



# National Report on Schooling in Australia

# 2021

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# Executive summary



## Introduction

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The *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2021* is the 33rd annual national report on Australia's school education sector.<sup>1</sup> It has been produced by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) on behalf of Australian education ministers.

The report highlights progress in 2021 towards the [Alice Springs \(Mparntwe\) Education Declaration](#) released by Australian education ministers in 2019 and is the second national report to address these nationally agreed goals and commitments.

The *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2021* consists of 2 parts: this written report and the online [National Report on Schooling data portal](#).

The written report addresses the 11 areas of commitment to action specified in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) declaration, describes the national policy and reporting context for school education in Australia, and reports against the nationally agreed key performance measures (KPMs) for schooling specified in the [Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020](#), providing data, analysis and commentary. It also includes other high-level statistical information on Australian schooling in 2021 and for the period 2011–2021 inclusive.

The National Report on Schooling data portal gives readers and researchers interactive access to a wider range of nationally consistent data on schooling in Australia. This includes data on enrolments, staffing, and school funding, and on the KPMs for student participation, achievement in the National Assessment Program (NAP), and attainment of Year 12 and post-school qualifications.

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<sup>1</sup> The first edition of the joint annual report on schooling across Australia was compiled at the direction of the then Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs for 1989.

The data portal allows readers to view data by state and territory as well as at the national level, by calendar year and by other breakdowns, such as school sector, sex and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, where possible and appropriate.<sup>2</sup> Data sets are regularly updated as new data becomes available and may be downloaded from the portal.

Previous editions of the National Report on Schooling in Australia for the years 2009–2020 are available on the [ACARA website](#). Editions from 1989 to 2008 are available in the [Trove](#) archive maintained by the National Library of Australia.

## Overview of the report

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### Part 1, 'Schools and schooling', provides information on the status of Australian schooling in 2021, including school, student and teacher numbers and school structures.

In Australia, responsibility for school education rests mainly with the 6 state and 2 territory governments.

All states and territories provide for 13 years of formal school education. Primary education, including a foundation year, lasts for either 7 or 8 years and is followed by secondary education of 6 or 5 years respectively.<sup>3</sup> Typically, schooling commences at age 5, is compulsory from age 6 until age 17 (with provision for alternative study or work arrangements in the senior secondary years), and is completed at age 17 or 18. School structures and age requirements in states and territories are summarised in Part 1.4.

The majority (69.8%) of schools are government schools, established and administered by state and territory governments through their education departments or authorities. The remaining 30.2% are non-government schools, mostly associated with religious organisations. Non-government schools are established and operated under conditions determined by state and territory governments through their registration authorities. School numbers are shown in Part 1.1.

Around two-thirds (65.1%) of school students are enrolled in government schools and about one-third (34.9%) in non-government schools.<sup>4</sup> Part 1.2 reports on numbers of students by school sector, state and territory, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status and notes the impact of national border closures due to COVID-19 on school enrolments.

Staff numbers closely reflect enrolments, with 63.6% of school teachers employed by the government school sector and 36.4% by non-government schools.<sup>5</sup> Part 1.3 reports on teaching staff numbers and student–teacher ratios by school sector and state and territory.

School, student and teacher numbers in 2021 are shown for Australia and by state and territory in Figure 1.

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<sup>2</sup> This report uses the term 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' to refer to First Nations Australians. This is in line with the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration and definitions used for data collection.

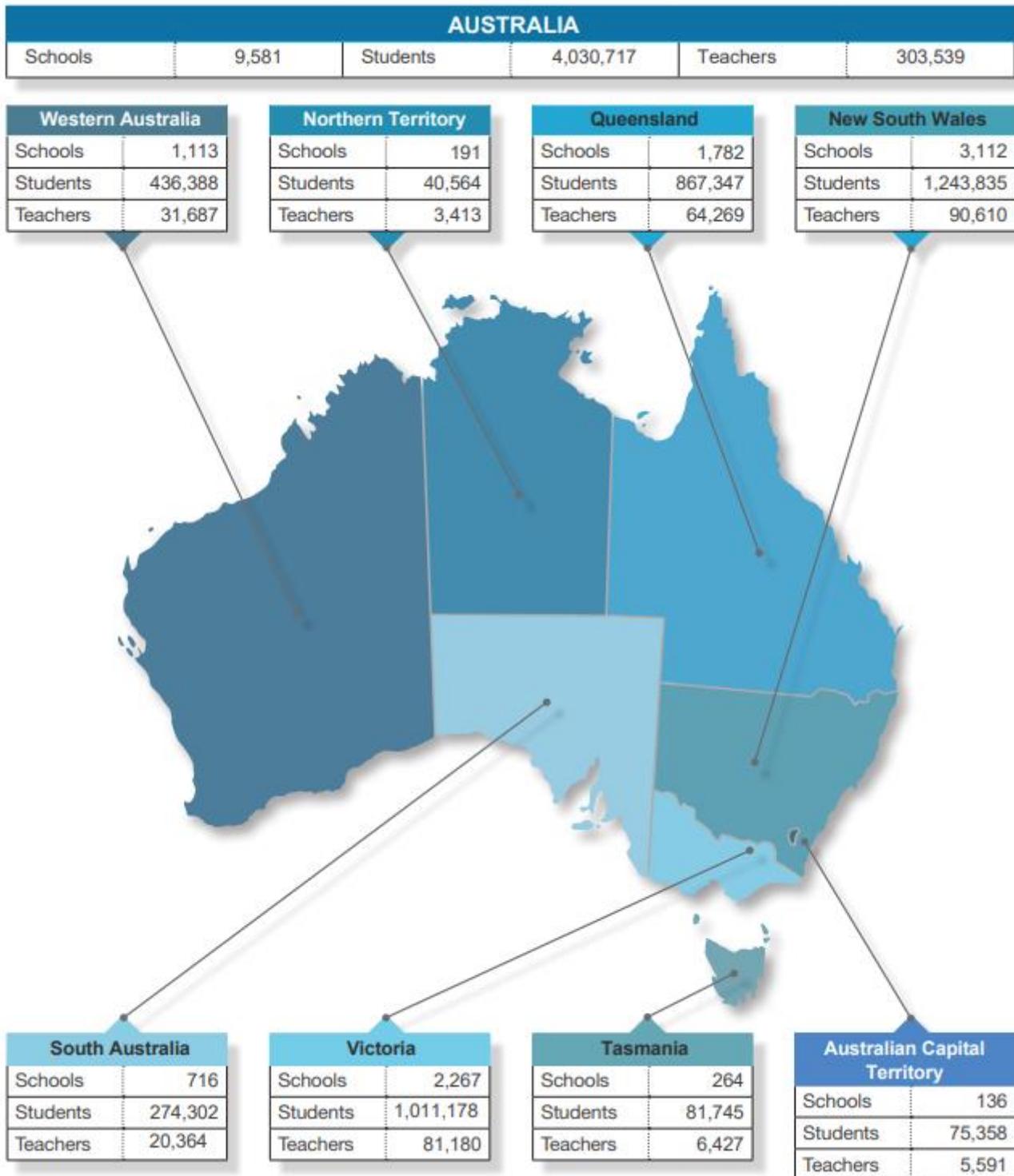
<sup>3</sup> SA is the only jurisdiction to follow the 8-year/5-year pattern (with a transition to a 7-year/6-year pattern in progress).

<sup>4</sup> Count of full-time plus part-time students.

<sup>5</sup> Full-time equivalent teaching staff.

Figure 1

## Numbers of schools, students and teachers by state and territory, Australia, 2021



## Notes:

Student numbers are individuals (full-time students plus part-time students). Teacher numbers are full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching staff.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021; see also National Report on Schooling data portal.

## Part 2, 'Policies and priorities', outlines the national policy context for Australian schooling in 2021 and reports against the commitments to action agreed by Australian education ministers in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration.

Part 2 of this report summarises the national policy context for schooling, including the role of the national ministerial forum, the Education Ministers Meeting, in deciding agreed national policy for education in 2021 and the broader framework within which national decisions for schooling were made.

Part 2.1 lists education ministers' agreed priorities for 2021 and describes the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration and the National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) as the prior national agreements shaping school education policy. It also identifies notable initiatives undertaken in 2021 and comments on the response of the school education sector to disruptions caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The extent of disruptions due to COVID-19 to school operations in 2021 in each state and territory, and the responses of school systems within each jurisdiction are detailed in Part 2.14.

From 2020, the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration replaced the Melbourne Declaration as the ministerial statement of educational goals for young Australians and commitment to action for the coming decade. Ministers agreed that education continue to promote excellence and equity and enable all Australians to become confident and creative individuals, successful learners, and active and informed community members. The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) declaration emphasises the importance of learning throughout life and a renewed commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures. Part 2.2 outlines the educational goals and commitment to action contained in the declaration.

Parts 2.3–2.13 report on national progress in implementing the [Alice Springs \(Mparntwe\) Education Declaration](#) commitment to action in 2021 under the 11 headings specified in the declaration. These sections also include activities addressing the 8 national policy initiatives specified in the National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) and list examples of state and territory initiatives relating to the commitment.

Progress towards the commitment to action reported for 2021 included:

- States and territories implemented new and continuing partnerships with industry and the community to improve science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. The Australian Government allocated funding to extend existing initiatives to support the teaching and learning of STEM.
- To support quality teaching and leadership, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) encouraged recognition of teachers certified through the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) program and implemented agreed national approaches to accreditation of initial teacher education.
- States and territories continued to implement the professional standards for teachers and principals, and the accreditation of teachers and teacher education programs, within their jurisdictions.
- States and territories and non-government sectors implemented initiatives for early childhood education, for the formative years of primary school, for the middle years of schooling, and for senior schooling and youth transitions.

- A range of activities were undertaken in response to the 2020 review of senior secondary pathways into work, including the mapping of skills development activities, developing specifications to inform learner profiles, enhancing career information and agreeing on the scope and principles of a national strategy for VET delivered to secondary students.
- Under the Heads of Agreement for Skills Reform (signed in July 2020), the Australian, state and territory governments have committed to strengthening VET pathways for secondary students.
- ACARA completed its review of the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum as requested by ministers. The revised Australian Curriculum, Version 9.0, will be considered for endorsement by education ministers in early 2022.<sup>6</sup>
- NAPLAN testing was resumed in May 2021 following its cancellation in 2020. Tests were administered to over 1.2 million students with approximately 67% of students undertaking the tests online, on track to the full transition to NAPLAN online in 2022.
- In November 2021, Education Ministers Meeting agreed in principle to move NAPLAN tests to Term One from 2023, to maintain the existing constructs for NAPLAN tests, to phase in opt-in assessments in Science, Civics & Citizenship and Digital Literacy and to move the NAP Sample test window to Term Two from 2023.
- In line with the NSRA, work continued to explore how learning progressions and formative assessment can enhance the capacity of teachers to make evidence-based decisions about student learning.
- In 2021 the Australian Government, all states and territories and the Coalition of Peaks (representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations) released their first annual Closing the Gap Implementation plans under the 2020 National Agreement on Closing the Gap. All states and territories operated programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities within their jurisdictions.
- The final report of the 5-yearly review of the Disability Standards for Education (DSE) was released in March 2021. The Australian Government worked with state and territory governments and non-government education authorities to implement the recommendations, with an initial focus on the development of information products.
- The *My School* website was updated to include school profile data for 2014 to 2020, and data on school finances, VET in schools and post school destinations from 2014 to 2019.
- Work continued on the development of options to establish a national unique student identifier (USI) as agreed under the NSRA, including privacy impact assessments. Education ministers agreed to pilot the proposed solution with NSW, SA and NT, including some Catholic and independent schools within those jurisdictions.
- The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO), a national policy initiative to improve the national evidence base under the NSRA was launched in December 2020. In 2021 AERO published resources to inform teacher practice, system improvement and policy development using evidence-based approaches.

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<sup>6</sup> Note: Version 9 was endorsed by education ministers in April 2022 and is published on the ACARA website.

Part 3, 'Measuring and reporting performance', reports on the performance of Australian schooling in 2021, using the nationally agreed key performance measures (KPMs) for schooling specified in the *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020*.

Part 3 reports on 17 of the 18 agreed KPMs scheduled for reporting in 2021.<sup>7</sup>

The measures are reported at the national level, and by various breakdowns, such as state and territory, school sector, school year and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status. For relevant KPMs, time series for the previous 10 years (2011–2020) are also included. Where relevant breakdowns or time series are not reported in Part 3, they are provided in the National Report on Schooling data portal, as part of extensive statistical information on schooling in Australia, along with technical notes and caveats.

Data reported for 2021 includes:

- At the 2021 census, the national enrolment rate for 6–15-year-olds was 99.3%. Enrolment rates were 99.0% or higher in all states and territories except the NT.
- The average national attendance rate for students in Years 1–10 in 2021 was 90.9% — a fall of 0.5 percentage points from 2019, with decreases at the national level in all three school sectors, arising from the continued spread of COVID-19 in 2021.
- At 79.4%, the average attendance rate for Indigenous students was 12.2 percentage points lower than for non-Indigenous students. There was an increase in this gap of 1.7 percentage points between 2019 and 2021.
- Among all Australian students in Years 1–10, 71.2% attended school for at least 90% of school days. However, just over 40% (41.3%) of Indigenous students within this group met the 90% benchmark.
- The national apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12 decreased by 0.5 percentage points to 81.6% in 2021. The apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students decreased by 1.0 percentage points to 60.5%. The apparent gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous rates widened by 0.4 percentage points to 22.2 percentage points in 2021. The long-term trends since 2011 in apparent retention rates from Year 10 to Year 12 were upward for all students and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, with a net fall in the gap of 4.9 percentage points between 2011 and 2021.
- NAPLAN participation rates were over 95% for each of Years 3, 5 and 7. At 92.3%, the Year 9 participation rate was lower than for other years.
- The proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard in NAPLAN tests was over 90% for Years 3, 5 and 7 in reading, and for Years 3 and 5 in writing. The proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard in NAPLAN numeracy tests was over 93% for all year groups tested.

<sup>7</sup> Other KPMs, for sample and international assessments, were not scheduled for 2021. The international assessment PIRLS was conducted in 2021, but results will not be available until mid-2023. This data will be added to the National Report on Schooling data portal when it becomes available. Further information on PIRLS is available on the ACER website.

- Nationally, for Year 3 and Year 5, there were upward long-term trends in the mean scale scores and the proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard for reading.
- The proportion of the 15–19-year-old population, including secondary students, undertaking a vocational education and training (VET) qualification increased from 26.4% in 2020 to 27.3% in 2021. The long-term trend in this measure since 2015 was downward.
- The 3 KPMs measuring the participation of young people in education and/or work, as measured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey of Education and Work (SEW), all increased in 2021, after falling in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic's negative impact on employment and training especially for young people. As 2021 was a census year in Australia, data for these measures drawn from the Census of Population and Housing is also reported for 2021.
- The proportion of 15–19-year-olds who were fully engaged in education, training or work, as measured by SEW, increased from 85.4% in 2020 to 90.3% in 2021. The long-term trend in this measure was upward, with an average annual increase of 0.3 percentage points. The proportion of 20–24-year-olds who were fully engaged in education, training or work increased from 71.0% in 2020 to 73.0% in 2021. However, this increase was not statistically significant and did not represent a full recovery to pre-COVID levels. There was no evident long-term trend in this measure for the period 2008–2021.
- The proportion of 17–24-year-olds who had left school and were fully engaged in education, training or work (as measured by SEW) increased from 69.3% in 2020 to 73.9% in 2021. The fall in this measure of 4.7 percentage points between 2019 and 2020 and the subsequent increase of 4.6 percentage points between 2020 and 2021 were both statistically significant and were closely related to the effect of COVID 19 on the employment of young people. With an average annual fall of 0.3 percentage points since 2008, the long-term trend in this measure was downward.
- At the 2021 census, 73.4% of 17–24-year-olds who had left school were fully engaged in education, training or work — an increase of 2.4 percentage points since 2016.
- The proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that had attained at least Year 12 or equivalent or Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Certificate II or above, as measured by the ABS SEW, was 89.9% in 2021, a similar level to 2020. The proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that had attained at least Year 12 or equivalent or AQF Certificate III or above increased from 89.4% in 2020 to 89.5% in 2021. This increase was not statistically significant, but the longer-term upward trend in this measure of 0.5 percentage points per annum since 2008 is in line with long-standing government policy to increase levels of attainment for young people.
- At the 2021 census, the proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that had attained at least Year 12 or equivalent or AQF Certificate II or above was 90.3%, compared to 88.6% in 2016; and the proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that had attained at least Year 12 or equivalent or AQF III or above was 89.9%, compared to 87.9% in 2016. These are substantial rises in census data over only 5 years.

Table 1 summarises the national KPMs for 2021 in comparison with 2020, or the most recent calendar year for which comparable data exists. This is expressed as the short-term change to each KPM. For data from the census of population and housing, the most recent previous calendar year is 2016. For attendance and NAPLAN measures the most recent previous calendar year is 2019. Table 1 also summarises longer-term trends in the movement of KPMs. This data demonstrates that while changes in KPMs from year to year are generally small, successive increments over time may result in measurable long-term trends.

Table 1

## Key performance measures for schooling, Australia, 2020–2021 and long-term trends

Key Performance Measures	Short-term change			Long-term trend		
	2020 or previous calendar year	2021	Change	Trend period	Average annual change (percent. points)	Trend
<b>1. Student participation</b>						
1(a) Enrolment: Proportion of children aged 6 to 15 years who are enrolled in school (Census of Population and Housing) (%) [previous calendar year is 2016]	99.4	99.3	↔	2011-21	0.0	↔
1(b) Attendance rate: The number of actual full-time equivalent student-days attended by full-time students in Years 1 to 10 in Semester 1 as a percentage of the total number of possible student-days attended in Semester 1 (%) [previous calendar year is 2019]	91.4	90.9	↔	2014-21	-0.3	↓
1(c) Attendance level: The proportion of full-time students in Years 1-10 whose attendance rate in Semester 1 is equal to or greater than 90 per cent (%) [previous calendar year is 2019]	73.1	71.2	↔	2018-21	-1.3	↔
1(d) NAPLAN participation: Proportion of students participating in NAPLAN in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (%) [previous calendar year is 2019]						
Year 3	96.1	96.4	↔	2008-21	-0.1	↓
Year 5	96.5	96.6	↔	2008-21	-0.1	↓
Year 7	96.0	95.8	↔	2008-21	-0.2	↓
Year 9	92.9	92.3	↔	2008-21	-0.3	↓
1(e) Apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12 (%)	82.1	81.6	↔	2010-21	0.3	↑
1(f) Participation of young people in VET including VET in Schools: Proportion of the population aged 15 to 19 years who in the calendar year successfully completed at least one Unit of Competency as part of a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above (%)	26.4	27.3	↔	2015-21	-0.4	↓
1(g) Proportion of 15–19-year-olds in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training (%)						
ABS Survey of Education and Work	85.4	90.3	↑	2008-21	0.3	↑
Census of Population and Housing [previous calendar year is 2016]	86.4	86.9	↔	2011-21	0.1	N/A
1(h) Proportion of 20–24-year-olds in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training (%)						
ABS Survey of Education and Work	71.0	73.0	↔	2008-21	-0.4	↓
Census of Population and Housing [previous calendar year is 2016]	72.2	72.3	↔	2011-21	-0.2	N/A
1(i) Proportion of 17–24-year-olds who have left school that are in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training (%)						
ABS Survey of Education and Work	69.3	73.9	↑	2008-21	-0.3	↓
Census of Population and Housing [previous calendar year is 2016]	71.0	73.4	↔	2011-21	0.0	N/A

Key Performance Measures	Short-term change			Long-term trend		
	2020 or Previous Calendar Year	2021	Change	Trend period	Average annual change (percent. points)	Trend
<b>2. Student Achievement – National Achievement Program – Literacy</b>						
2(a) Proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard for Reading in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (%) [previous calendar year is 2019]						
Year 3 – Band 2	95.9	95.9	↔	2008-21	0.2	↑
Year 5 – Band 4	94.7	95.1	↔	2008-21	0.3	↑
Year 7 – Band 5	94.5	93.8	↔	2008-21	0.0	↔
Year 9 – Band 6	91.8	89.7	↔	2008-21	-0.1	↔
2(b) NAPLAN mean scale scores for Reading in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (points on NAPLAN scale) [previous calendar year is 2019]						
Year 3	432.2	437.9	↔	2008-21	2.5	↑
Year 5	506.1	511.3	↔	2008-21	2.0	↑
Year 7	546.3	542.3	↔	2008-21	0.3	↔
Year 9	581.3	576.8	↔	2008-21	0.3	↔
2(c) Proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard for Writing in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (%) [previous calendar year is 2019]						
Year 3 – Band 2	96.3	96.7	↔	2011-21	0.1	↔
Year 5 – Band 4	92.8	93.3	↔	2011-21	0.1	↔
Year 7 – Band 5	89.4	89.7	↔	2011-21	-0.1	↔
Year 9 – Band 6	82.4	82.2	↔	2011-21	-0.2	↔
2(d) NAPLAN mean scale scores for Writing in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (points on NAPLAN scale) [previous calendar year is 2019]						
Year 3	422.5	425.3	↔	2011-21	0.8	↔
Year 5	474.1	479.9	↔	2011-21	-0.5	↔
Year 7	513.2	522.0	↔	2011-21	-0.7	↔
Year 9	548.8	550.6	↔	2011-21	-1.2	↔
2(f) Proportion of participating Year 4 students achieving at or above the proficient standard (Intermediate) in PIRLS (%) [previous calendar year is 2016]						
	81	N/A	N/A	2011-21	N/A	N/A
<b>3. Student Achievement – National Achievement Program – Numeracy</b>						
3(a) Proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard for Numeracy in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (%) [previous calendar year is 2019]						
Year 3 – Band 2	95.5	95.4	↔	2008-21	0.1	↔
Year 5 – Band 4	95.4	95.0	↔	2008-21	0.2	↑
Year 7 – Band 5	94.3	93.2	↔	2008-21	0.0	↔
Year 9 – Band 6	96.0	94.7	↔	2008-21	0.2	↔
3(b) NAPLAN mean scale scores for Numeracy in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (points on NAPLAN scale) [previous calendar year is 2019]						
Year 3	408.1	402.8	↔	2008-21	1.1	↑
Year 5	495.9	495.2	↔	2008-21	1.1	↑
Year 7	554.4	550.3	↔	2008-21	0.7	↔
Year 9	592.1	587.5	↔	2008-21	0.7	↔

Key Performance Measures	Short-term change			Long-term trend		
	Previous Calendar Year	2021	Change	Trend period	Average annual change (percent. points)	Trend
<b>7. Student Attainment</b>						
7(a) Proportion of the 20 to 24-year-old population having attained at least Year 12 or equivalent or AQF Certificate II or above						
ABS Survey of Education and Work (%)	89.9	89.9	↔	2008-21	0.5	↑
Census of Population and Housing (%) [previous calendar year is 2016] Census of Population and Housing (%) [most recent calendar year is 2016]	88.6	90.3	↔	2011-21	0.5	N/A
7(b) Proportion of the 20 to 24-year-old population having attained at least Year 12 or equivalent or AQF Certificate III or above						
ABS Survey of Education and Work (%)	89.4	89.5	↔	2008-21	0.5	↑
Census of Population and Housing (%) [previous calendar year is 2016]	87.9	89.9	↔	2011-21	0.5	N/A

## Notes:

Except for NAPLAN scale scores, KPMs are expressed as percentages.

Where appropriate, measures of short-term change in Table 1 have been tested for statistical significance. Where KPMs are based on census or administrative data, changes of more than 0.1 percentage points are considered noteworthy/significant.

Long-term trends for each KPM are shown for the period (at least 3 years) over which comparable data is available. To measure long-term trends, a line of best fit is calculated when at least three points are available. The annual change is calculated from the gradient. When the gradient exceeds the standard deviation calculated for the yearly KPMs, the line of best fit can be categorised as “trending up” or “trending down”. When there is no difference, the line of best fit will be described as “trending flat”.

For the trends in NAPLAN mean achievement (KPMs 2b, 2d and 3b), the criterion for determining the significance of the average annual change includes a calculation of equating error over time consistent with the NAPLAN National Report methodology.

↑ means the short-term increase in the measure was significant/the long-term trend was positive/upward

↓ means the short-term decrease in the measure was significant/the long-term trend was negative/downward

↔ means the short-term change in the measure was not significant/a long-term trend was not evident

N/A means not available.

With the exception of mean scale scores for NAPLAN, the average annual change over the trend period is expressed as percentage points. For NAPLAN mean scale scores, the average annual change over the trend period is expressed as points on the NAPLAN scale. For NAPLAN measures, this differs from the comparisons between calendar years published in the 2021 NAPLAN National Report and on the NAPLAN results page of the ACARA NAP website, which are comparisons between two points in time rather than trends over time. Trend data by state and territory, and by other disaggregations where possible and appropriate, is provided in the Key Performance Measures data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

## Part 4, 'School funding', reports data on government spending on Australian schooling and data on school income and capital expenditure.

Part 4 outlines intergovernmental funding arrangements for school education, and reports on state and territory and Australian Government expenditure on government and non-government schools. It also summarises data on school income from all sources and capital expenditure on schools.

Schools are funded through a combination of state or territory government funding, Australian Government funding, fees and charges and other parental or private contributions.

In the 2020–21 financial year, total recurrent government funding for schooling was \$72.21 billion. This was made up of \$49.96 billion (69.2%) from state and territory budgets and \$22.25 billion (30.8%) from the Australian Government (Commonwealth) budget.

Overall, 76.0% of recurrent government funding was allocated to government schools and 24.0% to non-government schools. The bulk (91.6%) of state and territory funding was allocated to government schools. Most (59.0%) of the Australian Government funding was allocated to non-government schools.

# Part 1: Schools and schooling



Part 1 provides information on the status of Australian schooling in 2021, including school, student and teacher numbers, and school structures.

## 1.1 School numbers

In Australia, responsibility for school education rests mainly with the 6 state and 2 territory governments.<sup>8</sup>

All states and territories provide for 13 years of formal school education. Primary education includes a Foundation year and Years 1–6. Secondary education consists of Years 7–12.<sup>9</sup> Typically, schooling commences at age 5, is compulsory from age 6 until age 17 (with provision for alternative study or work arrangements after Year 10) and is completed at age 17 or 18.

The majority of schools are government schools, established and administered by state and territory governments through their education departments or authorities. The remainder are non-government schools, mostly associated with religious organisations. Non-government schools are established and operated under conditions determined by state and territory governments through their registration authorities.

The number and proportion of schools by school type and school sector in 2021 are shown in Table 1.1.

<sup>8</sup> New South Wales (NSW), Victoria (Vic), Queensland (Qld), South Australia (SA), Western Australia (WA), Tasmania (Tas), Northern Territory (NT) and Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

<sup>9</sup> Except in SA. Most SA primary schools currently include Year 7, with a transition of Year 7 to a secondary school year in progress.

Table 1.1

## Number and proportion of schools by school type and school sector, Australia, 2021

School type	School sector									
	Government		Non-government				All schools			
	No.	%	Catholic		Independent		Total		Total	% by school type
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Primary	4,801	76.7	1,243	19.9	212	3.4	1,455	23.3	6,256	65.3
Secondary	1,059	73.4	324	22.5	59	4.1	383	26.6	1,442	15.1
Combined	496	36.1	149	10.8	729	53.1	878	63.9	1,374	14.3
Special	336	66.0	46	9.0	127	25.0	173	34.0	509	5.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,692</b>	<b>69.8</b>	<b>1,762</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>1,127</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>2,889</b>	<b>30.2</b>	<b>9,581</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Notes:

School type:

- primary – school delivers primary education
- secondary – school delivers secondary education
- combined – school delivers both primary and secondary education
- special – students may include primary students, secondary students, ungraded students or a combination of primary, secondary and ungraded students. Special schools cater for students with disability and/or other special needs.

School sector: Categories used in tables and graphs showing 'school sector' are 'government', 'Catholic' and 'independent'. In some cases, the category 'total non-government' (total of Catholic and independent) is also used. Systemic and non-systemic Catholic schools are counted as Catholic schools in the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) and in this report.<sup>10</sup> Independent public schools established in Qld, WA and the NT are government schools.

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal for further data, notes and caveats.

In 2021 there were 9,581 schools in Australia.<sup>11</sup> This total included primary, secondary, combined (primary and secondary) and special schools, across government and non-government school sectors. (See notes to Table 1.1 and Part 5: Glossary for definitions of school levels, school types and school sectors.)

Of the total number of schools, 69.8% were administered by state and territory governments, 18.4% identified as having Catholic affiliation, and 11.8% were classified as independent. Most independent schools are affiliated with religious denominations or promote a particular educational philosophy.

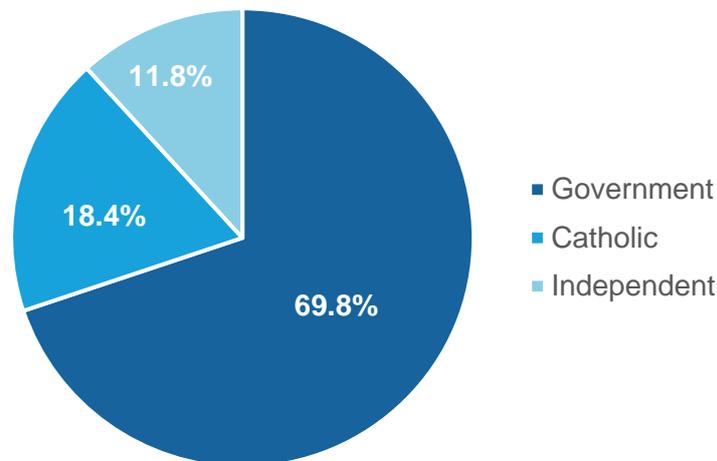
The proportion of schools by school sector in 2021 is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

<sup>10</sup> Except where noted in Part 4 School funding and in Part 5 Glossary.

<sup>11</sup> As at the NSSC schools census date, 6 August 2021.

Figure 1.1

## Proportion of schools by school sector, Australia, 2021 (%)



Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Around two-thirds (65.3%) of schools were primary schools. In general, primary schools are smaller and more localised than secondary schools. Three-quarters (76.7%) of primary schools were government schools.

Most secondary schools (73.4%) and special schools (66.0%) were also government schools, while most combined schools (63.9%) were non-government schools, most in the independent school sector.

The number and proportion of schools by state and territory in 2021 are shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2

## Number and proportion of schools by school type and state/territory, Australia, 2021

School type	State/territory								Australia
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	
Primary	2,097	1,571	1,139	448	686	155	75	85	6,256
Secondary	509	340	276	85	143	42	22	25	1,442
Combined	328	243	277	156	203	58	88	21	1,374
Special	178	113	90	27	81	9	6	5	509
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,112</b>	<b>2,267</b>	<b>1,782</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>1,113</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>9,581</b>
<b>Proportion (%)</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>23.7</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

The number of schools in each state and territory is largely determined by the size and geographical distribution of the school-age population, but changes in school numbers from year to year may be due to administrative or structural changes in schooling as well as to changes in student populations.

The total number of schools in Australia rose by 39 from 9,542 in 2020 to 9,581 in 2021, including increases of 13 in Vic and 12 in Qld. Proportions of schools per state and territory in 2021 did not change substantially from 2020.

There was a net rise of 146 (1.5%) in the total number of schools over the period 2011–2021. The numbers and proportions of schools in the 3 school sectors over this period are shown in Table 1.3.

**Table 1.3**

**Number and proportion of schools by school sector, Australia, 2011–2021**

Year	School sector						
	Government		Catholic		Independent		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
2011	6,705	71.1	1,710	18.1	1,020	10.8	9,435
2012	6,697	71.0	1,713	18.2	1,017	10.8	9,427
2013	6,661	70.9	1,717	18.3	1,015	10.8	9,393
2014	6,651	70.8	1,722	18.3	1,016	10.8	9,389
2015	6,639	70.6	1,737	18.5	1,028	10.9	9,404
2016	6,634	70.5	1,738	18.5	1,042	11.1	9,414
2017	6,639	70.3	1,744	18.5	1,061	11.2	9,444
2018	6,646	70.1	1,753	18.5	1,078	11.4	9,477
2019	6,659	70.1	1,756	18.5	1,088	11.4	9,503
2020	6,675	70.0	1,762	18.5	1,105	11.6	9,542
2021	6,692	69.8	1,762	18.4	1,127	11.8	9,581

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021 and previous releases.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Between 2011 and 2021 there was a net rise of 52 in the number of Catholic schools and of 107 in the number of independent schools with a net fall in the number of government schools of 13. The proportion of independent schools grew by 1.0 percentage points to 11.8% nationally over this period.

See also the School Numbers data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

## 1.2 Student numbers

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### Enrolments by school level and sector

In 2021, for the second year, enrolments in Australian schools exceeded 4 million, a rise of 0.6% from 2020.

At the time of the schools census in August 2021, various restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic were in place which may have impacted on the data. While the majority of schools across Australia continued as normal, initiatives to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the community remained in place, including the implementation of remote online learning where required.

For the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC), students were considered to be enrolled and active in an education program, even if that program had been temporarily disrupted by COVID-19. This included where programs were temporarily delivered online or remotely and even where schools were temporarily closed for COVID-19 related reasons.<sup>12</sup> Because enrolments were counted in this way, it is estimated that the impacts of COVID-19 on data quality were minor.

The exception to this was the negative impact of international border closures on both the school-age population and the level of school enrolments overall. This is discussed further below.

The numbers and proportions of individual students by school level and school sector in 2021 are summarised in Table 1.4.

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<sup>12</sup> ABS, [Schools, Australia, 2021](#). For a summary of COVID-19 arrangements for schools across states and territories see Part 2.14.

Table 1.4

**Number and proportion of students (full-time plus part-time) enrolled in schools by school level and school sector, Australia, 2021**

School level	School sector							
	Government		Catholic		Independent		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	% by level
Primary	1,583,684	69.8	406,903	17.9	277,468	12.2	2,268,055	56.3
Junior secondary	744,646	59.4	270,701	21.6	238,713	19.0	1,254,060	31.1
Senior secondary	294,425	57.9	109,577	21.5	104,600	20.6	508,602	12.6
Total secondary	1,039,071	58.9	380,278	21.6	343,313	19.5	1,762,662	43.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,622,755</b>	<b>65.1</b>	<b>787,181</b>	<b>19.5</b>	<b>620,781</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>4,030,717</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Notes:

School level:

- Primary education includes a Foundation (pre-Year 1) year followed by Years 1–6 in NSW, Vic, Qld, WA, Tas, NT and ACT. In SA, primary education includes Foundation followed by Years 1–7.
- Secondary education consists of the first year of secondary school (generally Year 8 in SA; Year 7 in all other jurisdictions) to Year 12. In 2020 in SA, Year 7 became a secondary school year for a number of non-government schools and 3 government schools, with other government schools to adopt this structure from 2022.
- Junior secondary: the years from start of secondary school to Year 10, including 'ungraded' secondary.
- Senior secondary: Years 11 and 12.
- Students attending special schools are allocated to either primary or secondary school on the basis of school year or school level, where identified. Where the school year or school level is not identified (ungraded), students are allocated to primary or secondary school level according to the typical age level in each state or territory. See Part 5: Glossary for definition of special school.

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021.

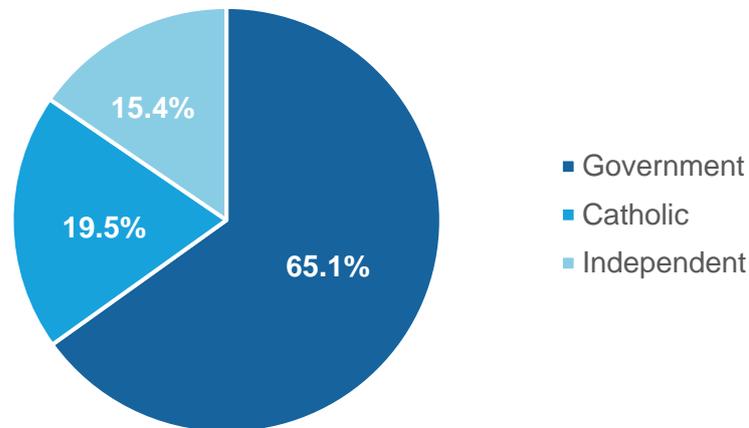
See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Of the 4.03 million school students, 2.27 million (56.3%) were primary students, and 1.76 million (43.7%) were secondary students. This difference is mainly due to the structure of schooling, in which primary schooling includes more year groups or cohorts than secondary schooling. Also, not all students complete Years 11 and 12, the last 2 years of secondary school.

As shown in Table 1.4, 65.1% of Australian school students in 2021 were enrolled in government schools, 19.5% of students were enrolled in Catholic schools and 15.4% of students were enrolled in independent schools. This is illustrated in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2

Proportion of students (full-time plus part-time) enrolled in schools by sector, Australia, 2021 (%)



Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

The proportions of students enrolled in each school sector differed between levels of education, with government schools accounting for 69.8% of primary students but less than 60% (58.9%) of secondary students.

Part-time students (10,978 students) accounted for only 0.3% of total enrolments. They were concentrated in Years 11 and 12 (73.3%), and in government schools (88.4%).<sup>13</sup>

### Enrolments by school level, and state and territory

Enrolments of students (full-time plus part-time) by state and territory and school level in 2021 are shown in Table 1.5.

<sup>13</sup> Student Numbers data set, National Report on Schooling data portal.

Table 1.5

**Number of students (full-time plus part-time) enrolled in schools by state/territory and school level, Australia, 2021**

School level	State/territory								Australia
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	
Primary	703,358	565,533	478,628	162,673	246,589	44,810	24,219	42,245	2,268,055
Junior secondary	392,832	314,780	277,021	72,543	135,093	26,671	12,128	22,992	1,254,060
Senior secondary	147,645	130,865	111,698	39,086	54,706	10,264	4,217	10,121	508,602
Total secondary	540,477	445,645	388,719	111,629	189,799	36,935	16,345	33,113	1,762,662
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,243,835</b>	<b>1,011,178</b>	<b>867,347</b>	<b>274,302</b>	<b>436,388</b>	<b>81,745</b>	<b>40,564</b>	<b>75,358</b>	<b>4,030,717</b>
<b>Proportion of Australian total (%)</b>	<b>30.9</b>	<b>25.1</b>	<b>21.5</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Notes:

See notes for Table 1.4.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Enrolments by state and territory and school level reflect the school-age population and its age distribution in each jurisdiction. More than three-quarters of students (77.5%) were enrolled in the 3 most populous states of NSW, Vic and Qld.

**Growth in enrolments**

The number of students enrolled in Australian schools grew by 23,743 (0.6%) between 2020 and 2021, the lowest growth in enrolments since 2008 and less than half the average annual growth rate for the previous decade (1.3% on average over 2010-2020).

This sharp fall in growth was experienced most strongly in government schools where total enrolments actually fell – by 6,388 students (0.2%) between 2020 and 2021 – for the first time since 2009. This included a fall of 13,368 primary students (0.8%) that was partly offset by an increase of 6,980 (0.7%) in secondary students.

Total primary enrolments across the 3 school sectors fell marginally by 836 students. Both non-government sectors experienced growth in total enrolments but with proportionately lower growth in Catholic schools (1.1%) than in independent schools (3.6%).

There was a shift between 2020 and 2021 in the share of total enrolments between government and non-government schools, with government schools falling by 0.5 percentage points to 65.1%, Catholic schools rising by 0.1 percentage points to 19.5% and independent schools rising by 0.4 percentage points to 15.4% of total enrolments.

The fall in total enrolment growth in 2021 can be largely attributed to the disruption of international travel and the closure of Australia's international borders due to COVID-19. One effect of this was a fall in the number of overseas students enrolled in Australian schools. Between 2020 and 2021 the number of full fee-paying overseas students (FFPOS) fell by 5,480 students (24.5%).<sup>14</sup>

However, border closures had a much broader effect than on international students, resulting in a fall in net immigration to Australia to its lowest level for 75 years.<sup>15</sup> This depressed population growth across all age groups, including those with school-aged children, leading to a negative impact on school enrolments.<sup>16</sup>

Overall, net overseas immigration for 5–19-year-olds fell by 41,140 persons, from 44,190 in 2019–20 to 3,050 in 2020–21.<sup>17</sup> Excluding 17–19-year-olds, this represented an estimated 30,000 potential school students who were unable to enter or re-enter the country in 2020–21 and were therefore not enrolled in Australian schools in August 2021. These included new permanent and temporary immigrants to Australia, overseas students and Australian students who were temporarily overseas and unable to return home, as well as those who departed Australia during this period.

As government schools provide education for around two thirds of students, it is not surprising that the 'loss' of potential students in 2021 – due to greatly reduced immigration – was reflected mainly in government school enrolments. However, the shift in enrolment 'shares' between the government and non-government sectors between 2020 and 2021 may indicate that this was more than proportionate.

The movement of students between sectors and differences in numbers of students starting and leaving school may have also contributed to this shift.

All states and territories experienced reduced overseas migration during 2020–21 but with varying effects on total school enrolments. Total enrolments fell by 0.6% in the NT and by 0.3% in Tas. NSW and SA experienced only 0.2% growth, with 0.5% growth in Vic, 1.1% in Qld and 1.5% growth in WA and the ACT. This had little effect on the distribution of students between states and territories.

Between 2011 and 2021 total enrolments grew by 488,908 (13.8%), largely reflecting the growth in the school-age population, as schooling is essentially compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16.<sup>18</sup> Growth in senior secondary enrolments, including 17-year-olds and 18-year-olds, is influenced by Year 11 and 12 retention rates as well as population growth.

Enrolments have risen both in government and in non-government schools over the past 10 years, with the bulk of total growth over the period (62.9%) occurring in government schools. Table 1.6 summarises this data.

<sup>14</sup> This followed a fall of 4,216 FFPOS between 2019 and 2020, with a total reduction of 9,696 students (36.5%) over the two years; ABS *Schools, Australia, 2021*.

<sup>15</sup> In the year ending 30 June 2021, overseas migration contributed a net loss of 89,000 to Australia's population. This was the second lowest on record after a loss of 129,000 during World War 1. ABS, *Overseas migration*, release date 17/12/2021.

<sup>16</sup> For a comparison of growth rates in estimated residential population and school enrolments, see *Schools, Australia 2021*.

<sup>17</sup> ABS, *Overseas migration*, release date 17/12/2021, Net overseas migration: Arrivals, departures and net, State/territory, Age and sex - Financial years, 2004-05 onwards.

<sup>18</sup> Enrolment requirements in states and territories are summarised in Part 1.4 School structures. The proportion of children aged 6–15 years who are enrolled in school is consistently close to 100% Enrolment rates for this age group are reported in Part 3: Measuring performance and in the National Report in Schooling data portal.

Table 1.6

## Number and proportion of students (full-time plus part-time) by school sector, Australia, 2011–2021

Year	School sector						
	Government		Catholic		Independent		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
2011	2,315,253	65.4	724,594	20.5	501,962	14.2	3,541,809
2012	2,342,379	65.2	736,595	20.5	511,012	14.2	3,589,986
2013	2,375,024	65.1	749,059	20.5	521,436	14.3	3,645,519
2014	2,406,495	65.1	757,749	20.5	529,857	14.3	3,694,101
2015	2,445,130	65.2	765,539	20.4	540,304	14.4	3,750,973
2016	2,483,802	65.4	767,050	20.2	547,374	14.4	3,798,226
2017	2,524,865	65.6	766,870	19.9	557,490	14.5	3,849,225
2018	2,558,169	65.7	765,735	19.7	569,930	14.6	3,893,834
2019	2,594,830	65.7	769,719	19.5	584,262	14.8	3,948,811
2020	2,629,143	65.6	778,605	19.4	599,226	15.0	4,006,974
2021	2,622,755	65.1	787,181	19.5	620,781	15.4	4,030,717

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Between 2011 and 2014 the government sector share of total enrolments fell by 0.3 percentage points, but, by 2020, had risen to 65.6%, a higher proportion than in 2011. In 2021, it fell sharply by 0.5 percentage points to 65.1%, with a net loss in total enrolments in that year.

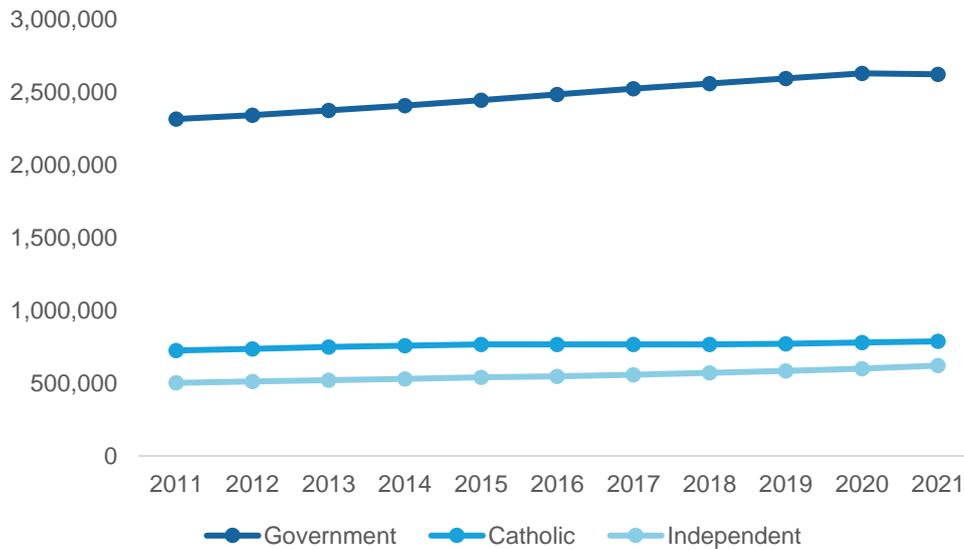
Between 2011 and 2021 independent school enrolments rose by 1.2 percentage points to 15.4% of the total, while Catholic sector enrolments fell by 1.0 percentage points to 19.5% of total enrolments over the period. This continues a long-term trend in the relative growth of the independent sector.

As noted above, it is not clear how much of the shift in sector proportions in 2021 is attributable to the fall in Australia's net overseas immigration and how much to net movements of students between sectors.

Figure 1.3 illustrates the growth in student enrolments 2011–2021 by school sector.

Figure 1.3

## Number of students enrolled (full-time plus part-time) by school sector, Australia, 2011–2021



Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

For time series of enrolments by state and territory, and for full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolments, see the Student numbers data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

In 2021 there were 249,103 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in Australian schools, making up 6.2% of the total school population.<sup>19</sup> Table 1.7 shows the number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by school level and state and territory.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are not evenly or proportionately distributed among states and territories.

With 82,646 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (33.2% of the national total), NSW had the highest number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments in 2021, more than the NSW share (30.9%) of total enrolments nationally. This represented 6.6% of the state's students, more than the national average of 6.2%. Qld schools accounted for 30.7% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (compared with 21.5% of total enrolments) and WA 12.0% (compared with 10.8% of total enrolments).

The highest concentration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was in the NT, which accounted for only 1.0% of total school enrolments in 2021, but for 6.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments. The 15,837 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in NT schools made up 39.0% of the Territory's school population. Because of this, data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has a greater impact on overall statistics for the NT than for any other state or territory.

<sup>19</sup> This report uses the term 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' to refer to First Nations Australians. This is in line with the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration and definitions used for data collection.

Table 1.7

**Number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (full-time plus part-time) enrolled in schools by school level and state/territory, Australia, 2021**

School level	State/territory								Australia
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	
Primary	48,816	11,210	44,697	9,086	17,934	4,623	9,594	1,416	147,376
Junior secondary	26,977	6,176	24,249	3,520	9,353	2,785	4,897	725	78,682
Senior secondary	6,853	1,822	7,512	1,608	2,723	872	1,346	309	23,045
Total secondary	33,830	7,998	31,761	5,128	12,076	3,657	6,243	1,034	101,727
<b>Total</b>	<b>82,646</b>	<b>19,208</b>	<b>76,458</b>	<b>14,214</b>	<b>30,010</b>	<b>8,280</b>	<b>15,837</b>	<b>2,450</b>	<b>249,103</b>
<b>Proportion of the Australian total of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students per state/territory (%)</b>	33.2	7.7	30.7	5.7	12.0	3.3	6.4	1.0	100.0
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as a proportion of total students in each state/territory (%)</b>	6.6	1.9	8.8	5.2	6.9	10.1	39.0	3.3	6.2

Notes:

See notes for Table 1.4.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia, 2021*.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were under-represented in senior secondary years: 4.5% of senior secondary students were identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, compared with 6.3% of junior secondary students. These proportions reflect Year 10 to Year 12 apparent retention rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, which are still substantially lower than for the overall school population. Apparent retention rates are reported in Part 3: Measuring performance and in the Apparent retention data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students predominantly attended government schools, with 82.9% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments in government schools compared with 65.1% of enrolments for all students. Overall, 17.1% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled in non-government schools (10.8% in Catholic schools, 6.3% in independent schools) with this proportion rising from 14.2% for primary students to 21.3% for secondary students.

More detailed data, tables and graphs on full-time, part-time and FTE enrolments by school sector and level, state and territory, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status and sex, are available in the Student Numbers data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

## 1.3 Staff numbers

The numbers and proportions of full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching staff by school sector, school level and sex in 2021 are shown in Table 1.8.

**Table 1.8**

### Number and proportion of FTE teaching staff by school sector, school level and sex, Australia, 2021

School level	Primary				Secondary				Total			
	Male	Female	Total	%	Male	Female	Total	%	Male	Female	Total	%
Government	19,865	89,813	109,678	70.3	31,514	51,995	83,508	56.6	51,379	141,807	193,186	63.6
Catholic	4,158	22,337	26,494	17.0	12,089	19,084	31,173	21.1	16,247	41,420	57,667	19.0
Independent	4,113	15,755	19,869	12.7	13,576	19,241	32,817	22.2	17,690	34,996	52,686	17.4
Total non-government	8,271	38,092	46,363	29.7	25,665	38,324	63,990	43.4	33,937	76,416	110,353	36.4
<b>All schools</b>	<b>28,136</b>	<b>127,905</b>	<b>156,041</b>	<b>51.4</b>	<b>57,179</b>	<b>90,319</b>	<b>147,498</b>	<b>48.6</b>	<b>85,316</b>	<b>218,224</b>	<b>303,539</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Notes:

In the calculation of numbers of FTE teaching staff, a part-time teacher is counted as a proportion of a full-time teacher according to the time employed, compared with a full-time teacher in the same school system or school. (See Part 5: Glossary for definitions of FTE and teaching staff.)

Staff employed in combined and special schools are allocated to either primary or secondary education on a pro-rata basis.

Percentage columns for primary and secondary show the proportions of FTE primary and secondary teachers employed in each sector. The total percentage column shows the proportions of total FTE teaching staff employed in each sector. The total (All schools) row shows the number and proportion of total FTE teaching staff employed at each level.

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia, 2021*.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal for data on teaching and non-teaching staff and for further notes and caveats.

In 2021, there were 303,539 FTE teaching staff across primary and secondary schooling in Australia. This was an increase of 7,023 (2.4%) from 2020. It was made up of a rise of 4,117 government school teachers (2.2% increase) and 2,906 non-government school teachers (2.7% increase).

Across Australia in 2021 63.6% of FTE teachers were employed by the government school sector, 19.0% by the Catholic school sector and 17.4% by the independent sector. This remains broadly consistent with the distribution of (full-time plus part-time) students across school sectors.

In 2021, Australia's teaching workforce continued to be predominantly female, with women making up 71.9 % of FTE teachers, and men making up 28.1%. This gap is similar to that in 2020. In 2021, the gender difference was again more pronounced at the primary level (82.0% female) than at secondary level (61.2% female).

The number and proportion of FTE teaching staff by state and territory in 2021 is shown in Table 1.9.

Table 1.9

## Number and proportion of FTE teaching staff by state and territory and school level, Australia, 2021

School level	State/territory								Australia
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	
Primary	46,454	41,954	32,202	11,086	16,138	3,228	2,004	2,976	156,041
Secondary	44,156	39,226	32,067	9,278	15,549	3,198	1,409	2,615	147,498
<b>Total</b>	<b>90,610</b>	<b>81,180</b>	<b>64,269</b>	<b>20,364</b>	<b>31,687</b>	<b>6,427</b>	<b>3,413</b>	<b>5,591</b>	<b>303,539</b>
<b>Proportion (%)</b>	<b>29.9</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>21.2</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Notes:

See notes for Table 1.8.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

The distribution of FTE teaching staff between states and territories remains broadly consistent with the overall distribution of students (as reported in Table 1.5).

Changes in teaching staffing levels for the period 2011–2021 are shown in Table 1.10.

Table 1.10

## Number of FTE teaching staff by school sector, Australia, 2011–2021

School sector	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Government	165,272	167,152	167,903	169,199	171,763	176,819	180,973	185,458	182,959	189,069	193,186
Catholic	48,393	49,427	50,527	50,936	52,160	53,154	53,839	54,511	55,372	56,645	57,667
Independent	41,445	42,407	43,154	43,930	45,277	46,357	47,248	48,614	49,963	50,802	52,686
Total non-government	89,838	91,834	93,682	94,866	97,437	99,511	101,087	103,125	105,335	107,447	110,353
<b>All schools</b>	<b>255,110</b>	<b>258,986</b>	<b>261,585</b>	<b>264,065</b>	<b>269,200</b>	<b>276,330</b>	<b>282,059</b>	<b>288,583</b>	<b>288,294</b>	<b>296,516</b>	<b>303,539</b>

Notes:

See notes for Table 1.8.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Between 2011 and 2021, the total number of FTE teaching staff grew by 48,429 (19.0%). This was substantially more than the percentage growth in (full-time plus part-time) student enrolments (13.8%) over the same period.

In 2021, FTE teaching staff accounted for 67.8 % of the FTE of all school staff. In addition to teaching staff, 144,436 FTE staff were employed in administrative and clerical roles, as teacher aides and assistants, as specialist support staff or in building and maintenance.<sup>20</sup>

Additional, more detailed information on numbers of teaching and non-teaching school staff is available in the Staff Numbers data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

<sup>20</sup> National Report on Schooling data portal, Staff numbers.

## Student–teacher ratios

The student–teacher ratio is calculated as the number of FTE students per FTE teaching staff. Table 1.11 summarises average student–teacher ratios in Australia in 2021 across the 3 school sectors.<sup>21</sup>

**Table 1.11**

### FTE student–teacher ratios, by school sector and school level, Australia, 2021

School sector	Primary	Secondary	All schools
Government	14.4	12.4	13.6
Catholic	15.4	12.2	13.6
Independent	14.0	10.5	11.8
All non-government	14.8	11.3	12.8
<b>All schools</b>	14.5	11.9	13.3

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia, 2021*.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

For all Australian schools, the average FTE student–teacher ratio in 2021 was 13.3:1, a reduction of 0.2 from 13.5:1 in 2020.

The average ratio for government schools nationally decreased by 0.3 from 13.9:1 to 13.6:1 between 2020 and 2021. This included a 0.4 reduction in primary and a 0.2 reduction in secondary student teacher ratios. In part, this may have reflected lower-than-expected student numbers due to the impact of COVID-19 border closures on overseas immigration.

The average ratio for non-government schools was unchanged from 2020 at 12.8:1. The average ratio for Catholic schools fell by 0.1 to 13.6:1 and for independent schools remained constant at 11.8:1.

Table 1.12 shows average student–teacher ratios in 2021 by school level and state and territory.

**Table 1.12**

### FTE student–teacher ratios, by state/territory and school level, Australia, 2021

School level	State/territory								Australia
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	
Primary	15.1	13.5	14.9	14.7	15.3	13.9	12.1	14.2	14.5
Secondary	12.2	11.3	12.1	11.9	12.2	11.5	11.5	12.6	11.9
<b>All schools</b>	13.7	12.4	13.5	13.4	13.8	12.7	11.9	13.5	13.3

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia, 2021*.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Student–teacher ratios fell in most states and territories in 2021, with the largest falls of 0.4 in NSW and Vic and 0.3 in Tas. The biggest single fall was in the NSW primary sector where the average student–teacher ratio fell by 0.7 to 15.1.

<sup>21</sup> Numbers of FTE students are marginally lower than numbers of full-time plus part-time students reported in Part 1.2.

Student–teacher ratios are consistently lower for secondary education than for primary education in all school sectors and across all states and territories. In 2021, the average FTE student–teacher ratio was 11.9:1 at the secondary level compared with 14.5:1 at the primary level.

This reflects differing requirements for particular student groups, and for different school subjects, in secondary schools, such as smaller maximum class sizes for practical subjects, and for senior secondary classes.

The specialist and administrative duties undertaken by teaching staff in secondary schools, such as non-teaching principals, subject head teachers, teacher librarians and careers advisers, also contribute to this difference. The extent to which teaching staff perform these roles may vary between states and between school systems. This will affect the number of teachers employed in each school, and therefore the average student–teacher ratio.

Lower student–teacher ratios mean there is a smaller number of students per teacher and, potentially, smaller class sizes. However, ratios, by themselves, are only approximate indicators of actual class size because they do not take into account the factors mentioned above.

The average national student–teacher ratio fell from 13.8:1 in 2011 to 13.3:1 in 2021, with reductions across all school sectors. Time series data (2009–2021) on student–teacher ratios by state and territory, school sector and school level is available in the Student–teacher Ratios data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

## 1.4 School structures

In recent years, school structures and age requirements for student enrolment have become more consistent across Australian states and territories. Policy initiatives leading to this include decisions by several jurisdictions to move Year 7 from a primary school year to a secondary school year and national agreement on minimum requirements for leaving school.

In 2021, primary education consisted of a Foundation year (first year of full-time school) followed by Years 1–6 in all states and territories except SA, with secondary education from Years 7–12. In SA, Year 7 was still a primary school year in most schools but with the transition of Year 7 to secondary schooling in progress.<sup>22</sup>

The age at which schooling becomes compulsory is 6 years in most states and territories. In practice, most children start the Foundation year of primary school at between 4 and a half and 5 and a half years old.

All states and territories require young people to participate in schooling until they complete Year 10 and to participate full time in education, training or employment, or a combination of these activities, until at least the age of 17.

However, there are still some variations in school structures, in requirements for compulsory school enrolment and in terminology between states and territories. These are summarised in Table 1.13.

Within the overall structure of primary and secondary education, individual schools may be primary only, secondary only or combined primary and secondary. Secondary schools may cater for the full age range of secondary students or be divided into junior and senior campuses.

There are also both government and non-government special schools for students with disability and other special needs in some states and territories. In others, most students with special needs are integrated into mainstream schools. (See Part 5: Glossary for definition of special school and special assistance school.)

Students who are geographically isolated or who are otherwise unable to attend a local school may study through distance education schools or centres. Boarding facilities are available at some schools, mainly in the non-government sectors.

Students of compulsory school age may also be home-schooled if they have met the criteria set down by the relevant state or territory education authority. However, students undertaking home schooling are only counted in the NSSC and this report if they are also formally enrolled in a course of study at school, including through distance education.

Each state and territory also has an early childhood education sector that is separate from primary and secondary schooling, although early childhood centres are often attached to, or accommodated in, primary or combined schools. In some jurisdictions, part-time early childhood education programs in the year before full-time schooling that are conducted in primary schools are considered to be a part of schooling. However, these programs are outside the scope and definition of schooling in the NSSC. Statistical data on these and other early childhood education programs is not included in this report.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> In 2018, the South Australian Government announced that Year 7 will be moved from a primary school year to a secondary school year (from 2022 for government schools). In 2020, this change was implemented for a number of non-government schools and 3 government schools.

<sup>23</sup> Statistical data on preschool early childhood education is available in ABS, [Preschool Education, Australia](#), 2021.

Table 1.13

**Primary and secondary school structures, minimum school starting age, compulsory school starting age, and minimum school leaving age, by state and territory, Australia, 2021**

State/territory	Name of Foundation year	Primary schooling	Secondary schooling	Minimum school starting age (Foundation)	Compulsory school starting age	Minimum school leaving age
NSW	Kindergarten	Kindergarten Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 31 July	6 years	17 years
Vic	Preparatory	Preparatory Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 30 April	6 years	17 years
Qld	Preparatory	Preparatory Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 30 June	6 years 6 months	17 years
SA	Reception	Reception Years 1–7	Years 8–12	4 turning 5 by 1 May	6 years	17 years
WA	Pre-primary	Pre-primary Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 30 June	5 years 6 months	17 years 6 months – 18 years
Tas	Preparatory	Preparatory Years 1–6	Years 7–12	5 by 1 January	5 years	17 years
NT	Transition	Transition Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 30 June	6 years	17 years
ACT	Kindergarten	Kindergarten Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 30 April	6 years	17 years

## Notes:

State and territory minimum ages for the commencement of the Foundation year of schooling are as at January of the year of commencement.

All students are required to complete Year 10 or approved equivalent. After Year 10, students must be in school, in approved education or training, in full-time employment or in a combination of training and employment until they turn 17 years of age or, in some jurisdictions, gain a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education or equivalent.

In WA, the requirement to remain at school or undertake an approved combination of training and employment extends to the end of the year in which a student turns 17 years 6 months of age, or they achieve the requirements for secondary graduation, or until they turn 18 years of age, whichever happens first.

Sources: State and territory education authorities; ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021.

Data on secondary education provided by adult learning institutions such as institutes of technical and further education (TAFE) is also excluded from this report, except for vocational education and training (VET) programs undertaken by secondary school students.

# Part 2: Policies and priorities



Part 2 outlines the national policy context for Australian schooling in 2021 and reports against the commitments to action agreed by Australian education ministers in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration.

## 2.1 National policy context

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Within Australia's federal system of government, constitutional responsibility for school education rests mainly with the Australian states and territories. The federal (Australian) government contributes to education policy through national agreements and its financial relations with the states.

The 6 state and 2 territory governments and the Australian Government cooperate to work towards agreed goals and commitments expressed in the [Alice Springs \(Mparntwe\) Education Declaration](#).

In Australia, joint decisions on agreed national policy and shared priorities are made through intergovernmental policy councils and forums. In 2021 the Education Ministers Meeting was the forum responsible for school education.<sup>24</sup> Skills and training ministers had responsibility for the ongoing management of the VET system through the Skills Ministers' Meeting.

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<sup>24</sup> The Education Ministers Meeting replaced the former Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Education Council from January 2021.

## Education Ministers Meeting

The Education Ministers Meeting is the forum for collaboration and decision-making on:

- early childhood education and care
- school education
- higher education
- international education.

The Education Ministers Meeting consists of portfolio ministers with responsibility for early childhood education and care, school education, higher education and international education from the Australian Government and each state and territory. New Zealand is a non-decision-making member of the Education Ministers Meeting.

The Commonwealth Minister for Education is the chair of the Education Ministers Meeting.

In 2021, education ministers agreed to focus on the following three priorities:

- Progressing national policy initiatives under the current National School Reform Agreement:
  - Unique student identifier
  - Online formative assessment
- Progressing priority national school education initiatives, with a focus on the National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and review of the Australian Curriculum
- Progressing decisions about future preschool education arrangements following consideration of the review of the Universal Access National Partnership.

## Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration

From 2020, the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration replaced the Melbourne Declaration as the ministerial statement of national educational goals and commitment to action for the coming decade.

Mparntwe (pronounced M-ban-tua) is the Arrernte name for Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. The Aboriginal Arrernte (pronounced Arrunda) people are the traditional custodians of Alice Springs and the surrounding region.

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration builds on the goals, actions, themes and values of the Melbourne Declaration. Ministers agreed that education continue to promote excellence and equity and enable all Australians to become confident and creative individuals, successful learners, and active and informed community members.

Areas of emphasis include the importance of meeting the individual needs of all learners, learning throughout life from early childhood onwards, support for educators, a renewed commitment to learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are supported to reach their potential.

In December 2020 Education Council endorsed the [Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020](#), which reflects the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. The 2020 measurement framework replaced the *Measurement Framework for Schooling Australia 2019* and specifies the nationally agreed Key Performance Measures (KPMs) for schooling reported in Part 3 of this report.

### National School Reform Agreement

The [National School Reform Agreement](#) (NSRA) is in place from 2019 to 2023. This is a joint agreement between the Commonwealth, states and territories that underpins Commonwealth funding for schooling over this period.

The NSRA specifies 8 national policy initiatives, grouped under 3 reform directions:

- Supporting students, student learning and student achievement
  1. Enhancing the Australian Curriculum to support teacher assessment of student attainment and growth
  2. Assisting teachers monitor student progress through online student learning assessment tools
  3. Reviewing senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training
- Supporting teaching, school leadership and school improvement
  4. Reviewing teacher workforce needs of the future
  5. Strengthening the initial teacher education (ITE) accreditation system<sup>25</sup>
- Enhancing the national evidence base
  6. Implementing a national unique student identifier (USI)<sup>26</sup>
  7. Establishing an independent national evidence institute
  8. Improving national data quality, consistency and collection to improve the national evidence base and inform policy development.

Reporting and public transparency arrangements include an annual public report from Education Council to demonstrate progress towards implementation. Also, bilateral reform agreements between the Australian Government and the states and territories reflect state-specific initiatives in the context of each jurisdiction. States and territories report annually to the Australian Government on progress against the actions outlined in individual bilateral agreements and on their funding contributions to government and non-government schools.

Progress on the development and implementation of the initiatives in 2021 is noted below and in the relevant sections of Part 2.

<sup>25</sup> ITE refers to degrees and/or diplomas required for professional employment in teaching.

<sup>26</sup> A unique and persistent number for every school student in Australia, which will allow for sharing of information between schools, sectors and jurisdictions, through to the VET and higher education sectors.

### Unique student identifier

Implementing a national unique student identifier (USI) is a national initiative under the NSRA and was a priority of Education Ministers Meeting in 2021. Progress on the initiative is reported in Part 2.13 strengthening accountability and transparency with strong, meaningful measures.

### Online formative assessment

The Online Formative Assessment initiative is aimed at assisting teachers monitor student progress through online student learning assessment tools. This is a national initiative under the NSRA and was a priority of Education Ministers Meeting in 2021. Progress on the initiative is reported in Part 2.10: Delivering world class curriculum and assessment.

### Australian Curriculum review

In 2021 ACARA completed its review of the Australian Curriculum – Foundation to Year 10, as requested by ministers in 2020. The review was a priority of Education Ministers Meeting in 2021. The revised Australian Curriculum, Version 9.0, will be considered for endorsement by education ministers in early 2022.<sup>27</sup> More information is provided in Part 2.10: Delivering world class curriculum and assessment.

### Review of the Disability Standards for Education

In 2020 the Australian Government conducted a 5-yearly review of the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*. The standards clarify the rights of students with disability and the obligations of education providers under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. The aim of the review was to test if the standards are effective in supporting students with disability to access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability and whether any improvements to the standards should be made.

The final report of the review was released in March 2021. More information is provided in Part 2.12: Supporting all young Australians at risk of educational disadvantage.

### Responses to the COVID-19 pandemic

During 2021, schools, students, teachers, and parents and carers in most states and territories were impacted to some extent by community lockdowns and other restrictions due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

Arrangements to keep students and school staff safe from COVID-19 varied according to jurisdiction and local circumstances, but as well as health precautions, included temporary school closures, partial school closures and extensive programs of online and other remote learning.

As in 2020, responses of education authorities in 2021 were characterised by close cooperation between the government, Catholic and independent school sectors.

The extent of disruptions to school operations in 2021 in each state and territory, and responses of school systems within each jurisdiction are detailed in Part 2.14: Arrangements for student learning during COVID-19.

<sup>27</sup> Note: Version 9 was endorsed by education ministers in April 2022 and is published on the ACARA website.

NAPLAN testing proceeded as scheduled in May 2021. However, given the cancellation of NAPLAN 2020 and impacts on schooling due to COVID-19 the timeline for full transition to NAPLAN Online was further deferred from 2021 to 2022.

In 2020, Education Council decided to postpone the NAP–ICT Literacy sample assessment scheduled for 2020 by 12 months to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In September 2021 Education Ministers decided to further postpone the NAP–ICT Literacy assessment to 2022 due to the continued COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, NAP–Science Literacy and NAP–Civics and Citizenship will also be delayed by a further 12 months. This will result in a one-off 5-year gap (as opposed to the normal 3-year gap) in the time series for each of the sample assessments.

Internationally, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries and associates decided to postpone the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2021 assessment to 2022 and the PISA 2024 assessment to 2025 to reflect post-COVID difficulties.

In 2021, a further effect of the disruption of international travel due to COVID-19 and closure of Australia's international borders became apparent. The reduction in numbers of international students and a very low immigration rate, including for school-aged children, led to the lowest growth in school enrolments since 2008. This is discussed in Part 1: Schools and schooling.

## State and territory policy initiatives

State and territory governments retain the responsibility for implementing agreed national policy in education, and for initiating and carrying out their own programs of innovation and reform. In 2021, all states and territories participated in national policy initiatives under the NSRA. Other state and territory policy initiatives are noted in the following sections of Part 2.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Information on state and territory initiatives reported in Part 2 is drawn from contributions received from state and territory education authorities.

## 2.2 Educational goals

### Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration has 2 overarching educational goals for young Australians:

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>Goal 1:</b> | The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity  |
| <b>Goal 2:</b> | All young Australians become: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• confident and creative individuals</li> <li>• successful lifelong learners</li> <li>• active and informed members of the community.</li> </ul> |

### Commitment to action to achieve the educational goals

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration includes a commitment to action in 11 interrelated areas:

- developing stronger partnerships
- supporting quality teaching and leadership
- strengthening early childhood education
- building foundational skills in the primary school years
- enhancing middle years development
- supporting senior years of schooling
- embedding pathways for learning throughout life and supporting effective transitions
- delivering world-class curriculum and assessment
- supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners to reach their full potential
- supporting all young Australians at risk of educational disadvantage
- strengthening accountability and transparency with strong, meaningful measures.

Progress in 2021 in addressing the areas for action is reported in the following sections of Part 2.

## Closing the Gap

Closing the Gap targets for education are part of a broader agenda for closing the gap between outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

The Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap between the Australian Government, state and territory governments, the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations and the Australian Local Government Association includes the following targets related to education:

- By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in the year before full-time schooling early childhood education to 95%.
- By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all 5 domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to 55%.
- By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (age 20–24) attaining Year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96%.
- By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) to 70%.
- By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15–24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67%.

## 2.3 Developing stronger partnerships

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration commits Australian governments to “building partnerships that support learners’ progress through the education system, and to provide them with individualised, high-quality learning opportunities and experiences, and personal development” (p 10).

### Closing the Gap

The first priority reform of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap is for formal partnerships and shared decision-making.

Under this reform Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are empowered to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress on Closing the Gap through formal partnership arrangements. Further information is available on the [Closing the Gap](#) website.

### National STEM initiatives

In the 2020–21 budget, as part of the student support package, the Australian Government allocated \$27.3 million over 5 years to extend existing initiatives to improve the teaching and learning of STEM in early learning and schools. These are delivered in partnership with STEM organisations, industry and STEM professionals.

### State, territory and sector initiatives

Under the commitment to stronger partnerships, states and territories have worked to establish and grow local and state-wide partnerships of schools with families, community groups, business, higher education, government agencies and others.

- In 2021, in partnership with Deakin AllPlay Learn program, NSW developed the Inclusive Practice hub. This platform provides evidence-based resources for schools to support the learning and wellbeing of students with disability and additional needs and strengthen inclusive practice in schools.
- The STEM Industry Partnerships Forum brought together a range of stakeholders from industry, university, government and education in Qld to collaborate and provide expert input to strengthen and create new school partnerships and resources in science, technology and mathematics.
- The Association of Independent Schools NSW (AISNSW) established a Pathways and Partnerships team which supports independent schools to connect with business, industry, education providers and other partners for the learning and career benefit of students and the professional growth of teachers. The focus includes VET and non-VET relationships.
- The SA education department partnered with the local government to provide grants and support for local councils to increase the proportion of children developmentally on track by building the capacity of councils to respond to the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data through improved services and programs.
- SA partnered with Raising Literacy Australia to build a coalition of non-government and government organisations to support the development of children aged 0-3 years through provision of consistent advice and resources.

- NT prioritised local decision making through community-led schools, school councils, school boards and Local Engagement and Decision-Making committees. Community-led schools gave families and community a strong voice to guide the way education is delivered for their children and ensure community aspirations influence the delivery of education services.
- The ACT Government's 10-year plan *Set up for Success: Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT* developed partnerships across the education and care sector and government for children's early education and development. The University of Canberra Affiliated Schools Program collaborated to develop quality teacher practice from pre-service to experienced teachers.
- The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) worked closely with Catholic education authorities, schools and PricewaterhouseCoopers to support the development of an evidence-based costing model for a new disability loading. One hundred and sixty-four Catholic schools participated in the project to inform a refined costing model for the students with disability loading.
- In WA the Catholic, government and independent sectors collaborated in supporting schools with funding, resources and opportunities for VET and careers. This included the running of career conservation sessions for parents/carers and teachers and a trial of a Year 9 career taster program to schools.
- The PRIMED project aims to prepare students in Years 7 to 10 for careers in primary industries in Western Australia. In 2021–22, PRIMED published a range of resources aligned to the Western Australian curriculum and trained teacher leaders to deliver related professional learning.
- Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) engaged in partnerships with key government and government funded organisations to promote wellbeing and online safety strategies and programs within independent schools, consistent with the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework.

## 2.4 Supporting quality teaching and leadership

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In the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, "Australian Governments commit to working with the education community to attract, develop, support and retain high-quality teachers, educators and leaders in Australia's education system" (p 11).

### **Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership**

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) is a company owned and funded by the Australian Government. AITSL has responsibility for supporting the implementation of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Australian Professional Standard for Principals.

Supporting teaching, school leadership and school improvement is one of 3 reform directions within the NSRA. Reviewing teacher workforce needs of the future and strengthening the ITE accreditation system are national policy initiatives under this direction.

In 2021 AITSL encouraged recognition of the professional expertise of teachers certified at the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) career stages. AITSL implemented agreed national approaches to accreditation of initial teacher education (ITE), continued its work to support the improved cultural competency of teachers and school leaders, in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education experts and the teaching profession; and supported teachers and school leaders to better understand and interpret their obligations under the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (DSE) as they relate to national teaching and school leadership frameworks.

### **Strengthening the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) System**

Strengthening the ITE accreditation system is one of the eight national policy initiatives in the NSRA. The Australian Government commissioned a review of ITE. The review was conducted by an expert panel that consulted widely with stakeholders including high-achieving school leavers, mid-career professionals thinking of making a career change to teaching, teachers, school leaders and ITE graduates. The Quality Initial Teacher Education Review final report will be released in 2022.

As at mid-2021 all ITE providers had an endorsed final year teaching performance assessment in place.

### **Online Formative Assessment initiative**

Online formative assessment is a national policy initiative under the NSRA and a priority area of focus for the Education Ministers Meeting in 2021.

The Online Formative Assessment initiative aims to provide Australian teachers with online assessment tools, flexibility and professional learning to plan teaching that is matched to the needs of students in their classrooms.

The initiative is outlined further in Part 2.10 Delivering world-class curriculum and assessment.

## High Achieving Teachers Program

The Australian Government committed \$28.7 million in funding in 2020, 2021 and 2022 for 2 programs providing alternative pathways into teaching through the High Achieving Teachers Program. The government contracted Teach for Australia and La Trobe University to deliver teaching qualifications to high-achieving graduates in needed subject areas. While undertaking postgraduate teaching qualifications, more than 400 participants will be placed in Australian secondary schools experiencing teacher workforce shortages.

## Future Leaders Program

The Australian Government committed \$7.54 million from 2019–20 to 2021–22 under the Future Leaders Program for Teach for Australia to pilot a new approach to building school leadership. This program provides leadership development and training to high-achieving teachers with leadership potential working in regional and rural primary and secondary schools.

In 2021, a total of 35 Fellows graduated from the program with over a third of participants promoted to a position of leadership or higher responsibility since commencing the program.

## State, territory and sector initiatives

States and territories continued to implement the standards for teachers and principals, and the accreditation of teachers and teacher education programs, within their jurisdictions.

- NSW continued to implement the School Leadership Development Strategy which identifies and develops school leaders and strengthens system leadership. In 2021, this included the pilot of a School Leadership Identification Framework to support the identification of future school leaders, as well as leadership induction and development programs.
- The Career Start Pilot is a \$73.4 million Vic initiative which aims to transform the first two years of a graduate teacher's career through a new induction program. The Pilot commenced in 2021 and provides graduates with a 20% reduction in face-to-face teaching time to participate in a high-quality professional learning program, work with a mentor, access health and wellbeing supports, and engage with other graduates.
- In 2021, more than 200 teachers from 121 schools were supported to take part in the Vic's Primary Mathematics and Science Specialists initiative, which develops high-quality teachers to lead mathematics or science education at their schools. In 2021, 175 out-of-field mathematics and science teachers were also supported to complete a Graduate Certificate of Secondary Mathematics or a Graduate Certificate of Secondary Science at Deakin University as part of the Secondary Mathematics and Science Initiative.
- Working with the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) developed a series of workshops for early career teachers, as well as a series of workshops to assist experienced school staff to act as mentors for new teachers. ISV's Beginning Teaching Fellowship program provided targeted, one-on-one professional learning and mentoring for 40 beginning teachers and 31 mentors within schools in 2021.
- Qld's Centres for Learning and Wellbeing supported rural and remote state school teachers and school leaders, focusing on leadership capability development, mentoring and coaching for beginning teachers, coaching for mid and experienced teachers, resilience building for staff new to rural and remote locations and inter-agency wellbeing support for staff and students.

- The M in STEM school clusters initiative in Qld built the capability of middle leaders to plan, implement and evaluate school improvement initiatives to transform teaching and learning in secondary mathematics through collaboration. It included a suite of professional learning resources to strengthen mathematical pedagogy.
- SA delivered professional learning in blended modes through Orbis, the SA department's professional learning academy, to ensure leaders and teachers continued to build exemplary practice during COVID.
- NT education launched its Education Leadership Strategy 2021-2024 which identifies actions to: create a common understanding of improvement; establish a clear leadership pipeline; improve the impact of leadership development programs; and engage Aboriginal and remote staff to both participate in and shape leadership development opportunities.
- In the ACT, Set up for Success includes initiatives to support quality early childhood teaching practice and to increase the number of non-government educators in the Early Childhood Degree Scholarship Program. Induction and coaching were provided for early career principals, along with custom professional learning and coaching for schools to develop teachers.
- Catholic education in Canberra (ACT) and Goulburn (NSW) implemented a system-wide focus on an evidence-based approach to teaching and learning through the Catalyst program.
- The Qld Catholic sector provided support for teachers seeking to obtain highly accomplished and lead teacher certification by providing professional development for aspirants and school leadership teams to understand the certification process through both introductory and in-depth workshops, resources for preparing an application, and regular updates.
- In WA, the Collegiate principal role was launched. Collegiate principals provide feedback and personalised support to increase the instructional leadership capacity of public school principals across WA and their impact on student learning.
- In Term 4, 2021, WA piloted the Public School Teaching Pathway program. This new program, in partnership with Western Australian universities, offers secondary schools the opportunity to employ high performing pre-service teachers on a part-time basis during the final year of their teaching course.

## 2.5 Strengthening early childhood education

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The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration commits Australian governments to continuing to build quality and access to early years learning and development. This should take place in environments that meet the needs of all Australian families.

Early childhood education takes place in the years before full-time schooling and is generally accessed by 3–5-year-olds. It is a separate education sector to primary and secondary education with separate regulatory and funding frameworks.

As such, it is formally outside the scope of the NSSC and the National Report on Schooling. Statistical data on early childhood education is not included in this report.

However, early childhood centres are often attached to, or accommodated in, primary schools and, in some jurisdictions, part-time early childhood education programs in the year before full-time schooling are considered to be a part of schooling. Preschool early childhood education is increasingly important as a preparation for schooling and is a key commitment of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. For these reasons, limited information on early childhood education is provided in this section.

### **National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education**

In 2021 the Australian Government provided funding of \$453.2 million to states and territories under the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (UANP) to support universal access to quality early childhood education programs.

### **Preschool Reform Agreement**

During 2021 the Australian Government negotiated a new Preschool Reform Agreement (PRA) with all states and territories to commence in 2022. This is a 4-year national reform agreement that aims to lift preschool enrolments and attendance and maximise the benefits of preschool. The funding supports the delivery of 15 hours a week, or 600 hours a year of quality preschool programs, by a degree qualified early childhood teacher, regardless of the setting in which programs are delivered, for all children in the year before they start school.

### **National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy**

Facilitated by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), all Governments and sector stakeholders collaborated to co-design a 10-year National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy (Strategy), released in October 2021. The Strategy aims to support the attraction, development and retention of a sustainable, high-quality early childhood workforce. An Implementation and Evaluation Plan is under development with input from all jurisdictions and sector representatives and will be delivered to governments to consider in mid-2022.

### **Early Years Learning Framework**

As the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) has been in use for close to a decade, education ministers have commissioned an update to ensure it continues to reflect contemporary developments in practice and knowledge, while supporting all educators to best meet the learning and development needs of each child.

## National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework (NQF) drives continuous improvement in the nationally consistent quality, regulation and assessment of early childhood and child care services. It applies to most long day care, family day care, kindergarten or preschool and outside school-hours care services in Australia. ACECQA is the national body that supports regulatory authorities in states and territories in administering the NQF.

In 2019 a review of the NQF was undertaken by all governments to consider 21 issues related to the health, safety, wellbeing of children and service quality, such as sleep and rest requirements, safety of children during transitions between services and building safety standards. The NQF is reviewed every 5 years.

## Closing the Gap

The Australian Government's package of early childhood measures as part of its Closing the Gap investments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is focused on initiatives and programs to lift participation in quality early childhood education and care and improve school readiness outcomes.

## State, territory and sector initiatives

- In 2021, NSW continued to roll out the Start Strong program, including free preschool for community and mobile preschools to support access during COVID-19. NSW remains committed to ensuring all children in NSW, regardless of circumstances, are able to access 600 hours of quality preschool education.
- In Vic, Early Childhood Education is being strengthened through the rollout of funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and the expansion of targeted supports for engaging vulnerable and disadvantaged children. In 2021 Three-Year-Old Kindergarten was delivered in 21 local government areas ahead of the state-wide rollout in 2022.
- Vic increased supports for vulnerable children include the expansion of the Early Childhood LOOKOUT program for children in out of home care; the expansion of the place-based Access to Early Learning program to engage vulnerable three-year-old children; and increased funding and outreach support for children from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.
- SA released the Early Learning Strategy in June 2021, with key streams of focus on 'growing learners together' and 'world-class preschools'.
- The Office for the Early Years (OEY) was established in SA to provide a single point of leadership across the public sector to improve the proportion of children developmentally 'on track' when starting school, and to work with key agencies and organisations to ensure that the child screening development system is expanded.
- The Catholic sector in WA worked on building the capacity of leaders through the early years leadership program, in consultation with Notre Dame University.
- The Education NT Strategy 2021–2025 has a key priority to build the foundations for learning including an action to extend access to quality early learning to two years before school. Since Semester 2 2021, the NT has been piloting three-year-old preschool at 6 primary school sites.
- In the ACT, Set up for Success included initiatives to strengthen early childhood education through equitable access to early childhood education for all children and through support for preschool teacher capability. The Koori Preschool Co-design process ensured that the Koori Preschool Program met community aspirations, expectations and needs around cultural safety and integrity.

- Catholic education in WA supported schools to build relationships with all families, especially Aboriginal families, through the establishment of playgroups and Aboriginal Families as First Educators (AFaFE) playgroups. There was much cross-sectoral collaboration in supporting school leaders and early years staff to understand and undertake the on-entry assessment.
- Catholic schools in NSW developed the Early Years Foundations for Learning digital resource for early childhood educators and teachers. The resource has been designed to provide practical, evidence-based activities to support literacy and numeracy skills/development aligned to the NSW Syllabus and the EYLF. The resource was produced in collaboration with early years consultants and teachers across NSW Catholic schools and early learning centres.

More information on early childhood education is available on the Australian Government Department of Education website.

## 2.6 Building foundational skills in the primary school years

This commitment to action in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration is to ensure school sectors are responsive to students' developmental and learning needs in primary school and provide a strong foundation for continued learning success throughout school and beyond.

Representatives of all school sectors participated in F–6 Curriculum and Teacher Practice Reference Group meetings as part of the Australian Curriculum review process with a strong focus on examining the primary curriculum content holistically by years/bands rather than by learning areas.

### STEM initiatives

In the 2020–21 budget the Australian Government provided funding to improve the teaching and learning of STEM in schools and early childhood, including:

- \$9.6 million to extend and evaluate the Primary Connections, Science by Doing and reSolve: Mathematics by Inquiry science programs to support student learning, including resources for teachers.
- \$5.7 million to support the Foundation to Year Two expansion of the Early Learning STEM Australia (ELSA) program to program to support engagement in STEM in the early years, through a pilot in Australian schools.
- \$4.8 million to extend and evaluate the STEM Professionals in Schools program by partnering teachers with STEM professionals to enhance STEM teaching practices and deliver engaging STEM education in Australian schools.
- \$4.4 million to extend and evaluate the Let's Count program to help develop the early numeracy skills of disadvantaged children.
- \$2.8 million to extend and evaluate the Little Scientists program to help early learning educators to build their skills and confidence in STEM, so that they can lead fun and inquiry-based learning.

### State, territory and sector initiatives

- In 2021 NSW introduced the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check to all NSW government primary schools, with 66,385 Year 1 students completing the assessment. This assessment complements existing school practices used to identify students' progress in developing foundational literacy skills.
- In 2021 in Vic 3,147 Koorie learners in prep-Year 6 who were not meeting expected standards in literacy and numeracy were supported through the Koorie Literacy and Numeracy Program.
- In Qld *Early Start* supports teachers to monitor and track student literacy and numeracy progress from Prep–Year 2.
- Qld teachers were supported to explicitly teach the curriculum's embedded literacy and numeracy demands and monitor literacy and numeracy development using the P–10 Literacy continuum and P–10 Numeracy continuum.
- \$23.7 million was allocated over 2021–22 for the provision of literacy and numeracy support across Prep to Year 10 in Qld schools. An additional \$5.7 million has been allocated to state schools to support *Early Start* since 2012–2013.

- NT schools implemented literacy and numeracy strategies to build foundational skills in the primary years. Nine schools participated in the Numeracy Action Research Project to build teacher capability at critical points in mathematics and numeracy through the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards and the National Numeracy Learning Progressions.
- The Finding the Balance Mathematics and Numeracy strategy supported ACT school leaders and teachers with targeted professional learning to better meet the numeracy needs of all students in F-6. This included teacher workshops and engagement with expert mathematics educators and academics.
- In WA, a 2021 election commitment will ensure funding for all primary schools that did not receive funding in a previous program that converted 200 classrooms into science laboratories. The new program will see classrooms at more than 130 schools converted into science laboratories. These schools will also receive a resource grant of \$25,000 to purchase science equipment and resources.
- The SA Catholic sector rolled out the First Years of School Assessment Pilot to ensure a valid, reliable and evidence-based suite of assessments that will fulfil the dual purpose of: informing learning and teaching; and providing a system view of children's early achievement in literacy. The Foundation of Literacy Assessment is mapped to the Australian Curriculum, and it is suitable for the first four years of schooling.
- Thirty-three primary and secondary Catholic Schools from NSW, Vic, Qld, SA, WA and Tas participated in an online NAPLAN Writing Assessment pilot to review the marking rubric, the role of Automated Essay Scoring, an additional writing genre and expanding the range of writing tasks.
- AISNSW supported schools to implement 4 12-month initiatives focused on strengthening literacy and numeracy outcomes for primary students. All initiatives included a combination of professional learning for leaders and teachers, instructional coaching provided by consultants with expertise in literacy and numeracy, access to screening tools to monitor student outcome data and parent workshops.

## 2.7 Enhancing middle years development

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration commits governments to work with all school sectors “to ensure that schools are responsive to students’ developmental and learning needs in the middle years, in ways which are challenging, engaging and rewarding” (p 13).

The Australian Government’s Student Wellbeing Hub provides a range of freely available information and resources for educators, students and parents to assist them to create and maintain a safe and supportive school environment. These resources include professional learning modules, a school survey tool that schools can use to assess the effectiveness of their policies and procedures in relation to student wellbeing, and classroom resources on a range of topics.

To address the unique challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic to the wellbeing of students and school communities, the Student Wellbeing Hub also includes over 50 targeted resources to provide additional support for mental health and wellbeing during this time. These include advice for students, parents and educators to optimise at-home learning, resources designed to support students’ mental health during COVID-19 lockdowns, research into the impacts of COVID-19 on children and adolescents, specific resources for Year 12 students, and professional learning modules on building student resilience.

### State, territory and sector initiatives

- In 2021, NSW expanded the use of check-in assessments to all year groups from Year 3 to 9. These online diagnostic assessments in reading and numeracy assist schools to identify how students are performing and help teachers tailor learning to meet student needs and support planning.
- Vic continued to deliver the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, including the \$183 million Middle Years Literacy and Numeracy Support initiative, which provides direct teaching support to secondary school students who are at risk of finishing school without the literacy and numeracy skills they need for future work or study. In 2020, direct support was provided to over 4,700 Year 10 and Year 11 students and by the end of 2022, it is anticipated that the initiative will have reached a total of approximately 23,000 students in Years 8 to 10.
- Vic mandated teaching age-appropriate consent education in all government schools from Term 2, 2021. Victoria developed a Sexuality and Consent Education policy, and published guidance on teaching consent in an age-appropriate way through teaching materials developed with leading experts in the sexuality and relationships education field.
- The Qld Coding Academy and Premier’s Coding Challenge supported STEM learning and engagement of middle years students.
- SA delivered the Learning+ pilot program, an online mathematics tutoring program. The pilot delivered tutoring to over 1200 year 6-9 students and the formal evaluation demonstrated promising findings with moderate growth in students’ general and specific mathematics self-efficacy.
- The NT department is partnering with students and young people through the Northern Territory Learning Commission participation, the Student Voice Positive Choice program, and the newly established Youth Voice Peak Group. The Northern Territory Learning Commission has approximately 2000 students, participating in regular forums designed to engage a broad representation of students from across the NT, using data and evidence to improve education delivery.

- The Finding the Balance Mathematics and Numeracy strategy supported ACT school leaders and teachers with targeted professional learning to better meet the numeracy needs of all students, particularly in the pivotal middle years when students are developing their identity as mathematical learners.
- In Catholic schools in SA, STEM professional learning opportunities were provided to regional schools to build teacher capacity in designing STEM learning embraced a Design Thinking methodology. The inaugural CESA STEM MAD Showcase was launched in 2021. Student teams are invited to design a product, service or innovation to 'Make A Difference' to others or the environment.
- The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) Virtual World Builders Project harnessed new digital media, Virtual Reality (VR), in a unique fusion of STEM research activity aligned to the Australian Curriculum, hands-on creativity and sharing of learning products.

## 2.8 Supporting senior years of schooling

Through the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, Australian governments commit to working with the education community to provide a senior secondary education that equips young people with the skills, knowledge, values and capabilities to succeed in employment, personal and civic life.

### Senior Secondary Certificates of Education

Each state and territory is responsible for providing senior secondary education for students participating in Years 11 and 12, the last 2 years of schooling.

The curriculum, assessment and certification authority (ACACA agency) in each jurisdiction is responsible for determining course content and how the agreed Australian Curriculum content and achievement standards are integrated into its courses.<sup>29</sup> These state and territory government authorities also determine assessment and certification specifications for successful course completion.

Senior secondary certificates of education (SSCEs) are AQF qualifications issued by the curriculum, assessment and certification authority in each state and territory to students meeting the requirements for successful completion of secondary schooling. Each state and territory has its own SSCE(s), as listed in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1**

#### Senior secondary certificates of education (SSCEs), Australian states and territories, 2021

State/territory	SSCE(s)
NSW	Higher School Certificate (HSC)
Vic	Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL)
Qld	Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE)
SA	South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE)
WA	Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE)
Tas	Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE)
NT	Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET)
ACT	Australian Capital Territory Senior Secondary Certificate (ACTSSC)

*Source:* [ACACA website, states and territories.](#)

Data on the completion of Year 12 or equivalent (AQF Certificate II or III) is reported in the Part 3: Measuring performance and in the Participation and Attainment data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

<sup>29</sup> These authorities are member organisations of [Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities \(ACACA\)](#).

## Senior Secondary Pathways Review

A review of senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training is a national policy initiative under the NSRA. Information on this initiative is included in Part 2.9: Embedding pathways for learning throughout life and supporting effective transitions.

### State and territory initiatives

State and territory initiatives in 2021 included:

- The introduction of a flexible operating model meant NSW HSC students could access their schools safely. This allowed essential curriculum delivery, wellbeing support and check-ins as HSC students completed their final year. The HSC hub provides high-quality, on-demand resources that teachers can use with their students to prepare for exams
- In 2021, further progress was made in developing a new vocational pathway within the VCE, the Vocational Major, which will be available to Victorian senior secondary students and will replace the current VCAL. The Victorian Pathways Certificate has also been developed which will replace Foundation VCAL for those students who are unable, or not yet able, to engage in the VCE. These reforms are in response to the Review into Vocational and Applied Learning Pathways in Senior Secondary Schooling.
- In Qld, the STEM Girl Power initiative supported the ongoing state-wide network of young STEM ambassadors who are inspired to take on senior and tertiary STEM learning pathways.
- In SA, preparation continued for the transition of year 7 into high school in 2022, including finalising learning spaces, workforce readiness, and ensuring school and family readiness for the start of the 2022 school year.
- NT provided a range of senior years schooling options for students across the NT to strengthen engagement in their final years of schooling, including the NTCET, vocational education and training (VET), the Employment Pathways program, and training and skilling opportunities.
- The ACT Education Directorate worked in partnership with tertiary providers, including the Australian National University (ANU), University of Canberra, and the Canberra Institute of Technology, to provide university extension courses for senior secondary students in the ACT. These courses provided tertiary pathways to students who may not have previously considered further study.
- During 2020 and 2021, seven Catholic colleges in SA worked in partnership with the Melbourne University Assessment Research Centre in developing a suite of rubrics for the Australian Curriculum General Capabilities, experimenting with how at least one of these could be used in their own schools in helping students to develop capabilities.
- Based on design thinking research from Stanford University, ISV delivered Wayfinder's core wellbeing programs to assist schools across all sectors to support the social emotional development of students from Foundation to Year 12. The 'Purpose' program focuses on guiding students in Years 10 to 12 to explore who they are and what matters to them so they can purposefully navigate their life ahead.

## 2.9 Embedding pathways for learning throughout life and supporting effective transitions

From the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (p 14):

At key developmental periods in each young person's life they transition between early childhood to primary school, from primary to secondary school and from secondary school to further education, training and employment ... Australian Governments commit to helping young Australians navigate the choices they will need to make for their education, training and employment by providing guidance and streamlining transitions.

### Senior Secondary Pathways Review

In late 2020, education ministers considered the outcomes of the *Review of senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training* and agreed priority areas for action. In 2021, the following activities were progressed in response these priorities:

- mapping activities across all education authorities supporting literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skill development
- development of specifications and general capabilities to inform further exploration of senior secondary learner profiles
- scoping project exploring opportunities to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' cultural capabilities, skills and experiences as a part of their learning outcomes
- enhancements to career information including through the National Careers Institute, and
- agreement of scope and principles to inform development of a national strategy for VET delivered to secondary students.

### VET delivered to secondary students

Programs for the delivery of VET to secondary students, including school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, operate in all states and territories. Under these programs, school students can combine school study with training towards an accredited AQF VET qualification. The achievement of a VET qualification signifies that a student has demonstrated competency against the skills and knowledge required to perform effectively in the workplace. All VET qualifications must be issued by registered training organisations (RTOs).

Participation of school-aged students including secondary students in VET in 2021 is reported in Part 3: Measuring performance and in the National Report on Schooling data portal. VET course enrolments and VET qualifications completed by senior secondary students are reported at the school level on the *My School* website.

Preparing Secondary Students for Work: A framework for vocational learning and VET delivered to secondary students provides that all secondary students should experience quality vocational learning and have access to quality VET courses that are integrated into secondary schooling and valued by students, parents, teachers and employers. The framework clarifies the distinction between vocational learning (career education and general work-related curriculum) and VET (nationally recognised training described within an industry-developed training package or an accredited course). It emphasises that VET delivered to secondary students is the same as all other VET, and that the same quality standards apply.

The framework, as well as a range of VET and career education tools and other resources, is published on the Australian Government's Your Career website.

## Skills Reform

Under the Heads of Agreement for Skills Reform (signed in July 2020), the Australian, state and territory governments have committed to strengthening VET pathways for secondary students. State, territory and school sector initiatives.

All states and territories offer VET courses to secondary students, usually as part of the SSCE in each jurisdiction, as well as career education and other work-related programs.

- In 2021, Summer Skills short training courses for Year 12 school leavers provided by the NSW Government were expanded to include online training in the business, construction, health and technology industries. Summer Skills is funded through JobTrainer which provides 200,000 fee-free training places for youth aged 16-24 to assist with transition from school to work or further study.
- Vic continued to deliver initiatives such as Head Start School-Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships program (1,341 students from 147 schools as at December 2021), Transforming Career Education, Professional Learning for VET and applied learning teachers, and Jobs, Skills and Pathways Coordination funding to improve the post-secondary transition outcomes for students.
- The Pathways to a successful future strategy outlines Qld's vision for preparing all students to engage with the possibilities of their future. The accompanying Pathways to a successful future hub, provides information, data, evidence-based tools and career education resources to support schools in implementing the strategy.
- Link and Launch supported Qld Year 12 completers who were not engaged in study, training or work. Operating in 30 locations, it supported 1927 young people from 125 schools. To date, 1381 participants have made a successful transition. Longitudinal follow-up showed that 87.2% were still engaged 18 months post-transition.
- In SA, the Student Pathways website was launched in September 2021 to support students to explore their career options, build a CV and connect with employers for opportunities for work experience, school-based apprenticeships and traineeships and other career exploration activities.
- SA continued to develop the Flexible Industry Pathways (FIPs) in 2021, a program of learning that leads to entry level employment, endorsed by SA industry that includes VET Courses, customised SACE, any additional industry specific requirements, and mentoring and support.
- The Education NT Strategy has a key priority to support successful transitions beyond schooling. In 2022, a review into secondary education will be commissioned in the NT with a focus on increased participation, retention and completion, particularly in remote areas.
- Consistent resources were introduced for all ACT public secondary and senior secondary schools to support pathway planning, career education lesson plans, virtual job experience, and VET courses. This included implementation of the [Career Tools](#) platform, an all-in-one solution for career planning and post-school options.

- In SA, a cross-sector collaboration project, the Learning and Accreditation through a Learner Profile project, with the University of Melbourne's Assessment Research Centre, provided practical assistance to schools looking to create reliable responses to the challenge of assessing a wider set of student capabilities.
- In SA, the Microcredential Project has focused on professional learning for schools and is developing a framework to provide structure and consistency to the construction of VET microcredentials for Catholic school students.

## 2.10 Delivering world-class curriculum and assessment

Australian governments have committed to ensuring that all education sectors deliver world-class curriculum and assessment in Australian schools as part of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration.

Progressing priority national school education initiatives, with a focus on the National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and review of the Australian Curriculum was an Education Ministers Meeting priority for 2021.

### Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority



The [Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority \(ACARA\)](#) is an independent statutory authority responsible to Education Council, established in legislation.<sup>30</sup> ACARA's functions in curriculum and assessment are to:

- develop and administer a national school curriculum, including content of the curriculum and achievement standards, for school subjects specified in the ACARA Charter<sup>31</sup>
- develop and administer national assessments
- provide school curriculum resource services
- provide information, resources, support and guidance to the teaching profession.

### Australian Curriculum



The 3-dimensional design of the Foundation – Year 10 Australian Curriculum recognises the importance of disciplinary knowledge, understanding and skills within the 8 learning areas, alongside general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.



<sup>30</sup> *Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act (2008)*.

<sup>31</sup> Education Ministers determine the ACARA Charter. The current charter took effect from November 2016. The charter specifies subjects to be included in the Australian Curriculum in the learning areas for Foundation – Year 10 and for the areas of English, Mathematics, Science, and Humanities and Social Sciences for Years 11 and 12.

There are 8 learning areas in the Australian Curriculum, corresponding to those listed by education ministers in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration:

- English
- Mathematics
- Science
- Humanities and Social Sciences
- The Arts
- Technologies
- Health and Physical Education
- Languages.

The Australian Curriculum incorporates 7 general capabilities: Literacy, Numeracy, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) capability, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social capability, Ethical Understanding, and Intercultural Understanding. There are also 3 cross-curriculum priorities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia, and Sustainability. The general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities are addressed within the content of the 8 learning areas.

### Senior secondary curriculum

Fifteen Australian Curriculum senior secondary subjects across English, Mathematics, Science, History and Geography have been endorsed by education ministers as the agreed and common base for the development of state and territory senior secondary courses.

State and territory curriculum, assessment and certification authorities are responsible for determining how the Australian Curriculum content and achievement standards are to be integrated into their courses.

Information on senior secondary qualifications in states and territories is included in Part 2.8: Supporting senior secondary education.

### Review of the Australian Curriculum

In June 2020 Education Ministers asked ACARA to review the Foundation – Year 10 Australian Curriculum. The review of the Australian Curriculum was a priority focus area of the Education Ministers Meeting in 2021.

The review was required to:

- Refine and reduce the amount of content in all eight key learning areas
- Reflect the goals of The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration.

ACARA was asked to complete the review by the end of 2021, with the revised Foundation – Year 10 Australian Curriculum released on a redesigned Australian Curriculum website in early 2022.

Eighteen reference groups were formed to support the Australian Curriculum Review. The members of these groups were nominated by state and territory education and curriculum authorities. Each reference group met regularly to agree on the directions for the revisions. A consultation curriculum was released for public comment between 29 April and 8 July 2021. This presented a unique opportunity for the community to provide feedback on the national curriculum as a whole.

During the 10-week public consultation period a total of 6,161 online surveys were completed and more than 900 email submissions were received. State and territory members, along with the NCEC and ISA, provided detailed written jurisdiction feedback.

The Terms of Reference for the Australian Curriculum Review specified that the curriculum would be refined, realigned and decluttered. In the course of the curriculum review:

- The content descriptions and achievement standards in all the learning areas were reviewed and, where necessary, refined and realigned.
- There was a reduction in content across all the learning areas.
- The elements and organising ideas in the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities respectively were reviewed and refined.

The revised Australian Curriculum, Version 9.0, was considered for endorsement by education ministers in early 2022. It was endorsed by education ministers in April 2022 and is published on the ACARA website.

### Curriculum projects

ACARA continued to manage the National Innovation and Science Agenda Digital Technologies in Focus (DTiF) project. Approximately 160 disadvantaged schools in urban (capital cities), rural (inner and outer regional), remote and very remote locations across all states and territories, incorporating more than 2,300 teachers and more than 30,000 students, participated in this project.<sup>32</sup> More than 1,700 teachers participated in professional learning. Curriculum specialist support is provided for each of the schools, with the integration of Digital Technologies being showcased through the publication of school stories, resources and professional learning on the Digital Technologies in Focus section of the Australian Curriculum website. The final report for the project was published on the website.

New STEM illustrations of practice and vodcasts were published and multiple support resources were developed, updated and published under the DTiF project.

ACARA worked with the University of Melbourne in 2 separate research projects to investigate the possibilities of incorporating their Students with Additional Needs (SWANs) program within the initiative. The first project mapped SWANs assessments to learning progression indicators, finding that there was considerable alignment along with some differences in content and approach. The second project established a framework whereby students' SWANs results could be displayed to teachers, parents and students.

### Online Formative Assessment

Online formative assessment is a national policy initiative under the NSRA and a priority for Education Ministers Meeting in 2021.

Formative assessment (in the forms of class discussion, exercises, assignments, or classroom tests) takes place as part of the teaching and learning process.<sup>33</sup> It reinforces student learning and helps teachers to monitor students' progress as they learn. The Online Formative Assessment initiative aims to provide Australian teachers with online assessment tools, flexibility and professional learning to plan teaching that is matched to the needs of students in their classrooms.

The work so far has been developed by AITSL, Education Services Australia (ESA) and ACARA; in collaboration with the teaching profession, school leaders, parents/carers and students. The initiative has been conducted in stages ('discovery', 'alpha' and 'beta').

<sup>32</sup> School locations are classified based on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) remoteness indicator. See Part 5 Glossary – Location for the five Remoteness Areas for Australia.

<sup>33</sup> Assessment at the end of a course (such as a final exam) is known as 'summative assessment'.

ACARA continued work in relation to critical and creative thinking (CCT). Analysis of the data gathered in the discovery phase was completed. On balance, it was concluded that while valid CCT assessments existed, there was insufficient evidence to describe students' CCT behaviours as a national learning progression. However, the analyses were used to inform improvements to the ACARA CCT learning continuum as part of the review of the Australian Curriculum. Reports on the alpha phase, along with recommendations for a potential beta trial phase were completed in June 2021 and submitted to education ministers for consideration.

In July 2021, upon completion of the discovery and alpha stages, Ministers requested the initiative undertake an additional 'alpha finalisation and beta establishment' stage to clarify the objectives and approach to the initiative. Ministers also agreed that South Australia would take on leadership and project management of the initiative during this stage. Work continued throughout 2021 on implementing the additional stage to inform Ministers' decision in mid-2022 on whether to proceed to the 'beta' stage of the initiative.

More information on the initiative is available on the [Online Formative Assessment initiative](#) website.

## National Assessment Program



The NAP consists of:

- annual national literacy and numeracy tests (NAPLAN)
- sample assessments in Civics and Citizenship, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Literacy and Science Literacy for Years 6 and 10 conducted on a three-year cycle
- Australia's participation in international assessments.

ACARA is responsible for overseeing the first 2 of these. The Australian Government department of education oversees participation in international assessments.

For national reporting purposes, Key Performance Measures (KPMs) for participation and achievement in assessments within the NAP have been approved by education ministers and are specified in the *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020*.

## NAPLAN 2021

NAPLAN is an annual national assessment for all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Students in these year levels are assessed on their literacy and numeracy skills through tests in reading, writing, conventions of language (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and numeracy. The tests are aligned with the Australian Curriculum: English F–10 and the Australian Curriculum: Mathematics F–10.

ACARA is responsible for the development and oversight of the delivery of the NAPLAN tests. States and territories are responsible for the administration of the tests in each jurisdiction. NAPLAN began the transition from a paper test to an online test in 2018. The national platform for administering NAPLAN online is managed by ESA and funded by the Australian Government. In March 2020 Education Council agreed to cancel NAPLAN for 2020 due to COVID-19. Given the cancellation of NAPLAN and the impacts on schooling due to COVID-19, education ministers decided in June 2020 that the timeline for full transition to NAPLAN Online will be deferred from 2021 to 2022.

NAPLAN was administered in May 2021 in either paper or online mode to over 1.2 million students. Prior to the tests, NAPLAN online schools were able to participate in a range of readiness activities such as a school readiness test, platform readiness testing and practice tests. This allowed teachers to rehearse procedures and students were able to familiarise themselves with testing procedures and item types.

Approximately 870,000 students (67%) in over 6,350 schools in all states and territories participated in NAPLAN 2021 online, on track to the full transition to NAPLAN online in 2022. For online schools, the final Student and School Summary Reports were released to test administration authorities in states and territories in August 2021. NAPLAN results data for 2021 is available in interactive form from the 'Results' page of the ACARA National Assessment Program website. The Results page and the *NAPLAN National Report for 2021* provide comparisons of performance by state and territory; by student characteristics such as gender, Indigeneity, and parental education; and by school characteristics such as location. The 2021 NAPLAN National Report and 2021 Test Incident Report were published in December 2021.

National data for the NAPLAN KPMs in 2021, along with long-term trends, is summarised in Part 3: Measuring performance and on the National Report in Schooling data portal.

### Independent NAPLAN review

A report on a joint review of NAPLAN commissioned by the governments of NSW, Qld, Vic and the ACT was provided to Education Council in 2020. Recommendations made in the report included changing the timing of testing to earlier in the school year, changes to the writing test, assessing in Year 10 instead of Year 9, and introducing critical and creative thinking in STEM. Several of these proposals were considered by Education Ministers Meeting in 2021.

### Potential improvements to NAPLAN

In line with its priorities for 2021, Education Ministers Meeting considered a number of potential improvements to NAPLAN during 2021. These included improvements to the writing test, moving the tests to earlier in the year, changing the Year 9 tests to Year 10 and the addition of an extra test domain in science.

In April 2021 the Education Ministers Meeting agreed in principle that ACARA will implement changes to the NAPLAN writing test in 2023 subject to other changes to NAPLAN and successful research trials. Ministers also agreed in principle to continue testing spelling, grammar and punctuation (Conventions of Language) separately from writing.

At their July 2021 meeting education ministers agreed that the writing test continue to be conducted as a census test and confirmed their 30 April in-principle decision that the testing of spelling, grammar and punctuation will be separate from writing as part of the annual census-based standardised assessment program.<sup>34</sup>

Ministers also agreed that the NAPLAN assessments continue to be undertaken in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 but agreed in-principle to enabling schools to "opt in" to assessments in the domains of Science Literacy (including critical and creative thinking), Digital Literacy and Civics and Citizenship annually in Year 6 and Year 10.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> For all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

<sup>35</sup> Corresponding to the domains tested in NAP Sample assessments for Years 6 and 10.

After further consideration at its September 2021 meeting, the Education Ministers Meeting on 12 November 2021:

- agreed in principle to move NAPLAN tests to Term 1 from 2023
- agreed to maintain the existing constructs for NAPLAN tests i.e., without additional questions to assess science and critical and creative thinking
- subject to NAPLAN being moved to Term 1, agreed to phase in, from Term 2 2024, opt-in assessments in Science, Civics & Citizenship and Digital Literacy
- subject to agreement to the point above, agreed to move the NAP Sample test window to Term 2 from 2023.

### NAP – sample assessments

The national sample assessments test the skills and understanding of Year 6 and Year 10 students in the areas of science literacy, civics and citizenship, and ICT literacy. The assessments began in 2003 and are usually held on a rolling 3-yearly basis. Participating schools are sampled from all states and territories and school sectors.

In June 2020 Education Council decided to postpone the NAP–ICT Literacy sample assessment scheduled for 2020 by 12 months to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In September 2021 Education Ministers decided to further postpone the NAP–ICT Literacy assessment to 2022 due to the continued COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, NAP–Science Literacy and NAP–Civics and Citizenship will also be delayed by a further 12 months. This postponement will result in a one-off 5-year gap (as opposed to the normal 3-year gap) in the time series for each of the sample assessments.

### NAP – Civics and Citizenship

The sixth NAP–Civics and Citizenship (NAP–CC) assessment of a sample of Years 6 and 10 students was delivered online in October and November 2019 (incorporating aspects of the Australian Curriculum: History). The final report was published on the NAP website in January 2021.

### NAP – Science Literacy

The sixth NAP–Science Literacy sample assessment was conducted in 2018 and the final report on the results was published in February 2020.

### NAP – ICT Literacy

The most recent NAP–ICT Literacy sample assessment took place in 2017. The next assessment is scheduled for 2022.

In November 2021 Education Ministers Meeting agreed, subject to NAPLAN being moved to Term 1, to phase in, from Term 2 2024, opt-in assessments in Science, Civics & Citizenship and Digital Literacy. Subject to this, education ministers also agreed to move the NAP sample assessment window to Term 2 from 2023.

## NAP – international assessments

Three international sample assessments included in the NAP are used as a basis for KPMs for schooling. These are:

### Programme for International Student Assessment

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) takes place every 3 years and assesses 15-year-olds in reading, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy. PISA is developed and administered internationally by the OECD. The most recent cycle was PISA 2018. Results were released in December 2019.

In 2020, OECD member countries and associates decided to postpone PISA 2021 to 2022 and PISA 2024 to 2025 to reflect post-COVID difficulties.

### Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) takes place every 4 years and assesses Year 4 and Year 8 students' achievement in mathematics and science. The assessment is administered by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). Data collection for the most recent cycle of TIMSS (2019) took place in Australia in late 2018. Results were released in December 2020. The next cycle of TIMSS is planned for 2023.

### Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is a 5-yearly assessment of reading literacy for Year 4 students. The IEA is responsible for PIRLS. Results for the most recent cycle of PIRLS (2016) were released in December 2017. PIRLS 2021 was conducted in Australia in late 2021. The results are expected to be released in mid-2023.

## State and territory and sector initiatives

- NSW is implementing the NSW Curriculum Reform, working to streamline and strengthen what is taught in NSW schools. The reform follows the most comprehensive NSW Curriculum Review in 3 decades. A new English and Mathematics K–2 curriculum was released in 2021 and will be taught in schools from 2022.
- In response to the Victorian Review into Vocational and Applied Learning Pathways in Senior Secondary Schooling, the VCE and VCAL are transitioning to a new integrated senior secondary certificate. As part of these reforms, significant work was undertaken during 2021 to allow Victorian senior secondary students to have their literacy and numeracy skills measured against new standards in a reformed General Achievement Test for the first time in 2022.
- In Qld, the Curriculum into the Classroom P–6 Curriculum Planning Model provides contextually-aligned Australian Curriculum assessment and planning resources for multilevel classes in diverse school contexts.
- SA published the second round of curriculum resources to support teachers and schools to implement the Australian Curriculum within a SA context.
- The Education NT Strategy 2021–2025 and Engagement Strategy 2021–2031 both focus on improving cultural responsiveness and delivering meaningful learning that speaks to the aspirations of children, families and community. Backed by a quality delivery of the Australian Curriculum, making learning meaningful to every child, is considered core to increasing engagement and outcomes.

- The ACT contributed to all aspects of the review of the Australian Curriculum Version 8.4. ACT public schools will be able to access, implement and assess against a curriculum that develops the necessary knowledge, skills and dispositions to thrive in the 21st century.
- The NCEC made a comprehensive submission to the Australian Curriculum Review with input from state and territory Catholic education authorities. Catholic education authorities also undertook an intensive F–6 engagement strategy to test out the manageability of the consultation versions of the F–6 Australian Curriculum through the development of the F-6 school scope and sequence plans across learning areas.
- Catholic education in SA is currently leading the development of A-E performance standards aligned to the Australian Curriculum achievement standards for all learning areas of the Australian Curriculum, for each year level. These will be made available for consistent use across the Catholic system. This is part of a larger project, aimed at improving learning outcomes for students through building teachers' assessment literacy.
- ISV collaborated with Project Zero at the Harvard School of Graduate Education to produce Arts as Civics Commons (ArtC). The tools and resources included in the ArtC Educator Handbook are publicly available and explore the way that schools can use art to teach civic engagement and to encourage students' participation in civic learning.
- ISQ provided support to independent schools in Qld to implement any changes resulting from the Review of the Australian Curriculum including Building Assessment Communities – social moderation conversations with teachers across K to Year 12 to improve assessment practices, and support for Curriculum Leaders to ensure they have the necessary information and tools to lead curriculum compliance and curriculum renewal conversations in their schools.

## 2.11 Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners to reach their full potential

In the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (p 16):

Australian Governments commit to empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to reach their potential and to ensuring the education community works to 'close the gap' for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

### Closing the Gap

In 2021 the Australian Government, all states and territories and the Coalition of Peaks (representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations) released their first annual Closing the Gap Implementation Plans under the 2020 National Agreement on Closing the Gap.<sup>36</sup>

These include measures aimed at enabling positive action toward Target 5 of the National Agreement: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (age 20-24) attaining year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96%.

The Australian Government's Implementation Plan included the announcement of a \$126 million package for three school education measures that focus on scaling up initiatives and evidence-driven programs which are demonstrating success at lifting student outcomes, attendance and engagement.

The Australian Government is providing \$16.6 million to assist boarding providers as they continue to respond to issues associated with COVID-19, and better support the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students.

All states and territories also operate programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities within their jurisdictions.

### State, territory and sector initiatives

- The Connected Communities Strategy was implemented in 33 NSW government schools. It is designed to bolster areas such as implementing culturally responsive teaching practices, family and community engagement at school, attendance and retention and improved literacy and numeracy results for Aboriginal students.
- Vic continued to implement the *Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-26*. Through Marrung, Vic is working in genuine partnership with the Koorie community to ensure Aboriginal peoples' cultures, knowledge and experiences are celebrated and that Vic is a state where all universal service systems are inclusive, responsive and respectful of Koorie people.
- Commencing in 2021, the Self-determination in Education Reform conversation and co-design process is bringing together Koorie communities, young people, schools and education staff to listen, share and connect about self-determination for Koorie people in education in Vic.
- Four Year 12 students from across Qld received a Peter Doherty Outstanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Senior STEM Student Award of \$5000. Students use these funds to undertake activities associated with tertiary STEM courses, attend STEM events, purchase equipment for their learning or to undertake research projects.

<sup>36</sup> Links to these plans are available on the [Closing the Gap](#) website.

- The Local Community Engagement Through Co-Design pilot commenced implementation in 13 state schools in Qld with the aim to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through the empowerment of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to inform school decision-making.
- The SA department continued to partner with external agencies such as the Clontarf Foundation and Glass Jar Australia to support the mentoring and engagement of Aboriginal students, and ensure the voice of Aboriginal students, families and community are reflected within new and ongoing service delivery.
- In SA the Culturally Responsive Framework created inclusive environments for Aboriginal employees, students and their families.
- In WA, a culturally responsive school leadership program for principals was developed in partnership with the Danjoo Koorliny (Walking Together) panel of Elders and community leaders, and the Centre for Social Impact.
- The Two-way Science Initiative in WA supports schools to build partnerships with Aboriginal communities to connect local Aboriginal knowledge with the science curriculum in an integrated teaching and learning program. 21 schools in the Kimberley, Goldfields and metropolitan regions were formally engaged in the initiative.
- Following significant consultation with families, communities and other stakeholders, the NT launched the Education Engagement Strategy 2022–2031. This recognises that children start formal education already equipped with deeply established knowledge systems, cultural values and ways of learning. The strategy supports an inclusive education system that reflects the rich cultural, social and linguistic diversity amongst our students.
- In the ACT, tertiary and secondary scholarships were available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to support potential pathways. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officers and Cultural Integrity Coordinators support and build the cultural integrity of schools and staff. Set up for Success provided 100 places for children at Koori Preschools.
- The NCEC collaborated with AITSL and the school sectors to establish an agreement on a roadmap for AITSL's development of resources and tools to support teachers and school leaders develop their cultural competency.
- The AISSA's Indigenous Secondary Student Mentoring Program completed its sixth year of implementation and saw an Indigenous mentor work alongside Indigenous secondary students across 21 metropolitan and regional independent schools, to provide culturally sensitive mentoring.
- AISWA worked with Aboriginal independent schools to further develop the school boards' understanding of governance. Schools have identified areas of need including understanding financial reports, ensuring all community voices are heard and attracting and retaining teachers. Local understanding and decision making by the school board means the community and school develop a stronger educational partnership.

## 2.12 Supporting all young Australians at risk of educational disadvantage

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In the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, Australian governments “commit to ensuring the education community works to provide equality of opportunity and educational outcomes for all students at risk of educational disadvantage” (p 17).

### Needs-based school funding

Under the Quality Schools funding arrangements, Australian Government recurrent funding for schools is calculated using a base per-student amount plus 6 loadings aimed at addressing disadvantage.

For most non-government schools, the base amount is discounted by the estimated capacity of parents to contribute towards the school’s operating costs.<sup>37</sup>

The areas of student and school disadvantage addressed through the loadings are:

- students with disability
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- students from low socio-economic backgrounds; students with low English proficiency
- location of the school (remoteness)
- size of the school.

Further information is provided in Part 4: School funding.

### Review of the Disability Standards for Education

In 2020 the Australian Government conducted a 5-yearly review of the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*. The standards clarify the rights of students with disability and the obligations of education providers under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. The aim of the review was to test if the standards are effective in supporting students with disability to access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability and whether any improvements to the standards should be made. There was an extensive public consultation process, which included a focus on the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with disability.

The final report of the review, released in March 2021, made 13 recommendations reflecting four reform directions:

- Empowering and supporting students with disability and their families
- Strengthening the knowledge and capability of educators and providers
- Embedding accountability for the Standards throughout the education system
- Building awareness and capability in the early childhood education and care sector.

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<sup>37</sup> The capacity to contribute does not apply to government schools, non-government special schools or special assistance schools, non-government majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools, or non-government sole provider schools.

During 2021 the Australian Government worked closely with state and territory governments and non-government education authorities to implement the recommendations, with an initial focus on the development of information products to empower students with disability and their families and strengthen the knowledge and capability of education providers.

## **Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability**

The Australian Government will invest \$20.0 million over four years to continue the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) Continuous Quality Improvement Measure.

## **The Smith Family's Growing Careers Project**

The Australian Government is providing \$38.2 million over four years (2020-21 to 2023-24) to support The Smith Family's Growing Careers Project. The project will support up to 76,725 disadvantaged high school students from Years 7 to 12 (or equivalent) across Australia to participate in a suite of careers education activities that aim to support successful transitions from school to work or to further education and training.

## **Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Australia – Disadvantaged Youth Program**

The Australian Government provided \$3 million to support 4,500 disadvantaged young people over 2021–22 to 2023–24 to access the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award. The Disadvantaged Youth Program provides young people with disability, aged 14 to 24 years, and young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, refugee, and regional and remote communities, aged 14 to 18 years, with opportunities to develop non-academic and academic competencies.

## **State, territory and sector initiatives**

- In 2021 the NSW Government invested \$337 million in the COVID Intensive Learning Support Program which provides targeted small group tuition to support students at risk of educational disadvantage in government and non-government schools.
- In Vic, Disability Inclusion has introduced a new functional needs-based assessment approach for students with disability, new school funding allocations and initiatives to develop systemic capability in inclusive education. Disability Inclusion is being implemented between 2021-2025 and has been rolled out to almost 600 schools to date.
- Qld partnered with the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) to develop elaborations under the National School Improvement Tool for student engagement and wellbeing. This research-based tool will support schools and education systems to focus efforts and practices that lift engagement and wellbeing outcomes for every student.
- SA launched a reform program to improve learning outcomes for children with disability and functional needs.
- SA improved access to Student Support Services, a multidisciplinary service to assist schools and preschools meet the needs of children with additional learning and wellbeing needs. A new complex care review panel has been established where children and students with very complex needs will receive coordinated support from the department and other agencies.
- Also in SA, a joint plan of action was implemented to improve learning outcomes for children in care.

- In WA, the trial initiative of the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Early Years Link (CaLDEYLink) Project began in 2 metropolitan primary schools with high proportions of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) families in Semester 2, 2021. The initiative aims to develop the personal/social, language and cognitive capabilities of English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) children prior to school entry, build on the capability of CaLD families as their children's first educators and forge stronger and more collaborative partnerships between home, school and community.
- Under the Framework for Inclusion 2019–29, the NT:
  - implemented the Building Collaborative Capacity Program to enhance educators' inclusive education practices
  - completed infrastructure works under the \$5.2 million Building for Inclusion Program to improve facilities and
  - identified 84 classrooms from 18 remote schools with the greatest hearing needs to receive acoustic upgrades.
- In the ACT, Set up for Success provided 2 days over 48 weeks for 500 children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage in the year before preschool. Early childhood educators had access to trauma informed training. ACT public schools supported students at risk of educational disadvantage, including support for students in out of home care.
- Catholic education in WA had significant engagement with the industry training hubs, as well as industry and Australian Apprenticeship Support Networks to make regional and metropolitan students aware of the career opportunities available to them and promote employment positions as school-based traineeships and apprenticeships.
- To ensure education promotes and contributes to a socially cohesive society, the NSW school sectors developed a three-year cross-sectoral work plan to address student antisocial and extremist behaviour and increase the resilience of school communities.
- AISNSW developed a *Framework of Behaviour Support and Student Engagement* inclusive of a range of resources, access to professional learning and specialised support. The Framework includes three tiers of support including assistance to schools to engage in specialised behaviour support planning for individual students; classroom management processes and practices; and whole-school positive behaviour interventions and supports.
- The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA) established a growing wellbeing network to support schools in sharing their practice and interpreting the latest wellbeing research. Additionally, a small number of schools participated in the pilot trial of mental health monitoring in Western Australian Schools using the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (BEES) wellbeing measure with Edith Cowan University.

## 2.13 Strengthening accountability and transparency with strong meaningful measures

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In the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (p 19) Australian governments commit to continuing to provide public reporting that:

- focuses on improving performance and student growth and outcomes for all students
- provides parents with information on their child's performance, progress and outcomes
- is locally, nationally, and internationally relevant
- is accessible, timely, consistent and comparable.

This includes access to national reporting on the performance of all schools, contextual information about a school and information about a school's enrolment profile.

Improving the national evidence base is one of 3 policy reform directions specified in the NSRA. Agreed policy initiatives in this area are implementing a national USI; establishing an independent national evidence institute (AERO) to inform teacher practice, system improvement and policy development; and improving national data quality, consistency and collection.

### Australian Education Research Organisation

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) is a joint ministerial company responsible for generating new evidence on effective teaching and learning practices and making this evidence accessible for teachers and school leaders across Australia. It is governed by a Board of up to eight members appointed by Education Ministers Meeting.

Launched in December 2020, AERO's scope covers both the schooling and early childhood sectors. The establishment of AERO is a national policy initiative to improve the national evidence base under the NSRA. In September 2021, Education Ministers Meeting approved AERO's three yearly strategic plan and annual research agenda. In 2021, AERO published resources to inform teacher practice, system improvement and policy development using evidence-based approaches in the schooling and early childhood education sectors. In December 2021, a new partnership was announced between AERO and Ochre Education, a new Australian education not-for-profit organisation to provide instructional teaching resources.

### Unique student identifier

Establishing a national unique student identifier (USI) is a policy initiative under the NSRA and is expected to support teaching, learning and student wellbeing; provide for more efficient administration; and facilitate research to inform policy development.

In 2021 work continued on the development of options, including privacy impact assessments. Education Ministers agreed to pilot the proposed solution with NSW, SA and NT, including some Catholic and independent schools within those jurisdictions. It was also agreed that the Australian Government would work with jurisdictions and the non-government sector on next steps after pilot delivery and an Applications Framework.

## ACARA

The data collection and reporting functions of ACARA are to:

- collect, manage and analyse student assessment data and other data relating to schools and comparative school performance
- facilitate information-sharing arrangements between Australian government bodies in relation to the collection, management and analysis of school data
- publish information relating to school education, including information relating to comparative school performance.

The ACARA Charter specifies the following priorities for data and reporting:

- assess data needs to review, and if necessary, introduce new performance indicators in the measurement framework
- manage the collection and quality assurance of data for policy development in the school education sector and provide accessible and comprehensive national school and schooling information (including the *My School* website and NAP reporting)
- produce a revitalised, timely and accessible national report on schooling, which meets the goals for national performance reporting.

### Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia

In 2020 ACARA revised the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia to reflect the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. The schedule of Key Performance Measures (KPMs) was also revised to reflect the postponement of NAP sample and international assessments due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The [Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020](#), endorsed by Education Council in December 2020, is the basis for reporting of KPMs for 2021.

### National Report on Schooling in Australia

In 2021 ACARA published the *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2019* following endorsement by Education Council. The *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2020* was prepared in consultation with representatives of state and territory education authorities, other government agencies and non-government school sectors. The report will be published in 2022.

### National Report on Schooling data portal

The online National Report on Schooling data portal provides public access, on a single website, to a wider range of national and state and territory data on schooling in Australia than available elsewhere.

It includes current statistics and time series data on school numbers, enrolments, staffing and funding, and data on the agreed KPMs for schooling, including attendance, retention, assessment and Year 12 or equivalent attainment. The portal allows users to view and download data at the national level, and also to disaggregate data by state and territory, by school sector, by calendar year and by available breakdowns of equity groups such as sex and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status.

The data portal allows for the timely release of national data on schooling in advance of the annual national report being published. It was updated in April and December 2021.

## My School

ACARA is responsible for the national data collection on individual schools reported on the *My School* website. *My School* includes information on school type and sector; data on enrolments, staffing, student attendance, senior secondary outcomes and VET activity, school funding, and the performance of the school's students in NAPLAN assessments; and a school comment submitted by principals.

*My School* was updated in March 2021 with the following additional datasets:

- School profile data 2014–2020
- Finance data 2014–2019
- VET in Schools data 2014–2019
- Post school destination data 2014–2019.

There were no updates to NAPLAN assessment data in 2021 as NAPLAN was cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic.

## Australian Schools List website

ACARA maintained the [Australian Schools List website](#) for online education services that rely on a current and accurate list of registered schools in Australia.

The list of schools is compiled from school registration authorities in each state and territory, providing details of all schools and campuses in Australia. It also includes school location, school type and school sector attributes. The list is refreshed quarterly.

ACARA continued to provide access to data collected by ACARA to third parties under the *Data Access Protocols 2015*.

## Teacher workforce data

AITSL continues to deliver the Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) initiative, linking ITE data with that of current teachers to assist in managing workforce needs; understanding teacher supply and demand; and providing insights into the teaching experience.

In 2021, AITSL released the second report using the ATWD collection. The *National Teacher Workforce Characteristics Report, December 2021* focuses on the professional journey of the teacher from the entry into the profession through their career trajectory and work experiences; and enables the identification of challenges and opportunities for teachers, teacher employers, workforce planning and policy makers.

## State and territory initiatives

- In 2021, NSW continued the implementation of the School Success Model, a whole-system evidence-led reform program that aims to strengthen shared accountability across the system by putting in place clearer targets for school improvement, lifting capability through the design of new system support and sharing best practice across the system.
- Vic used its system of collecting data and reporting to schools through Panorama dashboards to drive school improvement. System-level performance was monitored through the Outcome Framework. Regional performance was monitored through the Regional Performance Framework.

- In Qld, the data literacy framework was released in 2021. It provides guidance to teachers and school leaders on using data to support learning and wellbeing and school improvement. The improvement measures outlined within the State Schools Improvement Strategy 2022–2026 were used to support every student succeeding.
- SA released the Parent Engagement Strategy in December 2021. This seeks to place learning at the centre of parent and school relationships and outlines the plan for investment, advice and supports to achieve this outcome.
- In 2021, WA finalised the [Multicultural Plan 2021–2025](#). The plan outlines key areas of action to assist staff to support all aspects of our cultural and linguistic diversity in the workplace and in our school communities.
- The Education NT Strategy 2021–2025 is supported by 6 Headline Improvement Measures (relating to improvements in teacher-student relationships as assessed through the school survey, foundational early literacy skills, attended days, NAPLAN growth, A-E grades and year 12 achievement).
- Catholic education authorities held training workshops on the NCCD along with cross-school moderation sessions to build the capacity of teachers to cater for students with additional needs.
- State and territory Catholic education commissions participated in consultations with the Australian Government department on the implementation of recommendations of the National School Resourcing Board review into needs-based funding requirements.

## 2.14 Arrangements for student learning during COVID-19

From late March 2020, based on health advice, all states and territories put in place arrangements to keep students and school staff safe from COVID-19. These varied according to jurisdiction, community lockdowns and restrictions, and local circumstances, but as well as health precautions included temporary school closures, partial school closures and extensive programs of online and other remote learning.

During 2021, schools, students, teachers, and parents and carers in most states and territories were impacted to some extent by community lockdowns and other restrictions due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

The extent of changes to school operations in 2021 in each state and territory, and responses of school systems within each jurisdiction are summarised in Table 2.2.

### New South Wales

- For schools in the Greater Sydney area, the NSW Government encouraged parents / carers to keep students at home with remote learning available throughout Term 3 2021 and the first 3 weeks of Term 4 (mid-July to mid-October). Frontline workers and those employed in essential services were still able to send their children to school. Transition back to school-based learning occurred from 18 October 2021, with Kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 12 students returning to school. Grades 2 to 11 returned the following week.
- Schools in regional NSW had a shorter learning from home period, generally from mid-August to mid-September. However, this varied depending on the incidence of COVID 19 in the Local Government Area (LGA).
- Transition back to school-based learning occurred from 18 October 2021, with Kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 12 students returning to school. Grades 2 to 11 returned the following week.
- The COVID Intensive Learning Support Program provided small group tuition for students whose learning had been affected by extended periods of learning from home. The program was a joint effort between the three school sectors. Disadvantaged students in every NSW Government school were supported by the program. In 2021 a total of 265,000 students were supported.

### Victoria

- Semester one 2021 had state-wide lockdowns in Term 1 – week 4 and Term 2 – weeks 7 and 8. There were longer periods of remote learning in Term 3 (39 days in metropolitan Vic and 30 days in rural Vic) and Term 4 (20 days in metropolitan Vic and 14 days in rural Vic).
- In 2021, Free Kinder was offered as part of the recovery package from the impacts of COVID-19, with a focus on supporting kindergarten participation and workforce participation, particularly for women.
- The Tutor Learning Initiative (with an initial investment of \$250 million) enabled all Vic government schools, and low-fee non-government schools, to provide targeted support to students whose learning had been disrupted because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2.2

## School operations and remote learning arrangements in response to COVID-19 by state and territory, 2021

Week beginning	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT
25/01/2021								
1/02/2021								
8/02/2021								
15/02/2021								
22/02/2021								
1/03/2021								
8/03/2021								
15/03/2021								
22/03/2021								
29/03/2021								
5/04/2021								
12/04/2021								
19/04/2021								
26/04/2021								
3/05/2021								
10/05/2021								
17/05/2021								
24/05/2021								
31/05/2021								
7/06/2021								
14/06/2021								
21/06/2021								
28/06/2021								
5/07/2021								
12/07/2021								
19/07/2021								
26/07/2021								
2/08/2021								
9/08/2021								
16/08/2021								
23/08/2021								
30/08/2021								
6/09/2021								
13/09/2021								
20/09/2021								
27/09/2021								
4/10/2021								
11/10/2021								
18/10/2021								
25/10/2021								
1/11/2021								
8/11/2021								
15/11/2021								
22/11/2021								
29/11/2021								
6/12/2021								
13/12/2021								
20/12/2021								

Key:

	School holidays		School closures/pupil-free days
	Normal school operations		Remote learning available
	Some school closures/reduced attendance		No information provided

Source: State and territory education departments.

## Queensland

- For three days in Week 10 of Term 1 (30 March – 1 April 2021), schools in Greater Brisbane were only open to vulnerable children and children of essential workers. The majority of students were required to learn at home.
- Schools in 11 LGAs in South East Qld were disrupted in Week 4 of Term 3 (2-6 August 2021). Predominantly, affected schools were only open to vulnerable children and children of essential workers with the majority of students required to learn at home. Restrictions remained in a small number of schools for 14 days following confirmation of positive cases.
- Schools in two LGAs around Cairns delivered home-based learning for three days during Week 5 of Term 3 (9-11 August 2021).
- The Qld learning@home website provided resources including learning packages aligned to the F-10 Australian Curriculum and three television programs to support continuity of learning at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## South Australia

- In SA there were stay at home orders from 21 July 2021 to 27 July 2021.
- All schools had a student free day on Wednesday 21 July 2021 and remote learning was in place from Thursday 22 July 2021 until Tuesday 27 July 2021. Students returned to learning at school on Wednesday 28 July 2021.
- In 2021 there were also some individual school closures across the year based on SA Health advice.

## Western Australia

- Without widespread community transmission in 2021, delivery of face-to-face education in WA was largely unaffected. Schools in the Metro, Peel and Southwest regions closed for one week on direction from the Department of Health at the commencement of Term 1, and attendance in the Metro and Peel regions was impacted by a mandated lockdown in the final week of Term 2.
- In 2021, students medically referred to learn from home were supported centrally. From June 2021 all students, including those with medical conditions, were encouraged to attend school with appropriate precautions in place.
- In 2021 school preparedness and response planning provided contingencies for school closures, geographical lockdowns or other restrictions on learning. Government schools were supported to develop learning contingency plans appropriate to the context of the school. These were generally not required to be implemented but were maintained as a preparatory measure. Planning contingencies included hardcopy packages and online learning materials through online learning systems and through the department's Connected Learning Hub and Learning at Home website.

## Tasmania

- During 2021, normal school operations were in place across Tasmania. Students were required to stay at home if they had cold or flu symptoms; and observe Public Health requirements related to close contacts.

## Northern Territory

- There were no NT-wide school closures in 2021. However, isolated COVID-19 outbreaks impacted separate regions during the year and attendance was impacted more generally by isolation requirements and family choice.
- In the week beginning 16 August there were school closures in the Darwin and Katherine regions, with schools open for children of essential workers only. Remote learning packs were available to all students.
- During November and December there were some school closures, particularly in the Katherine region, with remote learning available. There were mask mandates across the Territory at this time.

## Australian Capital Territory

- COVID–19 lockdown was declared in the ACT from 12 August 2021. For the first week of the lockdown to 19 August, students were not required to attend school, nor to participate in remote learning. Students participated in remote learning for the remainder of the lockdown period with participation by daily check-ins and submission of units of work. On campus supervision was available for children whose parents are required to work and cannot provide care for their children at the same time, and for vulnerable children and young people.
- There was a staged return to face-to-face learning, with Year 12 students able to return on 5 October, with a focus on practical classes and essential exams and assessments. Year 11 students could also return for essential exams and assessments only that could not be deferred. On 18 October, Year 11 and 12 students returned to onsite learning. Preschool, kindergarten and years 1, 2, 6, 9 and 10 returned to onsite learning on 25 October and years 3,4,5, 7 and 8 returned on 25 October.

# Part 3: Measuring and reporting performance



Part 3 reports on the performance of Australian schooling in 2021, using the nationally agreed key performance measures (KPMs) for schooling specified in the *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020*.

## 3.1 Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia

The [Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020](#) provides the basis for national reporting on the performance of schooling for the years 2020–2023, as agreed by education ministers, and is the main focus of the statistical data included in this report.

The measurement framework 2020 edition is updated and revised to reflect the [Alice Springs \(Mparntwe\) Education Declaration](#). It replaces the *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2019*.<sup>38</sup> The measurement framework defines 32 national KPMs for schooling, specifies the data sources for these KPMs and outlines the reporting cycle for the period 2020–2023.

<sup>38</sup> The *Measurement Framework for Schooling Australia 2019* is available on the ACARA website along with the 2010, 2012 and 2015 editions of the framework that also reference the Melbourne Declaration. Previous editions of the framework (originally known as the Measurement Framework for National Key Performance Measures) are available in the [Trove](#) archive.

The Education Council's [Principles and protocols for reporting on schooling in Australia](#) guides the practices and procedures used by all jurisdictions, ACARA and other agencies when reporting against the measurement framework.

By intent, the KPMs contained in the measurement framework are:

- strategic measures which provide nationally comparable data on aspects of performance critical to achieving the Education Goals for Young Australians and monitoring progress against the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration
- student-centred, focusing on student participation, achievement, attainment and equity
- based on sound and reliable practice
- supportive of valid, consistent and transparent reporting
- relevant and of interest to the public
- cost-effective, practical to collect, and take account of the burden and impact that data collection may place on students, schools and schooling systems.

For national reporting purposes, KPMs for student participation, achievement and attainment are disaggregated by equity measures: Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status, sex, language background, geographic location, socio-economic background and disability, where it is possible and appropriate to do so.

Most KPMs are reported annually, but some are collected and reported on a cyclical basis of 3, 4 or 5 years.

Because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, no 2020 data was available for KPMs on achievement in the National Assessment Program (NAP) or for the KPMs on attendance. As a result, only 7 KPMs were reported for 2020.<sup>39</sup>

The effect of COVID-19 community lockdowns on school operations and attendance data in 2020 led to a national decision that attendance data would not be published. Attendance data, including the 2 KPMs for attendance, is published for 2021. Comparisons are made with 2019 as the most recent previous year for which data is available.

The resumption of NAPLAN testing in 2021, following its cancellation in 2020, has allowed the calculation and reporting of 7 KPMs on NAPLAN participation and achievement by the Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 student cohorts for 2021. Comparisons are made with 2019 as the most recent previous test year. Calculations of trend include a two-year gap between 2019 and 2021.

The 6 KPMs for proficient and highly proficient standards for NAP reading, writing and numeracy were not yet due for reporting in 2021.<sup>40</sup>

The KPM for the international sample assessment PIRLS that took place in 2021 is not reported as results will not be available until mid-2023. This data will be added to the National Report on Schooling data portal when it becomes available.

<sup>39</sup> The impact of COVID-19 in 2021 is summarised in Part 2.14.

<sup>40</sup> The reporting of proficiency standards, and the timing of this, are dependent on a full transition to NAPLAN online, and on separate endorsement of the standards by education ministers.

The remaining KPMs for student achievement are not applicable to the 2021 calendar year.

As 2021 was a 'census year', data for the enrolment KPM, based on the Australian Census of Population and Housing, is also reported, as are the 5-yearly Census measures for KPMs in participation and attainment in education and work.

The available measures are reported at the national level, and by various breakdowns, such as state and territory, school sector and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status. For relevant KPMs, time series for the previous 10 years (2011–2020) are also included.

Where applicable, long-term trends for KPMs are reported for the period (at least 3 years) over which comparable data is available. Trends are calculated from the line of best fit in a graph of all relevant data in a time series. The average annual change is calculated from the line of best fit and a test is performed to determine if a trend is evident.

Where relevant breakdowns or time series for the available KPMs are not reported in Part 3, they are provided in the National Report on Schooling data portal. Data for previous years for KPMs is also available in the data portal and in previous editions of this report.

## 3.2 Student participation

Part 3.2 reports on KPMs for student enrolment, attendance and apparent retention specified in the [Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020](#).

### 3.2.1 Enrolment rate

Part 1.2 of this report provides data on the number of students enrolled by school sector, by school level, by state and territory, and over time. Part 1.4 outlines the structure of Australian schooling, including age requirements for compulsory enrolment in school for children and teenagers living in each of the states and territories.

This section reports on the number of students enrolled, as a proportion of the Australian population in the corresponding age group, as a KPM for schooling.

#### Key Performance Measure 1(a)

Proportion of children aged 6–15 years who are enrolled in school

The KPM is specified as the number of students aged 6–15 years enrolled in school, expressed as a proportion of the 6–15-year-old population. As this approximates the age range of students for whom schooling is compulsory, the enrolment rate for this group is close to 100%.

Data for this KPM is drawn from the 5-yearly Australian Census of Population and Housing.<sup>41</sup> Table 3.1 shows this KPM for the Census years 2011, 2016 and 2021. At the 2021 census, the national enrolment rate for 6–15-year-olds was 99.3%.

Approaching 100%, KPM1(a) provides evidence that longstanding policies for universal access to schooling and for compulsory education for this age group are implemented in practice.

Data disaggregated by state and territory, and other disaggregations for the census years 2011 and 2016, is available in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

Part 1 of this report notes a downward effect of COVID-19 on school enrolments in 2021, largely due to the negative impact of national border closures on net immigration. This caused falls in the number of overseas students and of other potential students entering the country. However, this effect does not extend to enrolment rates, because any reduction in student numbers was reflected in a corresponding reduction in the 6–15-year-old population.

<sup>41</sup> The Census of Population and Housing is Australia's largest statistical collection undertaken by the ABS. It is conducted every 5 years.

Table 3.1

## Proportion of the population aged 6–15 years enrolled in school, Australia, 2011–2021

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
KPM1(a) Proportion of 6–15-year-olds enrolled in school, Australia (%) (Census of population and housing)	99.3	-	-	-	-	99.4	-	-	-	-	99.3
Number of children aged 6–15 years enrolled in school (NSSC)	2,768,177	2,801,751	2,844,983	2,889,292	2,930,612	2,974,656	3,022,905	3,071,847	3,131,591	3,174,506	3,198,158
Population, Australia (aged 6–15 years)	2,769,311	2,799,226	2,833,866	2,875,596	2,919,394	2,970,505	3,024,364	3,081,581	3,143,378	3,196,673	3,229,459
Proportion of 6–15-year-olds enrolled in school, Australia (%)	100.0	100.1	100.4	100.5	100.4	100.1	100.0	99.7	99.6	99.3	99.0

Sources: ABS, *Australian Census of Population and Housing*, 2011, 2016, 2021; ABS, *Schools Australia*, 2011-2021; ABS, *National, state and territory population December 2021* (release date 28/06/2021).

It is possible that the declines in the enrolment KPM of 0.1 percentage points between 2016 and 2021, and in the administrative measure of 0.6 percentage points between 2019 and 2021 include a component due to other effects of COVID-19.

For example, some parents may have delayed enrolling their 6-year-olds in school or withdrawn older students from formal schooling because of the pandemic. However, the data indicates that if such responses occurred, they were small in number and had very little effect on school participation overall.

Table 3.2 reports that KPM1(a) in 2021 met or exceeded 99.0% in all states and territories except the NT.

Table 3.2

## Proportion of the population aged 6–15 years enrolled in school, by state and territory, 2021

	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
KPM 1(a) Proportion of 6–15-year-olds enrolled in school (%) (Census of population and housing)	99.4	99.3	99.1	99.4	99.0	99.1	98.6	99.6	99.3

Source: ABS, *Australian Census of Population and Housing*, 2021.

Data disaggregated by state and territory, and other disaggregations for the census years 2011, 2016 and 2021, is available in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

### 3.2.2 Attendance

Like enrolment rates, the national KPMs for attendance in the *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020* relate to students in the compulsory years of schooling. However, attendance measures are specified in terms of school year (Years 1–10) rather than by student age. Where KPM 1(a) reports on the proportion of children enrolled in school, KPMs 1(b) and 1(c) report on the proportion of available time that students spend at school once enrolled.

#### **Key Performance Measure 1(b)**

Attendance rate: The number of actual full-time equivalent student-days attended by full-time students in Years 1–10 in Semester 1 as a percentage of the total number of possible student-days attended in Semester 1

#### **Key Performance Measure 1(c)**

Attendance level: The proportion of full-time students in Years 1–10 whose attendance rate in Semester 1 is equal to or greater than 90 per cent

All school sectors in all states and territories use a common reference period – Semester 1 in each school year – for the collection of attendance data for national reporting. This is consistent with the [National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting](#), which came into operation for the 2014 data collection period and onwards.

In 2020, this coincided with the period in which school operations in most jurisdictions were affected by responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of the different arrangements for schooling across the country that were put in place in response to health advice, attendance data for 2020 was not consistent across states and territories and was not published. While some disruption to schooling due to COVID-19 continued to occur in 2021, agreement was reached on the publication of 2021 national attendance data, including the KPMs, with some adjustments to the national standards to include remote learning arrangements during a natural disaster event/pandemic.

The extent of disruptions to school operations in 2021 in each state and territory, and responses of school systems within each jurisdiction are detailed in Part 2.14: Arrangements for student learning during COVID-19. State and territory caveats related to attendance data are listed in the Student Attendance data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

Attendance data for 2019 and earlier is available in the National Report on Schooling data portal and in previous editions of this report.

Data is reported from 2014 for the attendance rate and from 2015 for the attendance level.

## Attendance rates

Table 3.3 reports KPM 1(b) by state and territory and school sector for 2021.

**Table 3.3**

### Student attendance rates, Years 1–10, by state and territory and school sector, Australia, 2021 (%)

School sector	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Government	90.1	91.9	89.0	89.3	88.8	88.2	78.1	91.0	90.0
Catholic	92.3	92.8	92.3	92.5	92.1	91.0	81.1	92.2	92.3
Independent	93.0	94.2	92.4	93.0	92.2	92.7	87.7	93.2	93.0
All	91.0	92.4	90.1	90.5	89.9	89.3	79.7	91.6	90.9

Notes:

Excludes part-time students. For data definitions, see the [National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting](#).

National attendance data for 2020 was collected but not published as it was not considered nationally consistent because of differing arrangements in states and territories due to COVID-19.

2018, 2019 and 2021 attendance rates for NSW and Australia are not fully comparable to previous years, due to changes in the calculation method for NSW government schools in 2018.

2021 attendance data in NSW is not comparable with previous years due to changes to the attendance calculations to align with the revised 2020 National Standards for student attendance data reporting.

Source: ACARA, National Student Attendance Data Collection, [National Report on Schooling data portal](#).

Table 3.4 reports this KPM nationally, by school sector, for 2014–2021.

**Table 3.4**

### Student attendance rates, Years 1–10, by school sector, Australia, 2014–2021 (%)

School sector	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Government	91.9	92.0	91.9	91.8	91.3	90.7	N/A	90.0
Catholic	93.9	93.6	93.6	93.4	92.9	92.4	N/A	92.3
Independent	94.3	93.9	93.8	93.7	93.5	93.1	N/A	93.0
All	92.7	92.6	92.5	92.4	91.9	91.4	N/A	90.9

Notes:

See notes for Table 3.3.

Source: ACARA National Student Attendance Data Collection, National Report on Schooling data portal.

The average school attendance rate for Years 1–10 across Australia in 2021 was 90.0% for government schools, 92.7% for non-government schools and 90.9% for schools overall. This was a fall of 0.5 percentage points in the national KPM from 91.4% in 2019, with decreases occurring at the national level in all three school sectors.

The Key Performance Measures Dashboard in the [National Report on Schooling data portal](#) reports a downward trend over the period 2014–2021 of -0.3 percentage points per annum. The lower attendance rates in 2021 can thus be seen as consistent with a long-term trend.

This interpretation should be made with some caution, as part of the fall from 2019 to 2021 may have resulted from increased student absences due to illness or suspected illness as COVID-19 continued to spread in 2021. However, periods of community lockdown and remote learning due to COVID were more widespread in Semester 2 2021 than the attendance data reference period of Semester 1.

Most states and territories reported reduced attendance rates in 2021, with falls in Tas (1.5 percentage points), Qld and WA (1.0 percentage points) and NSW and SA (0.7 percentage points) predominantly in government schools. However, attendance rates rose in the ACT (0.5 percentage points) and Vic (0.4 percentage points). Attendance rates remained constant in the NT, despite a 0.8 percentage point fall in the government sector. The average attendance rate for Years 1–10 in 2021 continued to exceed 90% in all states and territories except WA and Tas, where it was marginally below 90%, and the NT, where, as in previous years, the much lower average attendance rate (61.6%) for the high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students led to an average rate for all students of 79.7%.<sup>42</sup>

A common characteristic across all states and territories was lower average attendance rates in Years 7–10 than in Years 1–6. At the national level in 2021, the average attendance rate for Years 7–10 was 88.8% compared with 92.3% for Years 1–6. There was little difference in the 2021 national average attendance rate for girls (91.0%) and boys (90.7%). Average attendance rates were higher in major cities (91.8%) than in remote areas (84.1%), and lowest in very remote areas (68.2%).<sup>43</sup>

Table 3.5 shows comparative attendance rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students in Years 1–10 by state and territory, and the gaps between them, in 2014, 2019 and 2021.

The gap in attendance rates between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students continued to rise in 2021, but at a faster rate than previously. At 2.1 percentage points nationally, the fall in attendance rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students between 2019 and 2021 was much sharper than that for non-Indigenous students (0.4 percentage points). This increased the gap between these rates by 1.7 percentage points to 12.2 percentage points nationally. This was more than twice the rise in the gap than occurred over the period 2014–19. Above average gaps in attendance rates were again recorded in the NT, WA and SA.

Geographic differences were much more marked for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students than for non-Indigenous students. For non-Indigenous students, the average attendance rate in schools in major cities was 92.2%, in remote schools 90.0% and in very remote schools 89.3%. But for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, these rates were 82.6% (major cities), 71.1% (remote) and 57.8% (very remote), a difference of 24.8 percentage points between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in major cities and in very remote schools, and a gap of 31.5 percentage points between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students in schools in very remote areas.<sup>44</sup>

The average attendance rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was lower for older year groups: 82.9% for Years 1–6 but 74.1% for Years 7–10. Attendance rates for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote and very remote areas fell more sharply than for older students in other locations, with an average national attendance rate of only 40.4% for Year 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in very remote areas. As a result, the attendance gap is larger at higher year levels in these areas.

<sup>42</sup> As at August 2021, 40.0% of full-time students in Years 1–10 in the NT were identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, compared with 6.4% of full-time students in Years 1–10 across Australia (ABS, *Schools, Australia, 2021*, table 42 (b)). For measuring attendance, years 1–10 includes ungraded primary and ungraded secondary students.

<sup>43</sup> Student attendance rates disaggregated by year level, sex and geolocation are available in the National Report on Schooling data portal, Student Attendance data set.

<sup>44</sup> National Report on Schooling data portal, Student Attendance data set.

Table 3.5

**Student attendance rates, Years 1–10, by state and territory and Indigenous status, Australia, 2014, 2019 and 2021 (%)**

State/territory	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
<b>2014</b>									
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	87.5	86.8	85.2	81.1	77.4	88.5	70.2	85.2	83.5
Non-Indigenous	93.9	93.1	92.8	92.6	92.7	92.4	90.9	92.5	93.2
All students	93.6	93.0	92.2	92.1	91.7	92.1	82.3	92.3	92.7
Gap Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/non-Indigenous (percentage points)	6.4	6.3	7.6	11.5	15.3	3.9	20.7	7.3	9.7
<b>2019</b>									
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	84.8	85.4	83.5	79.8	75.4	87.0	63.3	82.9	81.5
Non-Indigenous	92.2	92.1	91.9	91.8	92.1	91.2	90.7	91.4	92.0
All students	91.7	92.0	91.1	91.2	90.9	90.8	79.7	91.1	91.4
Gap Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/non-Indigenous (percentage points)	7.4	6.7	8.4	12.0	16.7	4.2	27.4	8.5	10.5
<b>2021</b>									
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	82.2	84.5	81.3	77.3	72.8	84.9	61.6	83.2	79.4
Non-Indigenous	91.6	92.6	90.9	91.2	91.2	89.9	91.7	91.9	91.6
All students	91.0	92.4	90.1	90.5	89.9	89.3	79.7	91.6	90.9
Gap Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/non-Indigenous (percentage points)	9.4	8.1	9.7	13.9	18.5	5.0	30.1	8.7	12.2
Change in gap 2014–19 (percentage points)	1.0	0.4	0.8	0.5	1.4	0.3	6.7	1.2	0.8
Change in gap 2014–21 (percentage points)	3.0	1.8	2.1	2.4	3.2	1.1	9.4	1.4	2.5
Change in gap 2019–21 (percentage points)	2.0	1.4	1.3	1.9	1.8	0.8	2.7	0.2	1.7

## Notes:

See notes for Table 3.3.

Source: ACARA National Student Attendance Data Collection, National Report on Schooling data portal.

Attendance rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have continued to decline, especially in remote and very remote communities, and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Attendance levels

The attendance level is a measure of the proportion of full-time students in Years 1–10, whose attendance rate in Semester 1 is greater than or equal to 90%. A number of studies have shown that learning outcomes and educational achievement decline markedly when student attendance slips below 90%.<sup>45</sup> KPM 1(c) aims to identify populations or groups for whom attendance is generally satisfactory. Conversely, it identifies groups whose lower levels of attendance may put them at a disadvantage.

Table 3.6 shows KPM 1(c) by state and territory, by school sector, for 2021.

**Table 3.6**

**Student attendance levels: proportion of students in Years 1–10 whose attendance rate is equal to or greater than 90%, by state and territory and school sector, Australia, 2021 (%); Change 2019–2021 (percentage points)**

School sector	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
<b>2021</b>									
Government	67.9	75.0	63.6	65.8	65.3	62.5	49.3	70.9	68.0
Catholic	76.0	78.3	74.9	76.3	74.6	70.6	53.4	73.7	76.0
Independent	78.7	84.6	76.6	78.5	75.8	77.1	66.8	78.1	79.2
All students	71.1	77.0	67.5	69.8	68.4	66.0	52.1	72.7	71.2
<b>Change 2019–2021</b>									
Government	-5.2	2.4	-5.8	-4.3	-4.2	-7.0	1.7	3.8	-3.1
Catholic	-1.1	1.9	1.8	-0.4	-2.3	-2.4	5.1	1.2	0.3
Independent	-1.0	4.3	-2.1	0.6	-3.0	-2.7	2.4	-1.2	0.0
All students	-3.8	2.6	-3.8	-2.7	-3.7	-5.4	2.1	2.2	-1.9

Notes:

See notes for Table 3.3.

Sources: National Report on Schooling data portal, Student attendance, ACARA National Student Attendance Data Collection.

In 2021, 71.2% of Australian students in Years 1–10 attended school for at least 90% of school days, falling from 2019 in 5 of the 8 jurisdictions and in Australia overall. The exceptions were Vic and the NT, where levels rose in all 3 school sectors, and the ACT, where attendance rose in the government and Catholic sectors.

It is likely that both the overall fall in this KPM and the differing results in jurisdictions resulted from variations in the spread of COVID-19 and its impact in 2021 on school operations. This included public health advice that students with cold and flu symptoms should not attend school. However, NSW has also reported that 2021 attendance data in NSW is not comparable with previous years, due to changes to the attendance calculations to align with the revised 2020 National Standards for student attendance data reporting. This would have also affected the national data.

This KPM is intended to monitor progress in Australia's priority to close the gaps in educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. The measure for 2021 confirms that a much lower proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander than non-Indigenous students were present at school for 90% or more of the expected number of days. Table 3.7 shows KPM 1(c) by state and territory, by Indigenous status, for 2021 and the gap in this measure between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students.

<sup>45</sup> For example, Hancock, K.J., Shepherd, C., Lawrence, D., & Zubrick, S. (2013), *Student Attendance and Educational Outcomes: Every day counts*, Telethon Institute for Child Health Research.

Table 3.7

**Student attendance levels: proportion of students in Years 1–10 whose attendance rate is equal to, or greater than, 90%, by state and territory and Indigenous status, Australia, 2021 (%); Change 2019–2021**

State/territory	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	44.5	50.3	42.9	37.1	32.1	51.7	21.6	48.1	41.3
Non-Indigenous	73.1	77.5	70.0	71.7	71.3	67.6	72.3	73.5	73.2
All students	71.1	77.0	67.5	69.8	68.4	66.0	52.1	72.7	71.2
Gap Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/non-Indigenous (percentage points)	28.5	27.2	27.1	34.5	39.2	15.9	50.7	25.5	31.9
<b>Change 2019–2021</b>									
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	-8.5	-3.2	-5.4	-5.1	-4.1	-7.8	-0.8	2.5	-5.6
Non-Indigenous	-3.3	2.7	-3.5	-2.4	-3.6	-5.0	3.7	2.2	-1.6
All students	-3.8	2.6	-3.8	-2.7	-3.7	-5.4	2.1	2.2	-1.9
Gap Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/non-Indigenous (percentage points)	5.1	5.9	1.9	2.6	0.5	2.8	4.5	-0.2	4.0

Notes:

See notes for Table 3.3.

Sources: National Report on Schooling data portal, Student attendance, ACARA National Student Attendance Data Collection.

In 2021, just over 40% of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attended school for 90% of the time or more, with a gap of 31.9 percentage points between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students, a rise in the gap of 4.0 percentage points since 2019. The gaps in the SA, WA and the NT were above the national average. Between 2019 and 2021 KPM 1c for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students fell and the gap rose in all jurisdictions except the ACT.

### 3.2.3 Apparent retention

Apparent retention rates estimate the progression of students through school over several years through several year levels. They measure the proportion of a year group or cohort that is still enrolled in that cohort after one or more calendar years.

These rates are designated as 'apparent' because they are based on aggregate enrolment data and do not record the progression of individual students. Apparent retention rates do not distinguish between students progressing at a 'normal' rate of one grade per calendar year and students who repeat a grade or are promoted, thus moving between cohorts; students who choose to adopt flexible study patterns in senior years; or students who join or leave a cohort through migration.

As such, apparent retention rates measure the net change in the size of a cohort as students leave or join it. This provides a measure of student progression for the majority of a year group. This measure is more reliable at the national level than at state and territory level, and less reliable for geographic areas with mobile populations and for individual schools.

KPM 1(e) in the [Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020](#) measures the apparent retention of students from Year 10 to Year 12.

### Key Performance Measure 1(e)

Apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12

Table 3.8 and Figure 3.1 show KPM 1(e) by school sector for the period 2011–2021.

**Table 3.8**

#### Apparent retention rates (uncapped), Year 10 to Year 12, by school sector, Australia, 2011–2021 (%)

School sector	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Government	75.0	74.8	76.7	78.6	79.2	79.5	79.8	79.2	78.0	78.2	77.2
Catholic	83.9	84.2	85.4	86.8	86.3	86.4	86.5	85.4	84.9	85.5	85.4
Independent	90.1	89.0	88.9	90.9	90.0	89.7	90.9	91.1	91.0	90.5	90.8
All	79.5	79.3	80.7	82.5	82.7	82.9	83.3	82.8	82.0	82.1	81.6

Notes:

The apparent retention rate measures the number of full-time school students in a designated level year level of schooling as a percentage of their respective cohort group in a base year. The base year for apparent retention rates Year 10 to Year 12 is Year 10, 2 years before. Enrolments are as at the annual Schools Census in the first week of August each year. Part-time students are not included. Ungraded students are not included.

Since 2015, *Schools, Australia* has included apparent retention rates that are capped at 100%, as well as the uncapped apparent retention rates reported historically. This report continues to publish uncapped apparent retention rates because, due to student movements and international migration, it is quite possible for a state, school sector or school to have higher enrolments in Year 12 than in Year 10 two years previously, resulting in apparent retention rates above 100%. Uncapped rates are more suitable for undertaking time series analysis of the data than capped rates.

In 2020 and 2021 border closures due to COVID-19 impacted on school enrolments due to reduced immigration and, in particular, to falls in the numbers of full fee-paying overseas students (FFPOS). This may have impacted the numerator and/or the denominator for this measure in 2020 and 2021.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021 and previous releases.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

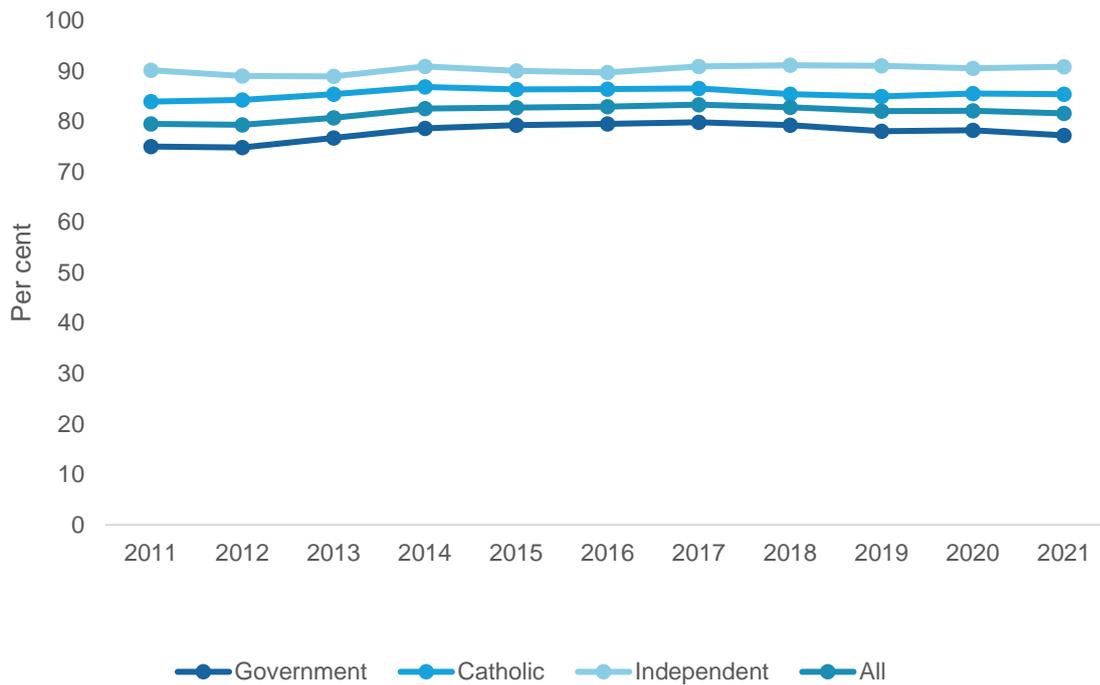
This series records an overall upward movement in apparent retention from Year 10 to Year 12, following the implementation of strengthened participation requirements for 15- and 16-year-olds in 2010.<sup>46</sup>

After 5 successive years of growth from 2012, the national apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12 decreased by 0.5 percentage points in 2018, and by 0.8 percentage points in 2019, but rose by 0.1 percentage point in 2020 before decreasing by 0.5 percentage points in 2021. The Key Performance Measures data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal reports a long-term upward trend in this measure of 0.3 percentage points per annum for the period 2008–2021.

<sup>46</sup> These included the mandatory requirement for all young people to participate in schooling until they complete Year 10, and the requirement to participate full time in schooling or other education, training or employment, or a combination of these activities, until the age of 17. These were implemented progressively in all states and territories between 2006 and 2010.

Figure 3.1

## Apparent retention rates (uncapped), Year 10 to Year 12, by school sector, Australia, 2011–2021 (%)



Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021 and previous releases.

In 2021, apparent retention rates from Year 10 to Year 12 increased in the independent sector but fell in the government and Catholic sectors. The gap in the rates between the government and independent sectors narrowed from 15.1 percentage points in 2011 to 10.2 percentage points in 2016, but, by 2021, this had widened to 13.6 percentage points, a net reduction in this gap of 1.5 percentage points over the 10-year period 2011–2021.

Sector-specific apparent retention rates should be interpreted with caution, as the rates do not distinguish between students continuing to Year 12 within a sector and students moving between sectors to complete their senior secondary schooling.

Caution is also advised when comparing apparent retention rates between states and territories, as they do not distinguish students progressing from Year 10 to 12 within a state from students moving between jurisdictions or from overseas.

Table 3.9 shows KPM 1(e) by state and territory.

**Table 3.9**

**Apparent retention rates (uncapped), Year 10 to Year 12, by state and territory, Australia, 2011, 2020 and 2021 (%) and changes 2020–2021 and 2011–2021 (percentage points)**

State/territory	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
2011	76.7	82.0	81.8	83.9	76.4	70.0	62.9	90.0	79.5
2020	77.5	83.9	83.7	88.6	85.8	73.9	70.4	90.1	82.1
2021	76.3	83.9	83.2	87.1	85.6	74.5	67.5	89.7	81.6
Change 2020–2021	-1.2	0.0	-0.5	-1.5	-0.2	0.6	-2.9	-0.4	-0.5
Change 2011–2021	-0.4	1.9	1.4	3.2	9.2	4.5	4.6	-0.3	2.1

Notes:

See notes for Table 3.8.

For a more detailed time series of apparent retention rates and trend analysis by state and territory, see the National Report on Schooling data portal.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021 and previous releases.

In 2021, apparent retention rates ranged from 67.5 for the NT to 89.7 in the ACT. Changes in KPM 1(e) between 2020 and 2021 were not significant for any of the 8 states and territories.

Factors that may contribute to differences between states and territories in apparent retention rates from Year 10 to Year 12 include:

- Rates at the state and territory level can be inflated or deflated by interstate migration, including students transferring from one state to another to undertake senior secondary schooling. These movements are not taken into account when calculating rates.
- Differential rates of international immigration, including the temporary entry of overseas students for Years 11 and 12, inflate apparent retention rates in the jurisdictions where these incoming students are concentrated.
- The age distribution of the school population affects the year level (Year 11 or Year 12) to which most students must remain at school in order to meet age-based participation requirements. This varies between states and territories because of historical differences in enrolment requirements and practices. States and territories with younger year cohorts have the potential to achieve relatively high Year 10 to Year 12 apparent retention rates because a higher proportion of their student population is required to remain at school until Year 12.
- State and territory retention rates are also affected by factors that are independent of schooling, such as differences in prevailing economic circumstances, including youth employment, and the availability and promotion of training and employment pathways that are recognised as approved alternatives to senior secondary schooling. States with more employment and training opportunities for 16- and 17-year-olds may record lower rates of retention to Year 12.

At the national level, the net increase and the positive long-term trend in retention from Year 10 to Year 12 over the last 10 years are in line with the policy intent of all Australian governments.

Table 3.10 and Figure 3.2 report this KPM for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students for the period 2011–2021.

**Table 3.10**

**Apparent retention rates (uncapped), Year 10 to Year 12, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students (%) and gap between rates (percentage points) Australia, 2011–2021**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	53.5	53.3	55.8	60.4	60.6	60.9	63.0	62.6	60.0	61.5	60.5
Non-Indigenous	80.6	80.4	81.9	83.6	83.8	84.0	84.3	83.9	83.2	83.3	82.7
Gap	27.1	27.1	26.1	23.2	23.2	23.1	21.3	21.3	23.2	21.8	22.2

Notes:

See notes for Table 3.8.

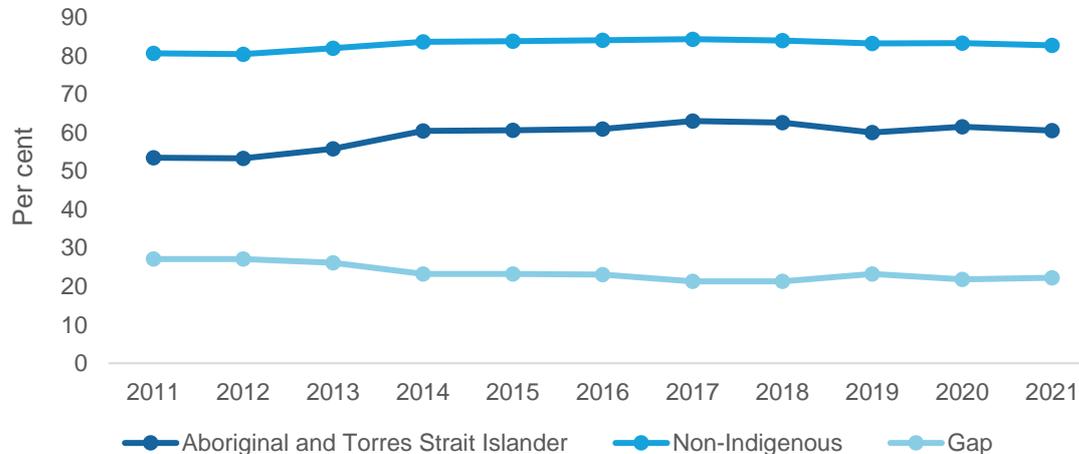
Apparent retention rates can be affected by changes over time in whether individuals identify (or are identified) as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021 and previous releases.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

**Figure 3.2**

**Apparent retention rates (uncapped), Year 10 to Year 12, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, Australia, 2011–2021 (%)**



Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021 and previous releases.

In 2021, the apparent retention rate for Year 10 to Year 12 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students decreased, but not significantly. The fall of one percentage point in 2021 followed a rise of 1.5 percentage points in 2020.

Year 10 to Year 12 retention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has increased substantially – a net rise of 7.0 percentage points since 2011. This is notably more than the rise for non-Indigenous students of 2.1 percentage points over this period, leading to a narrowing of the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students by 4.9 percentage points. This gives rise to a long-term upward trend in Year 10 to Year 12 apparent retention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students of 0.9 percentage points per annum for the period 2010–2021.

With the gap at 22.2 percentage points in 2021, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are still less likely to proceed to Year 12 than other students. However, as noted above, retention rates for 'all students' are inflated by students entering the cohort since Year 10, both as permanent migrants and as temporary international students. This also applies to rates for non-Indigenous students but not to those for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who, by definition, are Australian residents. The gap would therefore be smaller if recent immigrants and overseas students were excluded from the Year 12 count.<sup>47</sup>

Table 3.11 reports KPM 1(e) by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status and state and territory for 2011, 2020 and 2021. The table displays variations between states and territories in apparent retention rates for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students and in the percentage point gap between these rates.

**Table 3.11**

**Apparent retention rates (uncapped), Year 10 to Year 12, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students (%) and gap between rates (percentage points), by state and territory 2011, 2020 and 2021**

2011	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	49.0	58.3	61.8	69.8	44.2	41.6	43.8	78.4	53.5
Non-Indigenous	77.7	82.2	83.1	84.3	78.4	72.2	73.1	90.2	80.6
Gap	28.7	23.9	21.3	14.5	34.2	30.6	29.3	11.8	27.1
2020	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	53.1	66.8	68.4	73.3	63.1	58.4	51.9	93.6	61.5
Non-Indigenous	79.0	84.2	84.9	89.3	87.2	75.4	81.7	90.0	83.3
Gap	25.9	17.4	16.5	16.0	24.1	17.0	29.8	-3.6	21.8
2021	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	49.8	67.6	68.9	76.3	65.5	63.6	44.1	80.7	60.5
Non-Indigenous	77.9	84.2	84.3	87.6	86.8	75.5	82.7	89.9	82.7
Gap	28.1	16.6	15.4	11.3	21.3	11.9	38.6	9.2	22.2
<b>Change in gap 2020–2021</b>	2.2	-0.8	-1.1	-4.7	-2.8	-5.1	8.8	12.8	0.4
<b>Change in gap 2011–2021</b>	-0.6	-7.3	-5.9	-3.2	-12.9	-18.7	9.3	-2.6	-4.9

Notes:

See notes for tables 3.8 and 3.10.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021 and earlier releases.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

<sup>47</sup> These students are not separately identified in the NSSC. There may be instances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students returning from living overseas who were also not counted in the Year 10 cohort 2 years before.

In 2021, the apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students decreased from 2020 in NSW and the 2 territories and increased in all other states. The gap in apparent retention between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students widened between 2020 and 2021 in NSW, the NT and the ACT, and narrowed in Vic, Qld, WA, SA and Tas.

As well as factors affecting the state-by-state comparison of apparent retention rates for 'all students', variations between jurisdictions in retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students may be due to:

- the number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within each population – small numbers in some states and territories can affect results for these jurisdictions
- changes over time in whether individuals identify (or are identified) as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- movement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students between states and territories (for example, through scholarship programs for senior schooling)
- the age profile of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student population in relation to age participation requirements
- the extent of training and employment programs that provide alternative options to senior schooling
- the geographic distribution of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, especially its concentration in rural and remote communities.

Additional data on apparent retention from Year 10 to Year 12 is available in the Key Performance Measures data set and (including for other year groups) the Apparent Retention data set, in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

## 3.3 Student achievement – National Assessment Program

Part 3.3 reports on the KPMs for student achievement in the National Assessment Program (NAP) specified in the [Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020](#).

For 2021, this includes KPMs for NAP – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN reading, writing and numeracy outcomes, and literacy outcomes from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)).

### 3.3.1 NAP – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

In 2021, the thirteenth year of national literacy and numeracy testing, Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students in Australia were assessed on the test domains of reading, writing, language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and numeracy. KPMs are approved for reading, writing and numeracy.

The [2021 NAPLAN National Report](#) and the [NAPLAN results](#) page of the NAP website provide nationally comparable information on the 2021 national and state/territory results for each test domain. They also provide comparisons of performance by student characteristics such as gender, Indigenous status, language background other than English, parental occupation and parental education and by school location.

This section reports on NAPLAN 2021 and discusses short-term trends in NAPLAN achievement. In 2020, NAPLAN tests were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, these KPMs are not available for 2020, and 2021 data is compared to 2019 data to derive the short-term change.

Trends are calculated from the line of best fit in a graph of all relevant data in a time series. The average annual change is calculated from the line of best fit and a test is performed to determine if a trend is evident. For the trends in NAPLAN mean scale scores (KPMs 2b, 2d and 3b) an additional criterion has been applied, requiring the average annual change to exceed a minimum effect size, equivalent to 1.0 score points. This approach addresses the understatement of measurement error in the annual change and reduces the likelihood that some trends in the mean scale score may simply result from chance variation. This methodology differs from the comparisons between the base year published in both the 2021 NAPLAN National Report and on the NAPLAN results page for which comparisons are made between two points in time, rather than trends over time. The NAPLAN National Report released in 2022 shows a trend indicator on the Time series page which now incorporates the calculation of a long-term equating error that was not calculated for 2021. Therefore, the assessment of 2021 trends may differ from those calculated for 2022. Trend data is provided in the Key Performance Measures data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

NAPLAN results are also reported at the school level on the [My School website](#), and parents receive an individual report on their child's achievement in the NAPLAN tests. An individual student report shows student performance against the national average and relative to the achievement band scale. Information about how to interpret scales and standards is available on the [NAP website](#).

NAPLAN is in a period of transition from traditional paper-based testing to online adaptive testing. 2021 was the third year of this transition period, with the majority of students (67%) taking at least one NAPLAN test online. Online test results were equated with the paper test results and are reported on the same NAPLAN assessment scale.

NAPLAN participation rates, mean scale scores and proportions of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy at each year level are specified as KPMs in the [Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020](#).

## NAPLAN participation

## Key performance measure 1(d)

Proportion of students participating in NAPLAN for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9

Table 3.12 reports KPM 1(d) for 2021.

**Table 3.12**

**Proportion of students participating in at least one NAPLAN test for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, 2021 (%)**

	Year 3	Year 5	Year 7	Year 9	All
Proportion of students participating in at least one NAPLAN test (%)	96.4	96.6	95.8	92.3	95.3

Notes:

Participation rates are calculated as all assessed and exempt students as a percentage of the total number of students in each year level, as reported by the school. Exempt students do not sit the test. For reporting purposes, they are deemed to be below the national minimum standard.

Definitions of terms are provided in the [NAPLAN glossary](#) on the NAP website.

Source: ACARA, unpublished data.

Since 2019, the KPM for NAPLAN participation has been reported as participation in at least one NAPLAN assessment:

- Year 9 had the lowest participation in NAPLAN, decreasing from 96.0% in 2008 to 92.3% in 2021.
- While participation across all years has declined since 2008 an increase in participation was recorded for the first time between 2018 and 2019. Participation of all students in at least one NAPLAN assessment increased from 95.2% in 2018 to 95.4% in 2019 but decreased to 95.3% in 2021.
- Additional information on participation by test domain and by subgroups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is reported on the results tab of the NAP website and the 2021 NAPLAN National Report. This includes data on absences and withdrawal rates.
- As with previous years, participation rates in NAPLAN in 2021 were lower for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students than for non-Indigenous students.

Since 2008, there has been an increase in the proportion of students withdrawn from NAPLAN tests. Students are withdrawn by their parent or carer based on issues such as religious beliefs or philosophical objections to testing. Further information on withdrawals can be found on the [NAP website](#).

## Reading

**Key performance measure 2(a)**

Proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard for reading

**Key performance measure 2(b)**

NAPLAN mean scale scores for reading

Table 3.13 reports KPMs 2(a) and 2(b) for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in 2021 and summarises the national long-term trends in reading achievement from 2008 to 2021.

**Table 3.13**

**Summary for reading for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 for Australia: proportion at or above national minimum standard and mean scale scores (2021); long-term trends (2008–2021)**

	Year 3	Year 5	Year 7	Year 9
<b>2021</b>				
Proportion of students at or above national minimum standard (%)	95.9	95.1	93.8	89.7
CI ±	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4
Mean scale score	437.9	511.3	542.3	576.8
CI ±	1.2	1.0	1.5	1.6
<b>2008–2021</b>				
Average annual change in proportion above national minimum standard (percentage points)	0.2	0.3	0.0	-0.1
Trend	↗	↗	↔	↔
Average annual change in mean scale score (points on NAPLAN scale)	2.5	2.0	0.3	0.3
Trend	↗	↗	↔	↔

**Notes:**

Exempt students do not sit the test. For reporting purposes, they are deemed to be below the national minimum standard.

CI = confidence interval. Confidence intervals reflect the level of uncertainty associated with the measurement of achievement.

They define a range of values within which the true level of achievement is likely to lie. This table shows 95% confidence intervals for percentages of students at or above the national minimum standard. This means, for example, that where the percentage shown is 90% ± 0.5 it can be said with 95% confidence that the true value lies between 89.5% and 90.5%.

↗ = the long-term trend was positive/upward

↘ = the long-term trend was negative/downward

↔ = a long-term trend was not evident

Sources: ACARA, *National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy, Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy, National Report for 2021*; ACARA, National Report on Schooling data portal ACARA, unpublished data.

Summary of changes in reading achievement between 2019 and 2021:

- At the national level, there was no statistically significant change in the mean scale scores, or the proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard, for reading across all year levels.
- For Year 9 in NSW and Qld, there was a statistically significant decline in the proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard.

Summary of trends in reading for the period 2008–2021:

- Across all jurisdictions, for Year 3 and Year 5 there were upward trends in the mean scale scores and the proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard for reading. This was also the case for Year 9 in WA.
- For Year 9 in Vic and the NT, and for Year 7 in Tas, there were downward trends in the proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard for reading. For Year 9 in the NT, there was also a downward trend in mean scale scores.

## Writing

### Key performance measure 2(c)

Proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard for writing

### Key performance measure 2(d)

NAPLAN mean scale scores for writing

Table 3.14 reports on KPM 2(c) and 2(d) for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, 2021 and provides a summary of trends in writing achievement for the period 2011–2021.

The writing genre assessed in NAPLAN 2021 was narrative writing. Students and teachers were not advised in advance whether the genre would be narrative or persuasive. Since 2016, there have been two writing prompts: one for Years 3 and 5; and one for Years 7 and 9. A common writing scale for both genres has only been in place since 2011, hence reporting on writing uses 2011 as the base year for measuring long-term trends.

Table 3.14

**Summary for writing for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 for Australia: proportion at or above national minimum standard and mean scale scores (2021); long-term trends (2011 to 2021)**

	Year 3	Year 5	Year 7	Year 9
<b>2021</b>				
Proportion of students at or above national minimum standard (%)	96.7	93.3	89.7	82.2
CI ±	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.6
Mean scale score	425.3	479.9	522.0	550.6
CI ±	0.9	0.9	1.5	1.7
<b>2011–2021</b>				
Average annual change in proportion above national minimum standard (percentage points)	0.1	0.1	-0.1	-0.2
Trend	↔	↔	↔	↔
Average annual change in mean scale score (points on NAPLAN scale)	0.8	-0.5	-0.7	-1.2
Trend	↔	↔	↔	↔

## Notes:

See notes for Table 3.13.

Sources: ACARA, *National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy, Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy, National Report for 2021*; ACARA, National Report on Schooling data portal ACARA, unpublished data.

## Summary of changes in writing achievement between 2019 and 2021:

- At the national level, there was no statistically significant change in mean scale scores, or the proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard, for writing across all year levels.
- For Year 3 in Vic, there was an upward trend in the proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard.

## Summary of trends in writing achievement for the period 2011–2021:

- At the national level, there was no statistically significant change in mean scale scores, or the proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard, across all year levels.
- For Year 9 in Qld and the NT, and for Year 7 in Qld, there were downward trends in the proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard.
- For Year 9 students in WA, there was an upward trend in the proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard.
- For Year 9 students in Vic, Qld and the ACT, and for Year 7 students in Qld, there were downward trends in mean scale scores. For Year 3 students in WA, there was an upward trend in the mean scale score.
- Mean scale scores for female students in Year 9 decreased significantly at the national level between 2011 and 2021.
- Mean scale scores for female students in Year 9 decreased significantly at the national level between 2011 and 2021.

## Numeracy

**Key performance measure 3(a)**

Proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard for numeracy

**Key performance measure 3(b)**

NAPLAN mean scale scores for numeracy

Table 3.15 reports KPMs 3(a) and 3(b) for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, 2021 and provides a summary of trends in numeracy achievement for the period 2008–2021.

**Table 3.15**

**Summary for numeracy for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 for Australia: proportion at or above national minimum standard and mean scale scores (2021); and long-term trends (2008–2021)**

	Year 3	Year 5	Year 7	Year 9
<b>2021</b>				
Proportion of students at or above national minimum standard (%)	95.4	95.0	93.2	94.7
CI ±	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3
Mean scale score	402.8	495.2	550.3	587.5
CI ±	1.0	1.0	1.8	1.7
<b>2008–2021</b>				
Average annual change in proportion above national minimum standard (percentage points)	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.2
Trend	↔	↗	↔	↔
Average annual change in mean scale score (points on NAPLAN scale)	1.1	1.1	0.7	0.7
Trend	↗	↗	↔	↔

Notes:

See notes for Table 3.13.

Sources: ACARA, *National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy, Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy, National Report for 2021*; ACARA, National Report on Schooling data portal ACARA, unpublished data.

Summary of changes in numeracy achievement between 2019 and 2021:

- There were no statistically significant changes in the KPMs for numeracy at the national level between 2019 and 2021.
- For Year 9 in NSW and Qld, there was a downward trend in the proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard. This was also the case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Year 9.

Summary of trends in numeracy for the period 2008–2021:

- There were upward trends in the proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 5 and 9 achieving at or above the national minimum standard. This was also the case for Year 5 students overall, for male students in Years 3 and 5 and for female students in Years 5 and 9.

- There were also upward trends in the proportions of students achieving the national minimum standard for numeracy in several states and territories, particularly for the Year 5 cohort. These included Year 3 in Qld and ACT; Year 5 all states except the NT; and Year 9 in WA.
- At the national level, there were upward trends in mean scale scores for Years 3 and 5 overall, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 3, 5 and 9, male students in Years 3 and 5 and female students in Year 5.
- Upward trends in mean scale scores between 2008–2021 were also evident for Years 3 and 5 in Qld, SA and WA; and for Years 7 and 9 in WA.

### 3.3.2 NAP Sample Assessment

No NAP Sample Assessments were scheduled to take place in 2021. In 2020, because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Education ministers agreed to postpone the NAP – ICT Literacy sample assessment scheduled for 2020 to 2021. In September 2021, Education Ministers decided to further postpone the NAP–ICT Literacy assessment to 2022 due to the continued COVID-19 pandemic. These decisions are reported in Part 2.1: National policy context.

## 3.4 Senior schooling and youth transitions

Part 3.4 reports on KPMs for schooling for the:

- participation of young people, including secondary students, in VET, and in education, training and work
- attainment of young people in senior schooling and/or post-school education and training.

These measures reflect the intent of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration to define educational goals, not only for school students, but for all young Australians, and the role of the *National Report on Schooling in Australia* to report on the outcomes of schooling.

They also reflect the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration commitments to “supporting senior years of schooling” and “embedding pathways for learning throughout life and supporting effective transitions” (p 14).

These KPMs are indicators of the success of schools in supporting students throughout schooling and in their transitions to post-school education and work.

### 3.4.1 Participation of young people, including secondary students, in VET

The Australian VET sector provides nationally recognised training and qualifications for employment for those entering or already engaged in the workforce. Competency standards (units of competency or accredited modules) for VET qualifications in different industries and occupations are included in national industry-developed training packages or accredited courses, which also define qualifications in each industry. Nationally recognised VET qualifications are detailed on a national register [training.gov.au](http://training.gov.au).

The requirements for each level of VET qualification are set out in the [Australian Qualifications Framework \(AQF\)](#), which also provides guidelines for SSCE (Year 12) qualifications and qualifications in the higher education sector.<sup>48</sup>

Secondary school students in all states and territories can undertake nationally recognised VET as part of their school program, usually in the senior years of schooling, as part of the SSCE in each jurisdiction. VET delivered to secondary students<sup>49</sup> is regulated by the VET sector and is identical to VET offered in any other context. While all governments have a shared role in national policy leadership for VET, the state and territory governments and schools have responsibility for determining arrangements for delivery within their jurisdictions. These arrangements are summarised on the NCVER’s [VOCEDplus](#) website.

Secondary students enrolled in VET include school-based apprentices and trainees. These are students who, as well as undertaking an accredited VET qualification as a part of their school studies, have entered into a formal contract of part-time paid employment and training with an employer. Typically, these students undertake part of their traineeship or apprenticeship while at school and complete it once they have left school.

<sup>48</sup> The AQF is the national framework of qualifications in the school, VET and higher education sectors in Australia. The SSCE, Certificate II, III and IV, Diploma and Bachelor Degree are examples of qualifications within the AQF. SSCEs issued by each state and territory are listed in Part 2.8: Supporting senior years of schooling and Part 5 Glossary.

<sup>49</sup> The term ‘VET delivered to secondary students’ has generally replaced the term ‘VET in Schools (VETiS)’ historically used for these programs. However, in 2021, the term ‘VET in Schools’ continued to be used in the VET sector to identify VET delivered to secondary students and for data collection and reporting purposes.

Secondary student enrolments in VET and school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, and VET qualifications issued to secondary students are reported at the school level on the [My School website](#) for schools with senior secondary enrolments.

Senior secondary students can also take VET courses in addition to their school studies, or leave school to take up full-time VET study, or a combination of part-time VET and work, as alternative pathways to meet requirements for young people to participate in education, training or employment.

### VET KPM and program measures

The KPM for participation in VET includes all 15–19-year-old VET students (whether or not they are enrolled in school) as a proportion of the 15–19-year-old population. The specification for participation is the completion of at least one unit of competency (or accredited course module) in a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above.<sup>50</sup>

#### Key performance measure 1(f)

##### Participation of young people, including secondary students, in VET

Proportion of the population aged 15–19 years who in the calendar year successfully completed at least one unit of competency as part of a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above

The specification of the successful completion of a unit of competency in the KPM is a marker for genuine participation in a VET course (as opposed to an initial enrolment, which may not be followed through). It is not intended that this KPM be seen as a measure of attainment.

Table 3.16 and Figure 3.3 show national data for this KPM for the period 2011–2021.

<sup>50</sup> AQF Certificate II is regarded as entry-level training for employment.

Table 3.16

**Number and proportion of 15–19-year-olds who successfully completed at least one unit of competency as a part of a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above, Australia, 2011–2021**

Australia	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of 15–19-year-olds successfully completing at least one unit of competency at AQF II or above ('000)	399.2	418.5	395.5	494.8	435.6	413.4	412.6	401.1	407.5	392.1	404.5
15–19-year-old population ('000)	1453.5	1459.7	1466.7	1474.7	1469.9	1475.2	1481.6	1488.4	1495.1	1486.8	1479.6
Proportion of 15–19-year-olds successfully completing at least one unit of competency at AQF II or above (%)	27.5	28.7	27.0	33.6	29.6	28.0	27.8	27.0	27.3	26.4	27.3

Note:

'Unit of competency' includes training package units of competency and nationally accredited VET modules. A successfully completed unit of competency or module includes competencies with an outcome of competency achieved or pass or recognition of prior learning granted.

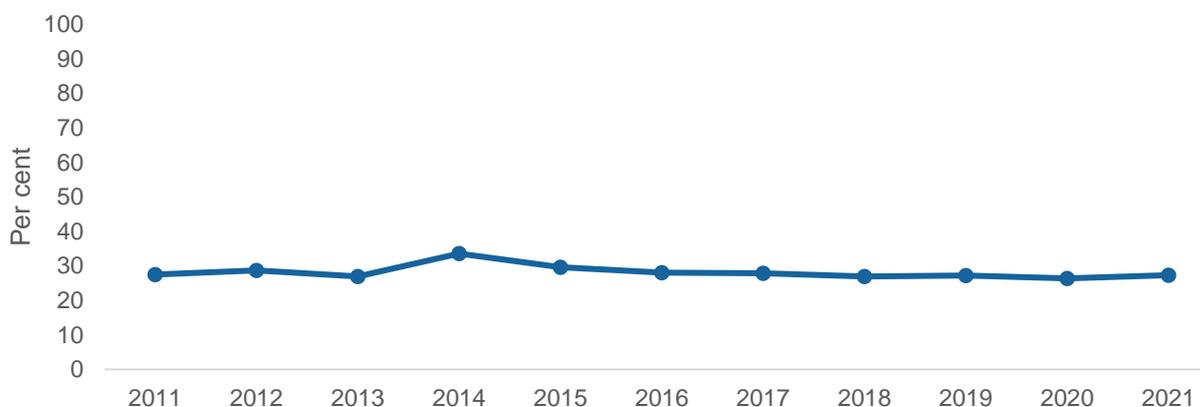
From January 2014, all RTOs, including private providers, were required to collect and report full AVETMISS data on all nationally accredited training. This represents a break in the series.

From January 2015, VET students have been allocated a Unique Student Identifier (USI). From 2015 onwards, NCVER has applied a de-duplication process, using the USI, to better estimate the counts of students participating in VET activity. This change constitutes another break in the time series between 2014 and 2015. Data from 2015 is consistent year-on-year. For further information, please refer to [Counting Students in Total VET students and courses](#).

Sources: NCVER, National VET in Schools Collection 2011–21; NCVER, National VET Provider Collection 2011–21; ABS, *National, state and territory population December 2021* (release date 28/06/2021).

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Figure 3.3

**Proportion of 15–19-year-olds successfully completing at least one unit of competency at AQF II or above (%), Australia, 2011–2021**

Note:

See note for Table 3.16

Sources: NCVER, National VET in Schools Collection 2011–21; NCVER, National VET Provider Collection 2011–21; ABS, *National, state and territory population December 2021* (release date 28/06/2021).

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

There is a break in the time series between 2013 and 2014, when reporting requirements for VET providers were extended to include privately funded accredited VET training. This change contributes to the higher numbers and proportions of 15–19-year-olds reported as participating in VET in 2014 than in previous years.

There is a further break in the series between 2014 and 2015, following the introduction of a national USI (student number) for VET students. The USI allows all training activity undertaken by a student to be electronically linked, irrespective of where the training took place. This enabled the removal of many duplicate student entries from 2015, resulting in reductions in the KPM and a break from data reported for 2014.<sup>51</sup>

Data for this KPM is revised annually as the latest year is always a preliminary estimate.

There is a long-term downward trend of 0.4 percentage points per annum over the period 2015–2021.

Data for KPM 1(f) by state and territory, disaggregated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, sex, geolocation and language background is provided in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

In addition to KPM 1(f), education ministers have approved 2 program measures for young people's participation and attainment in VET, disaggregated by industry area and by qualification level.

### **VET program measure 1**

Occupation and industry profile of VET engagement for 15–19-year-olds who in the calendar year successfully completed at least one unit of competency/module as a part of a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above

Table 3.17 reports VET program measure 1 for 2021 using the Australian standard classifications for field of education as a proxy for occupation and industry profile.

<sup>51</sup> However, as data for many VET in Schools students was provided without a USI, some duplication may occur in the count of these students.

Table 3.17

Number of 15–19-year-olds successfully completing at least one unit of competency as part of a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above, by field of education, Australia, 2021

Field of education	No. of students by field	%
01 – Natural and physical sciences	3,574	0.9
02 – Information technology	12,368	3.1
03 – Engineering and related technologies	82,812	20.5
04 – Architecture and building	54,781	13.5
05 – Agriculture, environmental and related studies	18,624	4.6
06 – Health	29,000	7.2
07 – Education	5,595	1.4
08 – Management and commerce	75,849	18.8
09 – Society and culture	81,770	20.2
10 – Creative arts	27,401	6.8
11 – Food, hospitality and personal services	69,925	17.3
12 – Mixed field programs	38,903	9.6
13 – Other	0	0.0
<b>Unique count of students</b>	<b>404,482</b>	

Notes:

Students undertaking multiple courses are counted for each field of education in which they have successfully completed at least one unit of competency at AQF II or above. Therefore, the number of students by field is greater than the unique count of students and the percentage of students will exceed 100.

Field of education is according to ABS 1272.0 – Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED), 2001.

Sources: NCVER, National VET in Schools Collection 2021; NCVER, National VET Provider Collection 2021.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

From 2020, students undertaking multiple courses in different fields of education are counted once within each relevant field.

Other disaggregations, by skills service organisation and by occupational category, are provided in the National Report on Schooling data portal along with state and territory data disaggregated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, sex, geolocation and language background.

### VET program measure 2

Level of AQF certification for 15–19-year-olds who in the calendar year successfully completed a VET qualification

Table 3.18 reports on the number of VET qualifications completed by 15–19-year-olds in 2021, by the AQF level of qualifications.

**Table 3.18**

**VET qualifications completed by 15–19-year-olds, by qualification level of major course, Australia, 2021**

Qualification level	Number
Certificate I	21,047
Certificate II	113,671
Certificate III	65,320
Certificate IV	10,485
Diploma or higher	10,679
<b>Total</b>	<b>221,202</b>

Notes:

Major course relates to the highest qualification attempted by a student in the reporting year.

Sources: NCVER, National VET in Schools Collection 2021; NCVER, National VET Provider Collection 2021.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

In 2021, 51.4% of qualifications gained by 15–19-year-olds were at AQF level II and 29.5% were at AQF level III.

Numbers of qualifications and students should not be compared, as student numbers include students who are beginning or continuing a multi-year course as well as those in the final year of a course. Also, due to time constraints, VET courses delivered to secondary students do not always lead to the achievement of a full AQF VET qualification. Where they do not, students assessed as competent in one or more units of competency receive a statement of attainment towards a certificate or other qualification and are eligible to complete the full qualification post-school.

State and territory data for VET qualifications completed by 15–19-year-olds is provided in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

### VET delivered to secondary students

KPM 1(f) and the VET program measures include all 15–19-year-old students undertaking VET. The data in this section refers to VET delivered to 15–19-year-old secondary school students. For the purposes of the national VET in Schools data collection<sup>52</sup>, these are students who are undertaking accredited VET as a part of a SSCE.<sup>53</sup> This data is not restricted to Certificate II or above, or to students who have successfully completed at least one unit of competency.

<sup>52</sup> The national VET in Schools data collection is compiled by NCVER from data provided by states and territories.

<sup>53</sup> In some jurisdictions, students who have left school (that is, they are not secondary students) but are receiving credit for a VET course towards a senior secondary certificate may be included in these counts. To the extent that these students are included, this inflates the data as a measure of the number of secondary school students undertaking VET.

Table 3.19 shows the number of 15–19-year-old students undertaking VET delivered to secondary students each year in the period 2011–2021 with school-based apprentices and trainees disaggregated.

**Table 3.19**

**Number of 15–19-year-old students undertaking VET delivered to secondary students (VET in Schools) Australia, 2011–2021**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
School-based apprentices and trainees ('000)	18.1	22.5	21.7	20.5	19.7	16.9	19.7	18.0	17.0	17.8	20.4
Other VET in Schools program students ('000)	218.3	219.8	218.1	216.1	226.8	216.9	218.0	208.9	214.8	220.3	227.8
Total VET in Schools students ('000)	236.4	242.3	239.7	236.6	246.5	233.7	237.7	226.8	231.8	238.1	248.2

Note:

'School-based apprentices and trainees' includes students who undertook at least one unit of competency or accredited module in a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship.

Sources: NCVER, National VET in Schools Collection, 2021; NCVER [VET in Schools 2021](#); NCVER, [DataBuilder](#).

In 2021 there were 248,182 students aged 15–19 years enrolled in VET in Schools/VET delivered to secondary students. Based on this data, it is estimated that nearly half of senior secondary students (48.8%) undertook one or more VET courses in 2021 as part of their SSCE.<sup>54</sup>

Most of these students (52.5%) were enrolled in Certificate II qualifications and a further 38.4% were enrolled in Certificate III qualifications. Of VET in Schools students aged 15–19 years, 20,409 (8.2%) were undertaking a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship.

The most popular courses undertaken by secondary students were from the training package Tourism, Travel and Hospitality, followed by the Business Services, and Sport, Fitness and Recreation training packages.

Between 2020 and 2021, the number of secondary students aged 15–19 years undertaking VET increased by 4.2%. There was a resurgence in the number of students undertaking school-based apprenticeships and traineeships to 2014 levels with a rise of 14.8% between 2020 and 2021. These rises were largely due to increases in student and school-based apprentice numbers in Qld.<sup>55</sup>

Further detailed information, including data disaggregated by state and territory, data definitions and data quality issues, are provided in the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) publication [VET in Schools 2021](#) and in the NCVER [DataBuilder](#).

Enrolments and qualifications achieved in VET by secondary students are reported at the school level, by field of education and qualification level, on the [My School](#) website.

<sup>54</sup> This estimate is calculated as the number of VET in Schools students as a proportion of the number of senior secondary students (full-time plus part-time) as reported in Part 1.2 (Table 1.4) of this report. It is an estimate only, as there are some disparities between the counting of VET in Schools students and of Year 11 and 12 students in the NSSC.

<sup>55</sup> The increase in VET in Schools students over the past several years in Qld corresponds to the state's VET investment budget which invested heavily in skills, including Certificate I and II training for VET in Schools students. Much of the increase has been driven by an increase in Foundation Skills training (NCVER, *VET in Schools*, 2021).

### 3.4.2 Participation in education and work

KPMs 1(g), 1(h) and 1(i) measure the full-time participation in education, training and employment of 3 groups of young people:

- 15–19-year-olds, including school students and those who have left school and have moved into tertiary study and/or the workforce
- 20–24-year-olds, who may be undertaking VET or university study, working, or a combination of these activities
- 17–24-year-olds who have left school and who may also be undertaking further study and/or work.

Full-time participation is defined as participation in full-time education or training, or full-time work, or a combination of both part-time education or training and part-time work. The annual measures of these KPMs are based on the ABS Survey of Education and Work (SEW), which is conducted in May each year. Five-yearly measures of the KPMs, based on data drawn from the Census of Population and Housing, are reported for census years.

#### **Key performance measure 1(g)**

Proportion of 15–19-year-olds in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training

#### **Key performance measure 1(h)**

Proportion of 20–24-year-olds in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training

#### **Key performance measure 1(i)**

Proportion of 17–24-year-olds who have left school that are in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training

KPMs 1(g) and 1(h) for the period 2010–2021 and for census years 2011, 2016 and 2021 are shown in Table 3.20. Figure 3.4 illustrates KPMs 1(g) and 1(h), as measured by the SEW, over the period 2011–2021.

Table 3.20

**Proportions of 15–19-year-olds and 20–24-year-olds in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training, Australia, 2011–2021 (%)**

Calendar year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Full-time participation rates for 15–19-year-olds	85.3	86.5	86.3	87.2	87.4	88.4	89.0	88.6	87.0	85.4	90.3
CI±	1.4	1.0	1.2	1.1	0.3	1.3	1.0	1.2	0.9	1.2	0.9
Full-time participation rates for 15–19-year-olds (Census measure)	86.0	-	-	-	-	86.4	-	-	-	-	86.9
Full-time participation rates for 20–24-year-olds	77.0	76.6	73.8	74.1	73.6	76.1	75.0	74.6	75.5	71.0	73.0
CI±	1.5	1.7	1.1	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.8	2.2	1.9
Full-time participation rates for 20–24-year-olds (Census measure)	74.7	-	-	-	-	72.2	-	-	-	-	72.3

Notes:

CI = confidence interval. The percentages reported for SEW data in this table include 95% confidence intervals. Confidence intervals are a way of expressing the degree of sampling and measurement error associated with survey estimates. For example, an estimate of 80 with a 95% confidence interval of  $\pm 2$  means that if the total population was surveyed rather than a sample, there is a 95% chance that the result would lie between 78 and 82.

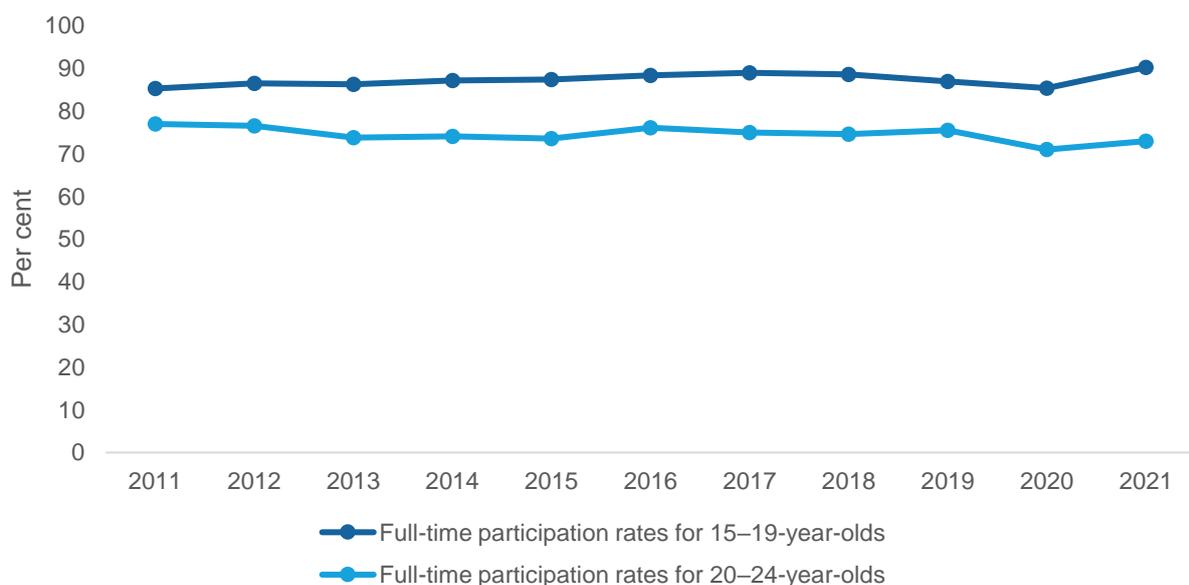
SEW includes people in very remote areas but excludes people in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in very remote areas. This exclusion has only a minor impact on national estimates.

Sources: ABS, *Education and Work, Australia*, May 2021; ABS, *Census of Population and Housing*, 2011, 2016, 2021.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Figure 3.4

**Proportions of 15–19-year-olds and 20–24-year-olds in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training, Australia, 2011–2021 (%)**



Source: ABS, *Education and Work, Australia*, May 2021.

As shown in Table 3.20 and Figure 3.4, full-time participation rates for young people in their mid-to-late teens are consistently higher than for those in their early to mid-20s. This is to be expected, as the 15–19-year age group includes a high proportion of secondary school students for whom full-time participation in education, training or work is compulsory, at least until age 17.

From 2010 to 2019 there was a net increase in full-time participation for 15–19-year-olds from 84.8% to 87.0%, but a net fall in the participation rate for 20–24-year-olds from 77.2% to 75.5%, despite a rise in participation in education and training by this age group over this period. This fall was partly due to the expansion of the sample population of the SEW from 2013 to include people who were permanently unable to work.

In 2020 both measures fell significantly — by 1.6 percentage points for 15–19-year-olds and by 4.5 percentage points for 20–24-year-olds.

The SEW is run during the first 2 weeks of May. During, and leading up to, this period in 2020, travel bans, community lockdowns and various other restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic were in place, and these are likely to have impacted the survey results.

There was a decrease in full-time engagement in education and/or work across all states and most age groups 15–64, but this impacted more on younger people in the 20–24 age group, particularly males. There was also a fall in the number of people who were both studying and working. In addition, international travel restrictions and the impact on net overseas migration including overseas students led to decreases in some key sub-populations of the survey, in particular the number of people currently studying for a non-school qualification.<sup>56</sup>

These factors are reflected in both KPMs 1(g) and 1(h) and their significant decreases between 2019 and 2020.

While some restrictions due to COVID remained in place in May 2021, both SEW measures increased from their low 2020 levels.

For 15-19-year-olds, there was a significant increase in full-time participation rates between 2020 and 2021, from 85.4% to 90.3%. This more than reversed the fall in 2020, recording the highest participation level for this age group to date and above the long-term trend for this measure.

Reasons for this change may include:

- provision of free courses through TAFE as a COVID measure,
- upskilling following pandemic changes,
- domestic and international travel restrictions,
- fewer school leavers taking a gap year,
- a significantly lower unemployment rate and increased job opportunities.

While full-time participation for 20-24-year-olds increased by 2 percentage points between 2020 and 2021, this increase was not statistically significant and did not represent a full recovery to pre-COVID levels. However, it was in line with the long-term trend for this measure.

<sup>56</sup> ABS, *Education and Work*, May 2021.

Trend data for the annual SEW measures of these KPMs for the period 2008–2021 is included in the Key Performance Measures data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal. This shows a long-term upward trend in KPM 1(g) of 0.3 percentage points per annum, and a long-term downward trend in KPM 1(h) of 0.4 percentage points per annum over this period.

The Census of Population and Housing, conducted in August 2021 reports KPM 1(g) as 86.9% and KPM 1(h) as 72.3%. The KPM data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal reports a long-term upward trend in the census measure for KPM 1(g) of 0.1 percentage points per annum, and no evident trend in the census measure for KPM 1(h) over the period 2011–2021. As a participation measure of 17–24-year-olds, KPM 1(i) includes people from the 15–19-year-old and 20–24-year-old age groups but excludes school students from both the numerator and the denominator. This measure is informative as an indicator of the transition of young people from school to post-school education and/or work, and the performance of schooling in facilitating this.

SEW data for this KPM is reported for the period 2011–2021 in Table 3.22 and Figure 3.5. Census data for the years 2011, 2016 and 2021 is reported in Table 3.21.

**Table 3.21**

**Proportion of 17–24-year-olds who have left school that are in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training, Australia, 2011–2021 (%)**

Calendar year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Full-time participation rates for 17–24-year-olds who have left school	75.1	75.5	72.7	73.2	72.9	75.5	74.7	74.3	74.0	69.3	73.9
CI±	1.4	1.3	1.1	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.6	1.6	1.8	1.6
Full-time participation rates for 17–24-year-olds who have left school (Census measure)	73.0					71.0					73.4

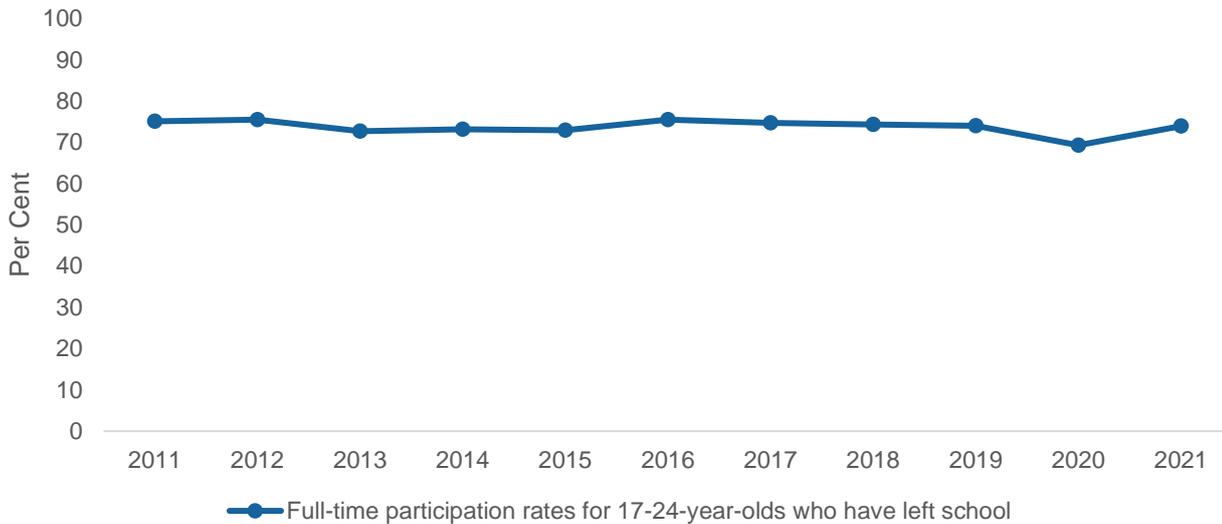
See notes for Table 3.20.

Sources: ABS, *Education and Work*, May 2021; ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2011, 2016, 2021.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Figure 3.5

Proportion of 17–24-year-olds who have left school that are in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training, Australia, 2011–2021 (%)



Source: ABS, *Education and Work, Australia*, May 2021.

There was little change in KPM 1(i) between 2011 and 2019. However, like other groups of young people, 17–24-year-olds who had left school were affected by the impact of COVID-19. The fall in this measure of 4.7 percentage points between 2019 and 2020 and the subsequent increase of 4.6 percentage points between 2020 and 2021 were both statistically significant.

The increase in 2021 is likely to reflect the policy initiative to provide free and subsidised training courses to school leavers and other young adults as a response to falls in employment due to the COVID pandemic.

There was a downward trend of 0.3 percentage points per annum in this measure over the period 2008–2021.

The Census reports KPM 1(i) as 73.4%. This is substantially up on the result of 71.0% from the 2016 Census. The KPM data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal reports no evident trend in the census measure for this KPM over the period 2011–2021 given the result of 73.0% at the 2011 Census. Census data provides more robust measures by state and territory and can be disaggregated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status but is only available every 5 years. Census data for these KPMs by state and territory and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status is also reported in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

However, because of sample size and other factors, SEW data for particular age groups is less reliable when disaggregated by state and territory, especially for smaller jurisdictions.<sup>57</sup> Because the survey is not conducted in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in very remote areas, and because of sample size, SEW data cannot be disaggregated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status.

The Participation and Attainment data set on the data portal also displays SEW and census data on participation in education and training (separately from employment) by various age groups.

<sup>57</sup> The survey sample covers the full working-age population, so numbers of 15–19-year-olds and 20–24-year-olds surveyed are relatively small in some states and territories.

### 3.4.3 Student attainment

The attainment KPMs specified in the *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020* measure the level of educational attainment achieved by young Australians by the time they have reached their early to mid-20s. These measures also reflect targets set by the former COAG for youth attainment in education and training:

**Key performance measure 7(a)**

Proportion of the 20–24-year-old population having attained at least Year 12 or equivalent or AQF Certificate II or above

**Key performance measure 7(b)**

Proportion of the 20–24-year-old population having attained at least Year 12 or equivalent or AQF Certificate III or above

The measures are based on the ABS SEW, which is conducted in May each year, and on the 5-yearly Census of Population and Housing.

Table 3.22 reports KPMs 7(a) and 7(b) at the national level for the period 2011–2021. It also includes these proportions as measured by the 2011, 2016 and 2021 censuses.

While the attainment KPMs 7(a) and 7(b) refer to the completion of Year 12 or equivalent or an AQF VET Certificate, this does not imply equivalence between the award of a SSCE on the completion of Year 12 and either AQF Certificate II or AQF Certificate III. SSCE qualifications are not located at a particular level in the AQF.<sup>58</sup>

For comparison purposes, Table 3.22 also reports the proportion of the 20–24-year-old population in each of these years that had completed Year 12 or equivalent. This is not, by itself, a KPM for schooling, but is the main component of both KPMs 7(a) and 7(b).

<sup>58</sup> The volume of learning required to attain an AQF Certificate II is typically 0.5–1 year; for Certificate III it is typically 1–2 years, and for a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education it is typically 2 years (AQF, second edition, p 14). In some instances, senior secondary students undertaking VET have the opportunity to complete several Certificate II qualifications as a part of a SSCE.

Table 3.22

**Proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate II or above; proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate III or above; proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent; Australia, 2011–2021 (%)**

Calendar year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate II or above	84.1	85.9	86.7	86.1	88.4	90.2	87.1	90.0	89.3	89.9	89.9
CI±	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.1	1.6	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.2
Proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate II or above (Census measure)	85.3	-	-	-	-	88.6	-	-	-	-	90.3
Proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate III or above	82.7	84.6	85.7	84.9	87.1	89.2	86.4	88.8	88.2	89.4	89.5
CI±	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.1	1.6	1.2	1.2	1.6	1.2	1.4
Proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate III or above (Census measure)	84.6	-	-	-	-	87.9	-	-	-	-	89.9
Proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent	74.9	76.3	77.2	76.8	78.7	81.3	79.1	82.1	82.5	84.6	84.3
CI±	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.8	1.6	1.9	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.8	1.7
Proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent (Census measure)	75.3	-	-	-	-	79.5	-	-	-	-	83.7

Notes:

See notes for Table 3.20.

Year 12 or equivalent includes AQF SSCeS issued by Australian state and territory curriculum assessment and certification authorities and equivalent qualifications such as matriculation certificates and school leaving qualifications obtained outside Australia and the International Baccalaureate. It also includes survey and census respondents who indicated that their highest level of education is Year 12.

AQF Certificate II is a VET qualification regarded as entry-level training for employment (or a similar qualification gained outside Australia). AQF Certificate III is a VET qualification regarded as intermediate-level training for employment (or a similar qualification gained outside Australia).

Sources: ABS, *Education and Work*, May 2021; ABS, *Census of Population and Housing*, 2011, 2016, 2021.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

As measured by SEW, the proportion of 20–24-year-olds who had attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate II or above – KPM 7(a) – rose from 84.1% in 2011 to 89.9% in 2020, with no change in 2021.

The previous COAG target for this measure (90% by 2015) was not met within the target timeframe.

As measured by SEW, the proportion of 20–24-year-olds who had attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate III or above – KPM 7(b) – rose from 82.7% in 2011 to 89.4% in 2020 and to 89.5% in 2021. The rise in this measure in 2021 was not statistically significant.

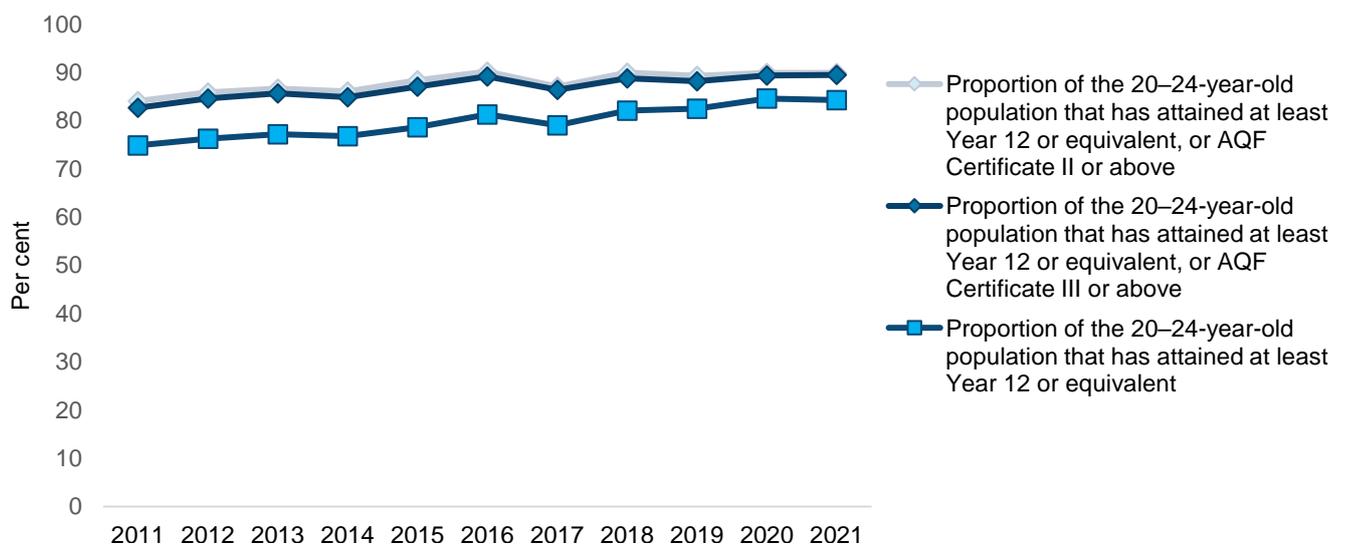
The COAG target for this measure was 90% by 2020. The Australian Government's [Performance reporting dashboard](#) reports that there was no improvement in this measure in 2021.<sup>59</sup>

Trend data for the annual measures of these KPMs for the period 2008–2021 is available in the Key Performance Measures data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal. This shows long-term upward trends of 0.5 percentage points per annum for both KPM 7(a) and KPM 7(b) over this period, in line with long-standing government policy to increase levels of attainment for young people.

Figure 3.6 depicts the annual movement in the 2 attainment measures from 2011 to 2021, as measured by SEW, along with the proportion of 20–24-year-olds having attained at least Year 12 or equivalent.

**Figure 3.6**

**Proportions of 20–24-year-olds having attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate II or above; 20–24-year-olds having attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate III or above; and 20–24-year-olds having attained at least Year 12 or equivalent; Australia, 2011–2021 (%)**



Source: ABS, *Education and Work, Australia*, May 2021.

As shown in Figure 3.6, the 2 attainment KPMs have generally moved in parallel over the period 2011–2021. There has been little difference between the 2 measures with an average difference of 1.1 percentage points. In 2021, the 2 measures converged further with a difference of only 0.4 percentage points.

Both KPMs have also generally paralleled movements in the proportion of 20–24-year-olds that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, which is easily the main component of both measures. The proportion of young people completing Year 12 or equivalent is not itself a KPM for schooling, because pursuing a VET qualification post-Year 10 is considered a legitimate alternative to Years 11 and 12 as a pathway to further education and work.

<sup>59</sup> Productivity Commission 2022, Performance Reporting Dashboard (accessed November 2022).

However, the proportion of 20–24-year-olds who have attained at least Year 12 or equivalent has risen more quickly in recent years than the proportions having attained equivalent VET qualifications.

In 2021, 84.3% of 20–24-year-olds had attained at least Year 12 or equivalent. This was a decline of 0.3 percentage points from 2020, but a rise of 9.4 percentage points from 2011. A further 5.2%, who had not attained Year 12, had attained Certificate III or above, and a further 0.4% had attained Certificate II, but not Year 12 or Certificate III. The proportion of 20–24-year-olds with equivalent VET qualifications but who have not completed Year 12 has declined from 8.9% in 2016 to 5.6% in 2021.

The qualifications held by 20–24-year-olds in May 2021 would have been attained in 2020 or earlier and there is no observable impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the SEW measures of KPMs 7(a) and 7(b) in 2021.

However, the significant falls due to COVID in participation in education, training and work reported in Part 3.4.2 for 15–24-year-olds in 2020 may be reflected in the SEW and census attainment measures in future.

SEW data for KPMs 7(a) and 7(b) by state and territory is provided on the National Report on Schooling data portal in the [Key Performance Measures](#) data set and in the [Participation and Attainment](#) data set. The Participation and Attainment data set also includes data on the attainment of Year 12 or equivalent and of other AQF qualifications.

However, because of sample size and other factors, SEW data for particular age groups (such as 20–24-year-olds) is less reliable when disaggregated by state and territory, especially for smaller jurisdictions, and cannot be disaggregated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status.

Census of Population and Housing data by state and territory is also published in the data portal and provides more reliable measures for disaggregation.

It is important to note that in measuring attainment for 20–24-year-olds, neither the SEW nor the census measures of attainment take into account the interstate movements of young people for employment or higher education after leaving school, or the numbers of overseas tertiary students residing in each state. As measures of the effectiveness of schooling within a state, the attainment KPMs therefore understate the successful outcomes of schooling in some states and territories and overstate them in others.

# Part 4: School funding



Part 4 reports data on government spending on Australian schooling and data on school income and capital expenditure.

Schools in Australia are funded by a combination of state/territory government funding, Australian Government funding, fees and charges, other parental or private contributions, and other private income.

The bulk of funding for government schools comes from the state or territory government that owns and administers the school, with contributions from the Australian Government. A smaller contribution comes from fees, charges and other private sources.

Most of the income for non-government schools comes from Australian Government funding and private sources (including fees and other charges), with smaller contributions from state and territory governments.

## Intergovernmental funding arrangements for school education

The National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) came into effect in 2019. As part of this agreement, each state and territory government has a separate agreement with the Australian Government. These agreements include state-specific actions to improve student outcomes and minimum state and territory funding contribution requirements. Parties agreed to contribute to funding for government and non-government schools; and committed to meeting agreed funding levels.

Agreed funding levels are expressed as a proportion of Schooling Resource Standard (SRS). The SRS is an estimate of how much public funding a school needs to meet its students' educational needs.

The *My School* finance data collection of 2015 was used to inform the Commonwealth school funding model as described in the *Australian Education Act 2013*. The SRS base funding amounts are derived from analysing the funding levels reported in the *My School* data collection for most schools, then estimated using the settings based on 'reference schools'.<sup>60</sup>

The *My School* source data was also used to help determine the share of funding contributed by state and territory governments towards the SRS as required in the bilateral agreements with the Australian Government.

The *Australian Education Act 2013* outlines the Australian Government funding arrangements for government and non-government schools. This includes the application of the SRS for determining funding for schools. The SRS of a school is made up of a base amount for every student and up to 6 needs-based loadings to provide extra funding for:

- students with disability
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- students who have low English proficiency
- students from a socio-educationally disadvantaged background
- schools that are not in major cities
- schools that are not large schools.

The amount of funding received by a school will change from year to year depending on the number of students enrolled at the school and the loadings the students and school attract.<sup>61</sup>

The base amount for most non-government schools is discounted by the capacity of the school's community to contribute financially to the operation of the school relative to other non-government schools, known as the Capacity to Contribute (CTC).

In 2020, the Australian Government introduced a new method for calculating a school community's CTC, using a Direct Measure of Income (DMI) based on the actual income of parents and guardians of students at each school. In 2020 and 2021, school funding was based on either their 2011 Census SES score, their 2016 Census SES score or their DMI score - whichever measure provided the greatest level of funding. The DMI methodology will apply to most non-government schools by 2022.<sup>62</sup>

The CTC does not apply to government schools, or non-government schools which are special schools, special assistance schools, majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools, or sole provider schools.

The CTC also does not apply to distance education students. Instead, distance education students at schools with CTC scores attract a proportion, prescribed in the Australian Education Regulation, of the primary or secondary SRS funding amount to their schools' SRS base amount.

<sup>60</sup> Reference schools are schools where at least 80% of students achieved above the national minimum standard for reading and numeracy in NAPLAN for 3 years in a row.

<sup>61</sup> More information on loadings is available under [Quality Schools Package](#) on the AGDESE website.

<sup>62</sup> There are 2 other methodologies that can be used to calculate a school's CTC – the Refined Area Based (RAB) methodology and ministerial discretion. The RAB methodology is used to calculate CTC for schools if it is not practicable to use the DMI methodology for the school for the year.

Conditions of funding, accountability and financial reporting requirements for government and non-government schools are outlined in the *Australian Education Act 2013* and the respective legislation of state and territory governments. Further information on the use of Australian Government recurrent funding by schools can be found in the [Use of Recurrent Funding Guide](#).

There is no single collection of school funding data. Because of differences between the various collections, not all data reported in this part is directly comparable. Each section that follows deals with one of 4 separate collections, with additional data available on the National Report on Schooling data portal. Table 4.1 gives an overview of the key features and differences between the 4 collections.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> In 2020 and 2021, the AGDESE financial questionnaire included a question about JobKeeper payments from the Australian Taxation office, and these payments are included in total recurrent income. Data on Government recurrent expenditure on government and non-government schools includes financial assistance provided in response to COVID-19 (e.g., bringing forward grant payments from 2020-21 into 2019-20 to assist non-government schools to manage the impacts of COVID-19.), but does not include JobKeeper payments.

Table 4.1

An overview of the key features and differences between the 4 school funding data collections

	Government expenditure on government schools	Non-government schools income and expenditure	School income and capital expenditure for government and non-government schools	Government recurrent expenditure on government and non-government schools
Reporting period	Financial year 2020–21 (ending in reporting year)	Calendar year 2021 (same as reporting year)	Calendar year 2020 (reporting year minus one)	Financial year 2020–21 (ending in reporting year)
Scope of reporting	Government schools only Disaggregation by state/territory No disaggregation by funding source	Non-government schools receiving Australian Government recurrent funding Disaggregation by state/territory, Catholic and independent schools Catholic non-systemic schools are reported as Catholic schools.	Government and non-government schools receiving government funding Disaggregation by state/territory, Catholic and independent schools Catholic non-systemic schools are reported as independent schools in aggregated data.	Government and non-government schools receiving government funding No disaggregation Catholic/Independent for non-government schools.
What is reported	Capital and recurrent expenditure In-school costs (e.g., teacher salaries) Out-of-school costs (e.g., state office, regional and local functions which support schools)	Income from all sources Capital expenditure and recurrent expenditure	Recurrent income from all sources Capital expenditure	Government recurrent expenditure on government schools and non-government schools No disaggregation by state/territory or primary/secondary
Income or expenditure based	Expenditure based (based on payment of expenses)	Income and expenditure based	Income and capital expenditure based	Expenditure based (based on payment of expenses)
Treatment of private funding	Not reported	Private income reported	Private income reported	Not reported
Inclusions	Payroll tax (real or notional) Notional user cost of capital in government school funding Non-salary costs include other operating expenses, grants and subsidies and depreciation	Recurrent and capital grants Debt servicing of loans Australian Government assistance as part of the COVID-19 response (including JobKeeper payments)	Government funding (including JobKeeper payments received by non-government schools) Private funding	Australian Government funding for schools, joint programs apportioned to government schools, assistance in response to COVID-19 (excluding JobKeeper payments received by non-government schools) Expenditure by state and territory government education departments Staff allowances for accommodation
Exclusions	Funds raised by schools, school councils or community organisations	Amounts related to boarding facilities	Items are treated differently across sectors, such as user cost of capital, payroll tax and boarding	Funds raised by schools, school councils or community organisations
Agency responsible for collecting data	State and territory governments	Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (AGDESE)	AGDESE (non-government schools) State/territory governments (government schools)	Productivity Commission
Source	National Schools Statistics Collection (Finance)	AGDESE financial questionnaire	<i>My School</i>	NSSC Finance Collection, federal budget papers and data provided to the Productivity Commission

## 4.1 Government recurrent funding for schools

This section provides comparable information on government expenditure (by state/territory governments and the Australian Government) for government and non-government schools. Government school funding is historically reported on a financial year basis. Calendar year data for non-government schools has been adapted in this section to report on a comparable basis to government school financial data.

In 2020–21 total government recurrent funding of \$72.21 billion was provided for school education:

- \$49.96 billion (69.2%) was provided through state and territory budgets, compared with \$48.22 billion (68.3%) in 2019–20
- \$22.25 billion (30.8%) was provided through the Australian Government budget, compared with \$22.40 billion (31.7%) in 2019–20.

Of total government recurrent funding:

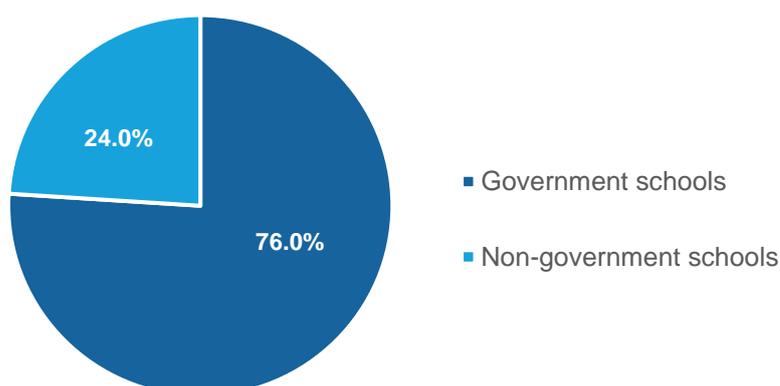
- the government school sector received 76.0% (compared with 74.5% in 2019–20)
- the non-government sector received 24.0% (compared with 25.5% in 2019–20).

This breakdown is shown in Figure 4.1.

The relative decreases in funding shares to the non-government school sector, and in contributions by the Australian Government were in part due to 2020–21 financial year payments to some non-government schools that had been paid in advance in the 2019–20 financial year.

**Figure 4.1**

**Share of recurrent government funding for school education by school sector, Australia, 2020–21 financial year**



*Sources:* National Schools Statistics Collection (Finance), unpublished, 2021; the Australian Government Department of Education (unpublished); Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP), *Report on Government Services 2023*, Productivity Commission; ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021.

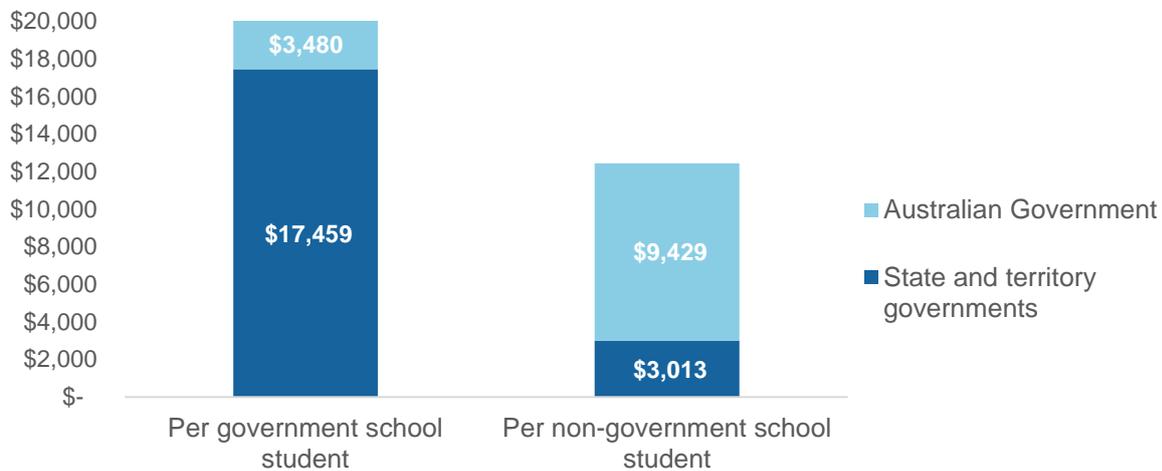
Total recurrent school education funding in 2020–21 was:

- \$20,940 per student for government schools, compared with \$20,182 in 2019–20
- \$12,442 per student for non-government schools, compared with \$13,189 in 2019–20.

Figure 4.2 shows the contribution of state and territory governments and the Australian Government to the government and non-government school sectors, on a per-student basis.

Figure 4.2

**Government recurrent funding for school education by funding source and school sector, Australia, 2020–21, (\$ per student)**

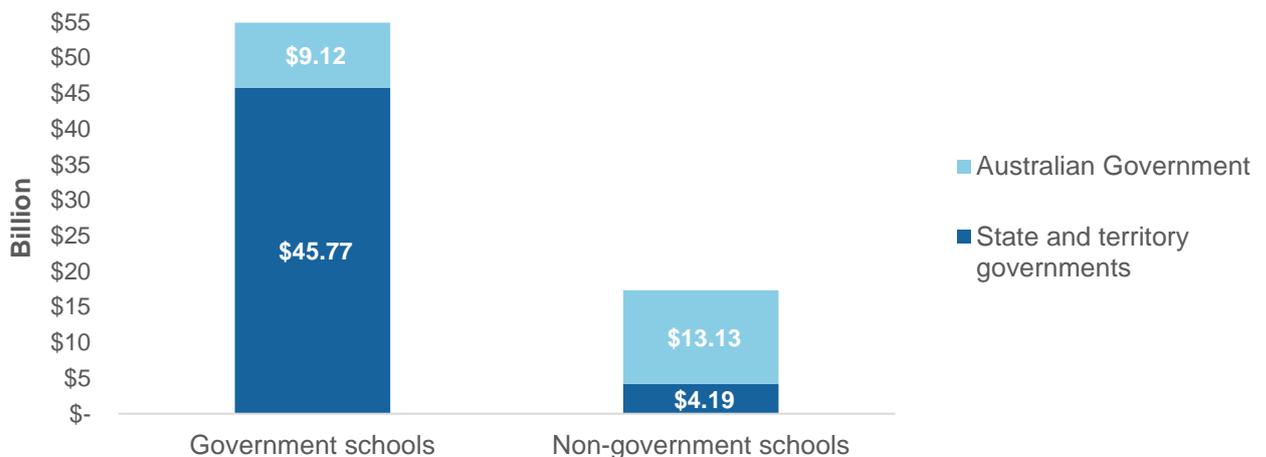


Sources: National Schools Statistics Collection (Finance), unpublished, 2021; the Australian Government Department of Education (unpublished); Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP), *Report on Government Services 2023*, Productivity Commission; ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021.

Total recurrent expenditure on government and non-government schools from all government sources in 2020–21 is reported in Figure 4.3. The bulk (91.6%) of state and territory funding was allocated to government schools. Most (59.0%) of the Australian Government funding was allocated to non-government schools.

Figure 4.3

**Total government recurrent funding for school education by funding source and school sector, Australia, 2020–21 (\$ billion)**



Sources: National Schools Statistics Collection (Finance), unpublished, 2021; the Australian Government Department of Education (unpublished); Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP), *Report on Government Services 2023*, Productivity Commission; ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2021.

More data on government recurrent expenditure on government and non-government schools is available on the National Report on Schooling in Australia data portal.

## 4.2 School income and capital expenditure – *My School* financial information

Part 4.2 provides data on funding for the 2020 calendar year for government and non-government schools. Data is shown for government, Catholic and independent schools, and includes income from private sources and expenditure on capital projects. This data is reported for individual schools on the *My School* website. Due to reporting timeframes, the *My School* financial data lags behind other data sets. Note that in this section non-systemic Catholic schools are included in the independent school data to reflect their financial status.<sup>64</sup> The National Report on Schooling data portal provides an option to allow these schools to be included in the Catholic or independent sector in the *My School* finance data collection.

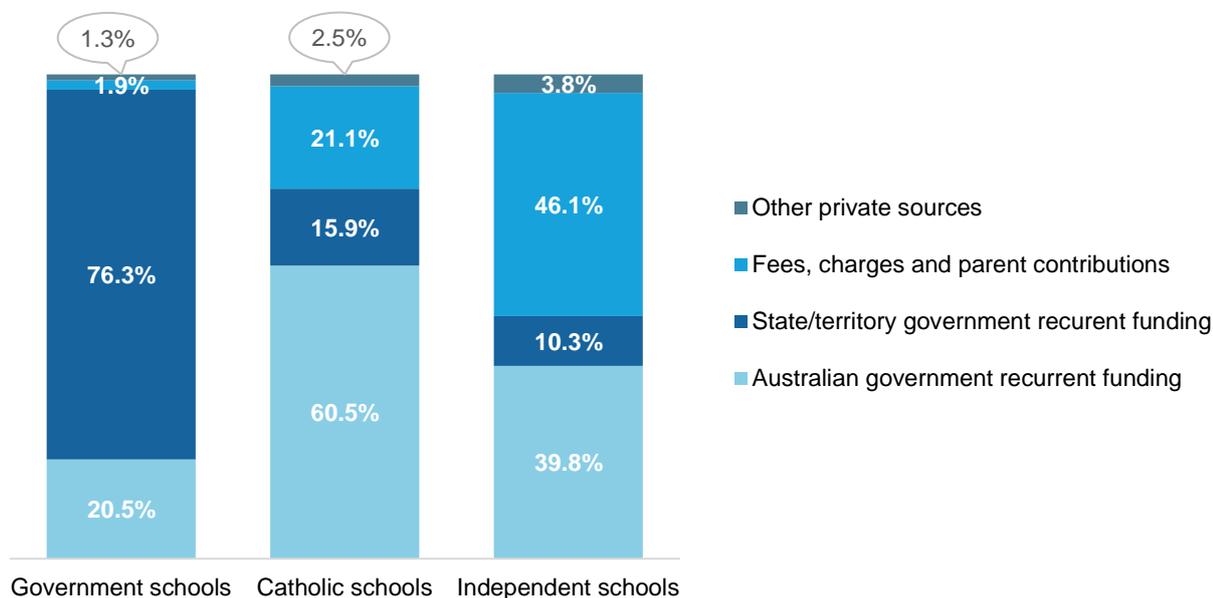
### Gross income

For 2020, Australian Government funding accounted for 20.5% of the total gross income for government schools, with state and territory governments providing 76.3% of funds.

For non-government schools, the Australian Government contributed 60.5% of Catholic sector gross income and 39.8% of independent sector gross income. Income from fees, charges and parent contributions contributed 21.1% of Catholic sector income and 46.1% of independent sector income. These contributions are shown in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4

#### Gross school income by funding source and school sector, Australia, 2020 (%)



Source: ACARA, *My School* finance data collection.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

<sup>64</sup> This is an exception to the general statement that non-systemic Catholic schools are counted as Catholic in this report. See Part 5 Glossary – School sector for further information.

## Net recurrent income per student

Net recurrent income per student (NRIPS) represents income per student from all sources, public and private, minus deductions per student due to debt and capital expenditure.

In 2020, the NRIPS was \$17,131. Between 2019 and 2020, the growth in NRIPS was 3.5%. In contrast, the ABS Wage Price Index for education and training grew by 2.4% over the same period.<sup>65</sup>

The compound annual growth in NRIPS for all schools from 2016 to 2020 was 4.0%. Compound annual growth in the Wage Price Index (education and training) was 2.3% for the same period.

Between 2019 and 2020, the NRIPS increased 3.3% for the government sector (to \$16,020), 4.2% for the Catholic sector (to \$16,732), and 3.2% for the independent sector (to \$22,070). This is shown in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2**

### Net recurrent income per student by funding source and school sector, Australia, 2019 and 2020 (\$ per FTE student)

Source of income	2019	2020	Change %
Australian Government	5,139	5,684	10.6%
State/territory government	8,579	8,951	4.3%
Fees, charges and parental contributions	2,935	2,706	-7.8%
Other private sources	459	362	-21.1%
Total gross income	17,113	17,704	3.4%
Deductions	555	572	3.1%
Total NRIPS	16,558	17,131	3.5%
NRIPS (government)	15,511	16,020	3.3%
NRIPS (Catholic)	16,052	16,732	4.2%
NRIPS (independent)	21,391	22,070	3.2%
FTE student numbers (no.)	3,971,788	4,027,784	1.4%

Source: ACARA, *My School* finance data collection.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

## Capital expenditure

*My School* allows for comparable reporting of capital expenditure by all schools. In 2020, capital expenditure was:

- \$4.69 billion in government schools
- \$1.65 billion in Catholic schools
- \$2.25 billion in independent schools.

<sup>65</sup> ABS, Wage Price Index (in education and training, combined public and private sector), series ID A2603449J. Wage index growth is a useful comparator as the majority of school expenditure is made up of salary costs.

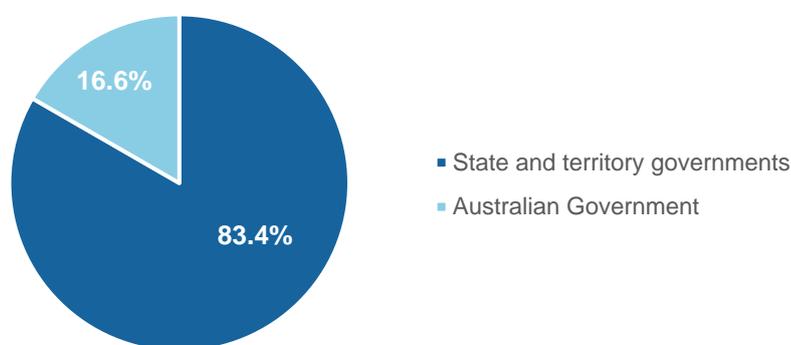
## 4.3 Government funding for government schools

The National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) – Finance comprises data provided by the various state and territory and federal education departments. This is a financial year, annual collection of total government expenditure data (expenditure on salary and non-salary costs) on government schools only. The collection provides education ministers with consistent data on government expenditure on school education, across government school systems and over time.

State and territory governments are the major funders of government schools. In 2020–21 they contributed 83.4% (\$45.77 billion) of total recurrent funding, with the Australian Government contributing the remaining 16.6% (\$9.12 billion). The relative proportions are shown in Figure 4.5.

**Figure 4.5**

**Share of total government recurrent expenditure, by funding source, government schools, Australia, 2020–21 financial year**



*Sources:* National Schools Statistics Collection (Finance), unpublished, 2021; Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, unpublished; Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP), Productivity Commission, *Report on Government Services 2023*.

### Government recurrent expenditure, government schools – in-school and out-of-school

The major component of funding for government schools directly funds schools' day-to-day operations, via in-school expenditure. In-school expenditure encompasses expenses related to teaching, learning, school administration and library functions. Out-of-school expenditure includes state office costs, and regional and local functions which support schools.

Salaries are by far the largest component of expenditure on schools, with teacher salaries comprising the majority of this expenditure.

- Teaching salary costs represented 75.8% of total salary costs in 2020–21 and 48.4% of total expenditure inclusive of user cost of capital.
- Teaching staff salaries changed marginally from 76.2% of total salary costs in 2019–20 to 75.8% of total salary costs in 2020–21.
- Non-teaching staff salaries were 24.2% of total salary costs in 2020–21.
- All other costs constitute 36.2% of total operating expenditure inclusive of user cost of capital.

Further details are provided in Table 4.3 and in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

Table 4.3

Operating expenditure by government education systems, Australia, from 2016–17 to 2020–21 financial years (accrual basis), (nominal \$'000)

Area of expenditure	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21
<b>In-school expenditure</b>					
Salaries (teaching)	21,775,001	22,870,538	24,486,320	25,629,930	26,542,516
Salaries (non-teaching)	5,346,145	5,800,908	6,143,754	6,631,037	6,967,655
<b>Sub-total incl. user cost of capital</b>	<b>41,924,697</b>	<b>44,670,182</b>	<b>47,389,882</b>	<b>50,158,837</b>	<b>52,311,275</b>
<b>Out-of-school expenditure</b>					
Salaries (teaching)	0	0	0	0	0
Salaries (non-teaching)	1,016,970	1,050,087	1,232,218	1,378,184	1,516,099
<b>Sub-total incl. user cost of capital</b>	<b>1,806,886</b>	<b>1,941,749</b>	<b>2,318,477</b>	<b>2,462,081</b>	<b>2,575,626</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>43,731,583</b>	<b>46,611,931</b>	<b>49,708,359</b>	<b>52,620,918</b>	<b>54,886,901</b>

Notes:

Amounts are expressed in actual dollars (nominal) and are not adjusted for inflation. User cost of capital is included in totals.

Components do not add to totals due to exclusions and rounding.

Salaries include on-costs such as superannuation, payroll tax, workers compensation and long service leave. Redundancy payments have been excluded from salaries (teaching and non-teaching)

Sources: National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) (Finance), unpublished, 2021; *National Report on Schooling in Australia* (previous years).

See also National Report on Schooling in Australia data portal.

## Capital expenditure

As shown in Table 4.4, capital expenditure in government schools was \$5.95 billion in the 2020–21 financial year. This table includes state and territory sourced funding and funding provided by the Australian Government to states and territories.

Table 4.4

Capital expenditure by state and territory governments in government schools, Australia, from 2016–17 to 2020–21 financial years (accrual basis) (\$'000)

Financial year	Capital expenditure
2016–17	2,044,704
2017–18	3,263,695
2018-19	4,916,579
2019-20	5,504,166
2020-21	5,946,255

Note: Amounts include Australian Government funding used for capital purposes.

Sources: National Schools Statistics Collection (Finance), unpublished, 2021; *National Report on Schooling in Australia*, (previous years).

## 4.4 Income and expenditure by non-government schools

Non-government school funding is reported on a calendar year basis and reflects income and expenditure for the 2021 calendar year. This data allows income and expenditure for Catholic and independent schools to be reported separately, and includes information on income from private sources, including school fees. It excludes amounts related to boarding facilities and direct payments by the Australian Government to students and/or parents. Note that, in this data collection, compiled by the Australian Government, non-systemic Catholic schools are counted as Catholic.

### Per capita income

Non-government schools derive their income from Australian Government and state/territory government grants, from school fees and charges, and from private sources including fundraising, and donations. The per capita income shown in Table 4.5 was used to fund both recurrent and capital purposes.

Table 4.5 also shows expenditure per student by school type. Expenditure per student in independent and Catholic schools increased slightly in the 2021 calendar year. This increase is consistent with historical trends in expenditure in the non-government sector, where per-student expenditure generally increases each year. However, in combined Catholic schools, there was a small decline in expenditure per student – from \$22,289 in 2019 to \$22,061 in 2020. There was also a decline in expenditure per student in independent secondary schools from \$29,004 in 2019 to \$27,974 in 2020.

**Table 4.5**

**Non-government school income per student by funding source and expenditure per student by school type, by school sector, Australia, 2021 calendar year (\$ per student)**

	Catholic	Independent
<b>Income per student by source</b>		
Australian Government grants	\$11,420	\$9,397
State/territory grants	\$3,205	\$2,817
Total government grants	\$14,625	\$12,214
Private income	\$4,367	\$12,739
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$18,992</b>	<b>\$24,953</b>
<b>Expenditure per student by school type</b>		
Primary	\$15,626	\$19,828
Secondary	\$21,026	\$27,974
Combined	\$22,061	\$23,841
<b>All schools</b>	<b>\$18,589</b>	<b>\$23,938</b>

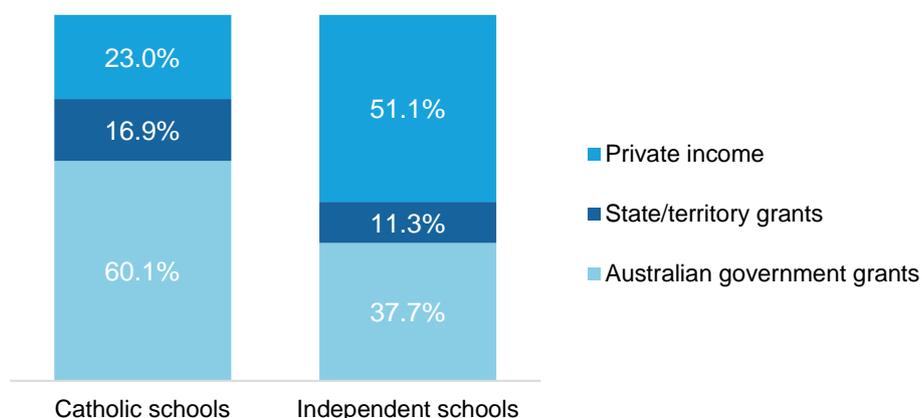
Source: Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, unpublished data.

See also National Report on Schooling in Australia data portal.

Figure 4.6 shows that for Catholic schools 77.0% of per capita income was from government grants. For independent schools 49.0% of per capita income was from government grants. Table 4.6 has further information.

Figure 4.6

Non-government school income per student by funding source and school sector, Australia, 2021 calendar year (%)



Source: Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, unpublished data.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Table 4.6 shows that overall, on a per-student basis, Australian Government grants increased by 0.2% for non-government schools between 2020 and 2021, with a 6.3% increase in Australian Government assistance provided to Catholic schools, and a 6.2% decrease in Australian Government assistance provided to independent schools. This follows substantial increases in Australian Government grants to non-government schools, as a result of Australian Government assistance provided in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Between 2020 and 2021, state/territory grants increased by 6.9%, with increases for both Catholic and independent schools. For Catholic schools, private income per student declined by 8.2%, while for independent schools there was a 3.8% increase.

Total per-student expenditure increased by 2.8% between 2020 and 2021, with capital expenditure per student increasing by 4.8% and recurrent expenditure per student increasing by 2.4%.

Table 4.6

Non-government school income by funding source, and expenditure by function, by school sector, Australia, 2020 and 2021 calendar years (\$ per student)

	Catholic			Independent			All non-government		
	2020	2021	Change	2020	2021	Change	2020	2021	Change
<b>Income per student by source</b>									
Australian Government grants	\$10,739	\$11,420	6.3%	\$10,021	\$9,397	-6.2%	\$10,425	\$10,448	0.2%
State/territory grants	\$2,977	\$3,205	7.7%	\$2,628	\$2,817	7.2%	\$2,824	\$3,018	6.9%
Total private income	\$4,759	4,367	-8.2%	\$12,277	\$12,739	3.8%	\$8,046	\$8,392	4.3%
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$18,475</b>	<b>18,992</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>\$24,926</b>	<b>\$24,953</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>\$21,295</b>	<b>\$21,858</b>	<b>2.6%</b>
<b>Expenditure by function</b>									
Capital expenditure	\$2,444	\$2,510	2.7%	\$3,507	\$3,634	3.6%	\$2,909	\$3,050	4.8%
Recurrent expenditure	\$15,853	\$16,079	1.4%	\$20,044	\$20,305	1.3%	\$17,686	\$18,111	2.4%
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>\$18,297</b>	<b>\$18,589</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>\$23,550</b>	<b>\$23,938</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>\$20,594</b>	<b>\$21,161</b>	<b>2.8%</b>

Source: Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, unpublished data.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

# Part 5: Glossary



## Note on data sources and terms

A main source of data reported in the *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2021* and in the National Report on Schooling data portal is the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) (non-finance). This is a count of schools, students and staff involved in primary and secondary education, in government and non-government schools, for all Australian states and territories. The schools census collection date for the collection is the first Friday in August each year.

Data for government schools is submitted to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) by state and territory departments of education.

Data for non-government schools in all states and territories is collected by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment and a subset is provided to the ABS for the NSSC.

Data from the collection is published by the ABS in [Schools, Australia](#). Definitions of terms in this glossary are, for the most part, quoted or adapted from the *Schools, Australia* glossary and explanatory notes.

Other major data sources for the *National Report on Schooling in Australia* include the National Student Attendance Data Collection (ACARA); the Survey of Education and Work (ABS); the Census of Population and Housing (ABS); National, state and territory population (ABS); the NSSC (finance) collection (states and territories); NAP national reports (ACARA) and National VET Provider and National VET in Schools collections (NCVER).

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) status**

A student is classified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin, based on information provided by the student, or their parent or guardian, on the school enrolment form.

**Accrual accounting**

A recording method in which revenues, expenses, lending and borrowing are recorded as they are earned, accrued or incurred regardless of when payment is made or received.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) status**

A student is classified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin, based on information provided by the student, or their parent or guardian, on the school enrolment form.

**Accrual accounting**

A recording method in which revenues, expenses, lending and borrowing are recorded as they are earned, accrued or incurred regardless of when payment is made or received.

**Apparent retention rate**

An indicative measure of student progression through secondary school. It is a measure of the proportion of full-time school students who have stayed at school from one year to another. The rate is calculated by dividing the number of students in a year group (cohort) in one calendar year by the number of students in the same cohort in a previous calendar year. For example, an apparent retention rate from Year 10 to 12 in 2021 measures the percentage of Year 10 students in 2019 that continued to Year 12 in 2021.

From 2015 onwards, the ABS has released rates tables in 2 formats: one with rates exceeding 100% capped to a maximum value of 100.0 (capped), and one where rates exceeding 100% continue to be reported as the raw calculated value (uncapped). This report continues to report uncapped rates for apparent retention.

See [Schools, Australia](#) explanatory notes for further information.

**Attendance**

The National Student Attendance Data Collection is conducted by ACARA for Semester 1 of each school year. Data is collected for full-time students in Years 1–10 (including ungraded secondary). Data is provided to ACARA by state and territory education departments for government schools and by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment for non-government schools.

The attendance rate is defined as the number of actual full-time equivalent student-days attended by full-time students in Years 1–10 in Semester 1 as a percentage of the total number of possible student-days attended in Semester 1.

The attendance level is defined as the proportion of full-time students in Years 1–10 whose attendance rate in Semester 1 is equal to or greater than 90%.

Specifications for the collection are provided in the [National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting](#).

## Capital expenditure

Expenditure by a school or school system to purchase or improve land, buildings and other capital assets and equipment.

## Census of Population and Housing

Australia's largest statistical collection, undertaken by the ABS. The Census of Population and Housing is conducted every 5 years. The aim of the census is to accurately collect data on the key characteristics of people in Australia on census night, and the dwellings in which they live. In 2021 the census counted 10.9 million dwellings and approximately 25.4 million people.

## Estimated resident population

The estimated resident population (ERP) is used as a denominator to calculate students as a proportion of the population. The ERP is an estimate of the population of Australia, based on data from the Census of Population and Housing, updated quarterly using information on births, deaths, and overseas and interstate migration. For further details see ABS, [National, state and territory population](#).

## Full-time equivalent students

The FTE value of students is a measure used for funding purposes. It is calculated by adding the number of full-time students and the FTE value of part-time students.

A full-time student is one who undertakes the prescribed minimum workload required to complete a given year level in a calendar year. This may vary between states and territories and from year to year. A part-time student is one who undertakes a workload less than that prescribed as full-time. Methods for estimating the FTE value of part-time students vary between states and territories due to different policy and administrative arrangements. The recorded FTE value for each student is capped at 1.0.

## Full-time equivalent teaching staff

The FTE value of teaching staff is a measure of the level of staffing resources. Staff who are employed full time and engaged solely on activities that fall within the scope of the NSSC have an FTE value of 1.0. All FTE values are rounded to one decimal place.

For staff not employed on a full-time basis, and/or engaged in a combination of in-scope and out-of-scope activities, the FTE value is calculated on the basis of the proportion of time spent on in-scope activities compared with staff who would be considered full time.

The FTE value of teaching staff is calculated by adding the number of full-time teaching staff and the FTE value of part-time teaching staff.

## Full-time equivalent student–teacher ratios

Student–teacher ratios are calculated by dividing the FTE student number by the FTE teaching staff number. They are an indicator of the level of staffing resources used and should not be used as a measure of class size. They do not include teacher aides and other non-teaching staff who may also assist in the delivery of school education.

## Location

School locations are classified based on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) remoteness indicator. The five Remoteness Areas for Australia are:

- major cities
- inner regional
- outer regional
- remote
- very remote.

A map, showing the location of these areas, is available on the [ABS website](#).

## Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia

The [Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020](#), as agreed by education ministers, provides the basis for national reporting on the performance of schooling in 2020, and is the main focus of the statistical data included in this report.

The measurement framework defines national key performance measures (KPMs) for schooling, specifies the data sources for these KPMs and outlines the reporting cycle for the period 2020–2023.

The framework is maintained by ACARA on behalf of education ministers and is published on the ACARA website. It is periodically revised by ACARA in consultation with jurisdictions and sectors.

## National Assessment Program

The National Assessment Program (NAP), as specified in the *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020*, encompasses all assessments endorsed by education ministers for participation by students nationally:

- NAPLAN – annual, full student cohort literacy and numeracy assessments in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9
- NAP sample assessments – triennial domestic sample student population assessments in Years 6 and 10 in Science Literacy, ICT Literacy and Civics and Citizenship
- Australia's participation in international sample student population assessments: Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS).

ACARA is delegated to manage the development and oversee the delivery of assessments and reporting for NAPLAN, and for domestic NAP sample assessments, as directed by education ministers. PISA is conducted by the OECD. TIMSS and PIRLS are conducted by the IEA.

## National Schools Statistics Collection

The scope of the NSSC consists of all 'establishments' that have as their major activity the administration or provision of full-time day primary, secondary and/or special education, or primary or secondary education by distance education. The statistics in the NSSC do not include students engaged in school-level education conducted by other institutions; in particular, TAFE, except where this is part of a school program, such as VET delivered to secondary students.

The NSSC consists of government and non-government statistics. Government statistics comprise all establishments (as defined) administered by departments of education under directors-general of education (or equivalent) in each state or territory. Non-government statistics comprise all such establishments not administered by departments of education.

The 2 sections of the NSSC are:

- non-finance statistics (numbers of schools, students and staff) collected for government and non-government schools and published by the ABS in its annual *Schools, Australia* publication
- finance statistics (expenditure on salaries and non-salary costs) collected for government school systems only; and published in this report and in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

## Primary education

See *School level and school year*.

## Recurrent funding

Annual funding provided to schools/school systems for expenditure relating to ongoing operating costs of the school (for example, teaching and non-teaching staff salaries, school operating costs).

## Remoteness

See *Location*.

## School

A school is an education establishment that satisfies all the following criteria:

- Its major activity is the provision of full-time day primary or secondary education or the provision of primary or secondary distance education.
- It is headed by a principal (or equivalent) responsible for its internal operation.
- It is possible for students to enrol and be active in a course of study for a minimum of 4 continuous weeks, excluding breaks for school vacations.

The term 'school' in this publication includes schools in institutions and hospitals, mission schools and similar establishments.

The term 'school' in this publication excludes preschools, early learning or long day care centres, senior technical and agricultural colleges, evening schools, continuation classes and institutions such as business or coaching colleges.

Multi-campus arrangements are counted as one school. Changes to school counts in this publication can occur when multiple schools amalgamate into a single multi-campus school, or multi-campus schools divide into separate schools.

### School level and school year

All states and territories provide for 13 years of formal school education. Typically, schooling commences at age 5, is compulsory from age 6 until at least the completion of Year 10 and is completed at age 17 or 18.

For national reporting purposes, primary education comprises a Foundation year<sup>66</sup> followed by Years 1–6 in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia<sup>67</sup>, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. Primary education generally comprises a Foundation year followed by Years 1–7 in South Australia.<sup>68</sup>

Junior secondary education includes the years from commencement of secondary schooling to Year 10, including ungraded secondary.

Senior secondary education comprises Years 11 and 12 in all states and territories.

Categories used in tables and graphs showing 'school level' are 'primary' and 'secondary'. In some tables, the categories 'primary', 'junior secondary', 'senior secondary' and 'total secondary' are used.

Students attending special schools are allocated to either primary or secondary education on the basis of school year or school level, where identified. Where a school year or school level is not identified, students are allocated to primary or secondary level of education according to the typical age level in each state or territory. Ungraded students (ungraded primary and ungraded secondary) are those who have not been placed in a specific year level.

See also *School type*.

See also *Special school*.

### School sector

This report and the National Report on Schooling data portal use the term 'school sector' to distinguish between government schools, which are established and administered by state and territory governments through their education departments, and non-government schools, usually with some religious affiliation, which are established and operated under conditions determined by state and territory governments through their registration authorities.

<sup>66</sup> The Foundation Year (first year of full-time schooling) is known as Preparatory in Vic, Qld and Tas, Kindergarten in NSW and the ACT, Reception in SA, Pre-primary in WA and Transition in the NT. In some jurisdictions, part-time programs that precede the Foundation Year are conducted in primary schools (for example, Kindergarten in WA). However, these programs are outside the scope of the NSSC and of data sets included in this report.

<sup>67</sup> Year 7 became part of secondary education in Qld and WA from 2015. This change affects some comparisons with previous years of student and staff data by school level.

<sup>68</sup> In 2018, the SA Government announced that Year 7 will be moved from a primary school year to a secondary school year. In 2020 in SA, Year 7 was counted as a secondary school year for a number of non-government schools and 3 government schools, with other government schools to adopt this structure from 2022.

'School sector' is also used to further distinguish between non-government schools as Catholic or independent. Catholic schools make up the largest group of non-government schools. Independent schools may be associated with other religions, other denominations, particular educational philosophies, or operate as single entities.

*Schools, Australia* uses the term 'affiliation' rather than 'school sector' to make these distinctions.

A further distinction is sometimes made between systemic and non-systemic non-government schools. Systemic schools are formally affiliated with a group or system of schools. Non-systemic non-government schools do not belong to a system.

In *Schools, Australia* and in this report, Catholic systemic and non-systemic schools are counted as 'Catholic'.

**Exception:** For the purposes of financial reporting in Part 4.2, based on data drawn from the *My School* data collection, a number of Catholic non-systemic schools, mainly in New South Wales, are counted as 'independent'. Government funding for these schools is distributed directly to the schools rather than through Catholic school system authorities. This affects comparisons between school sectors in some states and nationally. Financial data reported in Part 4.2 should not be compared with financial data included elsewhere in this report.

Categories used in tables and graphs showing 'school sector' are 'government', 'Catholic' and 'independent'. In some tables, the category 'total non-government' (total of Catholic and independent data) is also used.

### School type

Categories used in tables and graphs showing 'school type' are:

- 'primary' – school delivers primary education
- 'secondary' – school delivers secondary education
- 'combined' – school delivers primary and secondary education
- 'special' – students may include primary students, secondary students, ungraded students or a combination of primary, secondary and ungraded students.

See also *Special school*.

### Secondary education

See *School level and school year*.

## Senior secondary certificate of education

Senior secondary certificates of education (SSCEs) are Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications issued by the curriculum, assessment and certification authority in each state and territory to students meeting the requirements for successful completion of secondary schooling. These have different titles in each jurisdiction:

State/territory	SSCE(s)
<b>New South Wales</b>	Higher School Certificate (HSC)
<b>Victoria</b>	Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL)
<b>Queensland</b>	Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE)
<b>South Australia</b>	South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE)
<b>Western Australia</b>	Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE)
<b>Tasmania</b>	Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE)
<b>Northern Territory</b>	Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET)
<b>Australian Capital Territory</b>	Australian Capital Territory Senior Secondary Certificate (ACTSSC)

*Source: [ACACA website, states and territories](#).*

## Special school

A special school satisfies the definition of a school (see *School*), and requires one or more of the following characteristics to be exhibited by a student before enrolment is allowed:

- mental or physical disability or impairment
- slow learning ability
- social or emotional problems
- in custody, on remand or in hospital.

Special schools include special assistance schools, as defined under the *Australian Education Act 2013*. These are non-government schools that are:

- likely to be recognised by the state minister as a special assistance school
- primarily established to cater for students with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

## Staff

Staff are people engaged in the administration and/or provision of day primary, secondary or special school education, or primary or secondary education by distance education at in-scope education establishments.

The functional categories for school staff are as follows:

- (a) Teaching staff are employees who spend the majority of their time in contact with students. They support students either by direct class contact or on an individual basis and are engaged to impart school curriculum. For the purposes of this report, teaching staff includes principals, deputy principals, campus principals and senior teachers mainly involved in administration.
- (b) Specialist support staff are employees who perform functions to support students or teaching staff. While these staff may spend most of their time in contact with students, they are not employed or engaged to impart the school curriculum.
- (c) Administrative and clerical staff are employees whose main duties are generally clerical or administrative. Teacher aides and assistants are included in this category, as they are seen to provide services to teaching staff rather than directly to students.
- (d) Building operations, general maintenance and other staff are employees involved in the maintenance of buildings and grounds. Also included are staff providing associated technical services, other janitorial staff and staff who service equipment. School cleaners, whether salaried or employed on contract, are excluded.

For further details on the definition of staff, see [Schools, Australia, glossary](#).

## States and territories

Australia has a federal system of government comprising the national government, and the governments of the 6 states and 2 territories. In this report, the national government is generally referred to as 'the Australian Government'.

In tables and graphs in this report and the National Report on Schooling data portal, states and territories are listed in the order of New South Wales (NSW), Victoria (Vic), Queensland (Qld), South Australia (SA), Western Australia (WA), Tasmania (Tas), the Northern Territory (NT) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). This is the order used in ABS publications, including *Schools, Australia*.

## Student

A student is a person who, on the NSSC census date, is formally enrolled at a school and is active in a primary, secondary and/or special education program at that school. Students may be enrolled at more than one school; however, jurisdictions employ strategies that ensure that, as far as possible, students are reported only once in this collection.

Students not present at a school on the NSSC census date are included as students if they were expected to be absent for less than four continuous weeks (excluding school vacations).<sup>69</sup>

<sup>69</sup> For the schools census 2021, students were considered to be enrolled and active in an education program, even if that program had been temporarily disrupted by COVID-19. This included where programs were temporarily delivered online or remotely and even where schools were temporarily closed for COVID-19 related reasons.

School students undertaking VET (including through TAFE), school-based apprenticeships or traineeships, work placements or tertiary extension studies as a part of the student's school enrolment are in scope for the NSSC. The workload of these subjects or programs (which may take place outside the school premises) is included in a student's aggregate workload to determine whether a student is classified as full-time or part-time, and in calculating the FTE for part-time students.

### **Student attendance**

See *Attendance*.

### **Survey of Education and Work**

The SEW, conducted annually by the ABS, provides selected information on participation in education, highest educational attainment, transition from education to work, and current labour force and demographic characteristics for the population aged 15–74 years. Data from Education and Work is used to report participation and attainment data, including KPMs for schooling, in this report.

See [ABS, Education and Work, Australia methodology](#) for more information.

### **Teaching staff**

Teaching staff are staff who spend most of their time in contact with students. They support students either by direct class contact or on an individual basis and are engaged to impart school curriculum.

For the purposes of this report, teaching staff includes principals, deputy principals, campus principals and senior teachers mainly involved in administration. Teacher aides and assistants, and specialist support staff are excluded, except assistant teachers working in homeland learning centres and community schools in the Northern Territory.

### **User cost of capital**

In the government budget context, the user cost of capital is usually defined as the opportunity cost of funds tied up in capital assets used to deliver government services.

Capital charging is the actual procedure used for applying this cost of capital to the asset management process. As such, it is a means of representing the cost of capital used in the provision of government budgetary outputs.

### **VET for secondary students, VET in Schools**

Data on vocational education and training delivered to secondary students / VET in Schools was derived from the National VET in Schools Collection and the National VET Provider Collection, compiled by NCVET under the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) release 8.0.

## List of shortened forms

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ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACACA	Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACECQA	Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ACTSSC	Australian Capital Territory Senior Secondary Certificate of Education
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
AERO	Australian Education Research Organisation
AFaFE	Aboriginal Families as First Educators
AISNSW	Association of Independent Schools NSW
AISSA	Association of Independent Schools of South Australia
AISWA	Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
ANU	The Australian National University
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
ArtC	Arts as Civics Commons
ASCED	Australian Standard Classification of Education
ASGS	Australian Statistical Geography Standard
ATWD	Australian Teacher Workforce Data
AVETMISS	Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard
BEES	Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CaLDEYLink	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Early Years Link
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CCT	Critical and Creative Thinking
CTC	Capacity to Contribute
DSE	Disability Standards for Education
DMI	Direct Measure of Income
DTIF	Digital Technologies in Focus
EALD	English as an Additional Language or Dialect
ELSA	Early Learning STEM Australia
ERP	Estimated Resident Population

ESA	Education Services Australia
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
FFPOS	full fee-paying overseas students
FIPs	Flexible Industry Pathways
FTE	full-time equivalent
HALTs	Highly Accomplished teachers and Lead teachers
HSC	Higher School Certificate (NSW Senior Secondary Certificate of Education)
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
ISQ	Independent Schools Queensland
ISV	Independent Schools Victoria
KPM	Key Performance Measure
LGA	Local Government Area
NAP	National Assessment Program
NAP–CC	NAP–Civics and Citizenships
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy
NCCD	Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability
NCEC	National Catholic Education Commission
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NQF	National Quality Framework
NRIPS	net recurrent income per student
NSRA	National School Reform Agreement
NSSC	National Schools Statistics Collection
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
NTCET	Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OEY	Office for the Early Years
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PRA	Preschool Reform Agreement
QCE	Queensland Certificate of Education
Qld	Queensland
RAB	Refined Area Based (methodology)
RTO	Registered Training Organisation

SA	South Australia
SACE	South Australian Certificate of Education
SCRGSP	Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision
SES	socio-economic status
SEW	Survey of Education and Work
SRS	Schooling Resource Standard
SSCE	Senior Secondary Certificates of Education
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
SWANs	Students with Additional Needs
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
Tas	Tasmania
TCE	Tasmanian Certificate of Education
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UANP	Universal Access to Early Childhood Education
USI	Unique Student Identifier
VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VET	Vocational education and training
VETiS	VET in Schools
Vic	Victoria
VR	Virtual Reality
WA	Western Australia
WACE	Western Australian Certificate of Education