

Draft Purpose Survey Analysis Report

Department for Education

Data Collected
10 – 29 May 2023

Client Contact
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Methodology & Approach

The research methodology comprised of an online survey. The overall number of responses for the survey was 1,297 (including complete and partial responses).

Data has been aggregated and compared across respondent type where applicable.

In addition, 12 submissions were received from students, staff, families, community members and organisations, including South Australian Secondary Principals' Association, South Australian Association of School Parent Communities, Preschool Directors Association, Department of Human Services, Educators SA and the Teachers Registration Board.

Forums were held with the department's Aboriginal Education Directorate, professional associations and leaders.

Target Audience

Department for Education staff, students, other interested persons/ organisation and stakeholders

Survey Sample

Sample achieved	756 completes 541 partials (Department for Education staff n=894, Student n=275, Other interested person/ organisation n=128)
Sample source	Department for Education lists
Distribution of survey	Department for Education
Questionnaire length	5 minutes
Collection dates	10 – 29 May 2023



Background



In November 2022, the Department for Education began a conversation with the community of South Australia about the future of public education in the state. Specifically, ideas were sought on what the purpose of public education should be to ensure that every child and young person thrives and prospers in a future that will be different from today.

Children and young people started this conversation by participating in forums across the state, small group discussions, interviews, surveys and other activities designed to ensure groups with different needs, cultures and backgrounds had a voice.

The conversation then expanded to seek the views of staff, families, employers, and other interested organisations and individuals. Local, national and international experts were also engaged in the discussion. Square Holes produced the report 'Data Analysis: State-wide purpose of public education in South Australia consultation' that summarised this feedback.

A draft statement of purpose of public education in SA and areas of impact were produced from the ideas and feedback received. These drafts were released for consultation with students, staff and other interested organisations and individuals using an online survey to determine the level of satisfaction and inform any changes needed.

In all, the work is based on more than 10,000 pieces of feedback.

Square Holes was commissioned to conduct quantitative and qualitative analysis of the survey data and other stakeholder feedback. Responses were analysed for recurring themes and segmented (where applicable) by respondent type.



Mission

Determine the level of stakeholder satisfaction with the draft purpose of education and the draft areas of impact.

Objectives

- Suggest any changes based on survey feedback
- Include examples / specific quotes that illustrates feedback
- Include particular prevalence in cohort perspectives that can be identified



Survey findings





Draft purpose statement – Children and students learning and thriving

Public education is for every child and young person in every community across our state.

Our teachers and staff work together with families and communities to nurture, develop and empower all South Australian children and young people with the academic knowledge, skills and capabilities they need to become fulfilled individuals, active, compassionate citizens and lifelong learners.

In doing so we set to make the biggest difference we can for every one of our children and young people because of the experiences they have at preschool and school.

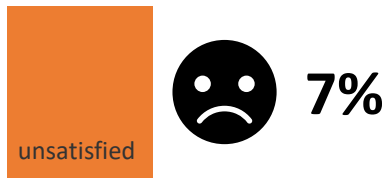
Our preschools and schools are safe, inclusive, and collaborative – a place where every child and young person is encouraged to contribute, develops positive relationships, has a say in their learning, and where their needs, interests and culture are recognised and supported.

We want our children and young people to enter the world beyond the classroom with the knowledge, skills and capabilities to help them make and create opportunities to live a satisfying and fulfilling life of their choosing.

When our children and young people thrive and prosper so does South Australia.



How satisfied are you with this draft statement of the purpose of public education in South Australia?

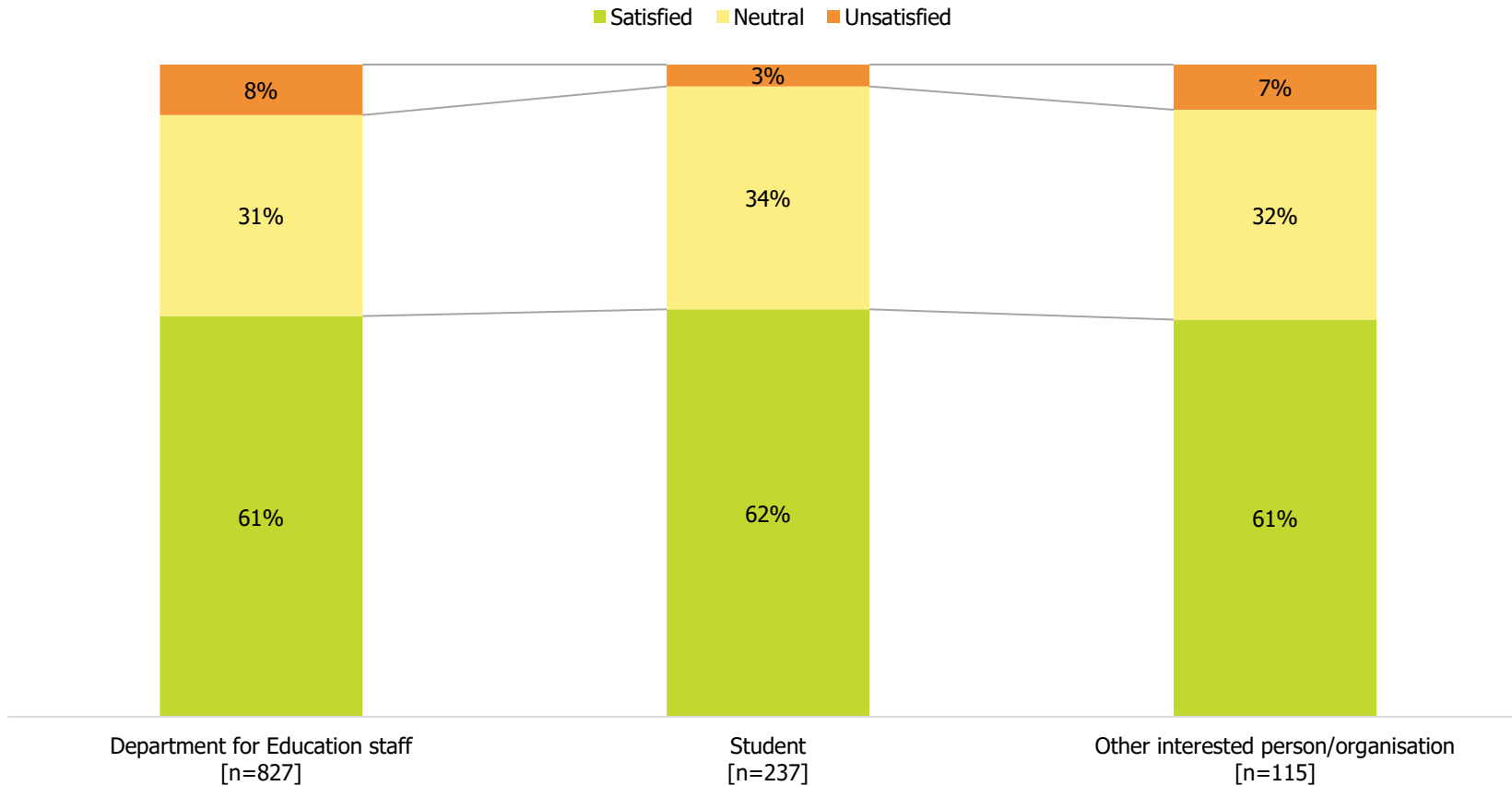


Over 90% of respondents are satisfied with, or at least neutral towards the draft statement proposed by the Department for Education.

Please note figures not equalling to 100% is a result of rounding errors in charting

How satisfied are you with this draft statement of the purpose of public education in South Australia?

[by respondent type]



Please note figures not equalling to 100% is a result of rounding errors in charting

Satisfaction of the draft statement is consistent across all respondent types (i.e., Department for Education staff, students and other interested persons/ organisations) at 61% – 62%.

Of the three respondent types, students are most positive towards the statement with just 3% being 'unsatisfied'.



Please tell us why you were satisfied about the draft purpose statement.


Summary of responses

Those satisfied with the statement appreciated how comprehensive it was, believing it to be inclusive and aligned with their values and goals for education. Emphasis on the holistic development of students, student agency, and the role of collaboration and community in creating a positive learning environment were all praised features, with respondents commending the purpose as a positive and hopeful step forward.

Holistic approach	Student centred	Inclusivity and equity	Collaboration and community involvement	Future focused	Aspirational
<p>“It focuses on the holistic approach for every child. Not so focused on assessments and achievement and the realisation that we need to look beyond this. Continuity of learning.”</p> <p>“It’s holistic approach, continuity of learning across sectors, is what I professionally believe is important to seeing a young person grow and prosper.”</p> <p>“The focus is on the child as a whole entity and not just looked at through a literacy and numeracy lens. I like the statement; we are very long way from delivering that. Until we start operating proactively rather than reactively it won't change.”</p>	<p>“It mentioned that when children grow up, they are the people who will be responsible for looking after our planet and will go to live lives of their own, and it is important to make sure they have to skills to do so from an early age.”</p> <p>“It is an aspirational statement that puts the child and young person at the centre.”</p> <p>“Has the children and students at the centre of what we do. The purpose extends beyond academic excellence to include all aspects of growth and development and hopes to instil skills for living a good life. It is a little long though.”</p>	<p>“The statement incorporates all learners, and acknowledges the student as having agency, their Voice being heard and their interests, and culture are also recognized. The last sentence sums it all up perfectly.”</p> <p>“Comprehensive, clear and concise. inclusive of every child and young person. Acknowledges children, educators, families and community.”</p> <p>“I agree with the above as long as it is endorsed by schools. I believe a united, inclusive environment to bring our future adults up is the right education for our children.”</p>	<p>“The statement is inclusive, encouraging and supportive and emphasises the importance of our children and young people but also including families and working together collaboratively.”</p> <p>“Everyone within our community to work together as a team in a respectful, positive manner so that our next generations are suited for the future.”</p> <p>“First it complies with Human Rights. Inclusive education with consultation of Family and community. All are equal and supported to be their best self.”</p>	<p>“We've bought the humanity back into our purpose and the final sentence sums up the importance of children for future prosperity - economic, social and academic.”</p> <p>“It hits the mark for me as it focusses on students being active participants in their learning and to gain necessary skills and knowledge for their future.”</p> <p>“I think it sounds really positive and meaningful. It values each student as an individual young person with the opportunity for a bright future and recognises their often complex situations...”</p>	<p>“It is aspirational and supports every child, in every aspect of their development.”</p> <p>“I like that this statement is holistic - about the overall outcomes for the individual, not just that they can read and write. I also think the aspiration that they will become lifelong learners is really important too...”</p> <p>“It is positive and hopeful, includes key words that our students identify as the things that make a difference to them (safe, inclusive collaborative), and includes how we work with families and communities for the best outcomes for children...”</p>

Select verbatims have been chosen to reflect key themes





“Such a joyful , optimistic , learner centred and refreshing focus.
A much needed and loudly applauded reset of SA educative
purpose. So proud to see this back at the end of my career and
know the future of education in SA is in such respectful hands.”



Please tell us how you would suggest the draft purpose statement is changed to improve it.

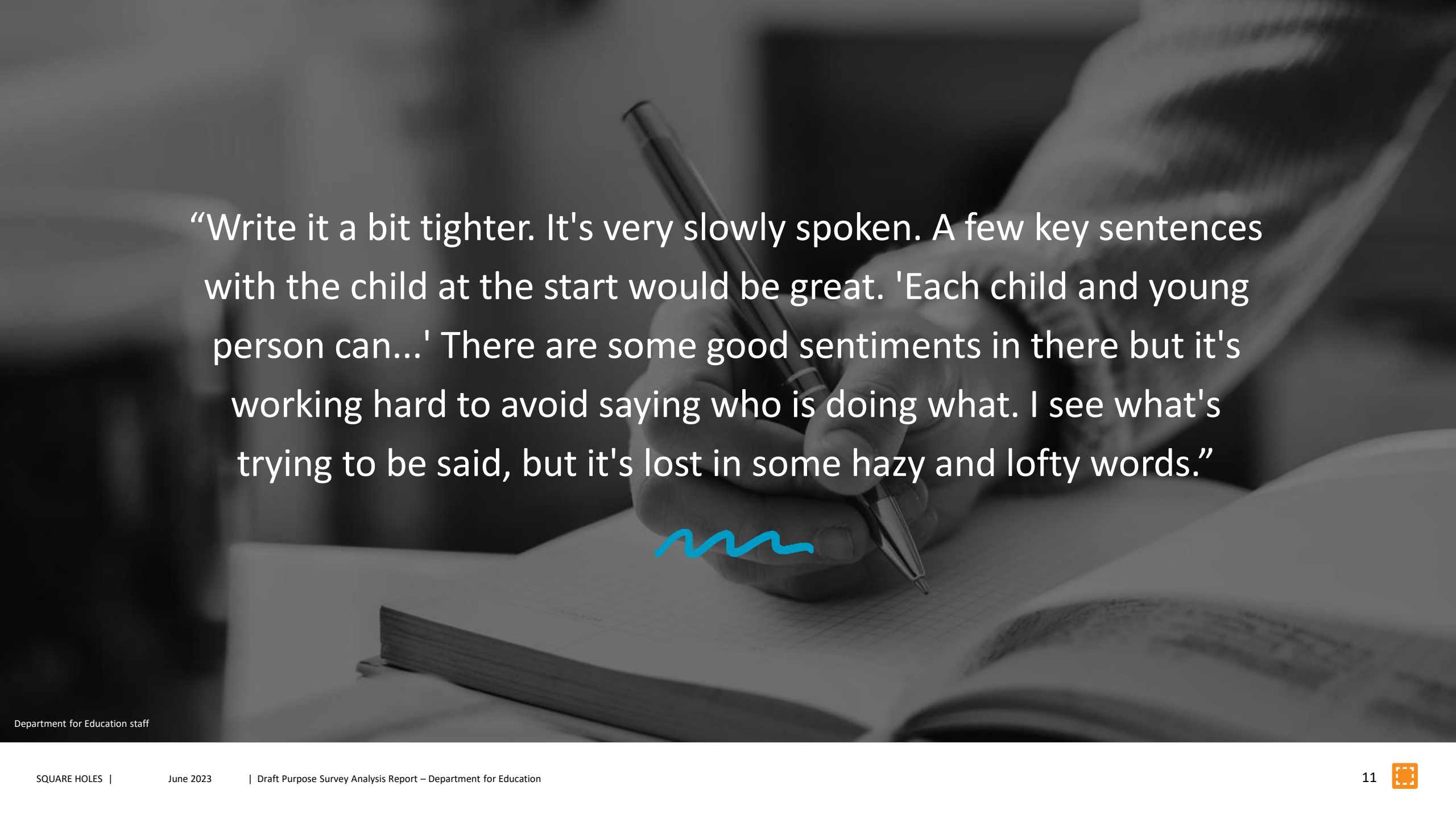
Summary of responses

Many expressed concern with the length of the statement, believing it needed to be shortened to achieve greater focus and impact of messaging. Suggestion was given to the use of clearer language, namely avoiding complex wording and overworked sentences to increase reader accessibility. Another common recommendation was to look at opportunities to greater emphasise inclusivity with some feeling the diversity of students wasn't always well represented or reflected. Additionally, themes around the need to better highlight skills and learning beyond academics were noted.

More concise and succinct	Improve language accessibility (clearer wording / avoid cliches)	Enhance inclusivity sentiment and diversity of students	Additional focus on critical thinking and skills development beyond academic knowledge
<p>“There is nothing new in this statement. The 2nd and 5th paragraphs are similar and could be combined to make the statement more succinct. To make this purpose statement live authentically and be embedded in ALL that we do in sites and as a system, it needs to be short so it can be easily remembered and quoted.”</p> <p>“It's bit long and I'm guessing will naturally be shortened to the first line which is not problematic. I'm sure you don't want wordsmithing, however :), 'EVERY child and student learning and thriving' builds in the equity element, uses more active language, and I think is more aspirational and inspiring.”</p> <p>'Needs to be more succinct - very wordy and the underlying meaning can be lost. Paragraph 3 could be deleted as it is superfluous to the rest of the statement.”</p>	<p>“The intent of the statement is great. The readability of this document is around grade 15. The sentences are long and difficult to read. For this document to be really impactful, care should be taken to make it accessible for everyone to read. The sentences should be short and to the point. Try running it through Hemmingway editor.”</p> <p>“The statement isn't written in an inclusive way- some of the sentences are too long and complex and this will detract from people feeling connected to and understand it. The content is good, but especially sentence 2 is too long. “</p> <p>“In doing so' is not necessary and makes it too wordy. Biggest difference' sounds clumsy. Reword this. 3rd paragraph and 4th paragraph end and then start with very close wording which limits the flow for the reader. 'Classroom' is not inclusive of preschools.”</p>	<p>“As a goal this is a great start as it includes many things currently missing. I just worry that because of the broadness of some statement's specific issues like support & alternative learning for disabled students & inclusivity of LGBTQ+ and gender diverse students will not be addressed.”</p> <p>“Some of the language could be more reflective of schools as ecosystems where students and families bring their own cultural backgrounds. Diversity is more than only cultural, and this could be strengthened in the language. The document reads a little bit linear and indicates that 'if schools do... then students and the community will..”</p> <p>“I'm not convinced the wording clearly represents the needs of our most diverse and 'needy' students with disability.”</p>	<p>“Critical thinking skills is missing. We want our children to become critical thinkers and we will teach them HOW to think not WHAT to think so that can positively contribute to society as informed independent and critical thinking citizens not regurgitators of approved narratives, ideologies and political virtue signalling.”</p> <p>“I think we need to look beyond 'academic' skills because there are a lot of creative intelligent students who are not what we would consider 'academic' and so a range of other skills need to be on offer so they can also achieve their full potential.”</p> <p>“Move academic knowledge to the end of lists. Skills and capabilities are more important. 'set to make' -what does this mean? That paragraph doesn't seem to add to the overall description. Should be removed. Had to reread 'has a say in their learning' several times as didn't flow with the list. Perhaps 'voices their preferences in their learning'.”</p>

Select verbatims have been chosen to reflect key themes



A grayscale photograph of a person's hands writing in a notebook with a pen. The person is wearing a patterned sweater. The background is blurred. The text is overlaid on the image in white.

“Write it a bit tighter. It's very slowly spoken. A few key sentences with the child at the start would be great. 'Each child and young person can...' There are some good sentiments in there but it's working hard to avoid saying who is doing what. I see what's trying to be said, but it's lost in some hazy and lofty words.”



Please tell us why you didn't like the draft purpose statement and how you would change it.

Much of the reasoning behind a level of dissatisfaction with the statement related to **length**, with some perceiving it to be overly wordy and cumbersome.

Stemming from this, some expressed concern that the **statement was not focussed enough** (particularly text beyond the first sentence), missing the link between sentiment and impact to the system.

Others communicated concern for what this revised purpose could mean for the **workload of teachers** and whether the expectations promoted in the statement are **achievable in reality**.

“I think that the purpose statement “learning and thriving” is a **terrific goal but doesn’t really act as a statement of purpose**. The remaining purpose is so long and cumbersome that it unusable. This purpose will never be “lived” if it remains in this form.”

“At what point are we going to **stop throwing more at teachers?**”

“It **is far too wordy and not linguistically consistent, giving the same message in different** words. It is not aspirational and reads like many old purpose statements i.e. life long learners??? It doesn't address the need for our students to develop the skills to function and contribute to a global society.”

“The **opening sentence is good but the rest doesn't hit on our purpose**. Misses point from inclusion headset and from excellence headset. Include students realising academic potential. Teachers and staff? Third paragraph ambiguous - doesn't talk about what difference we will make. Purpose should relate to system, not just schools and pre-schools.”

“The statement **lacks energy and focus. It is like a disparate set of statements**. The first sentence is good, but after that it needs work. Where is the link between this and the stated aims for our Education System? We need something that speaks to us. Imagine being overseas and reading this, what would it say about that system of education?”

Select verbatims have been chosen to reflect key themes





Areas of impact

The consultation highlighted key areas we, as a public education system, need to focus on to achieve our purpose. These areas of impact describe the non-negotiable, system level priority areas that will guide our decision making, effort and focus. These are the areas that SA's public education system will measure and track our progress against. The areas are inter-related and strengthen each other.

Impact Area 1: Wellbeing

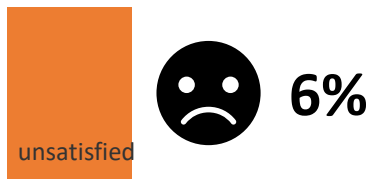
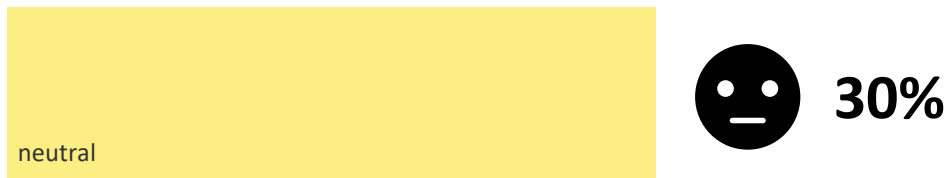
Impact Area 2: Learner agency

Impact Area 3: Effective learners

Impact Area 4: Excellence and equity



How satisfied are you with the following draft areas of impact?

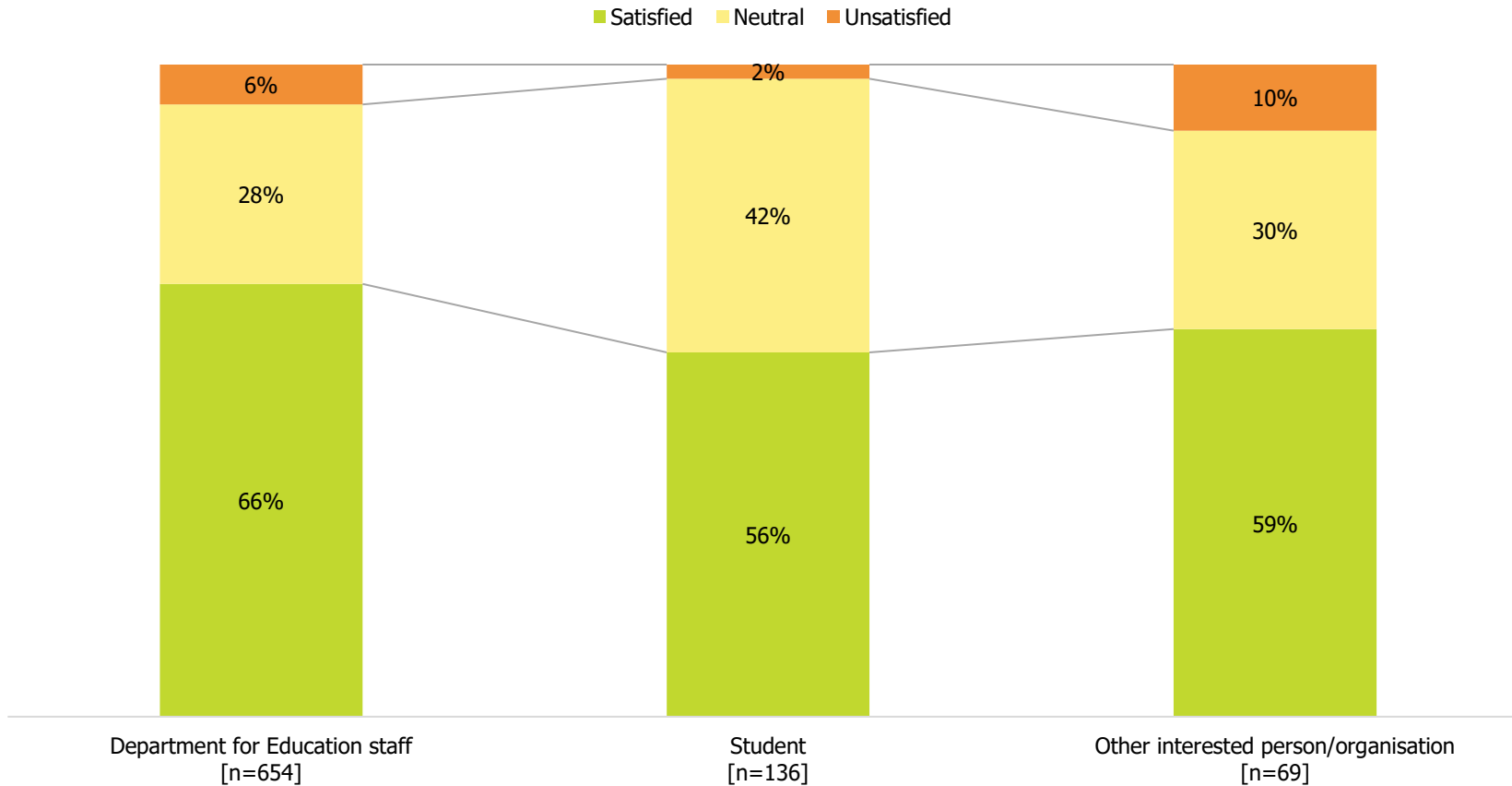


As with the draft purpose statement, more than 90% of respondents are satisfied with, or at least neutral towards the draft areas of impact.



How satisfied are you with the following draft areas of impact?

[by respondent type]



Please note figures not equalling to 100% is a result of rounding errors in charting

Across all respondent types satisfaction observes incidence of 56% or above, this being highest amongst Department for Education staff (66%).

Consistent with the draft statement, students are least negative towards the areas of impact (2% 'unsatisfied').



Please tell us why you were satisfied with the areas of impact.

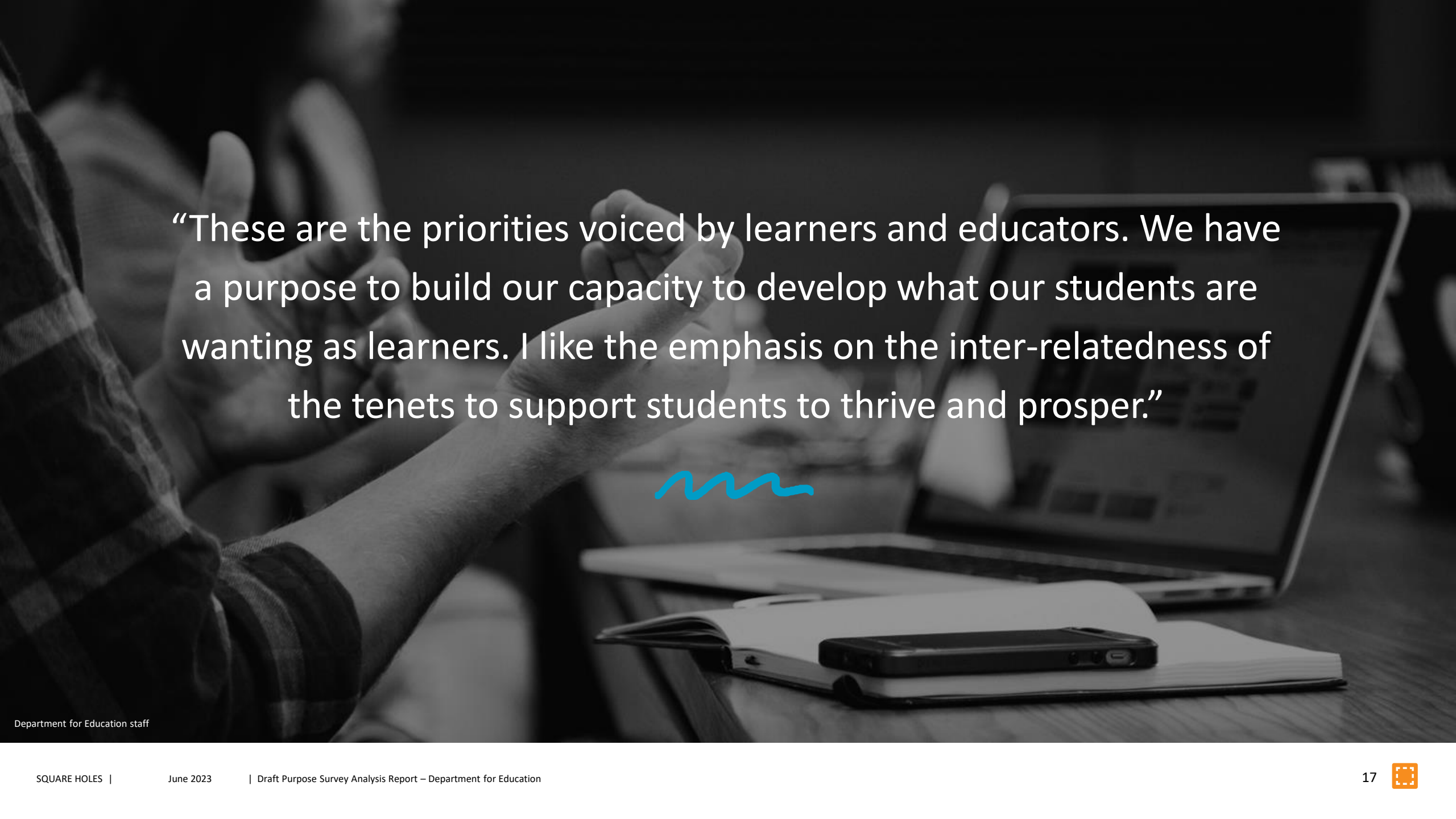
Summary of responses

Respondents were buoyed by the four stated impact areas, believing them to encapsulate the fundamentals of a positive education system moving forward. Positioning wellbeing as the leading area of impact was a key driver of satisfaction for many, a foundational component in student learning that can often be overlooked. Strengthening respondent satisfaction was the perceived alignment of the areas, each complementing the other and facilitating their achievement.

All encompassing (Deemed to cover a wide range critical areas)	Prioritisation of wellbeing	Positive and interconnected impact areas
<p>“Overall, the statement is encompassing of our direction for education and the areas of impact are well structured to consider the responsibilities of education. Practice and accountability measures need to be reflective of what is described, and this will take a significant cultural, structural and organisational shift.”</p> <p>“All essential areas that have a huge impact on student engagement and learning.”</p> <p>“4 key areas for education. Especially happy to see student agency included. Student, teacher, school and parent agency are a key to learning success. Also, very happy to see a greater focus on equity, which was being undermined by our previous direction.”</p> <p>“Short list, concise and encapsulates the 'key areas of impact' we can, and should, engage with as educators.”</p> <p>“These are the areas that are incredibly relevant to our children today and the areas we need to continue to strive for rigorous improvement in for our future.”</p> <p>“These areas have been of concern for a length of time, and it is finally being consulted.”</p>	<p>“Wellbeing at the top is wonderful. I would have loved equity to have its own place rather than be buried with 'excellence'. Excellence can sometimes be seen as a type of privilege to those who live in the world in an inequitable way.”</p> <p>“Wellbeing should be for most, without an individual's wellbeing being nurtured, it's more difficult for the rest to follow.”</p> <p>“The wellbeing of each student is vital to their learning and how they attend at school. If a child feels happy and cared for by staff, then they try harder for that particular teacher. Students have a voice that needs to be heard by everyone - how they feel, what they are learning and how they learn best.”</p> <p>“I love well-being as a focus, knowing that children cannot learn if their well-being is low. I love the acknowledgement that excellence and equity coexist.”</p> <p>“I am thrilled to see wellbeing highlighted. Students need to be ready, able and willing to learn before effective teaching can take place.”</p> <p>“I like that wellbeing is number 1. We need to have our wellbeing balanced before the learning can happen.”</p>	<p>“These all working together, with equal weight to help shape excellent students who are excellent humans is a wonderful aim, one I am proud SA is reaching for.”</p> <p>“These are excellent. The first three feed clearly into number four, but all are intertwined and show the impact educators can have in a compassionate and rigorous way. I really like the graphic that illustrates this.”</p> <p>“The interrelated areas complement each other and it is impossible for students to thrive and prosper without each area of impact.”</p> <p>“I feel that the above 4 areas of impact are important and work synergistically with each other. Please do not forget about Educator wellbeing - we can't fill from an empty cup.”</p> <p>“These are essential, and are interrelated and to some degree co-dependent.”</p>

Select verbatims have been chosen to reflect key themes





“These are the priorities voiced by learners and educators. We have a purpose to build our capacity to develop what our students are wanting as learners. I like the emphasis on the inter-relatedness of the tenets to support students to thrive and prosper.”



Please tell us what you would change about the areas of impact.

Summary of responses

Much of the discourse was around the need for clarification behind some of the language used to make the intent clear and more accessible to all audiences. The use of the word ‘excellence’ is a prime example, as this could have different meanings in various contexts. Other focus was given to how these impact areas will work in practice, with some wanting further information about the proposed strategies to achieve each. Suggestion was given to the separation of ‘excellence and equity’ as a single impact area, whilst others provided feedback as to potential additions (such as support, safety and resilience) and reordering of the current prioritisations.


Clarify language and audience	More information linking to implementation strategies	Potential to separate excellence and equity	Other additions and reordering
<p>“Clear for staff, but language for families needs to be looked at. It makes it sound like children are coming to us for culture when they already have culture. Look at language used and make it clear the working in partnership with families.”</p> <p>“4. What does excellence represent? Fulfilment is language used throughout document. Excellence seems judgemental.”</p> <p>“Again, the language used. Who is the audience? Also makes bold statements that might need more clarification on what this looks like for children and families.4.4 states develop culture. Children come with rich culture. Diversity could be more evident in areas of impact.”</p> <p>“They are just really nice words which mean different things to different people. I would have liked to see connection with real world in there more specifically. In full consultation I didn't see things like introducing mandatory work experience?”</p> <p>“Clarification of the difference between learner agency and effective learners is needed. Well-being for whom? Excellence of what?”</p>	<p>“They sound like nice sound bites - but how do you expect to deliver them with an undervalued/under-resourced workforce? Aspects like 'striving for excellence' - what does that mean? How will you measure it?”</p> <p>“These are lofty ambitions and assume qualities, opportunities and co-operations that often don't, in practice, exist.”</p> <p>“Again, how do we do it all? If we focus on wellbeing then excellence is secondary. Learner agency only comes when they understand how to learn. Effective learners in what way? Life experience? Rote learning? Critical thinking? Too much expectation.”</p> <p>“I would like some understanding in regards to the plan for how to achieve these areas of impact.”</p> <p>“I am hopeful that as much effort/finance/metric collection is put into these areas of impact as we have seen poured into lit/num, retention and SACE results over the last few years. Without a big shift of this kind, school leaders will continue to be unable to deliver on these other areas.”</p>	<p>“Whilst I think Excellence and equity on their own are very good, I am not sure if they should be placed in the same category (other than it is catchy because they are alliterative). I am not sure if learner agency will resonate with the public as a term, but not sure if there is anything better. The rest is fine.”</p> <p>“Why place excellence and equity together? I strongly advocate for all 4 areas of impact however; surely academic excellence is such a major area of impact it stands alone? Combining it with equity wears it down to a more 'fuzzy' area. Equity stands alone, so does academic excellence.”</p> <p>“Not sure how well excellence and equity go together. If they are together, do they both have equal weighting to the other three areas?”</p> <p>“Excellence and equity are both important but should be stand alone. Why are they together?”</p> <p>“Excellence for Equity instead of excellence and equity.”</p>	<p>“I wonder about the order of the list. Does this mean that wellbeing reigns supreme in our focus. I do believe it is important but wonder if having excellence and equity is a better thing to draw people's attention to. The impact domains seem fair enough. I wonder how we will measure for impact.”</p> <p>“I think a big area of impact is also the what (content) students are learning. I definitely agree with these 4 areas, but I am concerned that if we don't get the 'what' right and give space in our curriculum to develop these areas, it will be difficult to make the change we want.”</p> <p>“Given the significant increase in students reaching high school without the necessary literacy and numeracy skills to be successful, it feels like there are some steps missing. I think it is also problematic that wellbeing is listed first. I understand that this is not ranked in importance, but teaching skills and curriculum is our core business.”</p>

Select verbatims have been chosen to reflect key themes



Additional feedback





“The draft purpose statement acknowledges the importance of teachers and staff working together with families and communities to nurture, develop and empower all SA children and young people with the academic knowledge, skills and capabilities they need to become fulfilled individuals, active and compassionate citizens, and lifelong learners.”



Summarising feedback: Draft statement and impact areas

In addition to the online survey, supplementary feedback was provided by students, staff, families, community members and organisations, including South Australian Secondary Principals' Association, South Australian Association of School Parent Communities, Preschool Directors Association, Department of Human Services, Educators SA and the Teachers Registration Board.

Forums were held with the department's Aboriginal Education Directorate, professional associations and leaders.

Note, this feedback builds on the 45 submissions received from organisations and individuals during the initial consultation on the purpose of public education in SA in early 2023.

Generally, stakeholders were **positive and supportive** of the draft statement and impact areas put forward by the Department for Education. Feedback commented on the **aspirational** nature of the messaging, setting **strong expectations** of an **inclusive, collaborative** and **nurturing** education that will prioritise the growth and **development** of every student throughout their schooling and beyond. Recommendations were varied and often specific to certain sections and wording usages. Common themes from the 14 submissions have been collated and provided in this report (see right).

Recommendations for improvement

- **Strengthen intent** – more prescriptive, succinct and powerful, move away from perceived 'motherhood statements'
- **Greater reflection of diversity** – celebrate and reflect the diverse cultures, abilities and ways of learning present across the public education sector
- **Link to strategies** – currently some believe the statement and impact areas lack specificity as to how they will be achieved and the measures of success
- **Clarification of meanings** – give context to words with potential for multiple interpretations, avoid phrases that may not be accessible to all (e.g., 'get to the bottom of...')
- **Specific rewording** – many provided specific examples of sentence and word restructuring (e.g., changing 'teachers' to 'educators' to be more encompassing, removing the use of 'academic' to focus just on 'knowledge, skills and capabilities')
- **Greater emphasis on collaboration** – further description of the work to be undertaken with families, encouraging contribution and engagement
- Understanding that where we don't highlight the needs of Aboriginal students and community, it can be lost in the big picture as history has shown.





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