

# REPORT OF 2023 NAPLAN TEST INCIDENTS

## INTRODUCTION

From 2023, the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests are held during March each year. Prior to 2023, the tests were held in May. In 2023, the tests were held between 15 and 27 March. In total, approximately 4.4 million tests were sat by almost 1.3 million students.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is responsible for the central management of NAPLAN. The test administration authority (TAA) in each state and territory is responsible for the administration of the tests in schools.

ACARA works with state, territory and non-government representatives to ensure the NAPLAN tests are delivered in accordance with nationally agreed protocols so that the results validly, reliably and fairly capture student achievements. The *NAPLAN national protocols for test administration* and the *NAPLAN national protocols for test administration - alternative format (paper)* (collectively known as the 'National protocols for test administration' or the 'protocols') provide detailed information on all aspects of the administration of the tests and specify security requirements, uniform processes and procedures. This is to ensure students complete the tests under standardised conditions so that all students' results are comparable across Australia. Where individual students require special arrangements to complete the tests, these are provided at the school in consultation with the student, their parents/carers and the relevant TAA.

In the context of almost 1.3 million students at approximately 9,400 schools across the country participating in NAPLAN in 2023, there were very few allegations of breaches of the protocols. Where an allegation is made that the protocols have been breached, the relevant responsible entity<sup>1</sup> investigates and takes appropriate action. Reports are provided to ACARA summarising the test incident, including investigations and outcomes. This information is then compiled by ACARA and used to produce this test incidents report.

ACARA, in cooperation with states and territories, reviews the protocols annually to ensure they effectively support educators to administer the NAPLAN tests as required. This review is informed by analysis of the test incident information reported to ACARA to improve processes and education about the program.

In 2023, only schools using an approved alternative curriculum continued to complete all NAPLAN tests on paper. In total 35 schools completed NAPLAN on paper.

Technical issues associated with NAPLAN online are **not** considered test incidents for the

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of investigating breaches of the *NAPLAN national protocols for test administration*, the relevant 'responsible entity' will depend on the school governance arrangements and any existing agreements that allocate the responsibility for this activity. Responsible entities can include individuals, such as principals, or organisations, such as school boards or system authorities (including public education authorities), which have authority to receive and assess initial reports of test incidents. More information on investigating test incidents is provided in the *Guidelines for managing test incidents in schools* on the NAP website.

purposes of this report, unless they result in a breach of the protocols.

NAPLAN test incidents are defined as follows:

- Cheating (C)** A breach of the protocols amounting to cheating occurs when there is intent to gain an unfair advantage or improperly influence test results. This category does not include instances of student cheating, which, in itself, is not considered a breach of the protocols. Such incidents are dealt with through schools' existing procedures.
- Security (S)** A breach of the protocols affecting test security occurs when early knowledge of test content is obtained, which has a potential to compromise the integrity of the test results. Breaches of test security committed with intent to gain an unfair advantage are considered as cheating.
- General (G)** General breaches of the protocols include all other maladministrative practices that are not in accordance with the agreed protocols, but that do not amount to cheating or affect test security.

This report does not identify individuals or schools but provides information on breaches of the protocols in two tables as follows:

- **Table 1** provides information about the total number as well as the aggregated number of allegations of cheating, security breaches or general breaches of the protocols.
- **Table 2** provides further information about the aggregated substantiated cases, including a description of the incident, and information on what action has been taken as a consequence.

Test incidents are aggregated within jurisdictions where incidents are of a similar nature and where the outcomes were the same.

## ANALYSIS OF 2023 NAPLAN TEST INCIDENTS

The report of 2023 NAPLAN test incidents reinforce the fact that teachers and schools continue to work hard to ensure the integrity of the tests. This is evidenced both through the small number of incidents across the entire country, and through the number of schools reporting their own inadvertent breaches.

This report also plays an important educative role in reminding schools of the correct procedures. The transparency and concern shown by schools in reporting incidents demonstrates the schools' commitment to ensuring that the information they and their students receive from the tests is as useful as possible.

The below summary reports on the number of total incidents in 2023:

- Of the approximately 4.4 million NAPLAN tests sat by students nationally, 196 test incidents were substantiated, affecting 258 schools across the nation.

- Of the 196 total substantiated test incidents<sup>2</sup>, there were only three substantiated cheating breaches on the part of a school at the time of reporting.
- There was a total of 61 aggregated substantiated incidents; this is greater than the number of aggregated substantiated incidents in 2022 (48) but close to that in 2021 (65).
- Where incidents are substantiated (refer to Table 2), TAAs consider whether affected students' results are valid. This year's incidents demonstrate that in most of the situations where students might have had access to an unauthorised device there was no evidence that led to their results being compromised.
- The majority of total substantiated incidents (138) were general breaches that related to maladministration. This includes instances of test procedures not being followed correctly, and tests being delivered in the incorrect order. Schools and TAAs are increasingly identifying and reporting these types of breaches.
- Of the total substantiated incidents, there were 55 substantiated security breaches that included instances of test materials not being kept secure during the test security period, and/or photos being taken during testing that were posted on social media.
- As in previous years, many of the substantiated incidents were directly reported to the TAA by the schools, representing a broad level of understanding of the Protocols and significant efforts by schools to ensure transparency in their processes. This is testimony to the professionalism of teachers and school administrators.

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<sup>2</sup> Test incident reports prior to 2019 did not report the total of disaggregated incidents, so caution should be taken when making comparisons with previous test incident figures.

**Table 1: Summary of reported incidents - all allegations of cheating breaches, security breaches and general breaches of test protocols, 2023**

Incident category	Substantiated	Unsubstantiated	Under investigation	Total
Cheating breach (C)	3	0	0	3
Security breach (S)	55	0	0	55
General breach (G)	138	3	0	141
Total incidents	196	3	0	199
Total aggregated incidents*	61	0	0	61
Total schools affected	258	3	0	261

\* Test incidents (within jurisdictions) were aggregated where incidents are of a similar nature and where the outcomes were the same. Total aggregated incidents show the total of each type of incident, where one or more schools was impacted within a jurisdiction. See Table 2 for details of substantiated incidents and aggregations.

The format of this table has been revised in 2023 to remove paper incidents as all breaches reported were online. Caution should be taken when making comparisons with previous reports' test incident figures.

- Table 1 reports *Total incidents* (disaggregated) as well as *Total aggregated incidents* and *Total schools affected*.
- Table 2 continues to report incidents investigated and substantiated in more detail.

**TABLE 2: Incidents investigated and substantiated**

	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2023 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
1	ACT	G	4.3.10	Test material made public during test security period.  Relevant to one class at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
2	ACT	G	2.3.6	Inappropriate assistance provided to students during the test.  Relevant to two students at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data compromised and withheld.
3	ACT	G	8.12.1	Post-test administration procedures not followed correctly.  Relevant to one class at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
4	NSW	S	4.3.10	Photo taken of test environment and made public during test security period.  Relevant to 43 schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
5	NSW	S	8.6.1	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to test schedule.  Relevant to one year level at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
6	NSW	G	8.5.2	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to test schedule.  Relevant to four schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
7	NSW	G	8.5.2	Tests provided/distributed to students in incorrect sequence.  Relevant to 15 schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.

	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2023 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
8	NSW	G	8.6.2	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to catch-up test.  Relevant to three students at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
9	NSW	G	5.1.1	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to participating year levels.  Relevant to six students across five schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data compromised and withheld.
10	NSW	G	8.9.3	Test administration procedures not followed correctly for absent student.  Relevant to two students across two schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
11	NSW	G	8.9.10	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to providing sufficient equipment.  Relevant to two classes at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
12	NSW	G	8.9.7	Student not properly supervised during the test for a period of time.  Relevant to one student at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
13	NSW	G	8.9.11	Inappropriate assistance provided to student during the test.  Relevant to one student at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data compromised and withheld.
14	NSW	G	6.5.1	Adjustment provided without TAA approval.  Relevant to three students across two schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.

	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2023 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
15	NSW	G	6.5.1	Adjustment provided without parent approval.  Relevant to one student at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
16	NSW	G	6.9.9	Scribe rules not followed.  Relevant to 11 students at 11 schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data compromised and withheld.
17	NSW	G	6.9.8, 6.9.9	Permission not sought for the use of a scribe and scribe rules not followed.  Relevant to six students across four schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data compromised and withheld.
18	NSW	G	6.9.8	Permission not sought for the use of a scribe.  Relevant to six students across five schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
19	NSW	G	6.16.2	Scribe provided for a temporary injury.  Relevant to one student at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data compromised and withheld.
20	NT	S	4.2.3	Test materials not delivered to school in line with correct procedures.  Relevant to one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.

	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2023 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
21	NT	S	8.5.2	Tests provided/distributed to student in incorrect sequence.  Relevant to four students across two schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
22	NT	S	4.3.10	Test material made public during test security period.  Relevant to two schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
23	NT	G	8.5	Tests provided/distributed to student in incorrect sequence.  Relevant to seven students at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  No evidence that data were compromised.
24	NT	G	6.13.1	Adjustment/s provided without appropriate approval.  Relevant to one student at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  No evidence that data were compromised
25	NT	G	8.11.3	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to test disruption.  Relevant to six students at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
26	NT	G	4.3.8	Test materials not delivered to school in line with correct procedures.  Relevant to one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  No evidence that data were compromised.



	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2023 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
27	NT	G	5.1.1	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to participating year levels.  Relevant to one student at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  No evidence that data were compromised.
28	NT	G	5.1.1	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to participating year levels.  Relevant to one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
29	NT	G	4.3.8	Completed test booklets were lost by contractor and unrecovered.  Relevant to two students at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  No evidence that data were compromised.
30	QLD	S	4.3.10	Test material made public during test security period.  Relevant to one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
31	QLD	S	8.5.4	Pre-test administration procedures not followed correctly.  Relevant to two schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
32	QLD	G	8.8.1	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to test administration preparation.  Relevant to 21 schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
33	QLD	G	5.1.1	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to participation.  Relevant to one student at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
34	QLD	G	6.6.1	Unauthorised assistance provided to student during test.  Relevant to 18 students across three schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.

	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2023 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
35	QLD	G	8.5	Tests provided/distributed to student in incorrect sequence. Relevant to 29 schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
36	QLD	G	8.6.1	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to test security window. Relevant to eight students across two schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
37	QLD	G	8.9.8	Unauthorised access to device. Relevant to nine schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
38	SA	G	8.5	Tests provided/distributed to student in incorrect sequence. Relevant to sixty-three students across two schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
39	SA	G	8.9	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to appropriate behaviours. Relevant to thirty-six students across six schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
40	SA	G	8.6.5	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to catch-up test. Relevant to one student at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
41	SA	G	8.9.8	Unauthorised access to device. Relevant to one class of twenty-two students at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.

	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2023 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
42	TAS	S	4.3.10	Test material briefly made public during test security period.  Relevant to a small number of students across two schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  No evidence that data were compromised.
43	TAS	G	8.5.1	Tests provided/distributed to student in incorrect sequence.  Relevant to one student at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  No evidence that data were compromised.
44	TAS	G	8.5.2	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to test security window.  Relevant to two schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  No evidence that data were compromised.
45	TAS	G	5.6.4	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to sanctioned abandonment.  Relevant to ten schools.	Schools counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
46	VIC	G	8.5.1	Tests provided/distributed to student in incorrect sequence.  Relevant to nine schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
47	VIC	G	4.3.10	Photo taken of test environment and made public during test security period.  Relevant to 29 schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
48	VIC	G	8.9.9	Unauthorised access to device.  Relevant to eight students across six schools.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.

	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2023 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
49	VIC	G	8.9.7	Students not properly supervised during the test for a period of time. Relevant to one class at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. No evidence that data were compromised.
50	VIC	G	2.2.3	Influence exerted on parents to withdraw their child from testing. Relevant to one student at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
51	VIC	G	2.2.1	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to participation. Relevant to one student at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.
52	VIC	G	2.3.4	Test administration procedures not followed correctly during test. Relevant to one class at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data compromised and withheld.
53	VIC	G	2.3.4	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to test time. Relevant to one class at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. No evidence that data were compromised.
54	VIC	G	2.3.2	Unauthorised access to material. Relevant to one student at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years. Data not compromised.

	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2023 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
55	VIC	G	6.12.5	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to the use of a support person.  Relevant to one student at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data compromised and withheld.
56	WA	C	8.9.2	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to appropriate behaviours.  Relevant to one class at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data compromised and withheld.
57	WA	C	8.9.1	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to appropriate behaviours.  Relevant to one student at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  No evidence that data were compromised.
58	WA	C	8.9.1	Inappropriate assistance provided to student during the test.  Relevant to one student at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data compromised and withheld.
59	WA	S	4.3.10	Test material made public during test security period.  Relevant to two classes at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.
60	WA	S	4.3.10	Test material made public during test security period.  Relevant to one class at one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.

	State/ territory	Incident category (C, S, G)	2023 National protocol clause(s) breached	Description of incident	Action taken and outcome
61	WA	G	5.1.1	Test administration procedures not followed correctly relating to participating year levels.  Relevant to one school.	School counselled and undertook to improve procedures for future years.  Data not compromised.

\*Test incidents are aggregated where incidents are of a similar nature and where the outcomes were the same.