

Survive to thrive: Securing the future of Jewish education in New South Wales

EDUCATION REVIEW COMMITTEE
MARCH 2022



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Authorship

Survive to Thrive: Securing the Future of Jewish Education in New South Wales has been authored in its totality by the independent Education Review Committee. Design and editing support has been provided by Mint Marketing.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Education Review Committee acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora nation and the Darramuragal people of the Kuring-Gai nation, on whose land the schools that form the subject of this report now operate. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Foreword

Education Review Committee

Chair David Gonski, AC



In a complex environment combining secular and religious instruction under heavy State and Federal Government policy oversight, Sydney’s Jewish day schools must strike a fine balance to provide engaged learning, development and growth opportunities for both students and staff.

Beyond the already fundamental task of education, they also act as foundations of community, offering continuity, social and cultural connection and literacy for Jewish people in New South Wales.

Five of these institutions – Emanuel School, Kesser Torah College, Masada College, Moriah College and Mount Sinai College – are assisted in operating within and navigating this environment by the Jewish Communal Appeal (JCA), which has been fundraising for the community since 1967. JCA helps those in need, including through school fee assistance and special needs funding.

In response to future challenges brought to light by JCA demographer Dr David Graham’s analysis of the 2016 Census and Gen17 Australian Jewish Community Survey data, JCA’s support extended in 2020 to the establishment of an Education Review.

Made possible by a project gift to JCA from a private donor foundation, the initial stage of this review involved the appointment of an independent management consultant – Nous Group – to gain a full understanding of the present landscape and opportunities in Jewish education. Nous surveyed the views and attitudes of Jewish parents with children attending any educational establishment in NSW, followed up by a series of focus groups with parents from a diverse set of schools.

With the schools reviewing Nous’ findings, JCA mobilised an independent Education Review Committee (ERC), of which I was appointed Chair. The ERC comprises:

Kelly Bayer Rosmarin

Stephen Chipkin

Jonathan Gavshon

David Gonski

Anna Green

Anne Hastings

Gary Pinshaw

Caryn Sandler

Jacquie Seemann

Allan Vidor

The ERC was extensively supported by JCA’s Head of Planning, Shari Lowe, JCA’s Grants and Planning Associate, Garric Lazarus and by CEO Alain Hasson. Further to Dr Graham’s analysis and the Nous report, information underpinning the review included:

- Previous communal education reviews
- School-specific data analysis and education operational knowledge from Executive Director of the Australian Council of Jewish Schools Len Hain
- Guidance from former Emanuel School principal Anne Hastings and the current presidents and principals of the participating schools.

Furnished with this data, our task for the past year has been to impartially assess and identify holistic opportunities and determine solutions for the Jewish day school system to assist in facing the coming decades. After extensive consideration, and conscious of the many past reports produced on the subject of Jewish day schools in NSW, we resolved not to dictate to the schools what should be done, nor to give overarching opinions on all aspects of the situation. Instead we determined to make a contribution by arming our Jewish education providers with the kinds of big-picture strategies they need to survive the challenges ahead and continue thriving.

We, as a committee, commend the strategies set out in this report to all relevant stakeholders.

JCA foreword

Alain Hasson
CEO, JCA



Shari Lowe
Head of Planning, JCA



The provision of Jewish education in NSW is of paramount importance to the community and to JCA.

We believe it is pivotal to a thriving community.



Over the years, JCA has commissioned various education reports, convened many forums and committees, and worked closely with each of the Jewish education providers to continually question and improve the collective services delivered to the community. With the release of the findings from the Census 2016 and Gen17 reports, it was important to check in again. As a result, Nous was appointed to assist JCA, and all the Jewish day schools, in understanding the education environment, including attitudinal data from parents.

The Nous findings led JCA to commission an independent Education Review Committee who could analyse the findings and curate solutions which will benefit community and strengthen the schools. Through its independence, the Education Review Committee was not beholden to past reports, nor existing complexities, but rather could take a future focus and make clear data-driven suggestions, for the overall advantage of community.

The Jewish day school sector is a complex one, and providing private school education in a communal environment poses many challenges. We hope that schools, parents and the community will see the advantages of the proposals outlined in this report, and show a continued commitment to strong Jewish education, supporting our education providers now and into the future.

We understand it is the Education Review Committee's intention to advocate for the planning and implementation of outcomes suggested in this report, and – as has been the case during the research and analysis phase of this project – JCA will assist the committee in whichever way possible to add value, allowing our community and the education providers to survive and thrive. We will maintain a cooperative role in this endeavor and, on behalf of community, look forward to continuing a collaborative partnership moving forward.

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Survive to thrive: Securing the future of Jewish education in New South Wales

Jews are defined by long traditions of community and education that have survived and thrived for millennia. In New South Wales, the fruits of this history are evident in Sydney's six vibrant and diverse Jewish day schools – each of which strives to provide quality education that meets student needs.

In particular, the five of these schools that receive annual funding from the JCA, which are the focus of this report, enjoy strong community ties, with continuous healthy renewal of term-limited board leadership from talented and passionate volunteers, ensuring ongoing relevance and engagement. Yeshiva College, the sixth Jewish day school, is not funded by JCA and has therefore not been included in the deliberations or the numbers set out in this report. Yeshiva College has 51 students enrolled.

A number of sources signal existential challenges on the horizon – principally:

- Analysis of 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census and Gen17 Australian Jewish Community Survey data, which:
 - Projects a continuing decline in the number of Jewish school-aged children through to 2045, with a major impact expected by 2031
 - Reiterates steady growth in secularisation throughout the Jewish population.
- The JCA-commissioned Nous report, which offers significant insight into community sentiments around Jewish education that require consideration and implementation including:
 - Community feedback pointing to unmet needs and expectations
 - Declining enrolments, particularly in primary school
 - High levels of fee assistance resulting in operating deficits and a heavy reliance on communal funding.

To continue thriving, Jewish education in NSW must first survive these challenges.

Survive to Thrive: Securing the Future of Jewish Education in New South Wales represents the ERC's major output. Focusing holistically on education provision within Jewish day schools, this report:

- Defines the current landscape, purpose and future challenges of Jewish day schools in NSW
- Proposes six key achievable 'Big Ideas' Jewish day schools can choose to adopt – with the support of JCA – to continue fulfilling their purpose in the face of future challenges
- Recommends additional ideas for further consideration
- Articulates 'next steps' towards implementation.

The ERC notes that its remit has been focused on the Jewish day schools. However, from its deliberations, the ERC believes it has ensured that Jewish education providers more broadly can also benefit from some of the Big Ideas. Progressing any of the Big Ideas will require collaboration among both the schools and members of the wider community who are passionate about Jewish education. This report is published with hope and confidence that – in coming together to meet big challenges with big ideas – the future of Jewish day school education remains bright in NSW.



EMANUEL SCHOOL



Moriah College

בית ספר הר המוריה

Masada
College



MOUNT SINAI COLLEGE
CREATING LEARNERS FOR LIFE

1.0

Context



The ideas presented in the Survive to Thrive report are informed by an extensive review of the current landscape of Jewish education in NSW and projections for its future based on Census 2016 and Gen17 Survey data, engagement with school presidents and principals, and the findings of the Nous Group report undertaken as the first stage of the Education Review. This section summarises relevant data and outcomes.

1.1 Current landscape

Figure 1 presents a snapshot of the current landscape of Jewish education in NSW. The state is home to six private Jewish day schools serving different segments of the Jewish community. This report focuses on the five Jewish day schools that receive communal funding through JCA. These five schools cater to a range of religious and Jewish educational ideologies, with enrolments currently at close to capacity. All figures referenced in this report refer to the five Jewish day schools listed in the Foreword.

In 2021, of the estimated 7,655 Jewish school-aged students in NSW, a total of 3,278 attend a Jewish day school, equating to a 42.8 per cent take-up. With a total of 3,658 places available at the schools, the maximum achievable take-up rate is currently 47.8 per cent.

Schools devote between 25 and 40 per cent of their weekly school hours to Jewish studies, including Hebrew, religious studies, traditions and customs, Israel studies and the celebration of Jewish festivals.

For the purpose of this report, it should be noted that the ERC is not commenting on each school's current individual challenges but has taken a holistic approach to providing solutions. For the greatest success, all schools should collaboratively and inclusively work, focusing always on communal outcomes.

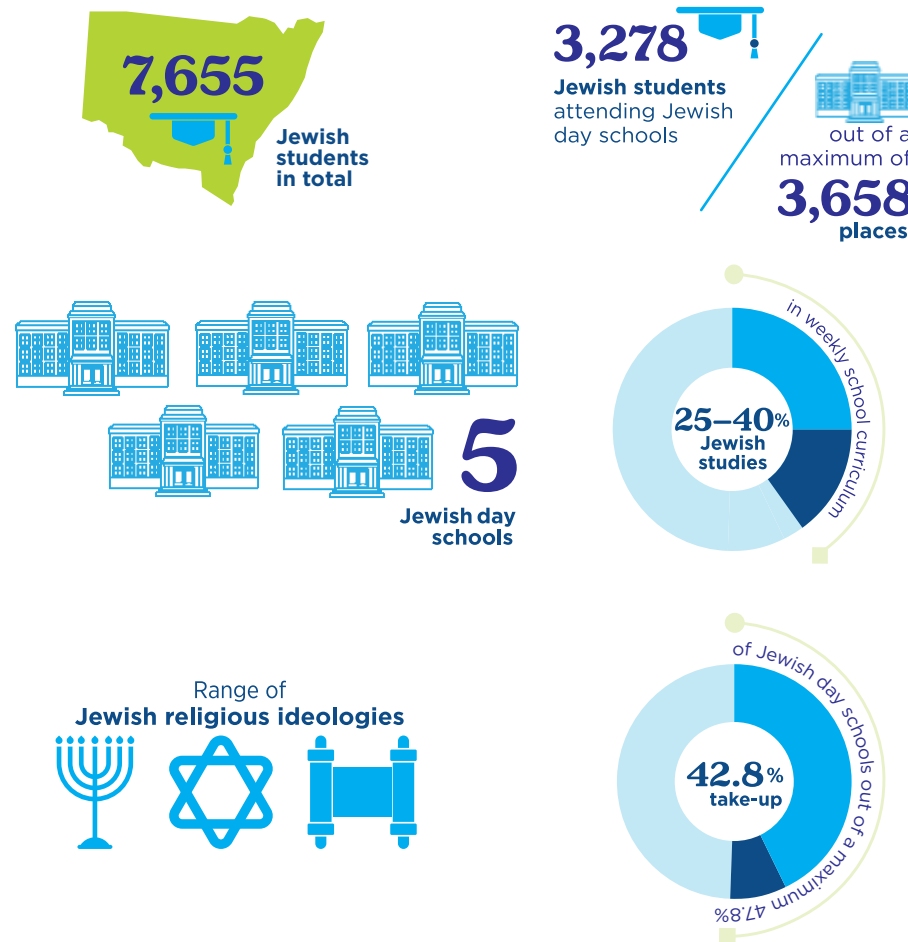


Figure 1. Snapshot of the current Jewish education landscape in NSW

1.1.1 Nous Group engagement

Future education sustainability is founded on an understanding of the current situation and opportunities. To gain this foundational knowledge as a starting point for the Education Review, JCA commissioned management consulting firm Nous Group in March 2020.

Nous was tasked with:

- Ascertaining the likely impact of socio-demographic changes on the Jewish day schools
- Examining the reasons families choose to send or not to send their children to Jewish day schools
- Capturing feedback on the extent to which the schools as a whole meet the needs of families attending those schools.

Initially postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Nous launched the survey in July 2020, achieving highly successful participation of 900 families representing over 2,080 past, present and future students. Eighty-three parents were further engaged via focus groups conducted for each Jewish day school in addition to government schools and other private schools, as summarised in Figure 2. Figure 3 depicts the range of schools attended by the children of survey respondents. Section 1.1.1.1 presents key findings from these processes.



Figure 2. Nous focus group configuration



Figure 3. Schools attended by children whose parents submitted survey responses

1.1.1.1 Survey and focus group findings

The survey was formulated to assess parents’ attitudes and drivers for choosing particular schools. Parents were asked to rank their satisfaction with their children’s schooling across each of the 14 categories shown in Figure 4.

As expected, respondents who identified as being more Orthodox were more focused on Jewish categories and more likely to choose a school offering a higher percentage of Hebrew and Jewish studies per school day.

Survey Satisfaction Categories	Student wellbeing and support	Academic education
	Culture	Jewish community connection
	School cohort of friends	Jewish education
	Jewish/religious ethos	Affordability
	Access to financial support	Co-curricular activities
	School location	School environment & facilities
	Personal family connection	Diversity of school community

Figure 4. Survey satisfaction categories

Figure 5 highlights the responses for families who have children currently enrolled in, or who have recently left a Jewish day school, or who plan to send their children to one in the future.

91 per cent of respondents ranked academic education as either very important or extremely important, while 67 per cent regarded Jewish education as very or extremely important.

These themes emerged consistently throughout the Nous engagement with the community. Families are setting a high bar for their children’s schooling, seeking world-class, accessible and equitable secular academic instruction, engaging and inspiring Jewish education, and a diverse and inclusive culture which produces well-rounded ‘mensches’, with strong governance and leadership at all levels.

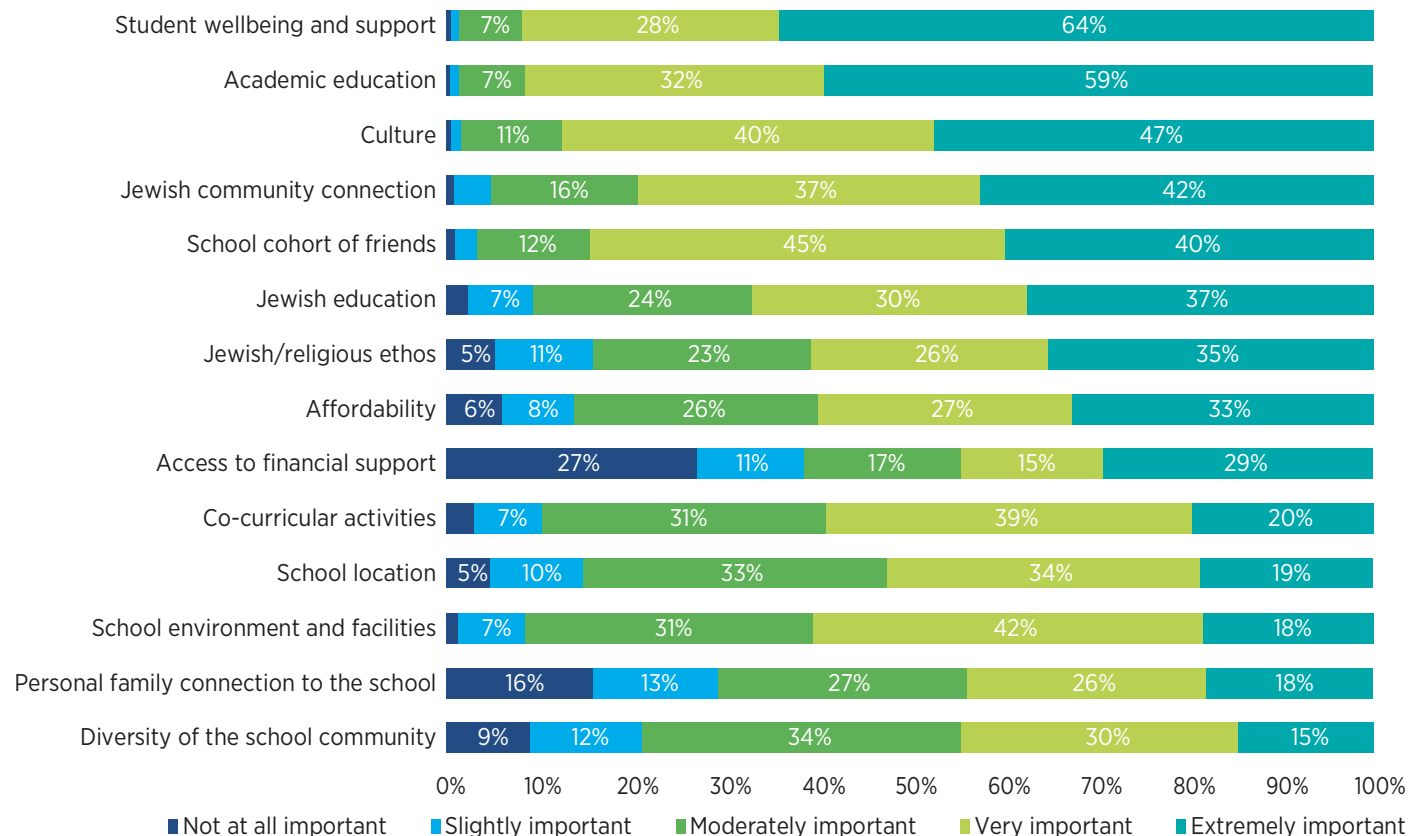


Figure 5. Importance of each factor in selecting a Jewish day school

The findings of Nous' 2020 community survey and focus groups highlighted three key challenges: socio-demographics, value proposition and affordability.

According to Nous:

Socio-demographics

Jewish students are increasingly attending government primary schools – with figures rising from 38 per cent in 2006 to 50 per cent in 2016.

With reference to attendance at Jewish high schools, these numbers remain relatively stable. However, a significantly larger proportion of students (23 per cent in 2016) are attending non-Jewish independent high schools versus those attending non-Jewish independent primary schools (10 per cent).

Based solely on changes in the number of Jewish school-aged children, and with schools maintaining their overall (primary and/or high) current market share of enrolments, it is projected that schools could be affected with a loss of students by 2031 as in Figure 6:

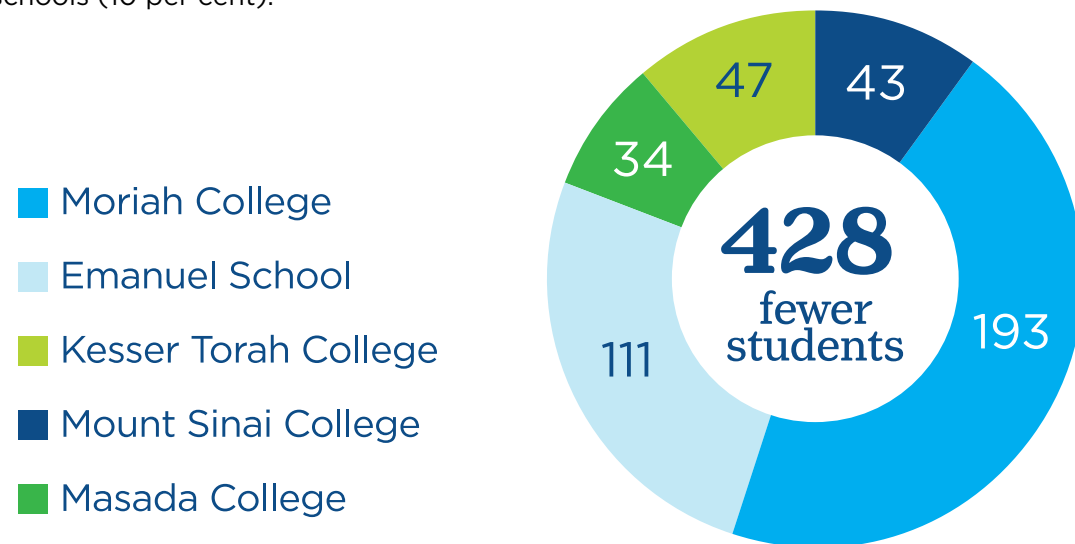
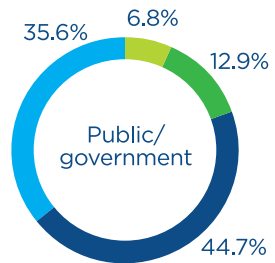
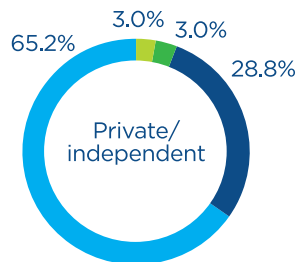
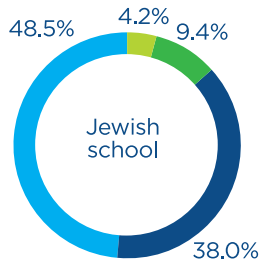


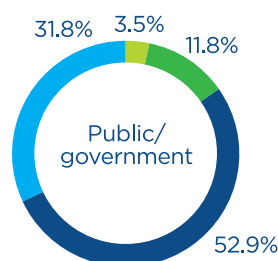
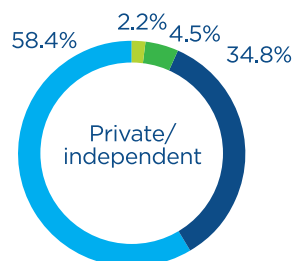
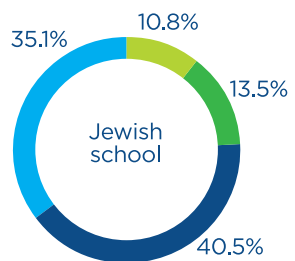
Figure 6. Projected loss of Jewish day school students, by school, by market share, 2031

Figure 7. Satisfaction Levels

Primary (by school type)



Secondary (by school type)



■ Very low (0-2) ■ Low (3-5) ■ Moderate (6-8) ■ High (9-10)

Value proposition

Jewish day schools need to demonstrate excellent value for their prices. Some high school parent feedback suggested that families are not seeing the value, and this is likely to result in fewer fee-paying families in future and potentially attrition of current students.

Families want a world class secular education. Sydney Jewish day schools are falling behind non-Jewish independent schools, and equivalent Melbourne Jewish day schools.

Some schools are no longer meeting the needs of families. Perceived declining academic performance, outdated school leadership, poor school culture (including bullying) and an uninspiring Jewish education were the main reasons families expressed dissatisfaction. Some families who can afford private education are choosing to send their children to other private schools instead of the Jewish day schools due to the higher perceived value in those offerings.

Affordability

Families are struggling to afford the cost of a Jewish independent private school education. Many families are being supported through fee assistance, requiring bank loans or relying on their own or other family members' wealth. Families increasingly need to decide between housing or school education.

Jewish day schools must deliver exceptional value for those families who can afford them. Some families are choosing other independent schools, as they see them as a better product, while other families are choosing a government school, as they can still experience a sense of the Jewish community without the fees.

Need for change

Nous concluded that community-level change is needed to ensure long-term sustainability of the Jewish day schools. Without this, there will be increasing competition among the schools for a declining cohort of Jewish students, resulting in poorly used infrastructure and ever-increasing demands on philanthropy.

These findings have implications for the purpose of Jewish day schools, explored in section 1.1.2.

Future challenges facing the schools are further explored in section 1.2 of this report.

1.1.2 Statement of purpose

The purpose of any religious school is, of course, subjective. Throughout the engagement of the ERC, members have considered the individual ethos, activities and cohorts of the five schools.



Each school delivers secular and religious education in distinctive ways. But with between 25 and 40 per cent of their weekly curriculum comprising Hebrew or Jewish studies, teaching of Jewish culture and literacy is a pervasive key driver of purpose, greatly informing parents' decisions to send their children to a Jewish day school.

While parents may choose a Jewish day school because they want their child to be raised within a specific ideology or with a particular level of Jewish literacy and culture, another major driver is the sense of belonging and community students acquire from socialising within a Jewish network. In addition, parents also seek their own social cohesion and community connections through the schools.

The Nous survey showed parents of both primary and high school students also desire a secular education of excellence. Giving the student community the best possible secular education start in life was a focus for 91 per cent of parents sending their children to a Jewish day school.

Based on the context described in section 1.1.1, the ERC has formulated the Big Ideas set out in section 2 of this report with reference to the statement of purpose for Jewish day schools opposite. While the ERC does not seek to dictate how schools should operate, schools are invited to consider and adopt this statement as a common basis for meeting the challenges of the future.

The purpose of a Jewish day school

Jewish day schools are the foundation of a diaspora community. Their paramount purpose is to provide a broad and deep education to their students. They are also communal centres – they must be welcoming, inclusive and engaged with other communal organisations.

While providing secular education of excellence, they must innovatively impart Jewish literacy – the language, structures, concepts and skills of Jewish life and culture, to engage students in a lifelong love of their roots, nurturing confident Jewish adults who continue to feel connected.

This is a critical part of what differentiates Jewish schools from other private schools.

The ultimate purpose of Jewish day schools is to meet the needs of the community they operate within. Limiting most of our school places along Orthodox lines may ultimately place the schools out of balance with community demand. Schools should seek to understand the social trends occurring within their own communities, reviewing their policies and practices in this light. By doing so, they will be best equipped to survive and thrive in the next 20 years.

1.2 Future challenges

The ERC has drawn on independent review of the 2016 ABS Census data, the Nous outputs, previous work within the NSW Jewish community and its internal education knowledge to classify the key overall challenges facing the schools into the six categories presented in Figure 8 and detailed in sections 1.2.1 to 1.2.6 of this report.

1.2.1 Demography

Since the 2006 Census, projections indicate a decrease in the size of the school-aged cohort over time – a change even more evident in the Census 2016 results. In particular, the ERC has considered cogent arguments based on the work of Dr David Graham who noted that the number of women of childbearing age indicates a total likely reduction of Jewish school-aged children from 2016 to 2031 of approximately 1,000 students and 2,000 overall by 2045. For more demographic information, refer to www.jca.org.au/publications.

To assist in understanding how changes such as these may affect the five Jewish day schools, the current 42.8 per cent ‘take-up rate’ (of Jewish students who currently attend Jewish day schools) can be applied to the projected numbers. By this method alone – without accounting for changing social dynamics, migration patterns and rising challenges in affordability, and absent intervention – the schools can anticipate 428 fewer students in the Jewish day school system by 2031 and 856 fewer by 2045. Figures 9 and 10 graphically portray these changes over time.



Figure 8. Key overall challenges facing Jewish day schools

c.428 fewer

students in the Jewish day school system by 2031

c.856 fewer

students in the Jewish day school system by 2045

c.\$10 million

loss in revenue by 2045

Should these projections prove correct, future student numbers will likely be insufficient for the Jewish day schools to remain sustainable at their current operating level. The ERC has calculated that, in this case, schools are likely to face a revenue loss in the order of \$10 million per annum in today's dollars. Given the already generous philanthropic landscape in the NSW community, it is unlikely that donations will be sufficient to make up for this shortfall and meet the future needs of the schools, and the schools therefore cannot remain reliant on the current level of philanthropic giving.

While demographics can shift in unanticipated directions, these projections are a sobering reminder of the fragility of enrolment patterns in Jewish day schools.

“Affordability is a huge consideration. It's actually everything. We didn't set out to send our kids to a private school, but we have made, and will continue to make sacrifices to allow my child to thrive.”

Parent, Nous report

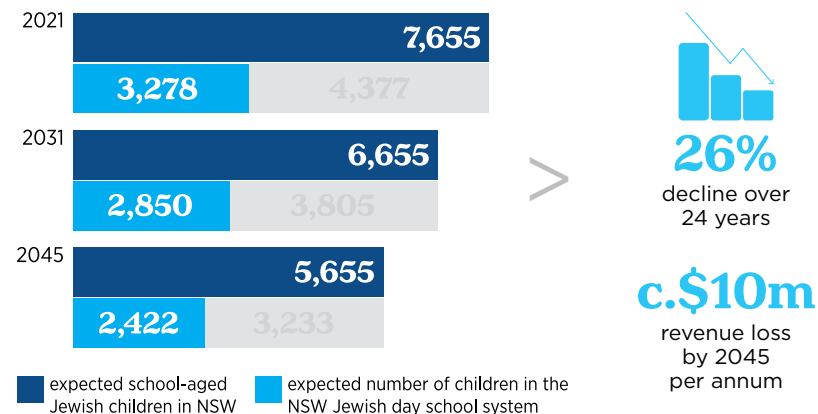


Figure 9. Demographic changes from 2016 to 2045

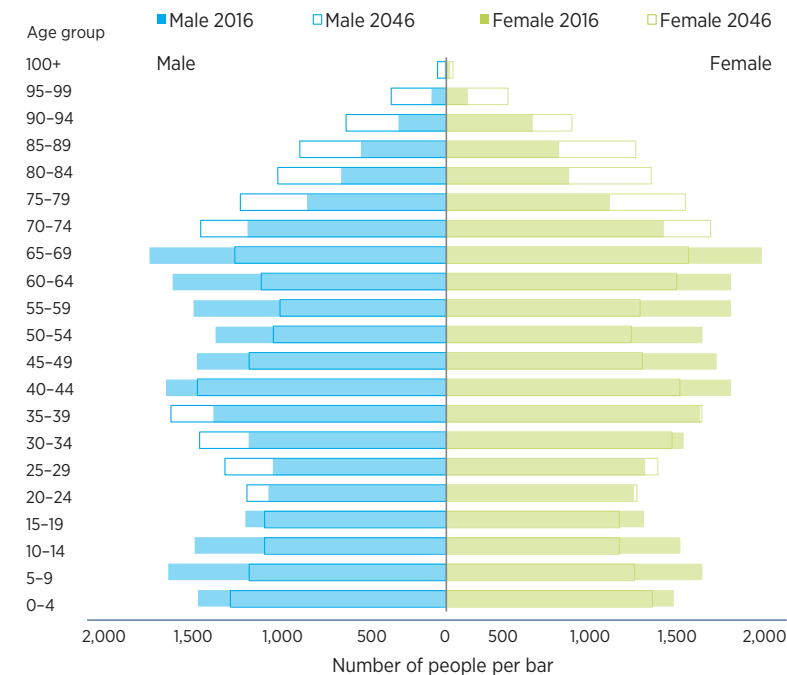


Figure 10. Projected population graph

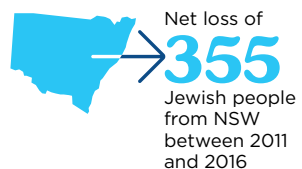
1.2.2 Migration

As with all groups, Jewish migration comprises arrivals and departures, with the difference between the two yielding ‘net migration’. Arrivals and departures are themselves made up of two sub-components: *international* movements between Australia and other countries, and *intranational* movements between NSW and other states and territories. While the Census provides excellent data on international arrivals and intranational arrivals and departures, data on international departures are not readily available. Net NSW migration can therefore not be calculated with absolute accuracy.

As shown in Figure 11, however, the number of international Jewish arrivals has been steadily decreasing since the mid-1990s. While international arrivals from many countries have modestly increased by an average of 209 per year, they are likely to be matched by international departures – especially to Israel – and are, in any case, dwarfed by the significant reduction in arrivals from South Africa, the most important source of Jewish migration to NSW in recent decades by far.

Based on Census data, intranational migration between NSW and the rest of Australia indicates a net loss of 355 Jews of all ages between 2011 and 2016, primarily to Victoria (211) and Queensland (109).

In March 2020, Australia closed its international borders to all non-citizens and non-residents as a health measure in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.



The exact implications of this closure on net migration will become clear only in several years’ time and it is unclear whether the effects of COVID-19 will increase Jewish immigration to NSW from South Africa or elsewhere.

The 2021 Census conducted in August of this year will also provide updated figures available towards the end of 2022.

Based on the data available and recognising the gaps within it, Jewish population projections for NSW must therefore be assumed at net zero migration, where total arrivals are balanced by total departures. As any change in migration to NSW in the current period is likely to be relatively small, even if above net zero, it cannot be relied on to buffer any of the demographic shortfalls predicted in section 1.2.1, particularly in relation to school-aged children.

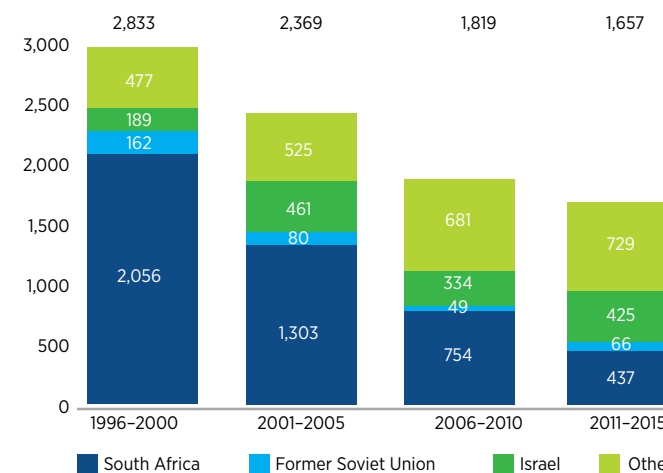


Figure 11. Estimated total number of international Jewish arrivals to NSW by five-year period

Inclusiveness and flexibility will underpin sustainability.

8.0%

of NSW Jewish people shift towards secularisation in their lifetimes



23%

intermarriage rate



34%

of children with mixed parents being raised as Jews in 2016



1.2.3 Secularisation

Secularisation is the social shift in identification away from religious and towards non-religious positions. While no single measure reflects this trend, various indicators can be used to develop an understanding of the process within a population.

One method to assess shifts in Jewish identification over time involves surveying people on the kind of Jewish upbringing they experienced versus the kind of Jew they are today. The Gen17 Survey shows that 69 per cent of NSW respondents are 'non-movers', retaining the same position today as they experienced growing up. For all other respondents – 31 per cent – their current position differs from their upbringing position.

The data show that 12 per cent of NSW respondents have moved towards more Orthodox positions – what might be termed moving 'right' – while 20 per cent have moved towards less Orthodox or 'left' positions, yielding net movement of eight per cent leftward. Therefore, while Jewish identity is fairly static over time, with most people retaining their position throughout their lives, movement overall is leftward to secularisation, with a gradual shift away from Orthodoxy.

Another source indicating change in identity over time is the Census, which provides a snapshot of the Jewish population every five years. Although the Census does not report on the specific level and nature of Jewish identity, it does reveal data on intermarriage, which is another indicator of secularisation. It shows that, in 2001, among all Jewish people in a couple in NSW, 20.4 per cent did not have a Jewish partner. Over the last 15 years, this proportion has increased in every successive census, reaching 24.8 per cent in 2016.

Gen17 allows us to calculate the rate which echoes this trend, showing that, among all respondents who married in the 1990s, 13 per cent married a non-Jewish person. For the most recent period, 2010 to 2017, the equivalent figure is 23 per cent.

One outcome of this trend is evident in the identity of children. The census data show that intermarried couples are far less likely to report their children as Jewish than in-married couples. For example, in 2016, the census showed that 97 per cent of the children of in-married Jewish couples were being raised Jewish, compared with 34 per cent of children with only one Jewish parent.

As described in Section 1.1.1.1, more-Orthodox respondents are more focused on Jewish education and more likely to choose a school offering a higher percentage of Hebrew and Jewish studies per school day.

Based on the available data, the clear overall trend over time toward secularisation in the Jewish population of NSW may therefore have two effects on demand for Jewish day schools:

- 1. The type of education sought may differ from historical patterns due to the trend away from Orthodoxy. Schools must closely review communal needs and adapt accordingly to ensure students of all ideologies can be educated within the system.**
- 2. Total enrolments may decline given the increase in intermarriage, which is associated with a lower rate of children raised as Jews.**

According to 2016 Census data shown in Figure 12, approximately 78 per cent of the NSW Jewish population have a pre-tax household income of less than \$312,000 per annum. This highlights the affordability challenge.

under \$312k




household income for 78% of Jewish population

\$22k




average annual school fees per child

80%



of school budgets allocated to staff salaries

44%



increase in average fees since 2010

1.2.4 Affordability

Given average annual Jewish day school fees approximating \$22,000 per child, income tax and the high costs of living in Sydney, affordability is a predictable issue. The increase per annum in these school fees has, over the last ten years, significantly eclipsed the rate of overall wage inflation, with an increase of 44 per cent since 2010. This aligns rather with the wage increases as mandated for teachers by the NSW Government.

This situation has, in some circumstances, given rise to a trend of school fees being paid by grandparents rather than parents. While this can alleviate some affordability issues, it is heavily dependent on grandparents' financial capacity, the number of grandchildren they have, and other considerable costs which can arise such as care and health.

Under current operations, however, Sydney's Jewish day schools are not in a position to reduce these fees in line with market capacity. The schools generally reach a 'break-even' financial position, with revenue comprising fees paid by parents and carers, government grants and communal assistance through donations, and approximately 80 per cent of budgets allocated to staff salaries.

While the NSW Jewish day schools have endeavoured to maintain the lowest possible fees for as long as possible, and are priced lower than many other private independent schools - including other Jewish day schools in Victoria - they ultimately provide a private, independent, Jewish education and, as with all

private independent schools in Australia, the costs of attendance are therefore high compared to essentially 'free' public schools.

With the demographic, migratory and cultural pressures detailed in sections 1.2.1 to 1.2.3 likely reducing the number of prospective students for Jewish day schools in coming decades, exclusion of additional potential students from the already diminished pool due to unaffordable fees with no capacity for cost reduction is a significant compounding factor which will also intensify pressure on the already over-extended discounting mechanisms detailed in section 1.2.5.

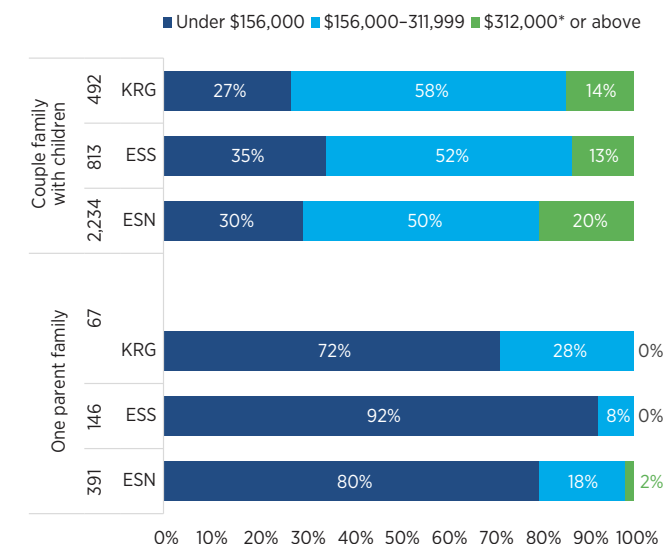


Figure 12. Incomes by area for households with children

KRG = Kuringai
ESS = Eastern Suburbs South
ESN = Eastern Suburbs North

*\$312,000 or above is the uppermost ABS data income band. The ERC has calculated that anything lower than this, for families with 2 or more students, for which school fees are being paid, would have an affordability challenge, unless other sources to fund all or part of the school fees are available to them.

c.\$15.7 million p.a.

in discounts

1/3 of students

receiving some form of discount

17.9%

assistance against revenue

\$10.2 million

of shortfalls in 2019

1.2.5 Discounting

In the context of school fees causing an affordability problem for many, an extremely generous level of discounting is currently undertaken in comparison to other private independent schools, through scholarships, bursaries, sibling discounts and fee assistance. Totalling approximately \$15.7 million annually, these funds are sourced primarily from the community – via both JCA and direct school donations – with the remainder funded by cross-subsidies from the schools’ own operations. The process to award these discounts is complex and time-consuming, and lacks transparency.

Although Jewish day schools are private independent schools, more than one third of their students receive discounting of some kind. With regards specifically to fee assistance, 640 students received some level of support in 2021, which is almost 20 per cent of both primary and high school students. The overall percentage of assistance measured against revenue for the Jewish day schools is 17.9 per cent, whereas other private independent schools measure from one to eight per cent at maximum.

In the context of fewer enrolments and less revenue driven by the other challenges outlined in this section, this level of support is not sustainable. It contributes to large operating deficits which, in turn, leads to over-reliance on high levels of community funding to maintain solvency. In 2019 alone, there were \$10.2 million of shortfalls across the Jewish day school system. As the pool of available students likely decreases, the use of fee assistance as a competitive advantage between individual Jewish day schools is especially counterproductive.

“**As a community we really should be thinking about how the next generation will be able to afford Jewish day school fees in Sydney**”

Parent, Nous report

1.2.6 Geography

Rising rents and house prices in historically Jewish areas of Sydney make it increasingly difficult for young families to remain within the vicinity of the cluster of Jewish day schools, driving the community to spread into areas which traditionally have not been chosen by Jews.

Eastern Suburbs North, for example – and particularly the Waverley and Woollahra Municipal Council areas – has traditionally housed Sydney’s largest Jewish sub-population by a significant margin. However, the rate of growth has been far stronger in Eastern Suburbs South, including Randwick, Kingsford and Maroubra, over the period from 1991 to 2011. Both areas are now growing at a similar rate, with the 2016 Census showing a 2 per cent growth in the north and three per cent in the south from 2011 to 2016. Areas such as Maroubra and Botany Bay have tripled in Jewish population size since 2011. Other areas such as Waterloo and as far north as Byron Bay have seen growth since Census 2006.

The ERC believes the price of housing and value for money are the main drivers of these changes, with median house prices in Botany at \$1.68 million while the median house price in Rose Bay is approximately \$4.425 million. It is also anticipated that, with new and more flexible ways of working exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, people may have more geographical freedom than ever before.

\$1.68 million

median house price
in Botany

vs



\$4.435 million

median house price
in Rose Bay

There has been a significant improvement in educational outcomes, particularly in some government schools at primary level, in many geographic areas of Australia.

Parents may therefore opt out of the Jewish day school system entirely due to geographic and logistical factors, with closer government schools presenting a more attractive option, particularly if there is a large Jewish cohort. Schools must consider this challenge in the future, and whether they are in the right location to meet community needs.

1.2.7 Conclusion

A variety of data have shown the same trends for the last 15 years: a potential downward turn in school-aged children, a petering out of migration, a shift towards secularisation and an increase in the cost of attending Jewish day schools at a rate higher than wage inflation, with the cost of property and living around the schools driving families into more distant areas. While these trends themselves cannot readily be influenced, understanding them can allow Jewish education in NSW to respond effectively in areas that can be changed.



2.0

Big Ideas



Based on the extensive consideration of the Education Review Committee (ERC), this section seeks to arm Jewish education providers with big-picture strategies needed to survive the challenges ahead and continue thriving.

Big Ideas

The findings of the *Nous* report and other data surveyed in section 1 reveal the existential threats Jewish day schools will face in coming decades if the status quo persists. As part of its report, *Nous* highlighted a number of actions, including:

1. Each school should:
 - 1.1 Review its own strategy based on the initial *Nous* findings
 - 1.2 Review the findings and prepare an action plan to resolve short-term challenges
 - 1.3 Ensure its board and executive leadership are well-placed to deliver any action plan
2. With JCA support and facilitation, the schools should collectively consider opportunities for collaboration in the future
3. JCA should continue to support education and connection for families outside the Jewish day schools
4. JCA should consider a communal approach to fee assistance
5. Through an independent Education Review Committee (ERC), the wider community should consider long-term options for the education of Jewish people in NSW.

With the schools currently responding to actions 1.1 to 1.3 and JCA continuing action 3, the ERC and this report represent a response to actions 2, 4 and 5.

Informed by *Nous*' findings, this report centres around three key focus areas which the ERC believes are the sustainability levers for meeting future challenges, as shown in Figure 13.



Figure 13. Three key focus areas to meet future challenges

Each of the initiatives proposed in this report target at least one key sustainability lever, and encompass more than one where possible.

To secure the longevity and sustainability of the schools in the face of the challenges identified, this report seeks to provide constructive measures that will allow the schools to continue serving the community into the future. Addressing the key focus areas, these measures take the form of six 'Big Ideas' extensively considered and analysed by the ERC, comprising:

1. Financial Assistance Central

A centralised process managing financial assistance

2. The Centre for Education Excellence

A place for teachers within the Jewish day schools to advance their professional development and network and for assisting and promoting teaching of Jewish studies

3. Resource Collaboration Group

A cross-school group aimed at reviewing all possible sharing of resources, as well as buying power and knowledge sharing

4. The Community Grants Scheme

A specific initiative to enhance enrolments, starting with Kindergarten

5. The Jewish Day Schools 'Scorecard'

A school-directed measurement process to assist with continual improvement

6. The Jewish Education Alliance Sydney

An integrated solution to assist all Jewish education providers with implementing initiatives which benefit the community

Described in detail in sections 2.1 to 2.6, each Big Idea has been designed as a separate initiative. However, the ERC hopes that the schools will support them collectively in order to underpin future sustainability of the Jewish day school system. Big Idea 6, the Jewish Education Alliance Sydney, brings all the solutions together in order to support the schools in their daily focus of education delivery.

2.1 Financial Assistance Central

A centralised
process managing
financial assistance



Meeting
community needs



Capacity
optimisation

As detailed in section 1.2 of this report, the unsustainable financial assistance and discounting practices currently prevalent across the Jewish day school system:

- Far exceed the level of assistance offered by other independent NSW schools, totalling approximately \$8 million of fee assistance and a further \$7.7 million of discounting annually
- Contribute to large operating deficits (\$10.2 million in 2019) which, in turn, leads to over-reliance on high levels of community funding to maintain solvency
- Are awarded through complex time-consuming and opaque processes and criteria that differ from school to school, duplicating resources, and are used counterproductively as a competitive advantage between Jewish day schools
- Will be exacerbated by demographic changes and lost revenue of approximately \$10 million from potential lower enrolments by 2031 (an aggregate loss of circa \$4.7 million to the schools allowing for the resulting reduced costs).

2.1.1 Solution

The ERC recommends establishing an independent financial assistance platform – ‘Financial Assistance Central’ – with a strong and holistic focus on sustainability to manage all financial assistance and discounting decisions across the Jewish day school system and to provide a consistent and fair process to all families seeking support. Over time, this platform would assist in smoothing unmaintainable levels of discounting in order to underpin sustainability.

2.1.2 Purpose

Financial Assistance Central represents a process-driven approach to test and link fee assistance and other discounts to the sustainability of each school. Maintaining robust assistance for families in need, it will also enhance simplicity, transparency and consistency across the Jewish day school system, refocusing the current schools-based system into one that is more parent and student-centred.

Benefiting both schools and the broader community, Financial Assistance Central would become the independent platform overseeing the level of discounting within the community and linking it to overall sustainability of the schools.

By centralising the process, the whole community is assured of a fair and consistent system and appropriate allocation of scarce funds to the students most in need, while schools are freed from this complex and time-consuming task. Parents may also prefer their situations to be assessed by an independent rather than school-based body.

2.1.3 Proposal

The ERC believes the path to sustainability requires a combination of:

1. **Increasing fee income, including by increasing, where appropriate, the number of full fee-paying students**
2. **Reducing costs, including by review and reduction of overall quantum of discounting**
3. **Securing a realistic annuity stream from the growth of foundations.**

This Big Idea encompasses the review and possible reduction of overall discounting to achieve a more sustainable future pathway. It proposes a more consistent and equitable process via the newly formed, independent Financial Assistance Central organisation which will, in consultation with the schools and their foundations, establish and apply agreed criteria for fee assistance eligibility. All fee assistance and related discounts and bursaries will be determined through Financial Assistance Central, irrespective of how those fee discounts are to be funded. The body will be the first decision point in recommending the levels of financial assistance. This rigour will test and help underpin the sustainability of the schools by keeping financial assistance within sustainable parameters.

Schools will continue to manage their staff discounts

and merit-based scholarships. Sibling discounts will also be left to the schools, but as they can be regarded as a form of financial assistance, should be considered further by the schools for potential future inclusion in the Financial Assistance Central process.

Within the limits of sustainability, the purpose of financial assistance should be to support parents who cannot otherwise afford to pay full fees. Shifting responsibility for awarding assistance to an impartial body enables a consistent process for assessing financial need and prevents the competitive use of over-discounting by any of the Jewish day schools as a means of attracting students. This enables healthier competition between schools in the areas of quality educational product offering, daily operations and attracting families, increasing focus on and accountability for these outcomes.

This Big Idea will also allow more strategic and flexible allocation of community funds to support financial assistance, taking into account demographic changes, school capacity, school marginal costs, school sustainability and current and expected challenges across the portfolio. It will enable a holistic view of the Jewish day school education environment, which will highlight the needs and gaps in supporting the schools.

Sustainability of the Jewish day schools will be at the forefront of Financial Assistance Central operations, ensuring schools can survive and thrive. Section 2.1.3.1 outlines some of the processes proposed for the body.

“The process for financial assistance asks for a lot of very private information. There can be a lot of shame and trauma attached... and we’re not even sure we’d qualify

Parent, Nous report

2.1.3.1 Process

Financial Assistance Central will assess defined sustainability data provided by the schools on an ongoing basis. This will standardise reporting, including all discounts provided, enabling greater understanding and efficiencies and optimising reliance on communal funding. Access to this level of detail will allow Financial Assistance Central to assist the schools with gradually smoothing the levels of discounting and strengthening their financial position.

A core objective will be to ensure parents feel comfortable and confident in the integrity, confidentiality and transparency of the process to encourage financial assistance applications where required.

While it is recommended that implementation initially commences with Kindergarten to help build enrolments and strengthen the schools ‘from the bottom up’, a fully resourced Financial Assistance Central is intended to take on responsibility across the years. During the transition, it will liaise with the schools to maintain oversight of financial assistance decisions. This should commence with financial assistance directly linked to JCA funding and any new financial assistance grants to students across the schools.

Financial Assistance Central will liaise with schools for relevant school-specific information, including enrolments, vacancies and sustainability measures. It will also liaise with JCA and the schools to assess the amount of funding available to support financial assistance in a particular year.

Proposed key operating principles for Financial Assistance Central are shown to the right.

2.1.4 Funding and governance

The ERC envisions Financial Assistance Central as an independent entity of excellence separate from JCA and any of the schools. Resourcing is proposed via a small, specialised group structure initially funded by JCA and donors, with a transition to funding from overall financial assistance, as the role and responsibility shifts from the schools to Financial Assistance Central. To support the new structure, there should be representation from both the schools and JCA. All discounting will be made within the limits of available community funding.

Key Operating Principles for Financial Assistance Central

Financial assistance should be used to address genuine family need in a seamless and transparent process

Total financial assistance over time should not exceed current levels

Financial assistance will be available within schools’ current stream structures – not as a means to increase streams

While additional funding may be required for fee assistance in initial years, the increased strategic and financial rigour of the process is expected to compensate for this with improved school financial performance over time

The overall allocation of JCA community funding for financial assistance will be strategically based on an annual assessment, including the additional cost of adding a student to an existing stream at a school and its sustainability position

While financial assistance for a student is expected to apply for multiple years, grants will be reviewed annually by Financial Assistance Central to test and adjust for changed family circumstances

While years not included in the initial tranche of this initiative will be grandfathered, annual reviews will still be required to ensure eligibility performance over time

2.1.5 Challenges

Schools will play a pivotal role in the success of this Big Idea, which will reduce their reliance on unstable communal funding and underpin sustainability. It will also give parents an impartial and independent platform that levels the playing field of financial assistance available across the Jewish day school system in NSW.

Both schools and parents will need to understand the rationale for departure from the current system. This change management can be achieved with transparency and education.

JCA must also support the initiative, which will involve a new way of allocating funding to the schools, as well as some funding for the operations of the new body. Key donor support will also assist likelihood of success, particularly for the implementation stage.



**Meeting
community needs**



**Capacity
optimisation**

2.1.6 Outcomes

The outcomes of this Big Idea will include:

- A single holistic financial assistance process for the whole Jewish day school student community
- An independent entity assuring parents of a fair and equitable process, giving increased comfort in confidentiality of circumstances
- Removing a time-consuming and often contentious process so schools can focus on their daily educational offering
- Reduction in financial assistance over time to underpin sustainability and reduce reliance on communal funding
- Identification of gaps in market and understanding of trends
- Introduction of a sustainability focus
- Application of community funds to optimise outcomes
- Removal of the use of fee assistance as a competitive advantage
- Consistency and transparency on agreed school metrics for donors, while ensuring funds are linked directly to families in need.

2.1.7 Next steps

Next steps for the implementation of this Big Idea include collaborating with schools:

- To understand their current financial assistance and discounting process
- To agree eligibility criteria for all financial assistance
- On existing sustainability data
- On fee structures and how they are constructed
- On systems they require in order to assess the marginal costings of additional students
- On updating financial information to ensure the assumptions upon which this report remain current
- To liaise with JCA and major donors to receive their support and work through implementation.

2.2

The Centre for Education Excellence

A place for all teachers within the Jewish day schools to advance their professional development and network, and for assisting and promoting the teaching of Jewish studies.



Meeting
community needs



Sustainability
and efficiency

The community is seeking to endow the next generation of Jewish children with quality in both secular academic learning and Jewish literacy and culture. As established in section 1.1.1.1 of this report, excellence in both fields is a significant factor for parents choosing Jewish day schools. However, the Nous report undertaken as the first stage of the Education Review found that many families feel some schools do not currently meet desired standards of excellence in secular instruction, nor that their children are sufficiently inspired by or committed to their Jewish studies.

For families to continue choosing a Jewish day school education, the schools must be highly regarded in the community as excellent places of learning across all domains: secular academic and Jewish learning, as well as general wellbeing and extracurricular activities. Appendix A of this report seeks to define this 'excellence' in the context of Sydney's Jewish day schools.

2.2.1 Solution

The ERC proposes the establishment of the Centre for Education Excellence – an organisation which focuses on assisting innovative educators to improve secular learning, as well as attracting, sourcing and training teachers in relation to Jewish learning.

2.2.2 Purpose

Attaining education excellence requires high-performing, enthusiastic, inspiring and continuously improving teachers. The Centre will engage in two key activities to drive these outcomes:

- **Professional Development:** Elevating teacher effectiveness and motivation by offering dynamic professional growth, development, expertise-sharing and networking opportunities for:
 - Educators in secular fields
 - Educators in Jewish studies
- **Jewish Educator Excellence:** Leveraging this professional learning and complementing it with a proactive talent identification, attraction, support, development and retention program to expand the pool of high-performing Jewish studies teachers.

The international experience of institutions such as Prizmah in the United States and Partnership for Jewish Schools (PaJeS) in the United Kingdom, as explored in section 2.6.3 of this report, shows that an effective epicentre of learning for teachers builds teacher expertise, confidence and knowledge of the curriculum, along with a sense of cooperation and collaboration among schools.

Figure 14 represents the core purposes and outcomes of the Centre.

An innovative plan to support the schools in achieving excellence, this Big Idea will:

- Support the attainment of excellence in Jewish and secular learning by facilitating teacher professional growth, shared learning and networking across the schools
- Identify potential high-performing educators of Jewish learning and encourage and support pre-service training
- Attract the best teachers through sponsoring professional development and assistance
- Promote a culture of sharing and collaboration among all teachers in the Jewish day schools.

The Centre is designed to benefit all teachers in Jewish schools and drive collaboration, enhancing school standards of excellence and educational and communal outcomes. Shared learning and expertise among personnel in schools will improve pedagogy, student engagement and teacher efficacy, enabling schools to reap the benefits of smaller, more familiar networks.

The Centre will contribute to the task of developing and updating teaching policies while schools will retain oversight and independence, therefore saving time and money from resourcing and administration.

To assist in sourcing educators and promoting teaching of Jewish studies, the Centre could also enlist the assistance of the University of Sydney's Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies. This synergy could open up undergraduate and postgraduate opportunities for candidates from the Centre to both the Jewish day schools and to other Jewish education providers in NSW.

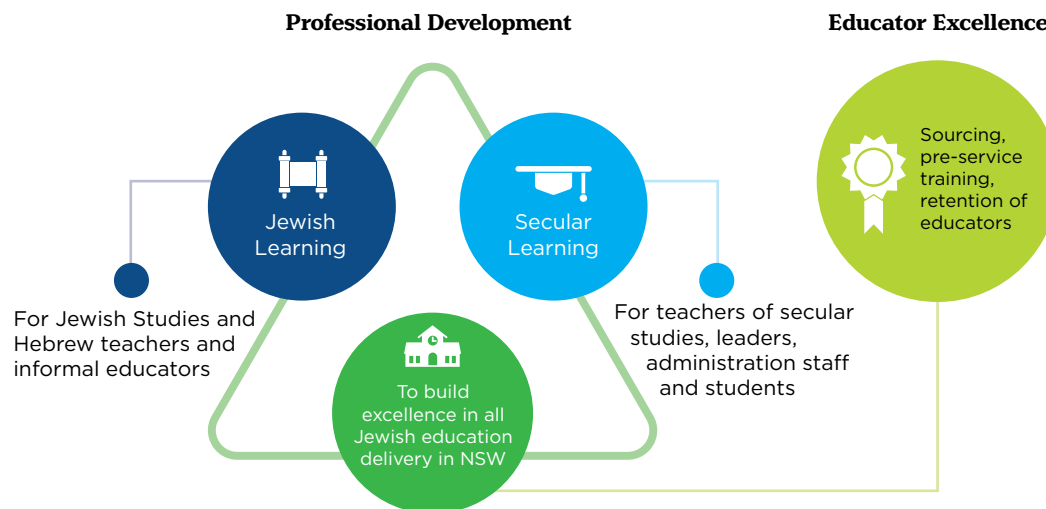


Figure 14. The Centre for Education Excellence

2.2.3 Proposal

The Centre for Education Excellence has two core goals: assisting education providers in encouraging and maintaining educators equipped to provide excellence in teaching, and establishing a place for teachers to advance their professional development and network.



In summary, the Centre's secular learning activities and programs would be available to all teachers in Jewish day schools and could include:

- Professional learning opportunities, including induction and professional learning and upskilling sessions for all relevant teachers and leaders in Jewish schools. This would encompass:
 - Subject-specific or generic education learning activities
 - Leadership development
 - Professional learning activities for school support and administration personnel
- Information sessions for compliance-related aspects of school education, as well as compulsory professional training and sharing of resources across compliance-related activities, allowing for reinforcement of the shared aspects of the communal, moral, and societal framework that are relevant to all Jewish schools in Sydney
- Online and face-to-face networks and mentoring for subject-specific teachers, middle and executive leaders
- Scholarships for current teachers for in-depth and long-term professional development to promote the recognition and retention of high-performing teachers in Jewish schools

- Representations, liaison and advocacy to universities, and sharing of current research on pedagogy.

Higher levels of excellence will make the Jewish schools more attractive to Jewish students and staff, and better enable them to fulfil their purpose. As identified in the Nous report, each school must review its own programs and develop a plan of action to raise its performance in relation to both Jewish and secular learning. The Centre will support all schools in this undertaking.

For students, the Centre will enhance pedagogy and learning. The secular learning focus of the Centre will seek to increase student engagement with their learning through their teachers' learning. In time, the Centre could institute further activities for students, such as a homework club, shared excursions and exhibitions, or new competitions – directly impacting on students' motivation and sense of connectedness.

These proposed enhancements to the Jewish educational community would supplement rather than replace each organisation's responsibility to ensure they are delivering excellence across all relevant domains.

Ultimately, it will drive better outcomes for students.



“The exciting part is educating our kids and families with the best private education. All parents want to give their kids the best opportunity possible. The ultimate objective is that every community child gets world class education, so they go on to be brilliant”

Parent, Nous report

In summary, the Centre’s Jewish learning activities and programs could include:

- The identification and development of potential high-performing teachers of Hebrew and/or Jewish studies, including school-leavers, immigrants and other professionals ready for a career change. The program would involve:
 - Assisting selected candidates to identify suitable courses with established programs both in Sydney and overseas
 - Funding candidates’ pre-service study through scholarships
 - Requiring a postgraduate commitment of some years
- Guaranteeing a well-paid position in one or more Sydney Jewish day schools after their training, along with ongoing, targeted professional mentoring
- Facilitation of effective teacher induction, professional learning and networking for teachers of Jewish studies and/or Hebrew, including a focus on integrating teachers from overseas and teachers who have not taught in Jewish schools before, and upskilling longstanding teachers with training gaps. Areas covered include NSW and Australian curriculum and pedagogy, particularly for candidates from other jurisdictions; knowledge and understanding of Jewish culture, religion and values; as well as a better appreciation of the differences between schools in terms of ethos/hashgafa (outlook), and the landscape of the Sydney Jewish community. The program could also involve pairing teachers from different schools in mentoring relationships, and investigating ways of sharing teacher resources across schools
- Provision of an appropriate salary amount for a qualified, exceptional teacher mentor of Jewish studies and/or Hebrew who can be attracted from overseas, interstate or intrastate to teach in one or more schools and work individually with teachers
- Facilitation of the development of informal Jewish learning program educators through professional learning in relation to student management, their responsibilities as educators, behaviours as role models and the sharing of expertise. This could also involve mentorship programs and a collaborative network.

2.2.4 Process

With the collaboration of schools and resources from JCA, the ERC recommends the establishment of a cohesive entity with a defined structure and the appropriate skills to guide the successful implementation of the Centre. It is anticipated that the Centre could be initiated within a matter of months and, with a carefully developed and instituted plan, could be partly operational from the beginning of the school year in 2023. In establishing the Centre, the Jewish learning focus should be the first priority.

2.2.5 Funding

The Centre would require annual funds for establishment and maintenance. Two fulltime experienced educators would be needed to oversee and coordinate the programs developed – one for each of the two learning streams, with the Jewish learning educator also focusing on the sourcing and skilling of other Jewish educators. They would require clerical support, potentially part-time. In addition, this Big Idea requires funding for scholarships, pre-service teachers, venue costs, office setup and other ancillary costs.

Schools could help cover the cost of each of the professional learning activities and networks by paying on a per-attendant basis. In time, once proven, it is expected that schools will contribute to the cost of the financial support for the training of Jewish studies teachers when that teacher is commissioned for their school.

Other funding for the Centre could be raised by an endowment fund and/or ongoing significant donations by a member of the community, for whom the different areas of focus of the Centre could be named. A fund could be established so that smaller donations could target certain areas. A school with spare classrooms could be used for the office and venue for professional learning, which could be shared by both learning streams to save some of the costs.

The Centre would require a targeted strategy to raise funding, which would need to be guaranteed for a five-year period to allow for initial establishment and consolidation. An important aspect would be measuring the Centre's success on a regular basis. Mechanisms including benchmarks and key performance indicators (KPIs) would evaluate each aspect of the Centre including professional learning activities, the sourcing and upskilling of new educators, and the benefits of the teacher scholarships and networks. Schools would need to report each year on the outcomes of the Centre for their organisation, and an overall report produced showing progress on the key benchmarks and KPIs. Such reports would need to be shared with donors annually.

An investigation would be required into achieving deductible gift recipient (DGR) status to enable tax-deductible donations.

“ Many of the better teachers leave, often mid year so students are left with multiple teachers across a subject throughout the year ... why are they not doing their best to retain the good ones? ”

Parent, Nous report

“You need to employ the best CEO who can employ the best people, a diverse and structured group who can work cohesively and are led with a positive and empowering culture”

Parent,
Nous report

2.2.6 Governance

The Centre would be an incorporated not-for-profit organisation, independent from but also a member of the JCA. Should the proposal for the Jewish Education Alliance Sydney (JEAS) – as detailed in section 2.6 of this report – be adopted, the governing board would also have oversight of the Centre. If this Big Idea is adopted independently, the Centre would have its own governing board comprising an independent chair, representation by each school principal, a representative of the JCA and two independent experienced educator members. The purpose of the board would be to oversee the strategic direction and finances of the Centre, as well as to monitor and advise on its various actions.

The terms of reference, code of conduct, charter and organisational information could be developed as one of the first responsibilities of the board, facilitated by the JCA.

As per the structure in Figure 14, each of the streams would be assigned its own advisory group of experts in the area. The Jewish learning stream would include each school's Head of Jewish Studies (or equivalent), while the secular learning advisory group would include the directors of teaching and learning or equivalent from each school, as well as others when relevant. It is recommended that each advisory group includes at least two independent experts in the area and has the facility to co-opt other advisors as relevant.

Assessment and selection of candidates for programs would require a committee of up to five members comprising independent educator volunteers and led by the relevant leader.

2.2.7 Challenges

Achieving excellence and identifying potential educators presents a number of challenges. It is essential for each of the schools to define its own brand and measures of excellence in its environment, strive towards continuous improvement and monitor the achievement of its goals.

The Centre would need support from the JCA, as well as each school. As this Big Idea depends on a spirit of cooperation and sharing among the schools, a lack of support from any school would be a barrier to its success. The governing board would need to approach its tasks with open-mindedness, a desire to improve things for all Jewish schools, and a firm conviction that the Centre can lift the level of excellence in each school.

Another potential barrier and opportunity lies in the quality and competence of the leaders and independent members of the advisory groups who would be selected as the driving force behind the Centre. These people must be visionary, highly regarded in the community and possess high-level communication, initiative and self-management attributes, the skills to deliver on the vision, and the ability to inspire and engage each school to be part of the collective and work for mutual benefit.

Ongoing funding would need to be guaranteed for the success of the network. The right people on the board and competent, committed, connected leaders will promote a high likelihood of success.

2.2.8 Outcomes



**Meeting
community needs**



**Sustainability
and efficiency**

The Centre for Education Excellence seeks to:

- Provide support for pre-service training and professional learning for teachers of Jewish studies and Hebrew, as well as informal educators of Jewish life
- Provide support for all teachers in Jewish schools, supporting regulatory compliance, developing dynamic networks of teachers for sharing of expertise and promoting student engagement through a range of across-school student activities
- Assist education providers in sourcing, encouraging and retaining educators to teach in the area of Jewish education at the level required by schools and community.

This Big Idea effectively achieves two needs in the community. Firstly, it meets the needs of parents who are seeking an excellent education for their children by providing leading educators who are supported through their training and development journey. Secondly, it provides schools with a stream of Jewish studies teachers from the community who can underpin the quality education within the schools for many years to come.

It expands the available pool of teachers while ensuring they are dedicated to the Jewish education system by attracting and retaining teachers through various programs.

2.2.9 Next steps

Next steps for implementing this Big Idea include:

- Establishing a committee to oversee the Centre's formation
- Educating the community through positive publicity about the Centre, ensuring its benefits are understood and widespread approval is gained
- Creating a fundraising strategy, identifying potential education donors, explaining the project and ascertaining the degree of financial support that could be obtained over a five-year period to test the success of the initiative
- Seeking the buy-in of each school, which could be formalised by developing a memorandum of understanding signed by each school's board chair and principal
- Encouraging principals and board chairs within schools to establish a positive climate of anticipation and support around the development and benefits of the Centre
- Carefully developing the terms of reference, charter, code of conduct and other legal requirements for the board to ensure all parties understand its role and purpose
- Establishing an experienced independent panel to advertise and undertake a careful selection process for:
 - Head of the Jewish learning stream
 - Head of the secular learning stream
 - Clerical support
- Ascertaining available space for setting up the Centre.

2.3

Resource Collaboration Group

A cross-school group aimed at reviewing all possible sharing of resources, as well as buying power and knowledge sharing



Sustainability and efficiency



Capacity optimisation

While each of the schools operate uniquely and cater to slightly different target markets, they are all committed to quality Jewish education that meets student needs. They undeniably share a fundamental level of cultural alignment and mutual interest, regardless of differences in approach and level of observance.

Despite these commonalities, opportunities for practical collaboration in pursuit of shared goals and mutual benefit are currently unrealised. Across the school community, capacity is underutilised and effort duplicated in numerous areas – both educational and administrative – that could be cooperatively rationalised to benefit all parties.

The ERC believes that recognising and capitalising on the affinity between the schools to share resources and fully harness the strengths of each is key to meeting the challenges of the future. This proposal outlines examples of initiatives which harness the holistic efficiencies which can be garnered through collaboration.

2.3.1 Solution

The ERC recommends establishing a Resource Collaboration Group with representatives from each of the schools to explore the full range of collaboration opportunities and progress a selection of ideas for consideration.

2.3.2 Purpose

The Resource Collaboration Group will identify key areas of cooperation across the schools to improve outcomes for the community. Potential benefits span improvement in teaching quality, educational outcomes and student experience, cost efficiency and broader productivity. Enabling better use of capacity across schools offers the potential to alleviate specific capacity constraints which currently see Jewish students leaving the Jewish day school system. The group could also conduct advocacy for the Jewish day school sector with government and universities, and investigate interstate and international educational collaboration.

As back-office collaboration between the schools has already been investigated on several occasions, this Big Idea discusses these opportunities only briefly, and the ERC recommends revisiting the previous investigations.

2.3.3 Proposal

Under this proposal, a Resource Collaboration Group will be established with representatives from each school and support resources from JCA. The group will explore in detail the ideas presented in this report, as well as any other opportunities for meaningful collaboration that can improve outcomes for Jewish day schools.

The ERC has considered four areas of collaboration opportunities, offered as suggestions for initial consideration by the group. Illustrating the potential value of ongoing contributions from the group, the following ideas may be adopted in isolation or in tandem with one another:

- Capacity management through selective co-location
- Shared teaching faculty and educational curriculum
- Strategic back office sharing approach in areas such as technology and cybersecurity
- Central fee assistance support and processes, detailed in full in section 2.1 of this report.

Sections 2.3.3.1 to 2.3.3.3 describe indicative potential collaboration areas in more detail.

2.3.3.1 Capacity management through selective co-location

Collaborative senior school

The suggestion here is for a collaborative senior school model. Years 11 and 12 could be brought together to form a combination of Jewish day schools on a single campus, with Year 10 co-location also worthy

of consideration to enable a smooth transition to the final years. This model could increase the breadth of subjects offered to students, leverage scale from specialist top-level teachers in all subjects, enable students to engage more broadly across the community, and ensure use of space is maximised. As an alternative form of delivery method, online platforms offering a blended teaching and independent learning model could benefit schools by not only easing capacity on site, but also broadening available subjects in the senior years.

Structural reorganisation across school campuses

Mount Sinai College currently has vacancy on its campus across multiple grades, and is faced with students leaving in Year 5 in order to secure high school positions via other schools. In comparison, Emanuel School is operating at capacity, with a waiting list that it cannot fulfil. This situation presents the opportunity to challenge conceptions of traditional school structure and transform current issues into advantages by offering a Kindergarten to Year 4 primary school on the Mount Sinai campus, and a modified Year 5 to 12 school on the Emanuel campus.

Enabling specialisation of age groups and clear pathways for all students, this idea seeks to maximise collaboration between the schools, enabling Mount Sinai College to fill its vacancies while allowing Emanuel to open up to more enrolments from its waiting list. This cooperative program would achieve a higher take-up rate across the Jewish day schools without the need for

“ There are not enough subjects for kids in high school because there are such small numbers. Parents of children who want to have more options go elsewhere and then there are even less people ”

Parent, Nous report

new buildings, and would likely bring more students from public schools into the Jewish day school system.

Mount Sinai children would gain guaranteed entry to Emanuel, as they do currently with Moriah, enabling more students to continue their journey through the Jewish high school system and giving parents choice in the education journey their child can take. It also creates opportunities for scale and administrative benefits for both schools and would enable sharing of physical resources appropriate to each age group.

A common school zone

The proximity between Emanuel School and Moriah College presents another opportunity to consider ways to collaborate across campuses. For example, potential ideas could include both high schools operating from one campus, while both primary schools operate from the other.

Enabling greater choice for parents to determine which school to send their children to without constraint by capacity issues, this would allow potential expansion of both schools, driven by community selection.

The objective is to create opportunities for scale and administrative benefits for both schools, especially for high school specialised teaching staff, timetabling and the combination of events such as gala days and carnivals. It enables sharing of physical resources appropriate to each age group, as well as promoting opportunities for children from different schools to interact and establish wider networks.

2.3.3.2 Shared teaching faculty and educational curriculum

As an example, Kesser Torah College currently experiences minimal enrolments in subjects such as Physics and Chemistry, while Moriah College has a greater volume of students and more specialist equipment for these subjects, with additional underutilised capacity.

A potential solution could involve the cooperative delivery of these subjects in a model that could be expanded to include other specific, traditionally lower-capacity senior high school subjects to all Jewish day school students at a single campus.

The campus where the subject is offered would be selected based on which school has the best teaching talent and available facilities, with a cost-sharing arrangement established to offer the school delivering the subject funding from 'outside' students.

This would enable the participating schools to offer the widest possible range of subjects to their students, whether via face-to-face learning or through online platforms. Participating schools would avoid competing for scarce specialised teacher talent, while offering greater focus for improved academic excellence.

Sharing specialised teachers in areas such as Hebrew and technology studies may also enable more efficient use of scarce quality resources. This could be undertaken through the Centre for

“ We want more places at Emanuel, but ideally a high school for Mt Sinai ”
Parent, Nous report

Education Excellence described in section 2.2 of this report, which could appoint a single teacher across a number of institutions with a fulltime equivalent (FTE) role that would offer variety and scope for improving teaching skills.

2.3.3.3 Strategic back office sharing approach

Each school is currently operationally separate and runs its own unique procurement and administrative functions, technology platforms and physical and cybersecurity, including liaison with the Community Security Group (CSG).

This presents the opportunity to establish a shared model for strategic back-office functions for greater efficiency that could enable savings, standardisation and improved outcomes.

Shared functions have been considered on a number of occasions, as well as a benchmarking study to understand potential benefits of achieving best-in-class cost efficiency by function – such as the 2008 process facilitated by JCA. A community initiative to purchase electricity was also undertaken in 2017 with participation by all schools. However, to date, other shared functions have not been pursued. These would require a clear governance model, alignment and commitment across schools to progress successfully.

2.3.4 Funding

Depending on the nature of the collaboration, an initial level of funding is likely to be required. It is envisaged that JCA will assist the Resource Collaboration Group to develop a business case and to understand investment and potential benefits, whether financial, educational or other, for each collaboration idea. The ERC also proposes consideration of the potential for a direct JCA funding model, drawn from the capped education distribution allocation, to directly support selected approved ideas and encourage and enable cross-participant benefit-sharing. Explicit capital-raising may be required for more significant ideas.

2.3.5 Governance

Governance could be established in a number of ways for these collaborative initiatives, including leadership by:

- School representatives, complemented by JCA resources
- Independent community volunteers (potentially JCA-sponsored) with representation across the schools
- A board member from each of the schools forming a joint taskforce.

Governance will ultimately be determined according to the nature of the ideas pursued and adopted. The ERC suggests a model which allocates specific JCA funds to potential ideas to assist schools with the implementation of some or all of the suggested schemes.

2.3.6 Challenges

The challenges for this Big Idea will be specific to each collaboration initiative. Initially there may be a challenge to bring schools together with an open mind to evaluate what is possible and the potential benefits to be achieved.

Some overarching challenges include:

Receptivity

The Boards of each individual school are tasked with optimising for their own school. This idea will require each opportunity to be quantified, and for the boards of each school to engage very genuinely with their stakeholder groups to obtain the right mandate.

A community-first mindset will be required for the schools to work in the interests of the Jewish day school system holistically, against the competition of non-Jewish day schools, rather than emphasising competition within the system.

Difference in ethos

In order to ensure that the ethos of each school is appropriately upheld under a collaborative arrangement, an assessment of each school's ethos and how it can be delivered alongside that of another schools' ethos would need to be undertaken and a clear approach outlined for how to accommodate any differences.

Implementation complexity

The logistics of sharing school campuses will have an impact on parents, students and staff whom all may have made their choice in part due to the school's location. It will be important to canvas the impact of any proposed shifts so as not to lose enrolments. Stakeholder engagement will be key.

As each school has its own systems and processes that will not be able to be completely aligned, it will be important to navigate these differences without necessarily needing to integrate them. For example, each school will run a different student management and timetabling platform and must be able to find a manual way to coordinate the sharing of resources while running the separate platforms.

2.3.7 Process

Each initiative will require a specific risk mitigation plan. For ideas that impact the parent and student body, a comprehensive communication strategy explaining the merits of the collaborative approach will be needed for parents, students and the school donor base.

A resource-sharing arrangement such as either an asset-sharing agreement or transfer pricing/cost-sharing system may need to be established so that schools sharing campuses, teachers or other elements are able to recover costs from other schools. It would also be critical for schools to be able to provide marginal costings, identify variable costs down to the student and individual class level, and be transparent about this information in order to create this sharing arrangement.

Addressing the challenge of differences in ethos will require an in-depth consultation process.

2.3.8 Outcomes

The outcomes of this Big Idea will include:

- Promotion of shared resources to maximise student potential
- Optimum use of high-level specialised teachers across community
- Maximised capacity on campus to deliver spaces for enrolments
- Collaborative programs for negotiating cost savings across functions and bolstering productivity.



**Capacity
optimisation**



**Sustainability
and efficiency**

2.3.9 Next steps

Next steps for the implementation of this Big Idea include collaborating with schools:

- On unanimously agreed governance and membership for the Resource Collaboration Group with a clear timeline and agenda
- To review the proposals and seek feedback
- On systems they require in order to assess marginal costings.

It is critical that stakeholders at all levels, including each school's board and school leadership, understand the merits of the idea and are committed to collaboration. However, one school's reluctance should not stop other schools from engaging in cooperative strategies.

This Big Idea will likely require independent facilitation to surface ideas, describe and quantify benefits and lay out an initial delivery plan. As part of that plan, a stakeholder management plan will be paramount for navigating the successful large-scale change for schools and community.

2.4

Community Grants Scheme

A specific initiative to initially enhance Kindergarten enrolments



Meeting community needs



Capacity optimisation

Enrolments and take-up rates in Jewish primary schools are declining, with a reduction over a ten-year period from 50 per cent in 2006 to 40 per cent in 2016. Of a total capacity of 249 Kindergarten places across the five schools, there are currently 51 vacancies – approximately 20 per cent unused capacity. The vacancy rate for the primary schools in their entirety is 14 per cent.

As described in section 1.2 of this report, these vacancies can be attributed to a number of factors, including:

- A declining number of Jewish school-aged students in the state
- Competition from free, high-quality public schools with large Jewish cohorts
- Affordability
- Competition from other private primary schools
- A growing social trend of secularisation.

Also, as discussed in section 1.2, by 2031, primary schools are expected to be further affected by additional demographic changes, with an estimated reduction in overall enrolments of approximately 13 per cent. Combining this impact with the current level of vacancy suggests a future unused capacity of 33 per cent, which will impact schools' revenue and cost structures and threatens school sustainability into the future. This is of great concern to the ERC given the formative impact of Jewish primary school education.

2.4.1 Solution

The ERC recommends establishing a special assistance program – the Community Grants Scheme – initially targeted at Kindergarten enrolments within current Jewish day school stream structures.

2.4.2 Purpose

This Big Idea seeks to address the decline in primary enrolments by focusing any growth in financial assistance initially to Kindergarten in 2023 with a view to stemming further attrition and attracting additional enrolments. This will build Jewish day schools from the ground up and fill available capacity, strengthening school sustainability. With primary school years believed to be some of the most formative and impactful years in a child's identity, this Big Idea represents an investment in connecting children in their early years to a lifelong love of Judaism and a basis of Jewish literacy.

2.4.3 Proposal

To address the affordability of primary schools given the free alternatives available, the Committee proposes applying any available growth in Jewish day school fee assistance fundraising towards community grants, say to a maximum value of \$8,000 per student. These grants would effectively operate as ‘vouchers’ eligible students can use at participating Jewish day schools. A central committee, such as Financial Assistance Central (detailed in section 2.1 of this report), would establish the base criteria upon which the voucher can be awarded.

This proposal benefits parents in providing a fair and equitable assessment of genuine need and schools in attracting further enrolments from parents who may otherwise have sought a free public school education.

2.4.4 Process

Parents will make a submission to a central independent administration body to assess financial need. The ‘voucher’ may be for any participating Jewish school or a specific Jewish school based upon strategic factors such as vacancy, and could be directed towards specific years once full launch is completed. The goal is to use the grant to attract students who would not previously have considered a Jewish day school, or to ensure siblings of those already on fee assistance at a Jewish day school remain together.

Parents will pay the difference between the ‘voucher’ amount and the fees set for the chosen school for the year in which their child is participating.

Throughout their primary school years the student would be assessed annually for voucher eligibility. In recommending to JCA and other donors the amount of community funding that should then flow to the school to compensate for the ‘voucher’, the financial assistance committee will reference the marginal cost of each new student, enhancing the efficiency of the use of scarce communal funds.

Should a community grant be awarded to a student whose parents are still unable to afford the school, there should be some consideration of an additional source of funds. Rather than perpetuating the current challenges of excessive discounting by schools offering more fee assistance, however, the idea of a special hardship fund should be investigated.

2.4.5 Governance

The oversight of the review and award of the community grants will be via an independent assessment committee, such as Financial Assistance Central. Schools and JCA will be involved in the eligibility criteria for the initiative.

“ We are willing to pay private fees for high school, but not primary, because there are excellent public primary schools in our area ”

Parent, Nous report

2.4.6 Challenges

While both primary and high school are important in helping to fashion and secure Jewish identity through education, the declining primary school take-up over the last 15 years and the effects of projected demographic trends on future enrolments is of particularly significant concern, as this period is critical to imparting Jewish literacy from an early age. Should the primary school initiative be successful, or should more funding become available, this Big Idea could be reviewed for Year 7 intake.

The community grant must factor in supporting students over a number of years. In line with the recommendations of section 2.1 of this report, the community grant, to the extent additional funding is required, should first be funded by money available from specific donors, including school foundations, for specific recipient schools.

Fair implementation in Kindergarten is also a challenge, as all students are new to the school system and theoretically any applicant could therefore be considering a public or other independent school. In implementing this idea, learning will need to be taken from similar ideas already implemented by the Jewish day schools and the effect on existing families.



**Meeting
community needs**



**Capacity
optimisation**

2.4.7 Outcomes

The outcomes of this Big Idea will include:

- Promotion of enrolment in Kindergarten to fill schools 'from the bottom up'
- Different new eligibility criteria for fee assistance
- Retention of families within the Jewish day school system
- Strengthened school sustainability.

2.4.8 Next steps

Next steps for the implementation of this Big Idea include collaborating with schools:

- To understand their current financial assistance discounting process
- On agreed eligibility criteria for the community grants (and other fee discounting)
- On fee structures and how they are constructed
- On systems they require in order to assess the marginal costings of additional students
- On updating financial information to ensure the assumptions upon which this report is based remain current, including price elasticity, to understand the suitability of a maximum voucher amount of \$8,000
- To liaise with JCA and major donors to receive their support and work through implementation
- To develop a database of families who have Kindergarten-age children not yet enrolled in a Jewish day school.

2.5

Jewish Day School Scorecard

A school-directed measurement process to assist with continual improvement



Meeting
community needs

While the operation of any education environment is complex, numerous stakeholders and multiple layers of funding – including varying fees, differing levels of government support and significant communal funds from a range of donors – pose particular challenges for the five Jewish day schools. Clarity and transparency are essential to gain and maintain support, assuring the community and donors of the ‘success’ or ‘excellence’ of the schools.

Such qualities are, to some extent, inevitably subjective. However, there is an opportunity for the schools to achieve greater transparency and better communicate positive outcomes with the community.

2.5.1 Solution

The ERC recommends development and adoption of a ‘Jewish Day School Scorecard’ to provide a consistent framework for measuring and tracking performance against specific metrics and individual strategic objectives.

2.5.2 Purpose

The purpose of the Scorecard is to:

- Provide practical metrics aligned with each school to self-assess performance, sustainability and desirability as a school serving the Sydney Jewish community
- Facilitate a focus on – and a level of transparency for – each school’s financial performance, academic and Jewish excellence, culture and social behaviour, and overall satisfaction for the benefit of the school, its current and prospective parents, and school-specific and community donors
- Support continuous improvement through the setting of goals by each school which are aligned with its overall strategic objectives.

The ERC strongly encourages each school to measure and track metrics, maintain a positive trajectory and support continuous improvement within its own strategic objectives. Such a set of relevant, transparent and regularly updated metrics for each school would also support the proposed Financial Assistance Central initiative outlined in section 2.1 of this report to more effectively and efficiently allocate community funding.

2.5.3 Proposal

Principles underlying the development of the Jewish Day School Scorecard are as follows:

- While the quantitative nature of some metrics alongside the qualitative nature of others may produce subjective outcomes, a consistent trend in the direction of fulfilling each school's own specific goals can be targeted and will be beneficial for all parties.
- The Scorecard is not intended to compare one school against another, but is rather for individual schools to track and improve their own relevant metrics as they align with their strategic plans and direction.
- Metrics will be tailored to each school. It is expected that quantitative metrics will largely be consistent across the schools, with more variation in qualitative metrics.
- Schools will decide on the number of metrics to track per area (outside of financial metrics), with a focus on those that can be consistently tracked with quality data. The ERC suggests each school conducts an annual survey measuring its net promoter score (NPS) and culture. Ideally uniform across the schools, this process can integrate with and be overseen by the Jewish Education Alliance Sydney (JEAS) Big Idea set out in section 2.6 of this report.
- Schools own their Scorecards and therefore define the sources of the data for the metrics, collate the data and populate the metrics.
- For transparency, the schools are encouraged to share an updated set or subset of metrics with relevant stakeholders such as parents and Financial Assistance Central at least annually. While circumstances may arise where certain confidential metrics cannot be disclosed, the starting point should be disclosure wherever possible.
- Schools are encouraged to share lessons learned on metric selection, measurement and improvement with one another.

2.5.4 Process

The Scorecard will ideally be holistic in nature and cover the five areas described in Sections 2.5.4.1 to 2.5.4.5.

Figure 15 provides an illustrative example of a Scorecard - excluding financial metrics - outlining target metrics the schools may consider tracking.

It is anticipated that schools will form their own categories for their scorecard.

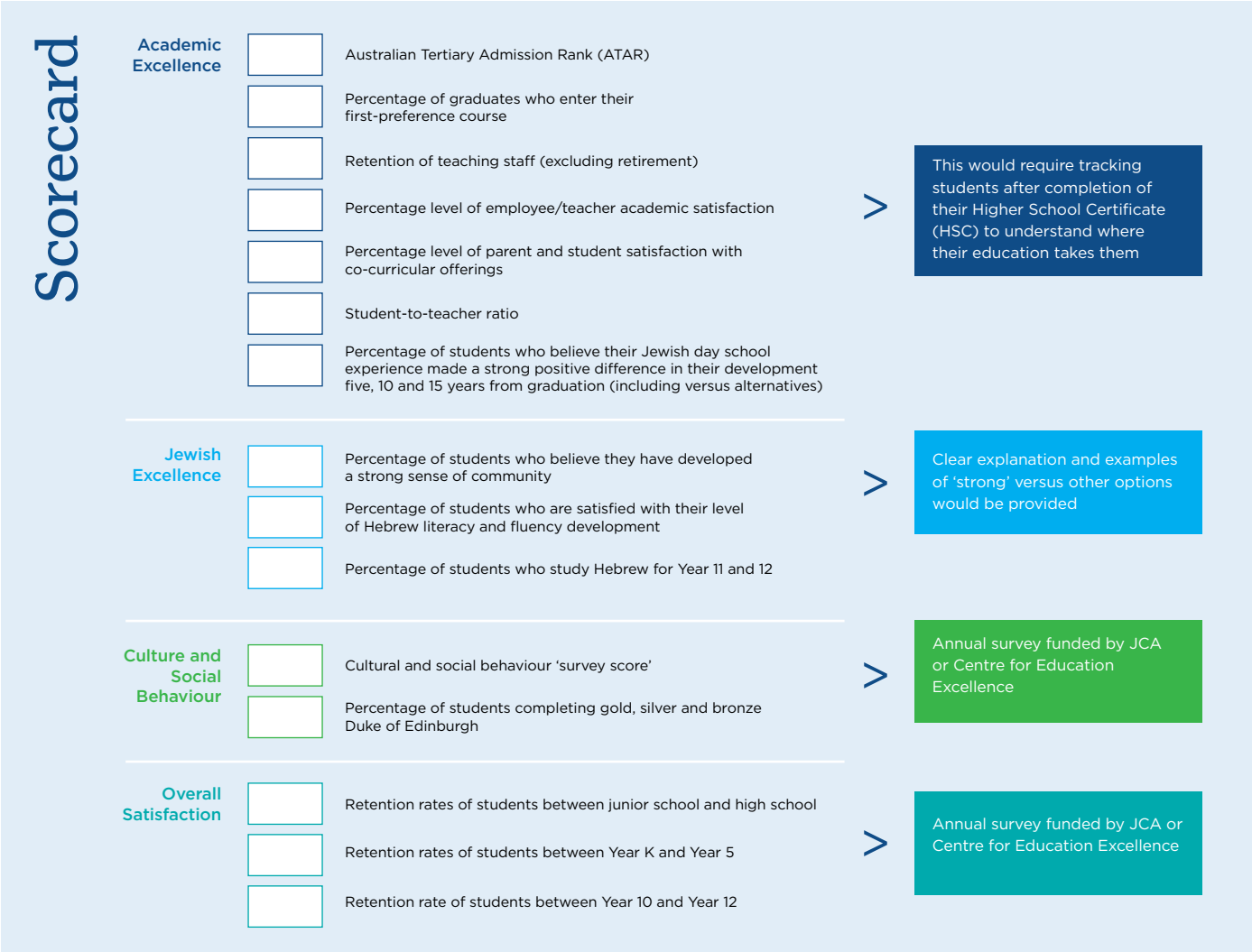


Figure 15. Indicative Scorecard, excluding financial metrics

2.5.4.1 Financial performance

Financial metrics will ideally be those already collated by the schools. Schools can also consider defining financial items more explicitly to help assess areas of opportunity, with a number of Australian and global school community financial benchmarks available, including Jewish systems. Figure 16 provides an illustrative example of potential financial data and metrics, noting that most schools already collect such data.



		Primary School	High School	
Fees	Gross fees payable			
	Less: Discounts			> Financial Assistance
				> Bursaries/scholarships
				> Other – e.g. sibling discounts
	Net Fees			
	Sundry income (security, etc)			
Grants – government				
Total revenue				
Expenses	Salary costs – Teaching			
				> Teaching: Secular
				> Teaching: Jewish
	Salary costs – Non Teaching			
	Total Salaries			
	Teaching materials			
	Other operating costs			
	Building and grounds – maintenance			
	Total non-salary expenses			
Total Expenses (incl. school provided depn)				
Net surplus/(Deficit) before internal foundation and donations				
Community Funding	JCA			
	Other funding – school foundations/donations			
Net surplus/(Deficit) after community funding – JCA and internal foundation and donations				
Net surplus/(Deficit) after JCA and internal foundation and donations and after ELC surplus (or deficit) applied				
Number of Students	Year K			
	Year 1			
	Year 2			
	Year 3			
	Year 4			
	Year 5			
	Year 6			
	Year 7			
	Year 8			
	Year 9			
	Year 10			
	Year 11			
	Year 12			
Total Students				

Figure 16. Indicative financial metrics

Schools aspire to be excellent and already have some methods of tracking progress, which can be further developed.

Appendix A to this report suggests a definition of excellence which schools may wish to refer to in defining the set of metrics for this Big Idea.

2.5.4.2 Academic excellence

Schools should define a holistic set of academic metrics. These may include outcome and results-oriented metrics recognised by parents such as Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR), National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), International Competitions and Assessments for Schools (ICAS) and co-curricular offerings, as well as metrics aligned with the school's broader objectives, such as the proportion of students accepted into their preferred university course, or affiliations with external organisations such as Apple Distinguished Schools, Commonwealth Science and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), or University of New South Wales (UNSW) faculties.

2.5.4.3 Jewish excellence

Each school is encouraged to determine its own definition of Jewish excellence in consultation with its parents, as well as methods for measuring whether it is achieved. A number of schools may already have such an aspiration and method of tracking progress. Significant diversity is anticipated across the schools – whether focusing on ability to read Hebrew, speak Hebrew fluently, comprehend Torah, understand Jewish history and festivals, say brachot, or take-up Hebrew and/or Jewish studies in the later years of high school. It could also be measured by volunteering hours in community.

2.5.4.4 Culture, wellbeing and social behaviour

As is now common across public and private sectors, a number of leading schools in Australia and globally measure and set quantitative and qualitative objectives related to overall wellbeing, culture and organisational 'health'. By measuring and tracking these, a school or organisation is able to perceive trends, specific strengths and opportunities for improvement. A number of tools on the market can be adopted to assist in this exercise.

2.5.4.5 Overall satisfaction

Most Jewish day schools currently measure parent, teacher and student satisfaction in some way. This is often via ad-hoc means such as a short periodic parent survey or calls to parents or teachers, while some schools employ more systematic measures such as surveys for all Year 12 students. To identify trends and drive remedial action where required, schools are encouraged to pragmatically and efficiently obtain relevant, regular feedback on overall satisfaction from parents, teachers and students at least once a year and in a manner that best suits the school objectives and ethos.

“ Jewish education is the most important thing to ensure Jewish continuity ”
Parent, Nous report

2.6

Jewish Education Alliance Sydney

An integrated solution to assist all Jewish education providers with implementing initiatives which benefit the community



Meeting
community needs



Sustainability
and efficiency



Capacity
optimisation

The ERC recognises that the conception of the Big Ideas set out in sections 2.1 to 2.5 of this report – some of which have been considered and even attempted in the past – represents only the first step in meeting the challenges of the future. The logistics of implementing these ideas will be as important as the ideas themselves, including the need for additional resourcing and funding to drive their further development and application.

2.6.1 Solution

In order to assist in both the likelihood and effectiveness of implementation of any or all of the Big Ideas, the ERC recommends the establishment of a separate body – the Jewish Education Alliance Sydney (JEAS).

2.6.2 Purpose

The purpose of this organisation would be to assist, coordinate and, at times, lead the implementation of the Big Ideas. It will assist in bringing together new and existing resources required for implementation and monitor the effectiveness of the ideas and their implementation over time. It performs a supporting and coordinating function to assist the schools in areas outside their core purpose, allowing schools to focus on education. JEAS will maximise involvement without burdening schools with resourcing, planning and implementation of the Big Ideas set out in this report.

Given the number of ad-hoc working committees such as the ERC that have considered the question of Jewish day schools and Jewish education in the last 20 years, JEAS would also take an ongoing responsibility for maintaining ongoing Jewish education sustainability, planning, research and collaboration initiatives within the community – potentially superseding the need for future working committees. This includes the opportunities for those education providers outside of the Jewish day school system to benefit from this entity.

2.6.3 Proposal

The ERC proposes the establishment of a new independent organisation to deliver on the purpose outlined in section 2.6.2. There are many international models on which JEAS could be modelled.



The Consortium of Jewish Day Schools (CoJDS): Dedicated to the empowerment, development and improvement of Jewish day schools across North America and promoting best practice guided by traditional Torah values, CoJDS produces professionally trained school leaders and educators and provides placement and on-the-job support.



Educating for Impact: Providing on-the-ground seminars for school leaders, teachers and community leaders to define community goals, identify challenges and develop strategic plans and approaches for building strong Jewish communities. Its energetic and professional team has extensive experience building Jewish schools for Kindergarten to Year 12 youth, running youth centres, invigorating synagogues, and implementing successful youth programs throughout Europe. The team is familiar with the multiple challenges faced by developing communities, and understands the processes for successful growth.



The Jewish Education Project: The mission of the United States-based Jewish Education Project is to inspire and empower educators to create transformative Jewish experiences. Offering leadership training, professional development, and other support and resources, it empowers educators from diverse Jewish backgrounds to help their students and families thrive. The Jewish Education Project works with students aged zero to 18 in early childhood centres, congregations, day schools, yeshivot, youth programs and emerging spaces.



The Julia and Henry Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Education: A division of the Jewish Federation of Greater Toronto, the Julia and Henry Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Education is dedicated to strengthening, enriching and promoting the quality of Jewish education in schools. The Koschitzky Centre serves 14 day schools, more than 30 after-school educational programs, 1,500 educators, and 16,000 students across the Greater Toronto area. Its mission is to strengthen the Jewish community and ensure its continuity by providing leadership and supporting a sustainable system of quality Jewish programs.



Lamorim: A French association created in 2017, Lamorim supports Jewish schools in efforts to train and develop Jewish academic and digital tools in Hebrew. It aims to create a community of educators and establish training, platforms and pooled methods that will have a lasting impact in promoting Jewish values and knowledge of history, language and tradition.



ORT: A global education network driven by Jewish values. Since its foundation in 1880, ORT has been transforming lives through training and education. ORT's new strategic vision is built on three pillars: Education for Life, Global Citizenship and Jewish Experience. Its network now reaches more than 200,000 people a year in more than 30 countries. ORT provides a combination of high-level science and technology education with strengthened Jewish identity, bridging the gap between ability and opportunity and ensuring the continuity of Jewish life worldwide. Australia is currently not represented within this network.



The Partnership for Jewish Schools: The United Kingdom's Partnership for Jewish Schools (PaJeS) provides services, support and strategy for Jewish schools from across the UK Jewish community. It supports the school network by providing high-level training programs to promote professionalism and ensure outstanding outcomes representing needs of Jewish schools with governmental bodies; creating resources, delivering teacher training and educational support; and centralising services to support schools in future planning, sustainability and financial savings.



Prizmah Centre for Jewish Day Schools: Strengthening the North American Jewish day school environment, the Prizmah Centre for Jewish Day Schools facilitates a network for schools and yeshivot, enhancing their ability to excel and thrive by deepening talent, catalysing resources, and accelerating educational innovation. Prizmah partners with day schools, yeshivot, philanthropists, and communities from all denominations, helping them grow their reach and impact and tackle the challenges on their path to success.



South African Board of Jewish Education: Since 1929, the South African Board of Jewish Education (SABJE) has led the pursuit of Jewish education within the South African community. The SABJE is the controlling body of King David Schools and represents the Jewish community in educational matters. Its purpose is to guide the King David Schools, ensuring that strategy, ethos and finances are all sound and in place.



The United: This initiative works to strengthen Jewish education by meeting the key challenges faced by Jewish schools throughout the world, including training and professional development for teachers; pedagogic support and consultation; accessibility of content and study materials; development of informal activities within schools; and reinforcing ties between schools and their communities. United believes that raising the quality, status and prestige of Jewish studies will strengthen schools and empower the Jewish ties of their graduates.

2.6.4 Governance

The ERC recommends that JEAS is appropriately resourced to ensure it has the capability to meet ongoing responsibilities, with further resources required as its responsibilities expand.

While it should remain independent of JCA, current Jewish education service providers and other bodies such as the Australian Council of Jewish Schools should work closely with JEAS and suitable representation from each can be included on its board. Board membership can also be drawn from donors and other stakeholders. It should have its own CEO and appropriate Executive Assistant appointed and oversee the various departments of the Big Ideas suggested, such as Financial Assistance Central and the Centre for Education Excellence.

2.6.5 Process

To ensure all education providers, JCA and the Australian Council of Jewish Schools buy in to JEAS and accept its role, its constitution and designation of operations should be determined in coordination with those organisations.

If required, the ERC is prepared to continue its operation to establish JEAS in cooperation with the relevant parties.

As the scope and obligations of JEAS will be contingent on the extent of acceptance or otherwise of the Big Ideas presented in this report, the establishment of JEAS will occur following this determination.

The ERC envisages that JEAS could:

- House Financial Assistance Central, including any voucher system (refer to sections 2.1 and 2.4 of this report)
- House the Centre for Education Excellence, encompassing training and retention of teachers and promotion of Jewish culture through our teaching base (refer to section 2.2 of this report)
- Act as a collaborative platform for the schools in terms of sharing of space, resources and purchasing power (refer to section 2.3 of this report)
- Manage the sustainability metrics of the schools to ensure they meet agreed targets (refer to section 2.5 of this report).

2.6.6 Challenges

This Big Idea represents a significant undertaking that will require the support of donors, all education providers, and the community.

An in-depth stakeholder management plan will be required to ensure JEAS can be established to meet the needs of the education providers and the community.

While the greatest challenge for this initiative may be securing funding for its implementation, the ERC believes such expenditure will be justified by the outcomes described in section 2.6.7.

2.6.7 Outcomes

A properly established JEAS will provide:

- Permanent and ongoing leadership and operational infrastructure to assist in ensuring sustainability and excellence of Jewish education in the community
- A place which can house the independent department overseeing financial assistance and ensuring communal funds are used where they are most needed
- A location for the Centre for Education Excellence, offering education providers ongoing training, development and retention of teaching staff, with excellence as its focus
- Assistance to education providers through holistically reviewing sustainability metrics and measures and supporting them in underpinning their future
- Support for the schools by providing a service for a review of shared space, resources and negotiated purchasing where agreed by schools.

The ERC believes JEAS will assist all its stakeholders – parents, teachers, donors and the community generally. It will bring focus, professionalism and additional assistance to the issues and matters referred to throughout this report.



3.0

Additional ideas



This Survive to Thrive report has focused on the Big Ideas to face the challenges of the future. During the course of the Education Review Committee's (ERC) deliberations, however, a number of additional ideas also emerged which warrant further consideration. This section sets out additional ideas that schools are encouraged to investigate with their boards in the future, which also align with the key focus areas defined in section 2.0 of this report.



**Sustainability
and efficiency**

3.1 Efficiencies in timetabling

Based on a number of discussions with the Australian Council of Jewish Schools (ACJS), there is a need for all five schools to regularly engage in ensuring their assets – including their valuable specialised teachers – are used in the most efficient and beneficial way.

While each of the schools has such specialised teachers, timetables are often not optimised to maximise benefit. With resourcing from JCA, the ERC proposes that the ACJS works with each school to review timetables and recommend, where practical, alterations to maximise the benefit of valuable specialised teachers as well as to identify cost savings from timetabling changes.



**Capacity
optimisation**

“ **I wouldn't spend any money on infrastructure, I'd spend premium money on the best teaching staff** ”
Parent, Nous report

3.2 Sale of assets

The ERC has briefly considered the possibility of selling some community or school-owned assets, using the moneys arising from such rationalisation to secure a more sustainable future for the school. These have included:

- Sale of Kesser Torah College's campus to build a Torah stream on another existing campus
- Repositioning of Emanuel School's Kornmehl Centre Preschool off site to create greater capacity for primary and high school accommodation on the Avoca Street campus
- Consolidation of Moriah College's early learning centres onto the campus in Queens Park, enabling establishment of a sizeable fund on the sale of excess real estate assets to sustain the school for years to come
- Sale of part of Masada College campus to sustain the school into the future and support the continued Jewish education of North Shore Jewish students.

However, the ERC determined that recommendations of this nature are beyond the scope of the Education Review and better explored and issued by the boards of the schools involved.

The ERC therefore recommends that school boards examine the question of the best long-term use of the assets forming part of the school campuses – whether retention or sale to benefit the schools. While some rationalisations may require short-term expenditure for alterations or otherwise, they may yield longer-term financial benefits.



**Capacity
optimisation**



Sustainability
and efficiency

3.3 Government engagement taskforce

For many years, government funding has been the subject of much discussion by and lobbying of government. While Commonwealth schools funding is now comparatively settled after more than a decade of intense debate, it is evident that some private school groups and systems have enjoyed more lobbying success than others.

The merits of the Jewish day schools are clear and important. The ERC suggests that, over time, the schools consider focusing on these strengths and ensuring government funding is maximised towards them.

This may require formation of a specific group from the schools, including JEAS – a government engagement taskforce – working carefully with the ACJS and others in the community to investigate opportunities for additional government funding, as well as which arguments and by whom they should be put to government.

In other jurisdictions such as the UK, for example, there is an established concept of ‘community’ or ‘charter schools’, which are government schools run by a particular religious group or, alternatively, a group with a particular educational focus. The establishment of an equivalent concept in Australia – a public school run by one or more of the Jewish

day schools – would alleviate the pressure of charging fees to fund a large portion of expenses and result in a school open to many more Jewish children.

The Catholic system has investigated this concept many times and, should it or another group succeed in convincing government of the need for it, a government engagement taskforce would be useful to ensure that the Jewish day school system could also benefit from it.

This is a long-term possibility. The ERC does not suggest that existing schools should be replaced by this model but rather that, if it does arise, they should consider seeking to benefit from it.

3.4 School review of costs

The ERC appreciates the competing costs involved in providing a private school education and, as explored in section 1.2.4 of this report, the problem of affordability for families. While the potential of an audit and cost review with an educational specialist to reduce fees or prevent significant increases was considered, the ERC concluded that the expenses cut would likely be insufficient to make a significant change in school fees.

However, school boards are encouraged to continue closely monitoring costs and consider seeking external assistance from time to time to ensure they do not inadvertently escalate unnecessarily.

“It would be good to have the Catholic option of cheaper Jewish schools without the fancy facilities”

Parent, Nous report



Sustainability
and efficiency



Meeting
community needs

3.5 A combined holistic approach to special needs

The Australian Government's Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) system, used to define funding for special needs students in schools, records 1,212 Jewish day school students for 2020. Given there are 3,266 students in total attending the Jewish day schools, 37 per cent of the total Jewish day school cohort are rated for special needs.

Many levels of assistance for special needs students apply, from no government funding as minimal adjustments are considered necessary from teaching requirements for a mainstream student, to more heavily funded categories based on the level of special needs. 54 per cent of the Jewish day school special needs students fall within these paid special needs funding categories, resulting in a collective \$4.2 million received across the schools in 2020.

The schools have suggested to the ERC that the outlay for special needs is much higher than this figure. The ERC believes that the number of special needs students in the schools is higher than in most comparative private schools, which indicates that they may indeed incur a greater expense for special needs than should be the case.

The ERC questions:

First, whether every effort has taken place to ensure that the relevant schools receive the maximum amount from Government permitted towards the expenses of their special needs student.

Second, whether – if the community was made more aware of this disproportionate expenditure by the schools – the community and the Government may be more receptive to assisting the schools through other means, such as welfare.

The ERC suggests that formation of a special group could be considered to investigate and act upon the outcomes of these two questions.

“ We have a child with complex needs which are beautifully met by the pastoral and educational staff ... so it is worth the scrimping and saving ”

Parent, Nous report

“ My son has Autism Spectrum Disorder and the school has the facilities and staff to cater exceptionally well for him while still instilling a strong sense of Judaism ”

Parent, Nous report



**Sustainability
and efficiency**

3.6 An education endowment fund

The ERC has undertaken a review of the current level of communal support for fee assistance in schools and deems it highly generous compared to that received by all other education providers in Australia.

While some Big Ideas presented within this report are proposed within the limits of existing funding, the ERC has suggested that JCA pursues the establishment of an education endowment fund to assist in one or more of:

- Lowering fees for all Jewish day school students
- Funding fee assistance, particularly through the Financial Assistance Central body proposed in section 2.1 of this report
- Providing more vouchers as referred to in section 2.4 of this report
- Catering to special needs students
- Promoting quality provision of Jewish education across all of the providers.

While the level of the endowment is difficult to quantify and subject to the agreed earnings rate, the ERC considers the establishment of such an endowment as one of the elements making up the mix of initiatives that will help sustain our Jewish day school system.

This idea is put forward for future consideration by the schools and by the community as a whole.

3.7 Project Sydney 2.0

In 2007, JCA introduced an initiative to bolster migration to NSW: Project Sydney. This was an incentive program offering discounts on specialist migration services and providing communal contacts for those willing to relocate. While the initiative was short-lived due to the global financial crisis in 2008, the ERC believes this innovative program should be reinvestigated to consider if any benefit would be gained – whether via an increase of quality teachers or increasing enrolments.

The ERC suggests establishment of a committee to review the possibilities of a ‘Project Sydney 2.0’ to benefit the Sydney Jewish community.

3.8 Overseas funding for diaspora communities

The ERC believes there is an opportunity to investigate how the state of Israel, and any other diaspora communities, may assist currently or further in sustainability of the schools. Such an initiative would involve Israel or others supporting Sydney’s Jewish diaspora communities to assist in the sustainability of Jewish education and Jewish life worldwide – teachings that strengthen connections to Israel and their Jewish roots. This could be overseen by JEAS.



**Capacity
optimisation**



**Sustainability
and efficiency**



**Meeting
community needs**

3.9 Awareness campaign for Jewish day schools

Parents tend to strongly believe that a high school can be measured by its HSC ranking alone. The ERC believes an awareness campaign could be undertaken to educate parents, the community and universities about the broader strengths of Jewish day schools. As an example, there may be an opportunity for engagement with universities to achieve bonus ATAR points for acceptance into NSW universities. This idea involves two main distinct tasks.

Firstly, it would address the successes of the schools beyond HSC rankings. The Resource Collaboration Group could investigate the various ways in which the schools achieve, to better educate parents and ensure a better understanding of the school system in NSW. Currently, most parents believe that HSC ranking is the epitome of school success. This campaign would address other factors and would take parents on a journey of alternative measurable outcomes. It would highlight individual academic results, as well as successes in entrepreneurship, drama, music and sport. NSW Jewish day schools have hosted a range of entrepreneurs through the years, including founders of such successful innovators as AfterPay, Camilla & Marc, Createable, CodeCamp, Global Prime, JasonL, JS Health, Taxi Box and Zip.

The second task of this campaign would be to approach universities and work with them on an agreeable program which could attract ATAR points, much as the Duke of Edinburgh Awards do in NSW. The undertaking of Jewish studies, whether language or heritage, and the culture it promotes is an additional skill that students from Jewish day schools possess, which would be a benefit to university life. The volunteering hours, which high schools promote, should also be entwined in this campaign with universities, to recognise the significance of community and the dedication to continuing Jewish culture.

Resources with marketing skills would be sourced to develop these two distinct tasks, working collaboratively with schools to best highlight their unique selling points.



**Sustainability
and efficiency**

Surviving and thriving together



While the Survive to Thrive report sets out the current challenges, and anticipates a number of challenges in the future, the ERC recognises it is only part of the solution.

As the schools will require assistance in order to execute the Big Ideas, the ERC remains available to support the schools in coordinating and driving the Big Ideas forward.

The ERC has also discussed these requirements with JCA. Committed to a sustainable and efficient education system that meets the needs of community, JCA will work with the schools and other education providers on the implementation of any Big Ideas and, where available, provide a level of funding for the execution of their plans. JCA will also provide leadership to manage collaborative working groups, as well as to assist with appropriately skilled resources to ensure successful community outcomes.

To avoid wasting resources, the ERC encourages interschool collaboration in the implementation of the Big Ideas. Sharing resources and acting cooperatively will assist efficient implementation and successful outcomes.

Following publication of this report, a series of discussions will be held to determine the pathways the schools wish to take. The initiatives communicated throughout this report remain flexible, and it is vital that any actions are undertaken in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders.

Discussions will also ensue with donors to better curate the holistic solutions to the needs of community and the schools.

Additionally, a communication plan will be compiled for the broader community to ensure its voices are heard. In a project of this size and significance, it is paramount that all parties are able to understand the challenges and the pathways available to successfully meet them.

Changemakers will be sought to lead these initiatives and, where necessary, further modelling will be undertaken to ensure scenarios are well planned for and that the future of Jewish education in NSW can survive and thrive.

A date, say three years out, should be set to see whether the ideas suggested in this report have been implemented and more particularly, whether steps have been taken towards the sustainability needed.

The ERC notes the commitment and quality of the directors of the various boards of the schools and particularly thanks the presidents and principals of the schools, the Australian Council of Jewish Education and the donors whose invaluable dedication has made this report possible. This report is just the beginning of securing the sustainability of Jewish education in NSW for many years to come.

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Appendix



What is excellence in Jewish schools?

Excellence in learning and teaching in Jewish schools is defined as comprising:

Academic excellence generally (as applying to secular as well as Jewish education)

- Student engagement in learning and strong development of critical thinking
- Student acquisition of foundational skills and knowledge, along with twenty-first century skills – including digital literacy
- Effective systems and processes for all students to achieve personal academic excellence throughout their school years – including without limitation at HSC level
- Effective support and programs for students with learning difficulties and high-potential learners
- Highly qualified, competent and collaborative teaching and support staff who are committed to ongoing professional learning and continuous improvement
- Student entry to the tertiary education option of their choice, including university, yeshiva, midrasha and TAFE

Jewish education – choices to be made according to the school's particular ethos

- In-depth knowledge of Jewish history, heritage, traditions, culture and ethics from the particular perspective of the relevant school's ethos
- Familiarity with foundational (classical) texts and skills to use and learn from these
- Confidence and facility in Hebrew (spoken and written)
- Meaningful Jewish experiential learning, leading to competence in core Jewish living skills as understood from the particular perspective of the school's ethos
- Pride in identity and heritage
- Involvement in and connection with community

Wellbeing

- Strong student and staff sense of belonging
- Proactive wellbeing programs that contribute to character building
- Purposeful service-learning programs
- Low levels of bullying and a proactive, effective approach to managing it
- Effective, holistic support for mental health
- Student love for their school and enjoyment of participating in their school community

Choices to be made according to student/parent preferences

- Range of formal and informal co- and extracurricular offerings supporting student development beyond the classroom
- Opportunities for students to excel in their preferred areas

Excellence in Jewish schools is supported by effective Leadership and Management

- Cohesive, visionary, inspiring, values-driven leadership
- Efficient and effective management of the running of the school, its operations, resources and finances.

