2023. N=1,462

##### Identification of providers

The identification and allocation of providers was aligned to the principal networks selected for the pilot. In 2021, an open tender process was launched to procure providers. Through the procurement process, providers listed their preferred networks and then were selected based on a range of criteria. Providers were awarded specific locations based on this criterion and given the option to decline the networks they were assigned to if they were unsuitable.

Eligible schools then accessed a list of the providers that are available within their principal network and selected a preferred provider to deliver the Program. Schools were not obliged to pick a provider if they determined that none are relevant to their needs or requirements. Whilst providers did nominate themselves for specific principal networks when the Program began, they gave feedback that this system of allocation limited their capacity to engage with other schools that are geographically close to their central office, but do not fall within their allocated principal network. However, in many instances this was due to these schools not being selected by the Department for the Program’s pilot.

Participating schools expressed a desire to select local providers with whom they may have an existing relationship with, to ensure the Program meets the needs of the school and students. Participating schools who had unsuccessful outcomes during program delivery cited that they felt some providers did not have the appropriate expertise or willingness to cater program delivery to the needs of students and schools. The school nomination of local providers was noted by schools as an appropriate measure to maximise the agency of schools and their initial confidence in the Program. One non-participating school commented that the perception that they would be assigned a service provider was off-putting for their engagement.

#### Administration

A key objective of the Program was to ensure its delivery did not present an administrative burden for participating schools. For a majority of schools, the administrative workload was acceptable and did not present a burden. However, a minority of schools still identified that the administrative workload from the program was significant, drawing time away from teaching and learning activities. This is largely due to miscommunicated roles and responsibilities between schools and providers. Providers highlighted the importance for In-school coordinators to have the authority to make key administrative decisions so that the implementation and co-design of the Program progresses quickly and sufficiently before program delivery.

All stakeholders highlighted several challenges that impact on administrative processes and efficiencies. Inefficient service order forms and the ICT platform were identified as significant barriers that need updating or replacing to improve usability. Duplicate risk assessments, obtaining written parent consent and short-term contracts were also highlighted as barriers to the efficiency of the Program. Several Department and provider stakeholders highlighted the need to establish a Program reference group to increase stakeholder dialogue, share insights, and highlight opportunities to improve the Program.

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| A purple circle with black and white logo  Description automatically generated | “It’s a real burden. We’ve always had administrative components with other programs. It just feels like it’s a lot more because you’re having to manage so many different components.” Participating school |

#### The co-design of school-specific programs

The Program’s co-design process has been identified by schools as central to student success, as this collaboration allows schools to ensure that the Program content responds to the specific needs of their student cohort. Schools strongly valued the co-design process and the flexibility of the Program. Most stakeholders advocated for co-design to be completed face-to-face between schools and providers for efficiently building relationships and completing co-design.

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| A purple circle with black and white logo  Description automatically generated | “It's very collaborative in that we can identify issues that are being presented at school and then the provider can tailor their program to address those issues.” Participating school |

The Program was found to be less successful by schools that reported limited co-design with the provider, with the Program not aligning to student and school needs. Not tailoring the Program can also impact on the relationship with the school and In-school coordinator who may have decreased confidence in the Program to meet the needs of students and schools.

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|  | “There was a huge variation of what we wanted to what they provided, and they didn't tailor the Program. Because of that we had disengaged students who weren't at all interested in what was provided.” Participating school |  |

##### Student involvement in co-designing Individualised Learning Plans

Co-design also occurs between the provider and students once the Program begins, to give the students an opportunity to have input into what goals they would like to set for their participation in the Program and how they will achieve these goals. This also includes discussions and preferences about what excursions or activities the students may like to do. Students have the most involvement in this student-focused co-design through the formulation of their Individualised Learning Plans (ILP).

Student engagement in the ILPs varies based on the individual student and their initial responsiveness to the Program, according to most providers and participating schools. Students revealed that their involvement in goal-setting is positive as they are able to identify and set these goals based on their desired improvements for the personal and social skills at school. Though students were generally positive about the activity of goal-setting, providers identified that completing goal-setting in the first session can impact student engagement due to some students being overwhelmed by the 3 to 4 goals required to be set in ILPs, not having experience thinking about goals, or being wary of sharing personal goals with facilitators who they are unfamiliar with. This dynamic has delayed program start dates and resulted in missed program sessions.

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|  | “They asked for our goals, long term and short term, for the semester. We did it at the start. Some days, they ask us questions about those and how we thought we went with the goals.” Student |

#### Outcomes

Evidence suggests that there has been student success in all three areas of student engagement (behavioural, cognitive, and emotional engagement) as a result of the Program.

##### Behavioural and emotional engagement

Students reported improvements to their behavioural and emotional engagement included an increased ability to express emotions appropriately and maintain positive relationships, and schools noted fewer negative reports from teachers regarding student behaviour. Reflecting on what they had learned during the program, students also discussed experiences that relate to behavioural engagement, sharing that they had used emotional regulation strategies that they had been taught during the program to remove themselves from a situation where they were angry.

Figure 5: Students self-recorded improvements interacting with other students

4% no.
27% partially.
69% yes.Source: Perfect Presence Pilot Program Student Post-participation Survey Results n=81

Figure 6: Students self-recorded improvements interacting with teachers

27% no.
38% partially.
35% yes.Source: Perfect Presence Pilot Program Student Post-participation Survey Results n=81

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| A purple circle with black and white logo  Description automatically generated | “Behaviour data definitely showed us that there are fewer negative reports from teachers for most of the students.” Participating school |
| A purple circle with black and white logo  Description automatically generated | “They teach you how to be social, respectful, and resilient. I’ve become more respectful talking to new people.” Student |

##### Individual Learning Program (ILP) outcomes

ILPs are specific plans for students to implement strategies that will assist them to achieve their goals during the Program. Program facilitators collaborate with school staff at the beginning of each program to assess students on each of these criteria, assigning the student a current level and recording this on the Platform. Students are assessed again at the end of the Program, during an open conversation between the student and facilitator. Student outcomes can be recognised in the progress they made against their ILPs, both in regard to the specific goals that they set themselves during the co-design process and in regards to an assessment of the student’s self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, and social-management.

The figures below show that students reported improvement in self-awareness and self-management after involvement in the Program.

###### Self-awareness

Figure 7: ILP scores for self-awareness

###### Self-management

Figure 8: ILP scores for self-management

##### Outcomes reported by parents

Parents and carers noted they observed improvements in their child’s overall behaviour and wellbeing, particularly through their confidence and emotional regulation. However, parents and carers also reported having limited confidence that the Program is having long-term and lasting effects. Some also felt that the Program is not having the intended benefit of significantly improving student attendance or preparing students for life after school.

Parents and carers who participated in our group interviews reported that they were largely unfamiliar with the Program and its intended benefits prior to the session. However, they also felt that the introduction of the Program in schools was a positive development and that their student’s participation could have beneficial outcomes for their engagement at school. The limited awareness of parents and carers about the Program, coupled with the approval of the Program once they learned more about it, highlights there is a potential opportunity to improve parent and carer engagement either in program delivery or in the initial targeted promotion to parents and carers.

##### Cognitive engagement

Most participating schools shared that cognitive engagement, particularly engagement in learning, tended to be the least impacted by the Program of the three types of engagement. It was noted that despite improvements in wellbeing and social and emotional connection, engagement in learning for some students was still minimal, often due to a pre-existing and strong disinterest in classroom learning. Some participating schools and providers believed that the cognitive outcome measure was not as appropriate as behavioural and emotional engagement. Most participating schools also admitted that tracking cognitive engagement, particularly increases in learning and school grades, was not widely done at participating schools.

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| A purple circle with black and white logo  Description automatically generated | “The majority of students have indicated that the Program helped them connect with school through a sense of confidence and belonging but not so much academically.” Participating school |
| A purple circle with black and white logo  Description automatically generated | “The primary outcome of our programs is more around social capabilities. So cognitive impacts are something that we can’t really measure.” Provider |

However, students who took the post-participation survey recorded notable increases in their ability to learn new ideas and skills. The below result shows that most students who participated in the survey believed they had an improved ability to learn new ideas and skills.

Figure 9: Students self-recorded improvements to learn new ideas and skills

9% no.
26% partially.
65% yes.

Source: Perfect Presence Pilot Program Student Post-participation Survey Results n=81

##### Attendance outcomes

Due to the recency of the Program and data limitations, statistical findings on the Program’s impact on student attendance should be viewed as indicative. Analysis of the preliminary data provided by the Department suggests that average student attendance declined in the period the Program operated. Comparing attendance rates from the terms immediately before and after a student’s participation in the Program identified that, across all participants, the difference in the change in average attendance over time between participants and non-participants was 1.7% (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Comparison of student attendance rates before and after Program by participation rate with participating students aggregated (n=893)

Comparing attendance rates from the terms immediately before and after a student’s participation in the Program identified that students who participated in more than 50% of the sessions available to them experienced, on average, a declined attendance of 3%. By contrast, students who participated less than 50% (including those who did not participate at all) experienced, on average, a more significant decline in attendance of 9.5% (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Comparison of student attendance rates before and after Program by participation rate (line) (n=893)

##### Limitations of analysis of attendance data

This evaluation can only provide an indicative analysis of the impact of the Program on student attendance due to a number of limitations:

* Data incompleteness led to cases being dropped.
* No true control group and imbalanced comparison groups meaning that confounding variables may still exist. Students who participate more in the program may already be more likely to attend also.
* Strong heterogeneity in participants leads to difficulty in isolating the effect of the program.

##### Factors contributing to unsuccessful outcomes

School staff who experienced unsuccessful program outcomes defined an “unsuccessful” Program as having minimal to no positive impact on students and not meeting the needs of the school. These were a minority of school respondents.

There are varying reasons for why schools experienced unsuccessful outcomes, but two repeated reasons that were common to a school’s negative experience were the school feeling like they did not have appropriate input within the co-design phase and the school feeling that the individual facilitator delivering their program had limited skills and experience in engaging students. Some participating schools acknowledged that individual personal circumstances of students, such as experiences with mental health, may also impact on their engagement and outcomes of the Program.

Facilitator turnover is an additional factor that decreased the confidence of schools in the Program and its outcomes. Staffing changes by the provider during the Program meant that students needed to engage with a different facilitator in different sessions. This made it difficult for students to consistently engage and build a rapport with one facilitator, which eventually led to disengagement from the Program.

Some participating schools emphasised the need for providers to equip facilitators with appropriate training on trauma and its impact on the behaviour of young people. In-school coordinators observed that some facilitators were not capable of de-escalating situations or respectfully engaging with students, resulting in escalated emotional responses from students and disrupted program sessions.

##### Value for money assessment

The value for money analysis within this report indicates that the Program has a moderately positive value for money for the NSW Government. The program has a positive Net Present Value (value of Benefits minus Costs) under all discount rates (Figure 12). Any NPV above $0 means benefits exceed costs for the project.

Figure 12: Benefit Cost Ratios by Discount Rate



This also means that the program has a Benefit Cost Ratios (BCR) above 1.0 (ranging from 1.63 at 3%, to 1.32 at 7%). Any result above 1.0 means benefits exceed costs.

More than half of the benefits accrue at the time of the Program with the remainder of benefits expected to occur in the future. Similarly, the various activities that are tailored by each provider to meet the needs of students and schools, helps to provide a diverse range of participation benefits for the Program.

#### Program delivery and provider capability

Factors that were consistently identified by stakeholders as contributing to effective program delivery and positive outcomes include the individual facilitators who build strong rapport with students, arrangements that ensure follow up between schools and providers, session topics, respectful discussions, recreational activities, professional development opportunities, and positive reinforcements, particularly through graduation ceremonies. These factors were noted by students, parents, carers, schools, and providers as being consistently beneficial to meet student and school needs. Because these factors have contributed to the Program’s ability to meet the needs of students and schools, they should be reinforced and consistently applied during broader program delivery.

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|  | “The kids just love the facilitators. They’ve been absolutely fantastic in engaging and developing those relationships and they’ve garnered more respect in a few days from the students than some really senior teachers have in decades of teaching.” Participating school |
|  | “Graduation ceremonies really work well because it gave students a platform to be recognised and be valued for something that they’ve achieved.” Participating school |

Some iterations of Program delivery have included several innovative arrangements to inform program delivery, that students, parents/carers, schools, and providers have identified as contributing to positive outcomes. Some of these innovations have followed from schools delivering the Program for multiple terms, and iteratively improving the Program during the co-design process as they learn what works best for their specific student cohort.

Alterations to the Program design include reducing the class size, conducting all sessions off-site, and dividing program delivery by gender through separate cohorts and classes. Because these changes are specific to the context and needs of the schools as identified by both In-school coordinators and providers, they may not be able to be applied broadly due to the various needs and circumstances of students and schools. However, because schools noted improvements to student engagement following such alterations it is clear that the Program must remain flexible enough that it can be tailored to meet specific needs of students and schools.

##### Continuity of care

The need for continuity of care applies to the Program in instances where students make positive improvements due to their participation in the Program but are not provided with the appropriate follow up or supports to maintain these improvements. This has led to some students regressing in their personal wellbeing and engagement at school. Ensuring the continuity of care could alleviate these instances.

Qualitative data, including parent survey responses, noted opportunities to improve the continuity of care by extending the length of program delivery. This was due to some students disengaging from school after the Program’s conclusion.

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|  | “Sometimes it's not lasting. They can be really motivated whilst they're in the Program, and then slip back into old patterns.” Provider |

##### Wrap-around support services

Some providers have been able to support students with wrap-around support services, often at the request of schools that may have limited in-school services available to meet student needs. In some cases, students have been referred to psychological support and case management at the providers. Providers can also refer students to other relevant services based on the individual needs of the student or their families. As reported by schools and providers, students have been more receptive to engage in additional supports when they were recommended by, or connected through, the provider. This is due to the pre-existing rapport that students have developed with the facilitators through the Program.

#### Program expansion

Participating schools and providers were confident that there is a strong need for a free student engagement program in NSW secondary schools. Given the positive program outcomes, most participating schools and providers asserted that the Program could be expanded throughout NSW to meet this need.

The expansion of the Program will require targeted promotion for schools that are not currently aware of the Program or its aims. This was highlighted by some providers who cautioned the need for a clearly defined outline of the Program to avoid the misperception that the Program rewards students for poor behaviour. This misperception highlights opportunities to refine program promotional material so that it is framed positively as an opportunity for the constructive personal development of students.

Engagements with non-participating schools revealed a persistent lack of awareness about the Program and its outcomes for students and schools. Non-participating schools also noted that they had neither heard positives or negatives about the Program from colleagues, principal network meetings, or from Department communications. This was the basis for their school’s non-engagement in the Program. Non-participating school staff were eager to engage in the Program once informed, highlighting that schools would proactively employ free, early intervention, student engagement programs if provided enough detail and the opportunity to do so.

### Summary of findings

Findings are identified when there are significant trends uncovered across stakeholder engagements and discovery activities, which have an impact on stakeholder experience and involvement which may impact Program outcomes. Note that not all findings will correspond to specific recommendations, and in some cases are beyond the control of Program stakeholders.

The 36 individual findings that emerged during the evaluation of the Program have been aggregated here, grouped by the relevant section title and ordered in the sequence they appear in the structure of the report.

#### Program eligibility

**Finding 1:** Some providers are delivering the Program in principal networks far away from their central office which has caused significant logistical barriers.

**Finding 2:** Providers that deliver the Program in geographically distant principal networks are also unfamiliar with local wrap-around support services for students.

**Finding 3:** Schools are relying less on the Program Guidelines to inform the selection of students, instead preferring their own selection based on their knowledge of students.

**Finding 4:** Students were found to initially engage with the Program more effectively if it was framed and promoted to them as an opportunity for personal development.

**Finding 5:** Participating schools preferred to nominate their own local providers to deliver the Program rather than have an allocated provider who schools were unsure whether they could meet the needs of students and schools.

#### Administration

**Finding 6:** The current service order form does not have an automated calculation for providers when completing and submitting forms. Error in the service order forms has caused a significant administrative burden and delay for providers.

**Finding 7:** Current arrangements for providers to deliver the Program in schools on a term-by-term basis are presenting schools and providers with barriers to effectively implementing the Program and ensuring consistent program delivery throughout the school year.

**Finding 8:** Various stakeholder groups have found that there should be a collective platform for dialogue to identify opportunities for improvement in the Program.

**Finding 9:** The implementation of the Program in schools is more streamlined when In-school coordinators have the ability to make decisions and influence the quick implementation of the Program. This requires school staff with the relevant authority to complete approvals and implement the Program.

**Finding 10:** Numerous school staff found that the completion of separate risk assessments both by the school and provider was creating administrative duplication and an administrative workload for schools.

**Finding 11:** Obtaining written parent and carer consent has caused significant administrative burden for school staff when implementing the Program.

**Finding 12:** Some schools have overcome the barrier of obtaining parent and carer consent to enrol students in the Program by obtaining verbal parent and carer consent.

**Finding 13:** The ICT Platform has a limited usability and function which causes significant administrative delays for program stakeholders.

**Finding 14:** The training for using the ICT Platform available for stakeholders, particularly schools, is limited and causes delay in the completion of important tasks on the ICT Platform.

**Finding 15:** School staff with limited expertise on the ICT Platform have tried to seek help from providers. Unfortunately, the help providers can give to schools on the ICT Platform is limited, due to the differing layouts and information available to each stakeholder group.

**Finding 16:** Providers have found that the data available on the ICT Platform does not align with Sentral data which has caused some confusion for providers regarding the selection of students.

#### The co-design of school-specific programs

**Finding 17:** The majority of participating schools are highly supportive of the co-design phase as it allows for genuine collaboration between school and provider staff.

**Finding 18:** Completing co-design through face-to-face engagement has been found to have been more efficient for schools and providers to complete co-design and establish relationships, as opposed to virtual engagement.

**Finding 19:** Schools who have experienced unsuccessful outcomes noted a distinct lack of program tailoring by providers to meet the needs of students and schools.

**Finding 20:** Providers not tailoring their programs is impacting on the school’s confidence that the Program is having a positive impact on students.

**Finding 21:** Some students have been found to feel overwhelmed by the number of goals required for their ILPs, which can create disengagement and delay their completion.

**Finding 22:** Some students disengage from contributing to their ILPs or sharing their goals if a rapport has not been built between them and the facilitator.

**Finding 23:** Some schools engage with providers but do not proceed to program delivery due to lack of information given to them by providers on the goal of the Program, its target cohorts, and its impacts as experienced by other schools.

#### Outcomes

**Finding 24:** Parent awareness of and engagement in the Program was found to be limited, with numerous providers and schools highlighting opportunities to better engage parents and carers in the Program.

**Finding 25:** Having different facilitators delivering the Program across a school term limits the ability for students to build rapport with facilitators and actively engage in the Program.

**Finding 26:** Some schools experienced negative individual outcomes for students due to facilitators not being equipped with appropriate trauma-informed training, which resulted in escalated scenarios and disrupted program sessions.

#### Program delivery and provider capability

**Finding 27:** Students were found to have disengaged from the Program if their interests were not catered to within the activities of the Program.

**Finding 28:** Some schools reported that providers with expertise in recreational activities are not appropriately incorporating activities within program delivery that cater to the broad interests of students.

**Finding 29:** Programs that included professional development opportunities were found to have led to practical skills for students.

**Finding 30:** Graduation ceremonies were found to be a strong positive reinforcement for students, which provides rewarding opportunities for students, parents, carers, schools, and providers to celebrate student achievement in the Program.

**Finding 31:** The provision of wrap-around services and school staff involvement in program delivery has led to lasting impacts for students and schools where students have developed positive relationships with school staff present in the Program, which has increased their engagement with in-school supports and the broader school community.

**Finding 32:** Providers have had limited oversight on the impact the Program is having on student engagement at school.

**Finding 33:** Some providers are relying on second-hand accounts or qualitative reports from member of the school community to track the outcomes of individual students.

#### Program expansion

**Finding 34:** Principal networks were found to be important promotional channels and platforms where school representatives discuss student programs.

**Finding 35:** Some schools feel there is a perceived disconnect between participating schools and the Department which oversees the Program.

**Finding 36:** There have also been instances of miscommunication and a perceived lack of direction regarding the aims of the Program.

### Summary of recommendations

Recommendations are provided to improve the Program by alleviating potential barriers to Program stakeholders or Program delivery. The 25 recommendations that emerged during the evaluation of the Program were informed by key findings and stakeholder insights. These recommendations are aggregated here and have been divided as they relate to different sections within the report.

#### Program eligibility

**Recommendation 1:** Prioritise the selection of local providers, wherever possible, to deliver programs in the area of schools.

**Recommendation 2:** Ensure the program is framed positively to students at all stages of program delivery.

**Recommendation 3:** Allow schools to nominate local providers to tender for the Program, where appropriate.

#### Administration

**Recommendation 4:** Implement a new service order form that automatically calculates costings and can be easily amended by providers.

**Recommendation 5:** Ensure greater certainty on program lengths to allow providers to be able to implement 12-month contracts.

**Recommendation 6:** Implement a Perfect Presence reference group.

**Recommendation 7:** When identifying In-school coordinators, ensure schools prioritise the selection of school staff who have capacity and authority to make administrative decisions.

**Recommendation 8:** Implement a single risk assessment procedure with joint input by providers and participating schools to avoid duplication and reduce administrative workload for schools.

**Recommendation 9:** Include parent and carer verbal consent in the Program Guidelines and encourage its broader use by schools.

**Recommendation 10:** Update or replace the ICT Platform in its current form to improve usability for stakeholders.

**Recommendation 11:** Educate program stakeholders on how to use the ICT Platform effectively through recorded training modules.

**Recommendation 12:** Standardise the ICT Platform’s layout to be identical for schools and providers so that providers can give more effective support to schools.

**Recommendation 13:** To alleviate potential confusion on the selection criteria of students, ensure regular attendance data updates and transfers between Sentral and the ICT Platform.

#### The co-design of school-specific programs

**Recommendation 14:** Prioritise face-to-face co-design to allow for efficient completion of co-design and relationship building.

**Recommendation 15:** Reduce the number of required goals for students in their ILPs and complete ILPs over multiple weeks.

#### Outcomes

**Recommendation 16:** Seek opportunities to engage parents and carers in the Program.

**Recommendation 17:** To improve student rapport with facilitators, providers should reduce facilitator turnover by providing longer-term contracts and avoiding the inconsistent allocation of different facilitators to one school.

**Recommendation 18:** Ensure providers equip program facilitators with trauma awareness and de-escalation training.

#### Program delivery and provider capability

**Recommendation 19:** Ensure that co-design leads to tailored activities that directly address student interests, rather than drawing on existing standardised engagement activities.

**Recommendation 20:** Expand professional development opportunities in the Program so that participating students are better prepared for entry into the workforce.

**Recommendation 21:** Include graduation ceremonies in the Program design as a standard form of positive reinforcement.

**Recommendation 22:** Explore innovative alterations to the Program’s design to ensure the continuity of care, including increased post-program wrap-around supports.

**Recommendation 23**: Ensure providers have appropriate access to student data and outcomes after program delivery.

#### Program expansion

**Recommendation 24:** Conduct targeted promotion of the Program to principal networks, which includes school and student testimonials.

**Recommendation 25:** Improve communication between Department and schools to support delivery of the Program, including clarifying roles and responsibilities, oversight of Program execution, fostering stronger positive relationships between parties.

