# 4 School education

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| Attachment tables are identified in references throughout this chapter by a ‘4A’ prefix (for example, table 4A.1) and are available from the website www.pc.gov.au/rogs/2017. |
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This chapter focuses on performance information for government‑funded school education in Australia.

All abbreviations used in this Report are available in a complete list in volume A: Approach to performance reporting.

## 4.1 Profile of school education

### Service overview

Schooling aims to provide education for all young people. The structure of school education varies across states and territories.

#### Compulsory school education

Entry to school education was compulsory in all states and territories for any child of 5 years of age or older at the start of the 2015 (ABS 2016). Generally, minimum starting ages restrict enrolment to children aged between four and a half and five years (ABS 2016). (See chapter 3, table 3A.1, for more details.)

National mandatory requirements for schooling — as agreed in the National Youth Participation Requirement (NYPR) — came into effect through relevant State and Territory government legislation in 2010. Under the NYPR, there is a mandatory requirement for all young people to participate in schooling until they complete year 10, and if they have completed year 10, in full time in education, training or employment, or a combination of these activities, until 17 years of age (ABS 2016).

#### Type and level of school education

Schools are the institutions within which organised school education takes place (see section 4.4 for a definition of ‘school’). Schools are differentiated by the type and level of education they provide, which for 2015 are categorised as the following.

* *Primary schools* provide education from the school level ‘pre‑year 1’ (the first year of primary school — see section 4.4 for the naming conventions used in each state and territory). Primary school education extends to year 6 (year 7 in SA). (Prior to 2015, primary school education also extended to year 7 in Queensland and WA.)
* *Secondary schools* provide education from the end of primary school to year 12.
* *Special schools* provide education for students that exhibit one or more of the following characteristics before enrolment: mental or physical disability or impairment; slow learning ability; social or emotional problems; or in custody, on remand or in hospital (ABS 2016).

#### Affiliation, ownership and management

Schools can also be differentiated by their affiliation, ownership and management, which are presented for two broad categories.

* *Government schools* are owned and managed by State and Territory governments.
* *Non‑government schools*, including Catholic or Independent schools, are owned and managed by non‑government establishments and are often affiliated with religious or philosophical beliefs and values.

### Roles and responsibilities

Under constitutional arrangements, State and Territory governments are responsible for ensuring the delivery and regulation of schooling to all children of school age in their jurisdiction. State and Territory governments provide most of the school education funding in Australia, which is administered under their own legislation. They determine curricula, register schools, regulate school activities and are directly responsible for the administration of government schools. They also provide support services used by both government and non‑government schools. Non‑government schools operate under conditions determined by State and Territory government registration authorities.

From 1 January 2014, Australian Government funding for government and non‑government schools was through the Students First funding arrangements, as determined by the *Australian Education Act 2013* (the Act). Prior to 1 January 2014, Australian Government funding was provided through the National Schools Specific Purpose Payment. State and Territory governments have discretion as to how to apply the funding to achieve the agreed outcomes. Detailed information on these funding arrangements can be found in box 4.6.

The Australian Government and State and Territory governments work together to progress and implement national policy priorities, such as: a national curriculum; national statistics and reporting; national testing; and, teaching standards (PM&C 2014). The Education Council — comprising Australian, State and Territory, and New Zealand education ministers — is the principal forum for developing national priorities and strategies for schooling.

### Funding

Nationally in 2014‑15, Australian, State and Territory government recurrent expenditure on school education was $53.0 billion, a 4.1 per cent real increase from 2013‑14. State and Territory governments provided the majority of funding (71.9 per cent), which varies across jurisdictions (figure 4.1).

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| Figure 4.1 Proportion of total school education government recurrent expenditure, 2014‑15**a** |
| |  | | --- | | Figure 4.1 Proportion of total school education government recurrent expenditure, 2014-15  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | |
| a See table 4A.7 for detailed footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: Education Council (unpublished) *National Schools Statistics Collection* (NSSC); Australian Government Department of Education and Training (unpublished); Australian, State and Territory governments (unpublished); table 4A.7. |
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* *Government schools* accounted for $40.3 billion (75.9 per cent). State and Territory governments were the major funding source for government schools ($34.9 billion, or 86.6 per cent of government schools funding).
* *Non‑government schools* accounted for $12.8 billion (24.1 per cent). The Australian Government was the major funding source for non‑government schools ($9.5 billion, or 74.5 per cent of non‑government schools funding) (table 4A.7).

The share of government funding to government and non‑government schools varies across jurisdictions and over time according to jurisdictional approaches to funding schools (see box 4.6) and is affected by the characteristics of school structures and the student body in each state and territory (see below).

Nationally in 2014‑15, of Australian, State and Territory government recurrent expenditure on *government* schools: 53.9 per cent was on in‑school primary ($21.7 billion); 41.9 per cent was on in‑school secondary ($16.9 billion); and, 4.2 per cent was on out‑of‑school ($1.7 billion) (table 4A.10). Data on government recurrent expenditure to *non‑government* schools cannot be disaggregated between primary and secondary education.

This Report presents expenditure related to government funding only, not to the full cost to the community of providing school education. Caution should be taken when comparing expenditure data for government and non‑government schools, because governments provide only part of school funding. Governments provided 57.1 per cent of non‑government school funding in 2015, with the remaining 42.9 per cent sourced from private fees and fundraising (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, unpublished).

Historical data on government recurrent expenditure are available in tables 4A.7–8.

### Size and scope

#### Schools

In 2015, there were 9404 schools in Australia (6224 primary schools, 1409 secondary schools, 1323 combined schools, and 448 special schools) (table 4A.3). The majority of schools were government owned and managed (70.6 per cent) (tables 4A.1–3).

Settlement patterns (population dispersion), the age distribution of the population and educational policy influence the distribution of schools by size and level in different jurisdictions.

Detailed data on school size and level can be found in *Schools Australia, 2015* (ABS Cat. no. 4221.0).

#### Student body

##### Full time and full time equivalent students

Nationally in 2015, there were 3.7 million full time students (table 4A.3), which represents 15.7 per cent of the Australian population (table 4A.5).

While the majority of students undertake schooling full time, there were 20 279 part time students in 2015 (predominantly in secondary schools), which equated to 8148 full time equivalent (FTE) student enrolments (see section 4.4 for a definition of FTE student) (table 4A.4). The prevalence of part time students varies across jurisdictions due to different policy and organisational arrangements for part time study, and different definitions of what constitutes part time study.

Nationally in 2015, there were 3.7 million FTE students (table 4A.3).

* *Government schools* had 2.4 million FTE students enrolled. The proportion of FTE students that were enrolled in a government school was 65.1 per cent in 2015. This proportion has remained steady since 2013, following a decrease from 67.8 per cent in 2006 (table 4A.6).
* *Non‑government schools* had 1.3 million FTE students enrolled. The proportion of FTE students that were enrolled in non‑government schools increased from 30.5 per cent at primary level to 40.8 per cent at secondary level (tables 4A.2).

A higher proportion of FTE students were enrolled in primary schools (57.1 per cent) than in secondary schools (42.9 per cent) (table 4A.3). SA has the highest proportion of students enrolled in primary school education (61.4 per cent) as it is the only jurisdiction that still includes year 7 in primary school.

##### Special needs groups

Given that the NYPR mandates that schooling is compulsory to year 10, all equity groups are represented in the student body. However, some groups of students in school education have been identified as having special needs. The number and proportion of full time students who are from these special needs groups can vary across jurisdiction and school sector (that is, government or non‑government) (tables 4A.26–28). Government schools have a higher proportion of students from selected special needs groups than non‑government schools, including for:

* *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students —* in 2015, 6.9 per cent in government schools and 2.4 per cent in non‑government schools (table 4A.23)
* *students with disability* — in 2015, 6.1 per cent in government schools and 4.0 per cent in non‑government schools (table 4A.25)
* *geographically remote and very remote students* — in 2015, 1.6 per cent in government schools and 0.8 per cent in non‑government schools for remote students, and 1.1 per cent in government schools and 0.3 per cent in non‑government schools for very remote students (table 4A.29).

Conversely, non‑government schools have a higher proportion of students that are:

* *students with a language background other than English* — in 2011, 20.4 per cent in government schools and 24.1 per cent in non‑government schools (table 4A.24).

Another special needs group which is a focus of this Report is:

* *low socioeconomic background students* — data by parental education/employment status is presented as a proxy for socioeconomic status.

## 4.2 Framework of performance indicators

Box 4.1 describes the vision and objectives for the school education system. The vision and objectives align with the educational goals for young Australians in the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA 2008), the National Education Agreement (NEA) (COAG 2009). In addition, performance indicators in this chapter are aligned with school education indicators in the NEA, where relevant.

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| Box 4.1 Objectives for School education |
| Improving educational outcomes for all young Australians is central to the nation’s social and economic prosperity and will position young people to live fulfilling, productive and responsible lives. The goals for school education are that: 1) Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence; and 2) all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens.  Australia’s governments aim to have a school education system:   * that benefits all young Australians, providing them with essential literacy and numeracy skills, a solid foundation in knowledge and understanding linked with complex skills that underpin problem solving, critical thinking and creativity, so they can reach their full potential * where Australian students excel by international standards * that reduces the educational disadvantage of children * that enables young people to make a successful transition from school to work and/or further study.   For these goals to be achieved, the school education system aims to provide all young Australians with access to high‑quality schooling that:   * engages all students and promotes student participation, attendance and successful transitions through schooling * has a focus on quality teaching and world‑class curriculum and assessment.   Governments aim for school education services to meet these objectives in an equitable and efficient manner. |
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The performance indicator framework provides information on equity, effectiveness and efficiency and distinguishes the outputs and outcomes of school education services (figure 4.2).

The performance indicator framework shows which data are complete and comparable in the 2017 Report. For data that are not considered directly comparable, text includes relevant caveats and supporting commentary. Chapter 1 discusses data comparability, data completeness and information on data quality from a Report‑wide perspective (chapter 1). In addition to section 4.1, the Report’s Statistical context chapter (chapter 2) contains data that may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this chapter.

Improvements to performance reporting for School education are ongoing and will include identifying indicators to fill gaps in reporting against key objectives, improving the comparability and completeness of data and reviewing proxy indicators to see if more direct measures can be developed.

| Figure 4.2 School education performance indicator framework |
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| | Figure 4.2 School education performance indicator framework  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | | --- | |
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## 4.3 Key performance indicator results

Different delivery contexts and locations influence the equity, effectiveness and efficiency of school education services.

### Outputs

Outputs are the services delivered (while outcomes are the impact of these services on the status of an individual or group) (see chapter 1). Output information is also critical for equitable, efficient and effective management of government services.

### Equity

#### Access — Attendance by target group

‘Attendance by target group’ is an indicator of governments’ objective for school education services to be provided in an equitable manner (box 4.2).

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| Box 4.2 Attendance by target group |
| ‘Attendance by target group’ is defined by two attendance measures.   * ‘Student attendance rate, by target group’ — compares the attendance rate of those in the target group (for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students) with the attendance rate of those outside the target group (non‑Indigenous). Student attendance rate is the number of actual full time equivalent student days attended by full time students as a percentage of the total number of possible student attendance days attended over the period.   Data reported for the attendance rate are:   * not comparable across jurisdictions — NSW government school data are not yet collected on a comparable basis to other states and territories * complete for the current reporting period (subject to caveats). All required 2016 data are available for all jurisdictions. * ‘Student attendance level, by target group’ — compares the attendance level of those in the target group (for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) with the attendance level of those outside the target group (non‑Indigenous people). Student attendance level is the proportion of full time students whose attendance rate is greater than or equal to 90 per cent over the period.   Data are collected for semester 1 of each year and results may not be representative of the entire school year. |
| A high or increasing student attendance rate and student attendance level is desirable.  Data reported for the attendance level are:   * comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions for 2016. Prior to 2016, data for non‑government schools were collected on a different basis to the nationally agreed standard for which data for government schools have been collected, and comparisons across the two sectors should be made with caution * incomplete for the current reporting period. Required 2016 data were not available for all NSW government schools. |
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##### Student attendance rate

Nationally in 2016, the attendance rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across all schools was similar across year 1 to year 6 (and was 86.2 per cent for years 1­­–6 combined) (tables 4A.33 and 4A.37). From year 7, attendance rates decreased as the year level increased (table 4A.33). However, attendance rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were lower and decreased further than for non‑Indigenous students (figure 4.3). This pattern was observed for both government and non‑government schools (table 4A.33).

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| Figure 4.3 Student attendance rate for year 6 to year 10, by Indigenous status, all schools, 2016 (per cent)**a, b** |
| |  | | --- | | Figure 4.3 Student attendance rate for year 6 to year 10, by Indigenous status, all schools, 2016 (per cent)  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | |
| a The non‑Indigenous attendance rate includes the total area shaded for each year level. b See box 4.2 and table 4A.33 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats.  *Source*: ACARA (unpublished); table 4A.33. |
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For years 1–6 combined, 7–10 combined and 1–10 combined (tables 4A.35–37), attendance rates generally declined as remoteness increased, with the decline greater for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students than for non‑Indigenous students.

##### Student attendance level (proportion of full time students whose attendance rate is greater than or equal to 90 per cent over the period)

Nationally in 2016, the attendance level for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in years 1–6 was 50.7 per cent per cent at government schools and 63.3 per cent at non‑government schools (tables 4A.40‑41). Consistent with the student attendance rate, the attendance level was steady for years 1–6 and decreased from year 7 to year 10. Non‑Indigenous students in government and non‑government schools had higher attendance levels than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across all year levels in all jurisdictions (figure 4.4 and table 4A.38).

For years 1–6 combined and 7–10 combined (and therefore 1–10 combined), the attendance level generally declined as remoteness increased, with the decline greater for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students than non‑Indigenous students (tables 4A.40−41).

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| Figure 4.4 Student attendance level, by Indigenous status, government schools, 2016 (per cent)**a, b, c** |
| |  | | --- | | Figure 4.4 Student attendance level, by Indigenous status, government schools, 2016 (per cent)  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | |
| a The non‑Indigenous attendance level includes the total area shaded for each year level. b See box 4.2 and table 4A.38 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. c Data for NSW are not available. The Australian total excludes NSW.  *Source*: ACARA (unpublished); table 4A.38. |
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### Effectiveness

#### Access — Attendance and participation

‘Attendance and participation’ is an indicator of governments’ objective that school education services engages all students and promotes student participation, attendance and successful transitions through schooling (box 4.17).

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| Box 4.3 Attendance and participation |
| Attendance and participation’ is defined by separate attendance and participation measures.  *Student attendance*   * ‘Student attendance rate’ * ‘Student attendance level’.   See box 4.2 for indicator interpretation information on student attendance.  A high or increasing student attendance rate and student attendance level is desirable. |
| *Student participation*   * ‘Proportion of 15–19 year olds enrolled in school’ — the number of school students of a particular age expressed as a proportion of the estimated resident population of the same age. * ‘Proportion of 15–19 year olds who have successfully completed at least one unit of competency as part of a Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualification at Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Certificate level II or above’ — the number VET unit completers aged 15–19 years expressed as a proportion of the estimated resident population of the same age.   A higher or increasing participation rate suggests an improvement in educational outcomes through greater access to or participation in school education. However, these measures need to be interpreted with care as:   * rates are influenced by jurisdictional differences in age/grade structures, and the participation rate is an age‑based rate * an overestimation of enrolment in some states and territories may occur due to students: moving interstate during a school year; multiple enrolments by individual students; or, students residing in one jurisdiction enrolling in schools in another jurisdiction (as the measures are based on enrolled population as a proportion of the resident population). In particular, enrolment rates are affected in the ACT due to NSW residents from surrounding areas enrolling in ACT. This is referred to as cross‑border enrolment.   The participation measures *do not* provide information on young people who develop their talents and capacities through other education and training options — for example, work‑based training and enrolment in a VET course. A broader participation indicator that accounts for some of these factors is reported in the Child care, education and training sector overview. Data reported for these measures are:   * comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time. * complete for the current reporting period (subject to caveats). All required 2015 and 2016 data are available for all jurisdictions. |
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##### Student attendance — Attendance rate

In 2016, the attendance rate for all school students across year levels 1–6 was 93.5 per cent (table 4A.37). The year 1–6 attendance rates have remained steady since 2014 and are similar across jurisdictions and within each state and territory over time.

Nationally in 2016, attendance rates decreased from year 7 to year 10 — from 93.1 per cent to 89.6 per cent (table 4A.33). Across most jurisdictions, there has not been a substantial change in attendance rates from 2014 to 2016 for government and non‑government schools (figure 4.5).

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| Figure 4.5 Student attendance rates, years 7–10, by sector (per cent)**a** |
| |  | | --- | | Figure 4.5 Student attendance rates, years 7–10, by sector (per cent)  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | |
| a See box 4.3 and tables 4A.35–36 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats.  *Source*: ACARA (unpublished); tables 4A.35–36. |
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##### Student attendance — Attendance level (proportion of full time students whose attendance rate is greater than or equal to 90 per cent over the period)

Results for the student attendance level follow a similar pattern to those for the student attendance rate (table 4A.38).

For government schools, the attendance level for year 1–6 was 78.3 per cent (table 4A.40). The attendance level decreased from 75.5 per cent in year 7 to 63.7 per cent in year 10 (table 4A.38). Attendance level data for government and non‑government schools are in tables 4A.38–41.

##### Student participation — Proportion of 15–19 year olds enrolled in school

Nationally in 2015, 57.6 per cent of 15–19 year olds were enrolled in school (table 4A.30), with the rate slightly higher for females (58.1 per cent) than males (57.1 per cent). School participation rates declined as students exceeded the maximum compulsory school age and varied by jurisdiction, age and sex (figure 4.6 and tables 4A.30‑31).

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| Figure 4.6 School participation rate for 15–19 year olds, all schools, 2015 (per cent)**a** |
| |  | | --- | | Figure 4.6 School participation rate for 15–19 year olds, all schools, 2015 (per cent)  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | |
| a See box 4.3 and table 4A.31 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: ABS (2016 and unpublished) *Schools Australia 2015*, Cat. no. 4221.0; table 4A.31. |
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##### Student participation — Achievement of VET competencies

School‑aged people may participate in VET by either:

* participating in ‘VET in Schools’, which allows school students to undertake VET as a part of their senior secondary certificate. Nationally in 2015, there were 257 100 VET in Schools students (NCVER 2016)
* remaining engaged in education through a Registered Training Organisation.

Nationally in 2015, 476 400 people aged 15 to 19 years successfully completed at least one unit of competency as part of a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above (at a school or Registered Training Organisation), representing 32.3 per cent of the 15 to 19 year old population (figure 4.7 and table 4A.32).

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| Figure 4.7 Proportion of 15–19 year olds who successfully completed at least one unit of competency as part of a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above, 2015 (per cent)**a** |
| |  | | --- | | Figure 4.7 Proportion of 15–19 year olds who successfully completed at least one unit of competency as part of a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above, 2015 (per cent)  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | |
| aSee box 4.3 and table 4A.32 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)*, National VET Provider Collection* (various years); NCVER*, National VET in Schools Collection* (various years); ABS *Australian Demographic Statistics* (various years) (Cat. no. 3101.0); table 4A.32. |
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#### Appropriateness — Student engagement

‘Student engagement’ is an indicator of governments’ objective that the school education system aims to provide all young Australians with access to high‑quality schooling that engages all students (box 4.4).

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| Box 4.4 Student engagement |
| ‘Student engagement’ is yet to be defined and this indicator is under development. Further research into the drivers and outcomes of student engagement will continue to inform this area.  Student engagement is regarded as relevant to student outcomes, and is closely connected to learning. There are also important links with student wellbeing, although the Australian evidence base on this is inconclusive.  Attendance is sometimes seen as a proxy for student engagement with evidence of the relationship between poor attendance and poor student outcomes, particularly once patterns of non‑attendance are established (Hancock et al. 2013). However, measurement of attendance alone is not an adequate proxy for student engagement. The performance of students with poor engagement may be affected so they may not reach the end of compulsory schooling satisfactorily, or their potential. |
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| Box 4.4 (continued) |
| Student engagement covers a number of areas, including:   * *behavioural engagement* — which may be measured by identifiable behaviours and by attendance, attainment and retention * *emotional engagement* — which may be analysed by seeking students’ attitude to learning and school * *cognitive engagement* — which has been less frequently measured in a classroom setting, but research studies have used measures such as inattention, distraction and off‑task behaviour.   The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015 includes a range of questions for students to assess their sense of belonging at school, which relates to the concept of emotional engagement. A selection of results are provided in table 4A.96.  Some items from the National School Survey developed by the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority (ACARA) are also used by some State and Territory governments to collect information on student engagement. |
| *Source*: Hancock, Shepherd, Lawrence and Zubrick (2013); Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER unpublished). |
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#### Appropriateness — Retention

‘Retention’ to the final years of schooling is an indicator of governments’ objective that engages all students and promotes student participation, attendance and successful transitions through schooling (box 4.5).

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| Box 4.5 Retention |
| ‘Retention’ (apparent retention rate) is defined as the number of full time school students in a designated level/year of education as a percentage of their respective ‘commencing’ cohort group. Data are reported for:   * the proportion of students commencing secondary school at year 7 or 8 and continuing to year 10 * the proportion of students commencing secondary school at year 7 or 8 and continuing to year 12 * the proportion of year 10 students continuing to year 12.   Data are reported for all students and by Indigenous status and government/non‑government schools.  A higher or increasing rate is desirable as it suggests that a larger proportion of students are continuing in school, which may result in improved educational outcomes. |
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| Box 4.5 (continued) |
| This indicator does not include part time or ungraded students (which has implications for the interpretation of results for all jurisdictions — see tables 4A.1–3) or provide information on students who pursue year 12 (or equivalent qualifications) through non‑school pathways.  The term ‘apparent’ is used because the measure is derived from total numbers of students in each of the relevant year levels, not by tracking the retention of individual students. Care needs be taken in interpreting this measure as it does not take account of factors such as:   * students repeating a year of education or returning to education after a period of absence * movement or migration of students between school sectors, between states/territories and between countries * the impact of full fee paying overseas students.   These factors may lead to apparent retention rates that exceed 100 per cent.  Apparent retention rates are affected by factors that vary across jurisdictions. For this reason, variations in apparent retention rates over time within jurisdictions may be more useful than comparisons across jurisdictions.  Data reported for these measures are:   * comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time * complete for the current reporting period (subject to caveats). All required 2015 data are available for all jurisdictions. |
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##### Retention — year 7 or 8 to year 10

The retention rate from the commencement of secondary school at year 7 or 8 to year 10 was above 99 per cent in most jurisdictions in 2015 (the national rate was 101.8 per cent) (table 4A.42). The retention rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was also near to 100 per cent (98.9 per cent), but lower than that of non‑Indigenous students (102.0 per cent), although this varies across jurisdictions (table 4A.42).

##### Retention — year 7 or 8 to year 12

The retention rate from the commencement of secondary school (at year 7 or 8) to year 12 was 84.0 per cent in 2015, an increase of 9.3 percentage points from 2006 (figure 4.8).

From 2006 to 2015, the retention rate for students in:

* *government schools* increased 13.3 percentage points to 81.8 per cent in 2015 (table 4A.45)
* *non‑government schools* showed less growth, but remained higher than government schools across the period and was 87.2 per cent in 2015 (table 4A.46).

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| Figure 4.8 Apparent retention rate from year 7/8 to year 12, full time secondary students, 2006 to 2015**a** |
| |  | | --- | | Figure 4.8 Apparent retention rate from year 7/8 to year 12, full time secondary students, 2006 to 2015   More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | |
| a See box 4.3 and table 4A.44 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats.  *Source*: ABS (2016) *Schools Australia 2015*, Cat. no. 4221.0; table 4A.44. |
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Retention rates from year 7/8 to year 12 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in all schools were lower than those for non‑Indigenous students in all jurisdictions in 2015 (table 4A.44).

##### Retention — year 10 to year 12

Nationally in 2015, the apparent rate of all full time students from year 10 to year 12 was 82.7 per cent, an increase from 76.2 per cent in 2006 (table 4A.44). The rate for government schools was 79.2 per cent and for non‑government schools was 88.0 per cent (tables 4A.45–46).

For the period 2006–2015, the retention from year 10 to year 12 has grown for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non‑Indigenous students. Nationally in 2015, the rate for:

* *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander* students was 60.6 per cent, an increase of 13.8 percentage points from 2006
* *non‑Indigenous* students was 83.8 per cent, an increase of 6.7 percentage points from 2006 (figure 4.9).

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| Figure 4.9 Apparent retention rates from year 10 to year 12, full time students, by Indigenous status, 2006 to 2015**a, b** |
| |  | | --- | | Figure 4.9 Apparent retention rates from year 10 to year 12, full time students, by Indigenous status, 2006 to 2015  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | |
| a The non‑Indigenous retention rate is the total area shaded for each year. b See box 4.3 and table 4A.44 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats.  *Source*: ABS (2016) *Schools Australia 2015*, Cat. no. 4221.0; table 4A.44. |
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#### Appropriateness — Quality

An ‘Appropriateness — Quality’ indicator for school education has not yet been developed, but will relate to governments’ objective that the school education system aims provides all young Australians with access to high‑quality schooling that has a focus on quality teaching and world‑class curriculum and assessment.

### Efficiency

An objective of the Steering Committee is to publish comparable estimates of costs. Ideally, such comparison should include the full range of costs to government. This chapter does not report on non‑government sources of funding, and so does not compare the efficiency of government and non‑government schools.

For information on the expenditure estimates see:

* box 4.6 for information on the identification and allocation of funding
* box 4.7 and attachment table footnotes for information on the comparability of the source expenditure data for government schools and non‑government schools
* table 4A.20 for the treatment of assets by school education agencies.

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| Box 4.6 School expenditure data reported in this chapter |
| Efficiency indicators in this chapter are based on financial year recurrent expenditure on government and non‑government schools by the Australian Government and State and Territory governments. Capital expenditure is generally excluded, but as Students First funding cannot be separated into capital and recurrent expenditure, these payments are treated as recurrent expenditure in this chapter. Expenditure relating to funding sources other than government (such as parent contributions and fees) are excluded.  Sources of data — government recurrent expenditure on government schools  Total recurrent expenditure on government schools is unpublished data sourced from the *National Schools Statistics Collection* (NSSC), under the auspices of the Education Council.   * Each State and Territory government reports to the Education Council on its expenditure on government schools (table 4A.10). Expenditure on government schools comprises: employee costs (including salaries, superannuation, workers compensation, payroll tax, termination and long service leave, sick leave); capital costs (depreciation and user cost of capital); umbrella departmental costs; and other costs (including rent and utilities). * The Australian Government reports its allocation to each State and Territory for government schools, consistent with Treasury Final Budget Outcomes — including the Students First funding and a range of National Partnership (NP) payments (table 4A.9). * To avoid double counting, Australian Government allocations are subtracted from the State and Territory expenditure to identify ‘net’ State and Territory government expenditure (tables 4A.7‑8).   The Education Council provides unpublished data on the user cost of capital for government schools, imputed as 8 per cent of the written down value of assets (table 4A.19).  Sources of data — government recurrent expenditure on non‑government schools  Total recurrent expenditure on non‑government schools is a combination of unpublished data from the NSSC and State and Territory governments, and comprises the following.   * Each State and Territory government provides unpublished data on its contributions to non‑government schools (tables 4A.7‑8). * The Australian Government reports its allocation to each State and Territory for non‑government schools, consistent with Treasury Final Budget Outcomes — including the Students First funding and NP payments see (table 4A.9).   Government recurrent expenditure on non‑government schools *does not* include user cost of capital. Tables 4A.7–8 also include expenditure data from government sources for all schools.  Allocation of funding  Students First funding — Australian Government  From 2014 to 2017, Commonwealth recurrent funding for all schools is transitioning under the *Australian Education Act 2013* from levels under the previous funding arrangements towards the Schooling Resource Standard funding arrangement levels. Funding is calculated with reference to a base amount plus loadings to target student and school disadvantage including |
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| Box 4.6 (continued) |
| students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, students with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with low English proficiency, and school size and location. For most non‑government schools, the base amount is discounted by the anticipated capacity of their school community to financially contribute towards the school’s operating costs.  Commonwealth recurrent funding is provided to approved authorities for the purpose of providing school education. Although calculated to reflect the need of each student and school, the approved authority for the school is not required to spend that funding on any particular student or group of students; approved authorities have the flexibility to allocate the funding for the purpose of providing school education that best meets the needs of their students, taking into account other revenue sources and budgetary restrictions. |
| State and Territory governments  In general, State and Territory government schools systems are funded based on a variety of formulas to determine a school’s recurrent or base allocation, with weightings and multipliers added for students facing disadvantage. For non‑government schools, State and Territory governments also provide funding for recurrent and targeted purposes, usually through per capita allocations. Indexation of costs is normally applied to these funding arrangements for both the government and non‑government school sectors. Changes in overall funding by State and Territory governments across years is affected by all these factors, including enrolment numbers and school size, location and staffing profiles.  User cost of capital  The User Cost of Capital (UCC) is defined as the notional costs to governments of the funds tied up in capital (for example, land and buildings owned by government schools) used to produce services, per FTE student. The notional UCC makes explicit the opportunity cost of using government funds to own assets for the provision of services rather than investing elsewhere or retiring debt.  User cost of capital is only reported for government schools. It is estimated at 8 per cent of the value of non‑current physical assets, which are re‑valued over time. |
| *Source*: ACARA (2016b); Australian Government Department of Education and Training (unpublished). |
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#### Inputs per output unit — Recurrent expenditure per student

‘Recurrent expenditure per student’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to provide school education services in an efficient manner (box 4.7).

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| Box 4.7 Recurrent expenditure per student |
| ‘Recurrent expenditure per student’ is defined by two measures:   * government recurrent expenditure per FTE student, reported for government schools and for non‑government schools. Government recurrent expenditure per FTE student includes estimates for user cost of capital for government schools (box 4.6). User cost of capital is not included for non‑government schools * government recurrent staff expenditure per FTE student in government schools.   FTE student numbers (table 4A.6) are drawn from the ABS publication *Schools Australia 2015* (ABS 2016) and averaged over two calendar years to match the financial year expenditure data.  Holding other factors constant, a low or decreasing government recurrent expenditure or staff expenditure per FTE student may represent better or improved efficiency.  Care should be taken in interpretation of efficiency data as:   * a number of factors beyond the control of governments, such as economies of scale, a high proportion of geographically remote students and/or a dispersed population, and migration across states and territories, may influence expenditure * while high or increasing expenditure per student may reflect deteriorating efficiency, it may also reflect changes in aspects of schooling (increasing school leaving age, improving outcomes for students with special needs, broader curricula or enhancing teacher quality), or the characteristics of the education environment (such as population dispersion) * the basis for allocation of numbers of staff between teaching and non‑teaching roles and the allocation of staff expenditure may differ. While high or increasing government expenditure on staff per student may reflect lower efficiency, it may also reflect improvements in teacher quality. |
| Data reported for these measures are:   * comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time. (Note that as non‑government schools data do not account for UCC nor non‑government sources of funding, the data are *not comparable* for comparing government and non‑government schools.) * complete for the current reporting period (subject to caveats). All required 2014‑15 data are available for all jurisdictions. |
| *Source*: ACARA (2016b); Australian Government Department of Education and Training (unpublished). |
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##### Recurrent expenditure per student — Government recurrent expenditure per FTE student

###### Government schools

Nationally in 2014‑15, government recurrent expenditure was $16 670 per FTE student in government schools, with UCC representing 14.8 per cent of this expenditure (tables 4A.11 and 4A.19). Between 2010‑11 and 2014‑15, real government expenditure per FTE student increased at an average rate of 1.1 per cent per year (figure 4.10).

Nationally in 2014‑15, in‑school expenditure per FTE student was higher for government secondary schools ($18 262 per FTE student) compared to government primary schools ($14 551 per FTE student). Out‑of‑school government expenditure per FTE student was substantially lower ($698 per FTE student) (table 4A.11).

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| Figure 4.10 Government real recurrent expenditure per FTE student (including UCC), government schools, 2009‑10 to 2014‑15 (2014‑15 dollars)**a** |
| |  | | --- | | Figure 4.10 Government real recurrent expenditure per FTE student (including UCC), government schools, 2009-10 to 2014-15 (2014-15 dollars)  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | |
| a See box 4.7 and table 4A.11 and 4A.19 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: ABS (2016) *Schools Australia 2015*, Cat. no. 4221.0; Education Council (unpublished) NSSC; tables 4A.11, 4A.19 and 2A.48. |
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###### Non‑government schools

Nationally in 2014‑15, government recurrent expenditure per FTE student in non‑government schools was $9843 — resulting in an average annual increase in real terms of 3.5 per cent since 2010‑11 (figure 4.11).

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| Figure 4.11 Government real recurrent expenditure per FTE student, non‑government schools (2014‑15 dollars)**a** |
| |  | | --- | | Figure 4.11 Government real recurrent expenditure per FTE student, non government schools (2014-15 dollars)  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | |
| a See box 4.7 and table 4A.14 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: ABS (2016) *Schools Australia 2015*, Cat. no. 4221.0; Australian Government Department of Education and Training (unpublished); State and Territory governments (unpublished); tables 4A.14 and 2A.48. |
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###### All schools

Nationally in 2014‑15, government recurrent expenditure per FTE student in all schools was $14 286 — resulting in an annual average increase in real terms of 1.6 per cent since 2010‑11 (table 4A.16).

##### Recurrent expenditure per student — Government recurrent staff expenditure per FTE student in government schools

Nationally in 2014‑15, 63.6 per cent of government recurrent expenditure in government schools was on staff (table 4A.10). Government recurrent staff expenditure per FTE student in government schools was $10 607, which varied across jurisdictions (figure 4.12).

| Figure 4.12 Government recurrent staff expenditure per FTE student, government schools, 2014‑15a |
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| | Figure 4.12 Government recurrent staff expenditure per FTE student, government schools, 2014-15  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | | --- | |
| a See box 4.7 and table 4A.13 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: ABS (2016) *Schools Australia 2015*, Cat. no. 4221.0; Australian Government Department of Education and Training (unpublished); State and Territory governments (unpublished); tables 4A.13 and 2A.48. |
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###### Student‑to‑staff ratio

The student‑to‑staff ratio is the number of FTE students per FTE staff, for all staff and for teaching staff (see section 4.4 for definitions). (Note that the student‑to‑teacher ratio is not a measure of class size.)

Differences in the ‘student‑to‑staff ratio’ can provide some context to differences in the government recurrent staff expenditure per FTE student as a low or decreasing student‑to‑teacher ratio may lead to higher staff expenditure per student. However, additional teaching staff expenditure may also reflect differences in teacher salaries, the degree to which administrative work is undertaken by people classified as teachers (such as principals, deputy principals and senior teachers), or the level of other inputs to school education (for example, non‑teaching staff, computers, books and laboratory equipment).

Nationally in 2015, the *student‑to‑teacher* ratio at government schools (primary and secondary combined) was 14.2, which is unchanged from 2014 and similar to the ratio in 2006 (table 4A.22). For non‑government schools, the student‑to‑teacher ratio was 13.4 in 2015 (table 4A.22). The student‑to‑teacher ratio, for both government and non‑government schools, is generally lower for secondary schools than primary schools.

Nationally in 2015, the *student to non‑teaching staff ratio* at non‑government schools was 29.4, which is lower than government schools (which was 35.2) (table 4A.21). Non‑teaching staff (such as specialists, administrative and building operations staff) account for approximately 30 per cent of the FTE staff at schools (ABS 2016).

### Outcomes

Outcomes are the impact of services on the status of an individual or group (see chapter 1).

#### Student outcomes (national testing)

‘Student outcomes (national testing)’ is an indicator of two of governments’ objectives, that the school education system:

* benefits all young Australians, providing them with essential literacy and numeracy skills, a solid foundation in knowledge and understanding linked with complex skills that underpin problem solving, critical thinking and creativity, so they can reach their full potential
* reduces the educational disadvantage of children (box 4.8).

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| Box 4.8 Student outcomes (national testing) |
| ‘Student outcomes (national testing)’ is defined by measures drawn from the National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and National Assessment Program (NAP) sample assessments.  National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)  NAPLAN testing is undertaken by students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Measure are reported for:   * NAPLAN participation — assessed and exempt students as a percentage of the total number of students reported by schools. * NAPLAN achievement — the proportion of students at or above the national minimum standard in NAPLAN testing and mean scale score for reading, numeracy and writing.   Achieving (but not exceeding) the national minimum standard represents achievement of the basic elements of literacy or numeracy for the year level. Students who have not achieved the national minimum standard for that year need focused intervention and additional support to help them achieve the skills they require to progress in schooling (ACARA 2016a). The mean scale score refers to a mean (average) score on a common national scale.  Data comparing a range of time series outcomes are provided for 2008, 2015 and 2016 for reading and numeracy and for 2011, 2015 and 2016 for writing.[[1]](#footnote-1) |
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| Box 4.8 (continued) |
| A high or increasing: proportion of students participating in NAPLAN testing; mean scale score; or, proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard, is desirable.  Data reported for all measures in this indicator are:   * comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time * complete for the current reporting period (subject to caveats). All required 2016 data are available for all jurisdictions.   NAP Sample assessments  NAP national sample assessments are undertaken by students in year 6 and 10, on a triennial, rotating basis. Measures are reported for the proportion of students at or above the proficient standard in NAP assessments and mean scale score for:   * NAP Science literacy (testing undertaken by year 6 students only) * NAP information and communication technologies (ICT) literacy * NAP civics and citizenship literacy   The proficient standards, which vary across the tests, are challenging but reasonable levels of performance, with students needing to demonstrate more than minimal or elementary skills expected at that year level to be regarded as reaching them.  Time series data are provided for the years in which NAP assessments have been undertaken.  A high or increasing: mean scale score; or, proportion of students achieving at or above the proficiency standard, is desirable.  Data reported for all measures in this indicator are:   * comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time * complete for the most recent reporting period (subject to caveats). All required data from the latest available NAP assessments are available for all jurisdictions. The latest available data for NAP sample assessment data are for 2014 (for NAP ICT), 2013 (for NAP civics and citizenship), and 2012 (for NAP science literacy). |
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##### Student outcomes (national testing) — Participation in NAPLAN testing

NAPLAN testing reports the number of assessed, exempt, absent and withdrawn students. Assessed students include all students who attempt the test and exempt students. Students with a language background other than English who arrived from overseas less than a year before the test, and students with significant intellectual disabilities may be exempted from testing. Participating students are those who were assessed or deemed exempt — other students were either absent or withdrawn.

In 2016, participation rates were at or above 90 per cent for most jurisdictions across testing domains and year levels. In all domains and year levels, a lower proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students than non‑Indigenous students participated in NAPLAN testing (table 4A.47).

##### Student outcomes (national testing) — NAPLAN reading

Nationally in 2016, the proportion of students who achieved at or above the reading national minimum standard was:

* 95.1 (±0.2) for *year 3 students*
* 93.0 (±0.2) for *year 5 students*
* 94.6 (±0.3) for *year 7 students*
* 92.8 (±0.3) for *year 9 students* (figure 4.13)

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| Figure 4.13 Proportion of students achieving at or above the reading national minimum standard, 2016**a, b** |
| |  | | --- | | Figure 4.13 Proportion of students achieving at or above the reading national minimum standard, 2016  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | |
| a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. b See box 4.8 and table 4A.48 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: ACARA (2016 and unpublished) *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2016*; table 4A.48. |
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These results varied across jurisdictions, but generally were above 90 per cent for all year levels (figure 4.13). The statistical significance of the difference in the proportion of students who achieved at or above the national minimum standard for reading in 2016, across states and territories, is provided in table 4A.48.

Nationally in 2016, the mean scale score for reading was:

* 425.6 (±1.1) for *year 3 students*
* 501.5 (±1.0) for *year 5 students*
* 540.8 (±1.5) for *year 7 students*
* 580.8 (±1.5) for *year 9 students* (table 4A.49).

Table 4A.49 also identifies statistical significance of differences between mean scale scores reading outcomes across states and territories in 2016.

Nationally for year 3 and year 5 students, the mean scale score for reading in 2016 is statistically significantly above the score in 2008 but, there was no significant difference for years 7 or 9 (tables 4A.52–4A.60).

###### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

In 2016, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who achieved at or above the national minimum standard for reading, and the mean scale score was statistically significantly above 2008 for year levels 3 and 5, but not statistically significantly different from 2015.

Nationally in 2016, for all year levels, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that achieved the national minimum standard for reading (and the mean scale score) was significantly lower than for non‑Indigenous students, although results varied across jurisdictions (tables 4A.48‑49). Figure 4.14 compares the 2016 NAPLAN reading results for year 5 students — the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at or above the national minimum standard was 70.8 (±1.6) per cent, significantly lower than for non‑Indigenous students [94.4 (±0.2) per cent].

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| Figure 4.14 Proportion of year 5 students achieving at or above the reading national minimum standard, 2016**a, b** |
| | Figure 4.14 Proportion of year 5 students achieving at or above the reading national minimum standard, 2016  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | | --- | |
| a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. b See box 4.8 and table 4A.48 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: ACARA (2016 and unpublished) *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2016*; table 4A.48. |
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###### Geolocation

Nationally in 2016, reading outcomes declined with remoteness. For example, in year 3 the proportion of students who achieved at or above the national minimum standard decreased from 96.0 (±0.2) per cent in major city areas to 62.9 (±5.6) per cent in very remote areas (table 4A.48). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students the decline is steeper, resulting in a widening of the gap in reading outcomes as remoteness increased.

###### Socioeconomic status

State and Territory data on the proportions of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard and mean scale scores in reading assessment for years 3, 5, 7 and 9 by parental education and parental occupation for 2015 are included in tables 4A.50–51. In general, outcomes were lower for students with lower levels of parental education and parental occupation. Data for 2011–2015 were included in previous reports.

##### Student outcomes (national testing) — NAPLAN Numeracy

Nationally in 2016, the proportion of students who achieved at or above the numeracy national minimum standard was:

* 95.5 (±0.2) for *year 3 students*
* 94.3 (±0.2) for *year 5 students*
* 95.5 (±0.2) for *year 7 students*
* 95.2 (±0.3) for *year 9 students* (figure 4.15)

These results varied across jurisdictions, but generally were above 92 per cent for all year levels (figure 4.15). The statistical significance of the difference in the proportion of students who achieved at or above the national minimum standard for reading in 2016, across states and territories, is provided in table 4A.74.

Nationally in 2016, the mean scale score for numeracy was:

* 402.0 (±1.0) for *year 3 students*
* 493.1 (±1.0) for *year 5 students*
* 549.7 (±1.7) for *year 7 students*
* 588.9 (±1.9) for *year 9 students* (table 4A.75).

Table 4A.75 also identifies statistical significance of differences between mean scale scores reading outcomes across states and territories in 2015.

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| Figure 4.15 Proportion of students achieving at or above the numeracy national minimum standard, 2016**a, b** |
| |  | | --- | | Figure 4.15 Proportion of students achieving at or above the numeracy national minimum standard, 2016  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | |
| a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. b See box 4.8 and table 4A.74 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: ACARA (2016 and unpublished) *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015*; table 4A.74. |
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Nationally for year 5 students, the mean scale score for numeracy in 2016 was statistically significantly above the mean scale score for numeracy in 2008, but there was no significant difference for years 3, 7 and 9 (tables 4A.78–4A.86).

###### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

In 2016, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieving at or above the national minimum standard in numeracy was statistically above 2008 for year levels 5 and 9, but there was no significant change for years 3 and 7 (tables 4A.78–4A.86).

Nationally in 2016, for all year levels, the proportion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who achieved the national minimum standard (and mean scale score) was significantly lower than for non‑Indigenous students, although results varied across jurisdictions (tables 4A.78–4A.86). Figure 4.14 compares the 2016 NAPLAN numeracy results for year 5 students — the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at or above the national minimum standard was 76.1 (±1.4) per cent, significantly lower than for non‑Indigenous students, which was 95.5 (±0.2) per cent.

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| Figure 4.16 Proportion of year 5 students achieving at or above the numeracy national minimum standard, 2016**a, b** |
| | Figure 4.16 Proportion of year 5 students achieving at or above the numeracy national minimum standard, 2016  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | | --- | |
| a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. b See box 4.8 and table 4A.74 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: ACARA (2016 and unpublished) *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2016*; table 4A.74. |
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###### Geolocation

Nationally in 2016, numeracy outcomes declined with remoteness. For example, in year 3 the proportion of students who achieved at or above the national minimum standard decreased from 96.2 (±0.2) per cent in major cities to 66.8 (±5.4) per cent in very remote areas (table 4A.74).

Nationally, for all geolocation categories across years 3, 5, 7 and 9, numeracy outcomes followed a similar pattern to those for reading outcomes (see NAPLAN reading section above) (tables 4A.74–75). Figure 4.17 shows the results for year 3 numeracy outcomes by geolocation.

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| Figure 4.17 National proportion of year 3 students achieving at or above the numeracy national minimum standard, by Indigenous status and geolocation, 2016**a, b** |
| |  | | --- | | Figure 4.17 National proportion of year 3 students achieving at or above the numeracy national minimum standard, by Indigenous status and geolocation, 2016  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | |
| a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. b See box 4.8 and table 4A.74 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: ACARA (2016 and unpublished) *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015*; table 4A.74. |
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###### Socioeconomic status

State and Territory data on the proportions of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard and mean scale scores in reading assessment for years 3, 5, 7 and 9 by parental education and parental occupation for 2016 are included in tables 4A.76‑77. Similar to NAPLAN reading outcomes, numeracy outcomes were generally lower for students with lower levels of parental education and parental occupation. Data for   
2011–2015 were included in the earlier Reports.

##### Student outcomes (national testing) — NAPLAN writing

Tables 4A.61–64 provide data on the mean scale scores and the proportions of year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students achieving at or above the national minimum standard for writing (including by Indigenous status, geolocation and parental education and occupation). Data comparing outcomes from 2011 and 2015 to 2016 by Indigenous status, for mean scale scores and for the proportion at and above the national minimum standard are included for each state and territory, and nationally in tables 4A.65–73.

##### Student outcomes (national testing) — NAP ICT literacy assessment

Nationally in 2014, the proportion of participating year 6 and year 10 students who achieved at or above the proficient standards in ICT literacy performance was 55 (±2.5) per cent and 52 (±2.5) per cent, respectively (tables 4A.93–95).

Detailed outcomes of the 2014 assessment were included in the 2016 Report.

##### Student outcomes (national testing) — NAP Civics and citizenship literacy assessment

Nationally in 2013, the proportion of participating students who achieved at or above the proficient standard in civics and citizenship literacy performance was 52 (±2.4) per cent for year 6 students and 44 (±2.6) per cent for year 10 students (tables 4A.90–92).

Detailed outcomes of the 2013 assessment were included in the 2015 Report.

##### Student outcomes (national testing) — NAP Science literacy assessment

Nationally in 2012, the proportion of participating year 6 students who achieved at or above the proficient standards in science literacy was 51.4 (±2.0) per cent   
(tables 4A.87–89).

Detailed outcomes of the 2012 assessment were included in the 2014 Report.

#### Attainment

‘Attainment’ is an indicator of two of governments’ objectives — that the school education system:

* benefits all young Australians, providing them with essential literacy and numeracy skills, a solid foundation in knowledge and understanding linked with complex skills that underpin problem solving, critical thinking and creativity, so they can reach their full potential
* reduces the educational disadvantage of children (box 4.9).

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| Box 4.9 Attainment |
| ‘Attainment’ (attainment rate) is defined as the number of students who meet the requirements of a year 12 certificate or equivalent expressed as a percentage of the estimated potential year 12 population. The estimated potential year 12 population is an estimate of a single year age group that could have attended year 12 that year, calculated as the estimated resident population aged 15–19 divided by five.  This indicator should be interpreted with caution as:   * assessment, reporting and criteria for obtaining a year 12 or equivalent certificate varies across jurisdictions * students completing their secondary education in technical and further education institutes are included in reporting for some jurisdictions and not in others * the aggregation of all postcode locations into three socioeconomic status categories (as a disaggregation for socioeconomic status) — high, medium and low — means there may be significant variation within the categories. The low category, for example, will include locations ranging from those of extreme disadvantage to those of moderate disadvantage.   A high or increasing completion rate suggests an improvement in educational outcomes.  Data reported for this measure are:   * comparable (subject to caveats) within some jurisdictions over time but are not comparable across jurisdictions. WA data for 2014 reflect a change to the pre‑year 1 entry age in 2002 resulting in approximately half the normal intake of students for that year level. * complete for the current reporting period (subject to caveats). All required 2015 data are available for all jurisdictions. |
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Attainment rates are primarily used as indicators of trends and are used, in part, because information on participation and retention rates is generally not available by socioeconomic background or geographic location.

Nationally in 2015, the year 12 certificate attainment rate for all students was 75 per cent (table 4A.108). The rates for students from low (70 per cent) and medium (75 per cent) socioeconomic backgrounds were below those for students from a high socioeconomic background (80 per cent) (figure 4.18). The attainment rate decreased as remoteness increased (77 per cent in metropolitan areas compared to 44 per cent in very remote areas) (table 4A.109).

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| Figure 4.18 Year 12 certificate attainment rates, by socioeconomic background, 2015**a, b** |
| |  | | --- | | Figure 4.18 Year 12 certificate attainment rates, by socioeconomic background, 2015  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | |
| a Data for ‘low’ and ‘medium’ in the ACT and ‘high’ in the NT are not published due to small numbers.b See box 4.9 and table 4A.108 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: Australian Government Department of Education and Training (unpublished); table 4A.108. |
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Nationally, attainment rates were higher for female students than for male students in all socioeconomic categories (table 4A.108) and higher for females students compared to male students in all geographic zones (table 4A.109). Time series data on national year 12 certificate attainment rates are reported in tables 4A.108‑109.

The Child care, education and training sector overview includes data on the proportions of the population aged 20–24 and 20–64 years having attained at least a year 12 or equivalent or AQF Certificate II or above (that is school and non‑school education and training to year 12 or above) (tables BA.29–33).

#### Student outcomes (international testing)

‘Student outcomes (international testing)’ is an indicator of governments’ aim to have a school education system where Australian students excel by international standards (box 4.10).

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| Box 4.10 Student outcomes (international testing) |
| ‘Student outcomes (international testing)’ is defined by Australia’s participation in three international tests:   * Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) — conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co‑operation and Development (OECD) as a triennial international assessment — measures the proportion of sampled 15 year old students achieving at or above the national proficient standard (set to level 3) on the OECD PISA combined scales for reading, mathematical and scientific literacy. * Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) — conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) as a quadrennial international assessment — measures the proportion of sampled year 4 and year 8 students achieving at or above the IEA intermediate international benchmark, the national proficient standard in Australia * Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) — conducted by the IEA as a quinquennial international assessment — measures the proportion of sampled year 4 students achieving at or above the IEA intermediate international benchmark, the national proficient standard in Australia.   A high or increasing proportion of students achieving at or above the national proficient standard, or a high or increasing mean scale score is desirable.  Data reported for all measures in this indicator are:   * comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time * complete for the current reporting period (subject to caveats). All required 2014 and 2015 data are available for all jurisdictions. |
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##### Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

Nationally in 2015, Australian 15 year old students achieved a mean score of 503 (±3.3), 494 (± 3.1) and 510 (± 3.0) for the PISA reading, mathematical, and scientific literacy assessments, respectively. These results were above the OECD average mean score.

The most reliable way to establish a trend for an assessment domain is to compare results to when the assessment domain was the major domain. Nationally in 2015, the mean scores for PISA reading, mathematical, and scientific literacy assessments were significantly lower than the mean scores achieved in PISA testing in the last major domain cycle (2009 for reading, 2012 for mathematics, and 2006 for science), although results varied by jurisdiction (tables 4A.98, 4A.100 and 4A.102).

Nationally in 2015, the proportion of Australian 15 year old students who achieved at or above the national proficient standard in:

* *reading literacy* was 60.6 (±1.4) per cent (table 4A.97)
* *mathematical literacy* was 55.4 (±1.6) per cent (table 4A.99)
* *scientific literacy* was 60.8 (±1.2) per cent (table 4A.101).

Nationally in 2015, across the three testing domains, the proportions of Australian 15 year old students who achieved at or above the national proficient standard were significantly lower than the proportions achieved in the last major domain cycle (2009 for reading, 2012 for mathematics, and 2006 for science) (figure 4.19).

| Figure 4.19 Proportion of year 15 year old students achieving at or above the national proficient standard, PISA, 2006, 2009, 2012 and 2015**a, b** |
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| | Figure 4.19 Proportion of year 15 year old students achieving at or above the national proficient standard, PISA, 2006, 2009, 2012 and 2015   Reading literacy  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. Figure 4.19 Proportion of year 15 year old students achieving at or above the national proficient standard, PISA, 2006, 2009, 2012 and 2015   Mathematical literacy  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. Figure 4.19 Proportion of year 15 year old students achieving at or above the national proficient standard, PISA, 2006, 2009, 2012 and 2015   Scientific literacy  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | | --- | |
| a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. b See box 4.10 and tables 4A.97, 4A.99 and 4A.101 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: ACER (2016 and unpublished) *PISA 2015: A first look at Australia’s results*, Melbourne; tables 4A.97, 4A.99 and 4A.101. |
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##### Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)

Nationally in 2015, students achieved similar results for mathematics and science assessments to the results for the 2011 and 2007 assessments, although results varied across jurisdictions (tables 4A.103‑106).

The proportion of students that achieved at or above the intermediate international benchmark (the national proficient standard for Australia) for the TIMSS:

* *mathematics assessment* was 70.2 (±2.6) per cent for year 4 students and 64.4 (±3.1) per cent for year 8 students (figure 4.20 and table 4A.103)
* *science assessment* was 75.4 (±2.7) per cent for year 4 students and 68.8 (±2.6) per cent for year 8 students (figure 4.20 and table 4A.105).

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| Figure 4.20 Proportion of year 8 students achieving at or above the intermediate international benchmark in TIMSS assessments, 2007, 2011 and 2015**a, b** |
| | Figure 4.20 Proportion of year 8 students achieving at or above the intermediate international benchmark in TIMSS assessments, 2007, 2011 and 2015  Mathematics achievement  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image.  Figure 4.20 Proportion of year 8 students achieving at or above the intermediate international benchmark in TIMSS assessments, 2007, 2011 and 2015  Science achievement  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. | | --- | |
| a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. b See box 4.10 and tables 4A.103 and 4A.105 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: ACER (2016 and unpublished) *TIMSS 2015: A first look at Australia’s results*, ACER, Melbourne; tables 4A.103 and 4A.105. |
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Nationally in 2015, Australian students achieved mean scores of: 517 (±6.0) (year 4 students) and 505 (±6.0) (year 8 students) in the TIMSS mathematics assessment; and, 524 (±5.6) (year 4 students) and 512 (±5.2) (year 8 students) in the TIMSS science assessment (table 4A.104 and 4A.106). Of the countries that participated in theTIMSS:

* *mathematics assessment*, Australian year 4 and year 8 students:
* significantly outperformed students from 20 and 12 other counties, respectively
* were significantly outperformed by students from 21 and eight other countries, respectively (ACER 2016).
* *science assessment*, Australian year 4 and year 8 students
* significantly outperformed students from 17 and 20 other countries, respectively
* were significantly outperformed by students from 17 and 14 other countries, respectively (ACER 2016).

##### Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

Outcomes from the 2011 PIRLS were first included in the 2014 Report and data are included in the attachment tables to this report (tables 4A.107). Data for the 2016 PIRLS are anticipated to be available in late 2017.

#### Destination

‘Destination’ is an indicator of governments’ objective that the Australian school system enables young people to make a successful transition from school to work and/or further study (box 4.11).

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| Box 4.11 Destination |
| ‘Destination’ (school leaver destination rate) is defined by three measures:   * The proportion of school leavers aged 15–24 years who left school in the previous year, who are participating in work or study. Data are reported for school leavers whose highest level of school completed was year 12, or year 11 and below. Data are sourced from the Survey of Education and Work. * The proportion of school leavers aged 15–24 years who left school at any time, who are fully participating in education and/or training, or employment. Data are reported for school leavers whose highest level of school completed was year 12, or year 11 and below. Data are sourced from the Survey of Education and Work. * The proportions of 15–19 and 20–24 year olds who are not in school, who are participating in full or part time study and full or part time work. Data are reported by highest level of qualification. Data are sourced from the Census of Population and Housing. |
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| Box 4.11 (continued) |
| A higher or increasing proportion of school leavers participating in further education, training or employment is likely to result in improved educational and employment outcomes in the longer term.  The data reported for this indicator relate to the jurisdiction in which the young person was resident the year of the survey/census and not necessarily the jurisdiction in which they attended school.  Data reported for this measure are:   * comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and within jurisdictions over time * complete for the current reporting period. All required 2011 and 2015 data are available for all jurisdictions. |
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##### The proportion of school leavers aged 15–24 years who left school in the previous year, who are participating in work or study

The proportion of all school leavers aged 15–24 years who left school in 2014 who were participating in work or study was 67.1 per cent — the proportion working either full or part time in 2015 was 58.7 per cent, and the proportion studying either full or part time was 57.8 per cent (some school leavers were undertaking both work and study and some were undertaking neither) (table 4A.113).

Year 12 completers reported a higher proportion fully engaged in study or work in 2015 (71.0 per cent), compared to those who completed year 11 or below (49.9 per cent) (table 4A.113).

##### The proportion of school leavers aged between 15–24 years who left school at any time, who are fully participating in education and/or training, or employment

Nationally in 2015, 72.7 per cent of all school leavers aged 15–24 were fully engaged in education and/or training, or employment, or a combination. The proportion fully participating in education and/or training was 35.5 per cent and the proportion fully participating in employment was 37.2 per cent (figure 4.21).

Amongst year 12 school leavers, the proportion fully engaged in education and/or training, or employment was 77.1 per cent nationally. Amongst year 11 school leavers, this proportion was 56.3 per cent (table 4A.111).

Tables 4A.110–111 provides data on the proportions participating in education by level of qualification and level of engagement.

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| Figure 4.21 School leaver destination (15–24 year olds), 2015 (per cent)**a** |
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| a See box 4.11 and table 4A.111 for detailed definitions, footnotes and caveats. |
| *Source*: ABS (unpublished, TableBuilder) *Education and Work, 2015*, cat. no. 6227.0; table 4A.111. |
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##### The proportions of 15–19 and 20–24 year olds who are not in school, who are participating in full or part time study and full or part time work

In 2011 (table 4A.112):

* of 15–19 year olds who were not undertaking school education, 37.9 per cent were participating in full time study, 27.4 per cent were participating in part time employment, 21.4 per cent were participating in full time employment, and 10.2 per cent were participating in part time study (individuals may be both working and studying)
* of 20–24 year olds who were not undertaking school education, 38.3 per cent were participating in full time employment, 26.9 per cent were participating in full time study, 24.2 per cent were participating in part time employment, and 8.7 per cent were participating in part time study (individuals may be both working and studying).

Table 4A.112 provides data by highest level of qualification.

Table 4A.114 summarises school leaver destination survey results from six jurisdictions. Each jurisdiction uses different research methods and data collection instruments, and the surveys are not designed for comparative national reporting. These data provide supplementary information to the measures above.

## 4.4 Definitions of key terms

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| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students | Students are considered to be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin if they identify as being an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background. Administrative processes for determining Indigenous status vary across jurisdictions. |
| Comparability | Data are considered comparable if (subject to caveats) they can be used to inform an assessment of comparative performance. Typically, data are considered comparable when they are collected in the same way and in accordance with the same definitions. For comparable indicators or measures, significant differences in reported results allow an assessment of differences in performance, rather than being the result of anomalies in the data. |
| Completeness | Data are considered complete if all required data are available for all jurisdictions that provide the service. |
| Full time equivalent student | The FTE of a full time student is 1.0. The method of converting part time student numbers into FTEs is based on the student’s workload compared with the workload usually undertaken by a full time student. |
| Full time student | A person who satisfies the definition of a student and undertakes a workload equivalent to, or greater than, that usually undertaken by a student of that year level. The definition of full time student varies across jurisdictions. |
| Geographic classification  (ASGC) | From 2016, Student remoteness is based on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Remoteness Structure. The extended version of the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+), developed by the University of Adelaide’s Australian Population and Migration Research Centre, is the standard ABS‑endorsed measure of remoteness on ABS postal areas. Student remoteness (ARIA+) regions use the same ARIA+ ranges as the ABS remoteness areas and are therefore an approximation of the ABS remoteness areas. For more details of ARIA+ refer to <www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/ remoteness+structure>. The remoteness categories are:   * Major cities of Australia * Inner regional areas of Australia * Outer regional areas of Australia * Remote areas of Australia * Very remote areas of Australia.   Geographic classifications prior to 2016 are based on the MCEECDYA standard. Data are not directly comparable. . (The exception is Census and survey data which were already using the ASGS, and prior to that the ASGC). |
| Geographic classification  (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs [MCEECDYA]) | Prior to 2016, Geographic categorisation is based on the agreed MCEECDYA Geographic Location Classification which, at the highest level, divides Australia into three zones (the metropolitan, provincial and remote zones). A further disaggregation comprises five categories: metropolitan and provincial zones each subdivided into two categories, and the remote zone. Further subdivisions of the two provincial zone categories and the remote zone category provide additional, more detailed, classification options. When data permit, a separate very remote zone can be reported along with the metropolitan, provincial and remote zones, as follows. |
| Geographic classification  (MCEECDYA)  (continued) | A. Metropolitan zone   * Mainland State capital city regions (Statistical Divisions (SDs)): Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth SDs. * Major urban Statistical Districts (100 000 or more population): ACT–Queanbeyan, Cairns, Gold Coast–Tweed, Geelong, Hobart, Newcastle, Sunshine Coast, Townsville, Wollongong.   B. Provincial zone (non‑remote)   * Provincial city Statistical Districts plus Darwin SD. * Provincial city statistical districts and Darwin statistical division (50 000–99 999 population): Albury–Wodonga, Ballarat, Bathurst–Orange, Burnie‑Devonport, Bundaberg, Bendigo, Darwin, Launceston, La Trobe Valley, Mackay, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Wagga Wagga. * Provincial City Statistical Districts (25 000–49 999 population): Bunbury, Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Geraldton, Gladstone, Shepparton, Hervey Bay, Kalgoorlie–Boulder, Lismore, Mandurah, Mildura, Nowra–Bomaderry, Port Macquarie, Tamworth, Warrnambool. * Other provincial areas (CD ARIA Plus score < 5.92) * Inner provincial areas (CD ARIA Plus score < 2.4) * Outer provincial areas (CD ARIA Plus score > 2.4 and < 5.92)   C. Remote zone   * Remote zone (CD ARIA Plus score > 5.92) * Remote areas (CD ARIA Plus score > 5.92 and < 10.53) * Very remote areas (CD ARIA Plus score > 10.53) |
| In‑school expenditure | Costs relating directly to schools. Staff, for example, are categorised as being either in‑school or out‑of‑school. They are categorised as  in‑school if they usually spend more than half of their time actively engaged in duties at one or more schools or ancillary education establishments. In‑school employee related expenses, for example, represent all salaries, wages awards, allowances and related on costs paid to in‑school staff. |
| Language background other than English student | A status that is determined by administrative processes that vary across jurisdictions. For NAPLAN data, a student is considered to have a ‘Language background other than English’ if either the student or parents/guardians speak a language other than English at home. Separately, data are also sourced from the 2011 Census of Population and Housing. |
| Out‑of‑school expenditure | Costs relating indirectly to schools. (See in‑school expenditure) |
| Pre‑year 1 | The first year of primary school.  Naming conventions for pre‑year 1 differ between states and territories. Pre‑year 1 is known as:   * Kindergarten in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory * Preparatory in Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania * Reception in South Australia * Pre‑primary in Western Australia * Transition in the Northern Territory, and * Foundation year in the Australian Curriculum. |
| Part time student | A student undertaking a workload that is less than that specified as being full time in the jurisdiction. |
| Real expenditure | Nominal expenditure adjusted for changes in prices, using the GDP price deflator and expressed in terms of final year prices. |
| **School** | A school is an establishment which satisfies all of 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 for a minimum of four continuous weeks, excluding breaks for school vacations. |
| Science literacy | Science literacy and scientific literacy: the application of broad conceptual understandings of science to make sense of the world, understand natural phenomena, and interpret media reports about scientific issues. It also includes asking investigable questions, conducting investigations, collecting and interpreting data and making decisions. |
| Socioeconomic status | As identified in footnotes to specific tables. |
| Source of income | In this chapter, income from either the Australian Government or State and Territory governments. Australian Government expenditure is derived from specific purpose payments (current and capital) for schools. This funding indicates the level of monies allocated, not necessarily the level of expenditure incurred in any given financial year. The data therefore provide only a broad indication of the level of Australian Government funding. |
| Special school | A special school satisfies the definition of a school and requires one or more of the following characteristics to be exhibited by the 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 (ABS 2016). |
| Student‑to‑staff ratios | The number of FTE students per FTE teaching staff. Students at special schools are allocated to primary and secondary (see below). The FTE of staff includes those who are generally active in schools and ancillary education establishments. |
| Student | A person who is formally (officially) enrolled or registered at a school, and is also active in a primary, secondary or special education program at that school. Students at special schools are allocated to primary and secondary on the basis of their actual grade (if assigned); whether or not they are receiving primary or secondary curriculum instruction; or, as a last resort, whether they are of primary or secondary school age. |
| Students with disability | Students included in the annual system reports to the Department of Education and Training. The definitions of students with disabilities are based on individual State and Territory criteria, so data are not comparable across jurisdictions. |
| Teaching staff | Teaching staff have teaching duties (that is, they are engaged to impart the school curriculum) and spend the majority of their time in contact with students. They support students, either by direct class contact or on an individual basis. Teaching staff include principals, deputy principals and senior teachers mainly involved in administrative duties, but not specialist support staff (who may spend the majority of their time in contact with students but are not engaged to impart the school curriculum). For the NT, Assistant Teachers in Homeland Learning Centres and community school are included as teaching staff. |
| Ungraded student | A student in ungraded classes who cannot readily be allocated to a year of education. These students are included as either ungraded primary or ungraded secondary, according to the typical age level in each jurisdiction. |
| VET in Schools | VET in Schools is a program which allows students to combine vocational studies with their general education curriculum. Students participating in VET in Schools continue to work towards their senior secondary school certificate, while the VET component of their studies gives them credit towards a nationally recognised VET qualification. The program may involve structured work placements and includes the options of a school‑based apprenticeship and traineeship or VET subjects and courses. |

## 4.5 References

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1. A change in the writing test from narrative to persuasive writing created a break in series in writing results in 2011. From 2016, both text types (narrative writing and persuasive writing) are assessed, but NAPLAN scores for writing remain comparable from 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)