

NATIONAL REPORT ON
SCHOOLING IN AUSTRALIA

2020

National Report on Schooling in Australia 2020

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List of shortened forms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACACA	Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACECQA	Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AERO	Australian Education Research Organisation
AFaFE	Aboriginal Families as First Educators
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
ATWD	Australian Teacher Workforce Data
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CTC	Capacity to Contribute
DMI	Direct Measure of Income
ERP	Estimated Resident Population
ESA	Education Services Australia
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
FaFT	Families as First Teachers
FTE	full-time equivalent
HALTS	Highly Accomplished teachers and Lead teachers
HSC	Higher School Certificate
ICT	information and communication technology
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
IES	Indigenous Education Strategy
ITE	initial teacher education
KPM	key performance measure
MHP	Mental Health Practitioners [initiative]
NCEC	National Catholic Education Commission
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NFRC	National Federation Reform Council
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
NQF	National Quality Framework
NRIPS	net recurrent income per student

NSRA	National School Reform Agreement
NSSC	National Schools Statistics Collection
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
NTCET	Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
QCE	Queensland Certificate of Education
Qld	Queensland
RSAS	Remote School Attendance Strategy
SA	South Australia
SACE	South Australian Certificate of Education
SCRGSP	Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision
SES	socio-economic status
SEW	Survey of Education and Work
SRS	Schooling Resource Standard
SSCE	senior secondary certificates of education
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
SWiFT	Schools with Internet Fibre Technology
TAFE	technical and further education
Tas	Tasmania
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
USI	unique student identifier
VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VET	Vocational education and training
Vic	Victoria
WA	Western Australia
WACE	Western Australian Certificate of Education

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Executive summary

Introduction

The *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2020* is the 32nd annual national report on Australia's school education sector.¹ It has been produced by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) on behalf of Australian education ministers.

The report highlights progress in 2020 towards the [Alice Springs \(Mparntwe\) Education Declaration](#) released by Australian education ministers in 2019 and is the first national report to address these nationally agreed goals and commitments.

The *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2020* consists of 2 parts: this written report and the online [National Report on Schooling data portal](#).

The written report addresses the 11 areas of commitment to action specified in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) declaration, describes the national policy and reporting context for school education in Australia, and reports against the nationally agreed key performance measures (KPMs) for schooling specified in the [Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020](#), providing data, analysis and commentary. It also includes other high-level statistical information on Australian schooling in 2020 and for the period 2010–2020 inclusive.

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

The data portal allows readers to view data by state and territory as well as at the national level, by calendar year and by other breakdowns, such as school sector, sex and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status², where possible and appropriate. Data sets are regularly updated as new data becomes available and may be downloaded from the portal.

For 2020, the data reported in both parts of the report has been limited by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on normal school operations across Australia.

Previous editions of the National Report on Schooling in Australia for the years 2009–2019 are available on the [ACARA website](#). Editions from 1989 to 2008 are available in the [Trove](#) archive maintained by the National Library of Australia.

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

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

Overview of the report



Part 1, ‘Schools and schooling’, provides information on the status of Australian schooling in 2020, including school, student and teacher numbers and school structures.

In Australia, responsibility for school education rests mainly with the 6 state and 2 territory governments.³

All states and territories provide for 13 years of formal school education. Primary education, including a foundation year, lasts for either 7 or 8 years and is followed by secondary education of 6 or 5 years respectively.⁴ Typically, schooling commences at age 5, is compulsory from age 6 until age 17 (with provision for alternative study or work arrangements in the senior secondary years), and is completed at age 17 or 18. School structures and age requirements in states and territories are summarised in Part 1.4.

The majority (70.0%) of schools are government schools, established and administered by state and territory governments through their education departments or authorities. The remaining 30.0% are non-government schools, mostly associated with religious organisations. Non-government schools are established and operated under conditions determined by state and territory governments through their registration authorities. School numbers are shown in Part 1.1.

Around two-thirds (65.6%) of school students⁵ are enrolled in government schools and about one-third (34.4%) in non-government schools. Part 1.2 reports on numbers of students by school sector, state and territory, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status.

Staff numbers closely reflect enrolments, with 63.8% of school teachers⁶ employed by the government school sector and 36.2% by non-government schools. Part 1.3 reports on teaching staff numbers and student-teacher ratios by school sector and state and territory.

School, student and teacher numbers in 2020 are shown for Australia and by state and territory in Figure 1.

³ New South Wales (NSW), Victoria (Vic), Queensland (Qld), South Australia (SA), Western Australia (WA), Tasmania (Tas), Northern Territory (NT) and Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

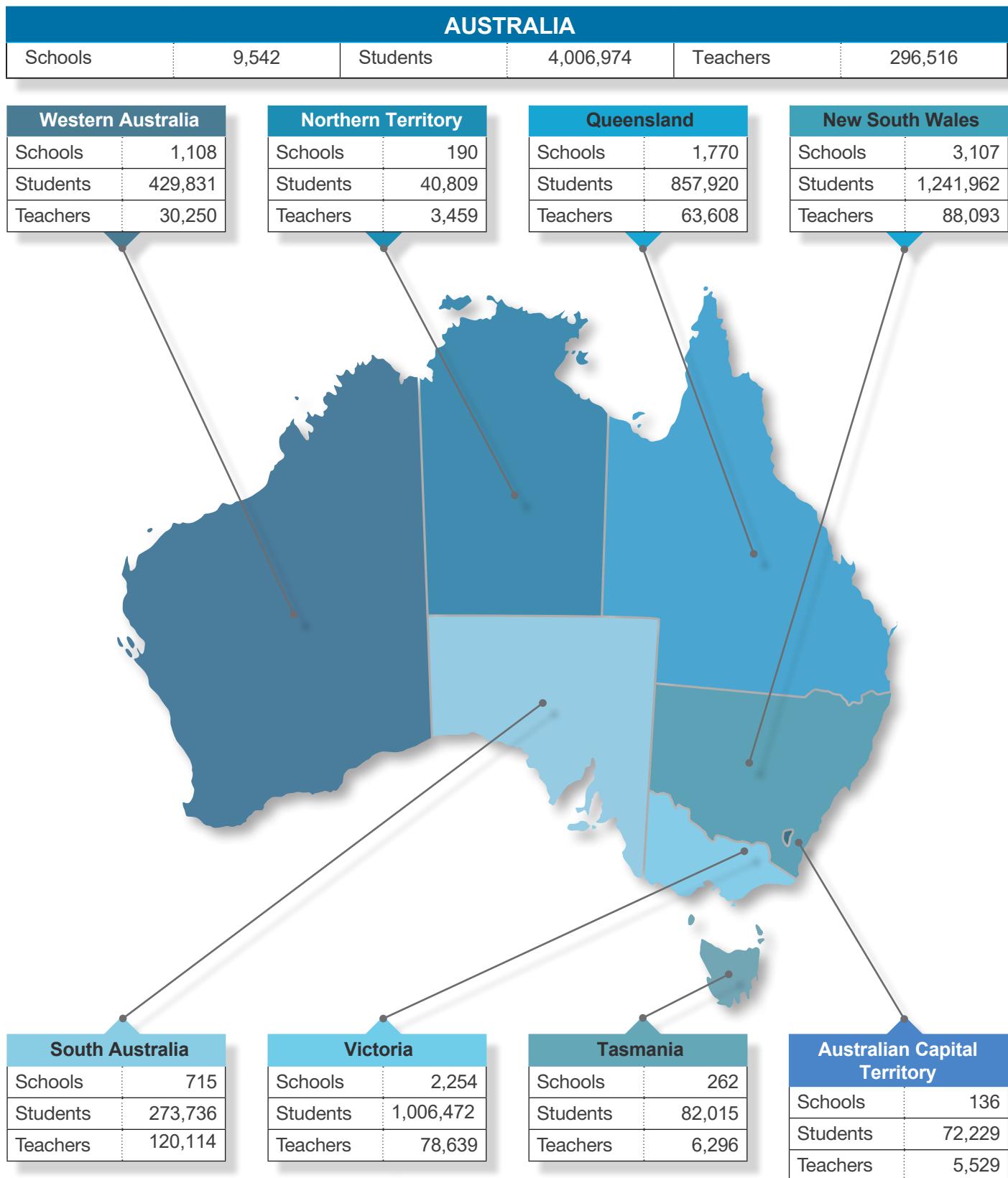
⁴ SA is the only jurisdiction to follow the 8-year/5-year pattern (with a transition to a 7-year/6-year pattern in progress).

⁵ Count of full-time plus part-time students.

⁶ Full-time equivalent teaching staff.

Figure 1

Numbers of schools, students and teachers by state and territory, Australia, 2020



Notes:

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

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020. See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Part 2, ‘Policies and priorities’, outlines the national policy context for Australian schooling in 2020 and reports against the commitment to action agreed by Australian education ministers in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration.

Part 2.1 of this report summarises the national policy context for schooling, including the role of national ministerial councils (the Education Council/Education Ministers Meeting) in deciding agreed national policy for education and major developments in education policy in 2020.

During 2020 a major restructure of these intergovernmental arrangements saw the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) replaced by the National Cabinet and the National Federation Reform Council (NFRC), and the COAG Education Council replaced by the Education Ministers Meeting.

The formation of the National Cabinet, and the changes to other ministerial forums that followed, were prompted by the need to coordinate Australia’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Schools in all states and territories were affected to some extent by community lockdowns and other restrictions imposed to combat the onset of COVID-19. National policy responses to COVID-19 for school education included a set of national principles to promote equitable outcomes for students during COVID-19 and the cancellation or postponement of national student assessments. These are summarised in Part 2.1, along with other national policy initiatives for education. State and territory responses, including changes to school operations in 2020, are detailed in Part 2.14.

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

Parts 2.3–2.13 report on national progress in implementing the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration commitment to action with a focus on developments in 2020. They include activities addressing the 8 national policy initiatives specified in the National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) and list examples of state and territory initiatives relating to the commitment.

Progress towards the commitment to action reported for 2020 include:

- States and territories implemented new and continuing partnerships with industry and the community to improve science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. The Australian Government contributed funding to support these initiatives.
- Formal partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples included ‘Walking Together, Working Together’ in New South Wales, and the Northern Territory’s Community-Led Schools initiative.
- To support quality teaching and leadership, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) reviewed the compliance and regulatory burden faced by teachers and school leaders, undertook quality assurance activities to strengthen the teacher accreditation system and supported the development of teaching effectiveness evaluation tools. States and territories and school sectors prioritised professional learning for teachers and school leaders.

- States and territories and non-government sectors implemented initiatives for early childhood education, for the formative years of primary school, for the middle years of schooling and for senior schooling and youth transitions.
- Education ministers published the final report of the Review of senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training and agreed to focus on specific aspects of the review.
- In June 2020, education ministers requested ACARA to review the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum. ACARA is to complete the review by the end of 2021, with the revised Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum released on a redesigned Australian Curriculum website by the start of 2022.
- In line with the NSRA, work continued to explore how learning progressions and formative assessment can enhance the capacity of teachers to make evidence-based decisions about their students' learning.
- The Australian Government allocated funding for an Indigenous Youth Education Package to provide scholarships, academies and mentoring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. All states and territories operated programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities within their jurisdictions.
- The Australian Government conducted a 5-yearly review of the Disability Standards for Education.
- The *My School* website was revised in March 2020 with a number of changes to National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) reporting. These focused on reporting gains made by students rather than school averages. School information was updated in March and November 2020.
- During 2020, work progressed on options to establish a national unique student identifier (USI) as agreed under the NSRA.
- In December 2020, Education Council launched the Australian Education Research Organisation ([AERO](#)), a national policy initiative to improve the national evidence base under the NSRA.
- The Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia was revised to address the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration and endorsed by education ministers for the period 2020–2023. The *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020* is used as the basis of KPMs in this report.

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

Part 3 reports on only 7 of the 17 agreed KPMs scheduled for reporting in 2020. This is a result of the cancellation of NAPLAN, the postponement of the NAP sample assessment in information and communication technology (ICT) literacy, and inconsistencies in attendance data due to COVID-19.

The measures are reported at the national level, and by various breakdowns, such as state and territory, school sector, school year and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status. For relevant KPMs, time series for the previous 10 years (2010–2019) are also included. Where relevant breakdowns or time series are not reported in Part 3, they are provided in the National Report on Schooling data portal, along with extensive statistical information on schooling in Australia.

Data reported for 2020 includes:

- The national apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12 increased by 0.1 percentage points to 82.1% in 2020. The apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students increased by 1.5 percentage points to 61.5%. These changes were not statistically significant, but the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous rates narrowed by 1.4 percentage points to 21.8 percentage points in 2020. The long-term trends since 2010 in apparent retention rates from Year 10 to Year 12 were upward for all students and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, with a net fall in the gap of 5.2 percentage points between 2010 and 2020.
- The proportion of the 15–19-year-old population, including secondary students, undertaking vocational education and training (VET) decreased (but not significantly) from 27.2% in 2019 to 26.3% in 2020. The long-term trend in this measure since 2015 was downward.
- The 3 KPMs measuring the participation of young people in education and/or work, as measured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey of Education and Work (SEW), all fell significantly in 2020. This reflected falls in employment and post-school education and training as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These falls affected young people more than other age groups in the workforce.
- The proportion of 15–19-year-olds who were fully engaged in education, training or work decreased significantly from 87.0% in 2019 to 85.4% in 2020. There was no evident long-term trend in this measure for the period 2008–2020.
- The proportion of 20–24-year-olds who were fully engaged in education, training or work decreased significantly from 75.5% in 2019 to 71.0% in 2020. With an average annual fall of 0.4 percentage points since 2008, the long-term trend in this measure was downward.
- The proportion of 17–24-year-olds who had left school and were fully engaged in education, training or work decreased significantly from 74.0% in 2019 to 69.3% in 2020. With an average annual fall of 0.3 percentage points since 2008, the long-term trend in this measure was downward.

- The proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that had attained at least Year 12 or equivalent or Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Certificate II or above, as measured by the ABS SEW increased from 89.3% in 2019 to 89.9% in 2020. The proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that had attained at least Year 12 or equivalent or AQF Certificate III or above increased from 88.2% in 2019 to 89.4% in 2020. Neither increase in 2020 was significant. There was no apparent effect of COVID-19 on the 2 attainment KPMs in 2020. The long-term trends in both of these measures (of 0.5 percentage points per annum since 2008) were upward.

Table 1 summarises the KPMs for 2020 in comparison with 2019. This is expressed as the short-term change to each KPM.

Table 1 also summarises longer-term trends in the movement of KPMs. This data demonstrates that while small changes in KPMs from year to year are rarely statistically significant, successive increments over time may result in measurable long-term trends.

Table 1**Key performance measures for schooling, Australia, 2019–2020 and long-term trends**

KPMs	Short-term change			Long-term trend		
	2019	2020	Change	Trend period	Average annual change (points)	Trend
1. Student participation						
1(e) Apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12 (%)	82.0	82.1	↔	2010–20	0.4	↑
1(f) Participation of young people, including secondary students, in VET: Proportion of the population aged 15 to 19 years who in the calendar year successfully completed at least one unit of competency as part of a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above (%)	27.2	26.3	↔	2015–20	-0.6	↓
1(g) Proportion of 15–19-year-olds in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training (ABS Survey of Education and Work) (%)	87.0	85.4	↓	2008–20	0.2	↔
1(h) Proportion of 20–24-year-olds in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training (ABS Survey of Education and Work) (%)	75.5	71.0	↓	2008–20	-0.4	↓
1(i) Proportion of 17–24-year-olds who have left school that are in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training (ABS Survey of Education and Work) (%)	74.0	69.3	↓	2008–20	-0.3	↓
7. Student attainment						
7(a) Proportion of the 20–24-year-old population having attained at least Year 12 or equivalent or AQF Certificate II or above (ABS Survey of Education and Work) (%)	89.3	89.9	↔	2008–20	0.5	↑
7(b) Proportion of the 20–24-year-old population having attained at least Year 12 or equivalent or AQF Certificate III or above (ABS Survey of Education and Work) (%)	88.2	89.4	↔	2008–20	0.5	↑

Notes:

Measures of short-term change in Table 1 have been tested for statistical significance:

Long-term trends for each KPM are shown for the period (at least 3 years) over which comparable data is available. Trends are calculated from the line of best fit in a graph of all relevant data in a time series. The average annual change is calculated from the line of best fit and a test is performed to determine if a trend is evident. It is expressed in percentage points.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the 2019–20 financial year, total recurrent government funding for schooling was \$70.63 billion. This was made up of \$48.22 billion (68.3%) from state and territory budgets and \$22.41 billion (31.7%) from the Australian Government (Commonwealth) budget.

Overall, 74.5% of recurrent government funding was allocated to government schools and 25.5% to non-government schools. The bulk (91.6%) of state and territory funding was allocated to government schools. Most (62.2%) of the Australian Government funding was allocated to non-government schools.

Between the 2019 and 2020 calendar years there was a substantial (12.3% per student) increase in Australian Government grants to non-government schools. This was partly due to additional financial assistance provided to non-government schools in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Part 1: Schools and schooling



Part 1 provides information on the status of Australian schooling in 2020, including school, student and teacher numbers, and school structures.

1.1 School numbers

In Australia, responsibility for school education rests mainly with the 6 state and 2 territory governments.⁷

All states and territories provide for 13 years of formal school education. Primary education includes a Foundation year and Years 1–6. Secondary education consists of Years 7–12.⁸ Typically, schooling commences at age 5, is compulsory from age 6 until age 17 (with provision for alternative study or work arrangements after Year 10) and is completed at age 17 or 18.

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

The number and proportion of schools by school type and school sector in 2020 are shown in Table 1.1.

⁷ New South Wales (NSW), Victoria (Vic), Queensland (Qld), South Australia (SA), Western Australia (WA), Tasmania (Tas), Northern Territory (NT) and Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

⁸ Except in SA. Most SA primary schools currently include Year 7, with a transition of Year 7 to a secondary school year in progress.

Table 1.1**Number and proportion of schools by school type and school sector, Australia, 2020**

School type	School sector									
	Government		Non-government				All schools			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	% by school type
Primary	4,790	76.7	1,248	20.0	211	3.4	1,459	23.3	6,249	65.5
Secondary	1,052	73.4	326	22.7	55	3.8	381	26.6	1,433	15.0
Combined	499	36.6	144	10.6	720	52.8	864	63.4	1,363	14.3
Special	334	67.2	44	8.9	119	23.9	163	32.8	497	5.2
Total	6,675	70.0	1,762	18.5	1,105	11.6	2,867	30.0	9,542	100.0

Notes:

School type:

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

School sector: Categories used in tables and graphs showing 'school sector' are 'government', 'Catholic' and 'independent'. In some cases, the category 'total non-government' (total of Catholic and independent) is also used. Systemic and non-systemic Catholic schools are counted as Catholic schools in the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) and in this report⁹. Independent public schools established in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory are government schools.

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020.

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

In 2020 there were 9,542 schools in Australia.¹⁰ This total included primary, secondary, combined (primary and secondary) and special schools, across government and non-government school sectors. (See notes to Table 1.1 and Part 5: Glossary for definitions of school levels, school types and school sectors.)

Of the total number of schools, 70.0% were administered by state and territory governments, 18.5 % identified as having Catholic affiliation, and 11.6% were classified as independent. Most independent schools are affiliated with religious denominations or promote a particular educational philosophy.

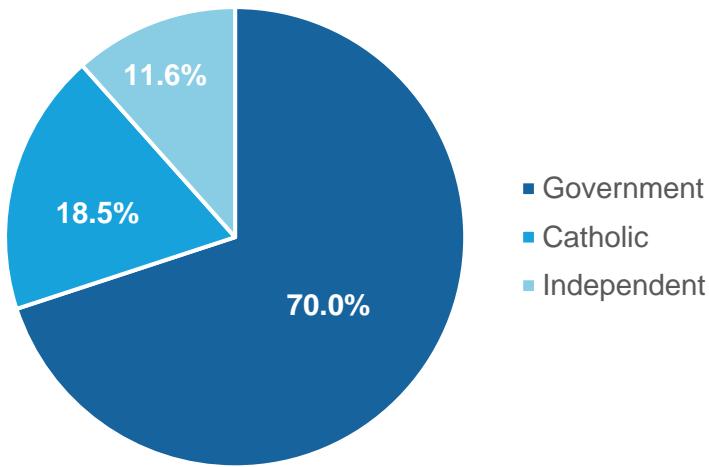
⁹ Except where noted in Part 4 School funding and in Part 5 Glossary

¹⁰ As at the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) schools census date, 7 August 2020.

The proportion of schools by school sector in 2020 is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1

Proportion of schools by school sector, Australia, 2020 (%)



Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Around two-thirds (65.5%) of schools were primary schools. In general, primary schools are smaller and more localised than secondary schools. Three-quarters (76.7%) of primary schools were government schools.

Most secondary schools (73.4%) and special schools (67.2%) were also government schools, while most combined schools (63.4%) were non-government schools.

The number and proportion of schools by state and territory in 2020 are shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2

Number and proportion of schools by school type and state/territory, Australia, 2020

School type	State/territory								
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Primary	2,102	1,564	1,135	448	685	155	75	85	6,249
Secondary	509	340	267	86	142	42	22	25	1,433
Combined	321	243	279	155	201	56	87	21	1,363
Special	175	107	89	26	80	9	6	5	497
Total	3,107	2,254	1,770	715	1,108	262	190	136	9,542
Proportion (%)	32.6	23.6	18.5	7.5	11.6	2.7	2.0	1.4	100.0

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

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

The total number of schools in Australia rose by 39 from 9,503 in 2019 to 9,542 in 2020, including increases of 15 in Queensland and 11 in Western Australia. Proportions of schools per state and territory in 2020 were substantially unchanged from 2019.

There was a net rise of 74 (0.8%) in the total number of schools over the period 2010–2020. The numbers and proportions of schools in the 3 school sectors over this period are shown in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3**Number and proportion of schools by school sector, Australia, 2010–2020**

School sector							
	Government		Catholic		Independent		Total
Year	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
2010	6,743	71.2	1,708	18.0	1,017	10.7	9,468
2011	6,705	71.1	1,710	18.1	1,020	10.8	9,435
2012	6,697	71.0	1,713	18.2	1,017	10.8	9,427
2013	6,661	70.9	1,717	18.3	1,015	10.8	9,393
2014	6,651	70.8	1,722	18.3	1,016	10.8	9,389
2015	6,639	70.6	1,737	18.5	1,028	10.9	9,404
2016	6,634	70.5	1,738	18.5	1,042	11.1	9,414
2017	6,639	70.3	1,744	18.5	1,061	11.2	9,444
2018	6,646	70.1	1,753	18.5	1,078	11.4	9,477
2019	6,659	70.1	1,756	18.5	1,088	11.4	9,503
2020	6,675	70.0	1,762	18.5	1,105	11.6	9,542

Note: Percentages may not add to totals due to rounding.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia, 2020* and previous releases.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Between 2010 and 2020 there was a net rise of 54 in the number of Catholic schools and of 88 in the number of independent schools with a net fall in the number of government schools of 68. The proportion of independent schools grew by 0.9 percentage points to 11.6% nationally over this period.

1.2 Student numbers

Enrolments by school level and sector

In 2020, for the first time, enrolments in Australian schools exceeded 4 million, a rise of 1.5% from 2019.

At the time of the schools census in August 2020, various restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic were in place, which may impact on the data. However, because of the way the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) counted enrolments, it is estimated that the impacts of COVID-19 on the data were minor.

While the majority of schools across Australia continued as normal, initiatives to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the community were put in place, including the implementation of remote online learning where required. For the schools census, students were considered to be enrolled and active in an education program, even if that program had been temporarily disrupted by COVID-19. This included where programs were temporarily delivered online or remotely and even where schools were temporarily closed for COVID-19 related reasons.¹¹

The numbers and proportions of individual students by school level and school sector in 2020 are summarised in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4

Number and proportion of students (full-time plus part-time) enrolled in schools by school level and school sector, Australia, 2020

School level	School sector							
	Government		Catholic		Independent		Total	% by level
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	
Primary	1,597,052	70.4	403,784	17.8	268,055	11.8	2,268,891	56.6
Junior secondary	736,615	59.8	265,148	21.5	229,576	18.6	1,231,339	30.7
Senior secondary	295,476	58.3	109,673	21.6	101,595	20.0	506,744	12.6
Total secondary	1,032,091	59.4	374,821	21.6	331,171	19.1	1,738,083	43.4
Total	2,629,143	65.6	778,605	19.4	599,226	15.0	4,006,974	100.0

Notes:

School level:

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

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

¹¹ ABS, *Schools, Australia, 2020*

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020.

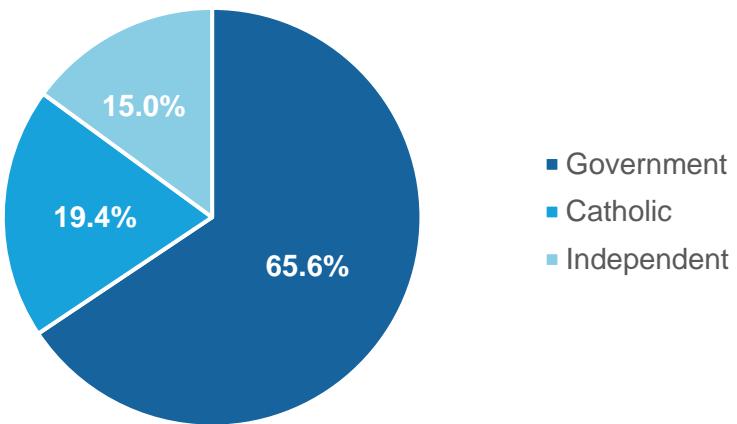
See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Of the 4.01 million school students, 2.27 million (56.6%) were primary students, and 1.74 million (43.4%) were secondary students. This difference is mainly due to the structure of schooling, in which primary schooling includes more year groups or cohorts than secondary schooling. Also, not all students complete Years 11 and 12, the last 2 years of secondary school.

As shown in Table 1.4, 65.6% of Australian school students in 2020 were enrolled in government schools, 19.4% of students were enrolled in Catholic schools and 15.0% of students were enrolled in independent schools. This is illustrated in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2

Proportion of students (full-time plus part-time) enrolled in schools by sector, Australia, 2020 (%)



Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

The proportions of students enrolled in each school sector differed between levels of education, with government schools accounting for 70.4% of primary students but less than 60% (59.4%) of secondary students.

Part-time students accounted for only 0.3% of total enrolments. They were concentrated in Years 11 and 12 (75.1%), and in government schools (87.4%).

Enrolments by school level, and state and territory

Enrolments of individual students (full-time plus part-time) by state and territory and school level in 2020 are shown in Table 1.5.

Table 1.5

Number of students (full-time plus part-time) enrolled in schools by state/territory and school level, Australia, 2020

School level	State/territory								
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Primary	705,756	566,769	478,224	163,127	243,235	45,580	24,380	41,820	2,268,891
Junior secondary	387,240	310,353	270,686	70,792	132,054	25,929	11,968	22,317	1,231,339
Senior secondary	148,966	129,350	109,010	39,817	54,542	10,506	4,461	10,092	506,744
Total secondary	536,206	439,703	379,696	110,609	186,596	36,435	16,429	32,409	1,738,083
Total	1,241,962	1,006,472	857,920	273,736	429,831	82,015	40,809	74,229	4,006,974
Proportion of Australian total (%)	31.0	25.1	21.4	6.8	10.7	2.0	1.0	1.9	100.0

Notes:

See notes for Table 1.4.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

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

Growth in enrolments

The numbers of students enrolled in Australian schools grew by 58,163 (1.5%) between 2019 and 2020 with growth in absolute numbers in all 3 school sectors.

Total enrolments grew by 496,099 (14.1%) between 2010 and 2020, largely reflecting the growth in the school-age population, as schooling is essentially compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16.¹² Growth in senior secondary enrolments, including 17-year-olds and 18-year-olds, may be influenced by factors in addition to population growth.

Enrolments, both in government and in non-government schools, have risen over the past 10 years, with the bulk of total growth over the period (66.4%) occurring in government schools. Table 1.6 summarises this data.

¹² The proportion of children aged 6–15 years who are enrolled in school is consistently close to 100%. Enrolment rates for this age group are reported in Part 3: Measuring performance and in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

Table 1.6**Number and proportion of students (full-time plus part-time) by school sector, Australia, 2010–2020**

Year	School sector						
	Government		Catholic		Independent		Total
Year	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
2010	2,304,259	65.6	713,911	20.3	492,705	14.0	3,510,875
2011	2,315,253	65.4	724,594	20.5	501,962	14.2	3,541,809
2012	2,342,379	65.2	736,595	20.5	511,012	14.2	3,589,986
2013	2,375,024	65.1	749,059	20.5	521,436	14.3	3,645,519
2014	2,406,495	65.1	757,749	20.5	529,857	14.3	3,694,101
2015	2,445,130	65.2	765,539	20.4	540,304	14.4	3,750,973
2016	2,483,802	65.4	767,050	20.2	547,374	14.4	3,798,226
2017	2,524,865	65.6	766,870	19.9	557,490	14.5	3,849,225
2018	2,558,169	65.7	765,735	19.7	569,930	14.6	3,893,834
2019	2,594,830	65.7	769,719	19.5	584,262	14.8	3,948,811
2020	2,629,143	65.6	778,605	19.4	599,226	15.0	4,006,974

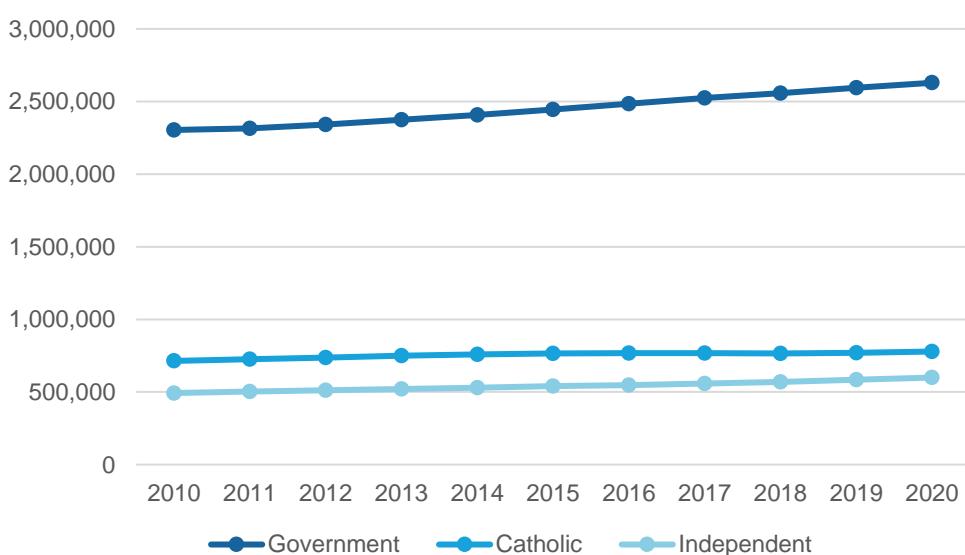
Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Between 2010 and 2014 the government sector ‘share’ of total enrolments fell by 0.5 percentage points, but, by 2020, had recovered to 65.6%, a similar proportion as in 2010. Between 2010 and 2020 independent school enrolments rose by 1.0 percentage point to 15.0% of the total, while Catholic sector enrolments fell by 0.9 percentage points to 19.4% of total enrolments over the period.

Figure 1.3 illustrates the growth in student enrolments 2010–2020 by school sector.

Figure 1.3**Number of students enrolled (full-time plus part-time) by school sector, Australia, 2010–2020**

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

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

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

In 2020 there were 240,180 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander¹³ students enrolled in Australian schools, making up 6.0% of the total school population. Table 1.7 shows the number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by school level and state and territory.

Table 1.7

Number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (full-time plus part-time) enrolled in schools by school level and state/territory, Australia, 2020

School level	State/territory								
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Primary	47,141	10,702	43,420	8,768	17,484	4,540	9,735	1,330	143,120
Junior secondary	25,920	5,737	22,802	3,264	8,929	2,566	4,735	711	74,664
Senior secondary	6,708	1,746	7,144	1,617	2,619	809	1,444	309	22,396
Total secondary	32,628	7,483	29,946	4,881	11,548	3,375	6,179	1,020	97,060
Total (no.)	79,769	18,185	73,366	13,649	29,032	7,915	15,914	2,350	240,180
Proportion of the Australian total of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students per state/territory (%)	33.2	7.6	30.5	5.7	12.1	3.3	6.6	1.0	100.0
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as a proportion of total students in each state/territory (%)	6.4	1.8	8.6	5.0	6.8	9.7	39.0	3.2	6.0

Notes:

See notes for Table 1.4.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

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

With 79,769 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (33.2% of the national total), New South Wales had the highest number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments in 2020. This represented 6.4% of the state's students, more than the national average of 6.0%, and more than the NSW share (31.0%) of total enrolments nationally. Queensland schools accounted for 30.5% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (compared with 21.4% of total enrolments) and Western Australia 12.1% (compared with 10.7% of total enrolments).

The highest concentration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was in the Northern Territory, which accounted for only 1.0% of total school enrolments in 2020, but for 6.6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments. The 15,914 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in NT schools made up 39.0% of the Territory's school population. Because of this, data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait

¹³ This report uses the term 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' to refer to First Nations Australians. This is in line with the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration and definitions used for data collection.

Islander students has a greater impact on overall statistics for the Northern Territory than for any other state or territory.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were under-represented in senior secondary years: 4.4% of senior secondary students were identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, compared with 6.1% of junior secondary students. These proportions reflect Year 10 to Year 12 apparent retention rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, which increased between 2010 and 2020, but are still substantially lower than for the overall school population. Apparent retention rates are reported in Part 3: Measuring performance and in the [National Report on Schooling data portal](#).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students predominantly attended government schools, with 83.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments in government schools compared with 65.6% of enrolments for all students. Overall, 16.6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled in non-government schools (10.6% in Catholic schools, 6.0% in independent schools) but this proportion rose from 13.7% for primary students to 20.9% for secondary students.

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

1.3 Staff numbers

The numbers and proportions of FTE teaching staff by school sector, school level and sex in 2020 are shown in Table 1.8.

Table 1.8

Number and proportion of FTE teaching staff by school sector, school level and sex, Australia, 2020

School level		Primary				Secondary				Total			
School sector		M	F	Total	%	M	F	Total	%	M	F	Total	%
Government		19,514	88,029	107,543	70.4	30,764	50,762	81,526	56.7	50,278	138,791	189,069	63.8
Catholic		4,066	21,968	26,034	17.0	11,951	18,660	30,611	21.3	16,017	40,628	56,645	19.1
Independent		4,100	15,143	19,243	12.6	13,137	18,422	31,558	22.0	17,237	33,565	50,802	17.1
Total non-government		8,166	37,112	45,278	29.6	25,087	37,082	62,169	43.3	33,253	74,193	107,447	36.2
All schools		27,680	125,141	152,821	51.5	55,851	87,844	143,695	48.5	83,532	212,985	296,516	100.0

Notes:

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

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

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

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020.

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

In 2020, there were 296,516 FTE teaching staff across primary and secondary schooling in Australia. This was an increase of 8,222 (2.9%) from 2019. This was made up of a rise of 6,110 government school teachers (3.3% increase) and 2,112 non-government school teachers (2.0% increase).

Across Australia in 2020, 63.8% of FTE teachers were employed by the government school sector, 19.1% by the Catholic school sector and 17.1% by the independent sector. This remains broadly consistent with the distribution of (full-time plus part-time) students across school sectors.

In 2020, Australia's teaching workforce continued to be predominantly female, with women making up 71.8 % of FTE teachers, and men making up 28.2%. This gap is similar to that in 2010. In 2020, the gender difference was again more pronounced at the primary level (81.1% female) than at secondary level (61.1% female).

The number and proportion of FTE teaching staff by state and territory in 2020 is shown in Table 1.9.

Table 1.9

Number and proportion of FTE teaching staff by state and territory and school level, Australia, 2020

School level	State/territory								
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Primary	44,800	40,631	32,396	11,187	15,669	3,242	2,020	2,877	152,821
Secondary	43,293	38,008	31,212	8,928	15,110	3,054	1,439	2,652	143,695
Total	88,093	78,639	63,608	20,114	30,779	6,296	3,459	5,529	296,516
Proportion (%)	29.7	26.5	21.5	6.8	10.4	2.1	1.2	1.9	100.0

Notes:

See notes for Table 1.8.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

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

Changes in teaching staffing levels for the period 2010–2020 are shown in Table 1.10.

Table 1.10

Number of FTE teaching staff by school sector, Australia, 2010–2020

School sector	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Government	163,697	165,272	167,152	167,903	169,199	171,763	176,819	180,973	185,458	182,959	189,069
Catholic	47,391	48,393	49,427	50,527	50,936	52,160	53,154	53,839	54,511	55,372	56,645
Independent	40,333	41,445	42,407	43,154	43,930	45,277	46,357	47,248	48,614	49,963	50,802
Total non-government	87,724	89,838	91,834	93,682	94,866	97,437	99,511	101,087	103,125	105,335	107,447
All schools	251,422	255,110	258,986	261,585	264,065	269,200	276,330	282,059	288,583	288,294	296,516

Notes:

See notes for Table 1.8.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Between 2010 and 2020, the total number of FTE teaching staff grew by 45,094 (17.9%). This was noticeably more than the percentage growth in (full-time plus part-time) student enrolments (14.1%) over the same period.

In 2020, FTE teaching staff accounted for 68.1 % of the FTE of all school staff. In addition to teaching staff, 138,992 FTE staff were employed in administrative and clerical roles, as teacher aides and assistants, as specialist support staff or in building and maintenance.

Additional, more detailed information on numbers of teaching and non-teaching school staff is available in the [National Report on Schooling data portal](#).

Student–teacher ratios

The student–teacher ratio is calculated as the number of FTE students per FTE teaching staff. Numbers of FTE students are marginally lower than numbers of full-time plus part-time students reported in Part 1.2.

Table 1.11 summarises average student–teacher ratios in Australia in 2020 across the 3 school sectors.

Table 1.11

FTE student–teacher ratios, by school sector and school level, Australia, 2020

School sector	Primary	Secondary	All schools
Government	14.8	12.6	13.9
Catholic	15.5	12.2	13.7
Independent	13.9	10.5	11.8
All non-government	14.8	11.4	12.8
All schools	14.8	12.1	13.5

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

For all Australian schools, the average FTE student–teacher ratio in 2020 was 13.5:1, a reduction from 13.7:1 in 2019. The average ratio for government schools nationally decreased from 14.2:1 to 13.9:1 between 2019 and 2020. The average ratio for non-government schools was unchanged from 2019, but this included a fall in ratios for Catholic schools and an increase in ratios for independent schools.

The average ratio for government schools (13.9:1) was higher than ratios for non-government schools overall (12.8:1), Catholic schools (13.7:1) and independent schools (11.8:1).

Table 1.12 shows average student–teacher ratios in 2020 by school level and state and territory.

Table 1.12

FTE student–teacher ratios, by state/territory and school level, Australia, 2020

School level	State/territory								
	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Primary	15.8	13.9	14.8	14.6	15.5	14.1	12.1	14.5	14.8
Secondary	12.4	11.5	12.1	12.3	12.3	11.9	11.4	12.2	12.1
All schools	14.1	12.8	13.5	13.6	14.0	13.0	11.8	13.4	13.5

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Student–teacher ratios are consistently lower for secondary education than for primary education in all school sectors and across all states and territories. In 2020, the average FTE student–teacher ratio was 12.1:1 at the secondary level compared with 14.8:1 at the primary level.

This reflects differing requirements for particular student groups, and for different school subjects, in

secondary schools, such as smaller maximum class sizes for practical subjects, and for senior secondary classes.

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

Lower student–teacher ratios mean there is a smaller number of students per teacher and, potentially, smaller class sizes.

However, ratios, by themselves, are only approximate indicators of actual class size because they do not take into account the factors mentioned above.

The average national student–teacher ratio fell from 13.9:1 in 2010 to 13.5:1 in 2020, with reductions across all school sectors. Time series data (2009–2020) on student–teacher ratios by state and territory, school sector and school level is available in the [National Report on Schooling data portal](#).

1.4 School structures

During the last decade, school structures and age requirements for student enrolment have been made more consistent across Australian states and territories. Policy changes leading to this include decisions by several jurisdictions to move Year 7 from a primary school year to a secondary school year and national agreement to effectively increase the minimum school leaving age.

In 2020, primary education consisted of a Foundation year (first year of full-time school) followed by Years 1–6 in all states and territories except South Australia, with secondary education from Years 7–12. In South Australia, Year 7 was still a primary school year in most schools but with the transition of Year 7 to secondary schooling in progress.¹⁴

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

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

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

¹⁴ In 2018, the South Australian Government announced that Year 7 will be moved from a primary school year to a secondary school year (from 2022 for government schools). In 2020, this change was implemented for a number of non-government schools and 3 government schools.

Table 1.13

Primary and secondary school structures, minimum school starting age, compulsory school starting age, and minimum school leaving age, by state and territory, Australia, 2020

State/territory	Name of Foundation year	Primary schooling	Secondary schooling	Minimum school starting age (Foundation)	Compulsory school starting age	Minimum school leaving age
New South Wales	Kindergarten	Kindergarten Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 31 July	6 years	17 years
Victoria	Preparatory	Preparatory Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 30 April	6 years	17 years
Queensland	Preparatory	Preparatory Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 30 June	6 years 6 months	17 years
South Australia	Reception	Reception Years 1–7	Years 8–12	4 turning 5 by 1 May	6 years	17 years
Western Australia	Pre-primary	Pre-primary Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 30 June	5 years 6 months	17 years 6 months – 18 years
Tasmania	Preparatory	Preparatory Years 1–6	Years 7–12	5 by 1 January	5 years	17 years
Northern Territory	Transition	Transition Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 30 June	6 years	17 years
Australian Capital Territory	Kindergarten	Kindergarten Years 1–6	Years 7–12	4 turning 5 by 30 April	6 years	17 years

Notes:

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

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

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

Sources: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020; state and territory education authorities.

Within the overall structure of primary and secondary education, there is further variation. Individual schools may be primary only, secondary only or combined primary and secondary. Secondary schools may accommodate the full age range of secondary students or be divided into junior and senior campuses (sometimes known as ‘senior colleges’).

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

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

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

Each state and territory also has an early childhood education sector that is separate from primary and secondary schooling, although early childhood centres are often attached to, or accommodated in, primary schools. In some jurisdictions, part-time early childhood education programs in the year before full-time schooling that are conducted in primary schools are considered to be a part of schooling. However, these programs are outside the scope and definition of schooling in the NSSC. Statistical data on these and other early childhood education programs is not included in this report.¹⁵

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

¹⁵ Statistical data on preschool early childhood education is available in ABS, *Preschool Education, Australia*, 2020.

Part 2: Policies and priorities



Part 2 outlines the national policy context for Australian schooling in 2020 and reports against the commitments to action agreed by Australian education ministers in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration.

2.1 National policy context

Within Australia's federal system of government, constitutional responsibility for school education rests mainly with the Australian states and territories.¹⁶ The federal (Australian) government contributes to education policy through national agreements and its financial relations with the states.

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

In Australia, joint decisions on agreed national policy and shared priorities are made through intergovernmental policy councils and forums. For education and training, in the first half of 2020 these councils were the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), the COAG Education Council and the COAG Skills Council.

During 2020 there was a major restructure of these intergovernmental arrangements.

¹⁶ New South Wales (NSW), Victoria (Vic), Queensland (Qld), South Australia (SA), Western Australia (WA), Tasmania (Tas), Northern Territory (NT) and Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

Council of Australian Governments and National Cabinet

COAG was the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia in the first part of 2020. Its members were the Prime Minister, state and territory first ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association.

In March 2020 the National Cabinet was formed to coordinate Australia's response to COVID-19.

In May 2020 the Prime Minister, state premiers and territory chief ministers agreed to continue as the National Cabinet, to form the new National Federation Reform Council (NFRC) and to disband COAG.

The National Cabinet will continue to meet regularly. The NFRC, which consists of first ministers and treasurers of all Australian jurisdictions and the President of the Australian Local Government Association, will meet annually to consider priority national federation issues.

The National Cabinet also commissioned a review of COAG Councils and Ministerial Forums. This led to a decision to reduce the number of ministerial councils and other forums and streamline their operations. Education and Skills are 2 of the 10 policy areas in which regular ministerial meetings have been retained in amended form.

In June 2020, the National Cabinet also announced the formation of 6 National Cabinet Reform Committees in 6 initial priority areas of reform, including the Skills National Cabinet Reform Committee (Skills Committee).

COAG Education Council and Education Ministers Meeting

In 2020 the COAG Education Council was the national ministerial council with responsibility for schooling. State, territory, Australian Government and New Zealand ministers with responsibility for the portfolios of school education, higher education and/or early childhood education were members of the council.

Education Council's scope of responsibility covered:

- early childhood education and care
- primary and secondary education, including vocational education and training in schools
- higher education
- international education.

Education Council provided a forum through which strategic policy on education could be coordinated at the national level.

Following the review of ministerial forums, the Education Council held its last meeting in December 2020, and was replaced by the Education Ministers Meeting from 2021.

COAG Skills Council, Skills Committee and Skills Ministers Meeting

In 2020 the COAG Skills Council had responsibility for skills development and national training arrangements within the vocational education and training (VET) sector.

In June 2020, the National Cabinet announced the formation of the Skills National Cabinet Reform Committee (Skills Committee) as one of 6 such committees in priority areas of reform. In addition to the Skills Committee, skills and training ministers have responsibility for the ongoing management of

the VET system through the Skills Ministers' Meeting.

Both committees consist of ministers from each state and territory and the Australian Government with portfolio responsibility for skills issues, and have replaced the COAG Skills Council as a forum for decision-making about skills development and national training arrangements.

Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration

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

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

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

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

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

National School Reform Agreement

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

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

- Supporting students, student learning and student achievement
 1. Enhancing the Australian Curriculum to support teacher assessment of student attainment and growth
 2. Assisting teachers monitor student progress through online student learning assessment tools
 3. Reviewing senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training
- Supporting teaching, school leadership and school improvement
 4. Reviewing teacher workforce needs of the future
 5. Strengthening the initial teacher education¹⁷ accreditation system

¹⁷ Initial teacher education (ITE) refers to degrees and/or diplomas required for professional employment in teaching.

- Enhancing the national evidence base
- 6. Implementing a national unique student identifier (USI)¹⁸
- 7. Establishing an independent national evidence institute
- 8. Improving national data quality, consistency and collection

During 2020 work continued to support the implementation of the 8 national policy initiatives specified in the agreement. These initiatives are being jointly developed by all Australian governments through Education Council.

Reporting and public transparency arrangements include an annual public report from Education Council to demonstrate progress towards implementation. Progress on the development of the initiatives in 2020 is noted in the following sections of Part 2.

Also, bilateral reform agreements between the Australian Government and the states and territories reflect state-specific initiatives in the context of each jurisdiction. States and territories report annually to the Australian Government on progress against the actions outlined in individual bilateral agreements and on their funding contributions to government and non-government schools.

Review of the National Education Architecture

This review examined how ACARA, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and Education Services Australia (ESA) can best support the objectives of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration and the NSRA. Education Council considered the Final Report of the Review of the National Architecture for Schooling in Australia in December 2019.

In 2020 Education Council resolved not to undertake structural changes during the COVID-19 pandemic, but to rather focus on process and governance to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the national architecture.

Responses to the COVID-19 pandemic

During 2020, schools, students, teachers, and parents and carers in all states and territories were impacted to some extent by community lockdowns and other restrictions imposed to combat the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In April 2020 Education Council agreed a set of national principles to promote equitable outcomes for students during COVID-19 and support local decisions:

- Students will be able to achieve a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education in 2020, and the certificate will facilitate access to university, further education and employment.
- Any revisions to school assessment programs must be made with students' best interests in mind and to honour the intent of the learning described in the curriculum.
- Equity in assessment must be maintained while also providing schools with flexibility to accommodate their unique circumstances, including the specific needs of individual students.
- Revisions to assessment programs must not compromise the integrity of senior certification and public confidence in the credentials issued to senior students.

To ensure that students applying for university entry interstate were not disadvantaged, Education Council

¹⁸ A unique and persistent number for every school student in Australia, which will allow for sharing of information between schools, sectors and jurisdictions, through to the VET and higher education sectors.

decided that Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) results will be released in a nationally consistent window of dates beginning in 2020.

In March 2020 Education Council agreed to cancel NAPLAN for 2020 due to COVID-19. Given the cancellation of NAPLAN 2020 and the impacts on schooling due to COVID-19, education ministers decided in June 2020 that the timeline for full transition to NAPLAN Online will be further deferred from 2021 to 2022.

In June 2020, Education Council decided to postpone the NAP–ICT Literacy sample assessment scheduled for 2020 by 12 months to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ministers agreed that NAP sample assessment cycle will continue from 2021, resulting in a one-off four-year gap (as opposed to the normal three-year gap) in the time series for each of the sample assessments.

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

All school sectors (government, Catholic and independent) worked together during this period. Departments of education in each state and territory worked with the non-government sectors and their communities to ensure they had access to the full range of learning-at-home resources available to government schools. The Australian Government's Education Sector Pandemic Preparedness Committee had representatives from all school sectors.

Student attendance in 2020 was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of the different arrangements for schooling across the country that were put in place in response to health advice, attendance data was not consistent across states and territories. As a result, student attendance data is not published for 2020.

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

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

The extent of disruptions to school operations in 2020 in each state and territory, and responses of school systems within each jurisdiction are detailed in Part 2.14: Arrangements for student learning during COVID-19.

State and territory policy initiatives

State and territory governments retain the responsibility for implementing agreed national policy in education, and for initiating and carrying out their own programs of innovation and reform. In 2020, all states and territories participated in national policy initiatives under the NSRA. Other state and territory policy initiatives¹⁹ are noted in the following sections of Part 2.

¹⁹ Information on state and territory initiatives reported in Part 2 is drawn from contributions received from state and territory education authorities.

2.2 Educational goals

Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration

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

Goal 1: The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity

Goal 2: All young Australians become:

- confident and creative individuals
- successful lifelong learners
- active and informed members of the community.

Commitment to action to achieve the educational goals

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

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

Progress in 2020 in addressing the areas for action is reported in the following sections of Part 2.

COAG targets

Over the last decade, the former COAG set targets to lift educational attainment overall and to close the gap between the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students. The targets are to:

- lift the Year 12 or equivalent or Certificate III attainment rate to 90 per cent by 2020
- at least halve the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students' Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.

Progress against COAG targets for school education is reported in Part 3: Measuring and reporting performance.

Closing the Gap

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

In March 2019 a formal Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap was established between the Australian Government, state and territory governments, the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations and the Australian Local Government Association. This partnership developed a new [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#), which was signed in July 2020 and includes the following targets related to education:

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

2.3 Developing stronger partnerships

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

Closing the Gap

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

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

STEM partnerships

The final report of the STEM Partnerships Forum, [Optimising STEM industry–school partnerships: Inspiring Australia’s next generation](#) (2018), emphasised the need for ongoing partnerships between education and industry to improve science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education.

The report was influential in the development of the NSRA. Education ministers’ [Response to the STEM Partnerships Forum report](#) (2019) outlines national and state and territory initiatives in relation to STEM.

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

Pathways in Technology

The Australian Government has committed \$5.1 million to pilot the Pathways in Technology (P-TECH) model of education – industry collaboration at a number of sites across the country as part of the broader strategy to improve Australia’s STEM capability.

P-TECH involves the establishment of long-term partnerships between industry, schools and tertiary education providers that enable businesses to play an active role in supporting young people to develop the skills they need for the jobs of the future. Local education and industry partners involved in the pilot are working together to design and deliver P-TECH learning programs suited to local circumstances.

In 2020 there were 13 pilot sites operating across Australia involving more than 60 major employers, industry bodies and tertiary education providers. More than 3,000 students have participated in introductory P-TECH activities, with more than 600 students pursuing formal P-TECH pathways.

State and territory initiatives

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

- In 2020, New South Wales signed an updated partnership agreement with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Incorporated titled ‘Walking Together, Working Together’ for 2020–2030. One of the goals is that educational outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people

will be ‘as good as or better than’ the general student population of NSW.

- In Victoria the Tech School program is providing students and teachers in government schools with exposure to the latest technology, local industries and real-world industry problems to inspire interest in STEM.
- Victoria has established a ‘community of practice’ for state and territory complaints management experts across Australia’s education sector.
- In Queensland the STEM Industry Partnerships Forum brings together a range of stakeholders from industry, university, government and education to collaborate and provide expert input to strengthen and create new school partnerships and resources.
- The South Australian education department has partnered with Telstra to deliver the SWiFT (Schools With internet Fibre Technology) project to 99% of schools and 98% of preschools across the state. SWiFT is a high-speed internet solution enabling government schools and preschools to connect and collaborate more effectively, access online resources and platforms seamlessly, and deliver curriculum via digital means.
- The Western Australian department of education contributed to the Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy, a cross-government approach led by the department of justice to address youth offending rates and antisocial behaviours in the Kimberley region.
- As part of the Northern Territory’s local decision-making agenda, the Community-Led Schools initiative better enables Aboriginal people in their communities to be involved in decisions about their children’s learning. In 2020, 83 schools engaged in a community-led schools’ pathway and 38 Local Engagement and Decision-making committees were in place.
- In the Australian Capital Territory, the 2020 Future of Education Strategy is building strong partnerships with parents and community throughout the COVID interruption. All sectors collaborated both for remote and on-campus learning challenges. This included sharing professional development and resources for teachers, scenario planning and guidance to support the safe operation of schools.

2.4 Supporting quality teaching and leadership

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

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

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

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

In 2020, AITSL:

- reviewed the compliance and regulatory burden faced by teachers and school leaders
- developed a national strategy to support schools to address the abuse of school staff
- undertook quality assurance activities to strengthen the teacher accreditation system
- supported improvements to the quality of professional learning of teachers
- enhanced the cultural competency of the Australian teaching workforce, in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education experts and the profession
- worked to improve national consistency in judgements in teacher registration processes
- supported the development of teaching effectiveness evaluation tools
- published Australian Teacher Workforce Data in the *National Initial Teacher Education Pipeline: Australian Teacher Workforce Data Report 1*, which reports on undergraduate and postgraduate students who are entering, are enrolled in, or have completed their initial teacher education
- developed *Teaching Futures*, a comprehensive paper on strategic issues for the national teacher workforce.

High Achieving Teachers Program

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

Future Leaders Program

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

State, territory and sector initiatives

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

- The NSW department of education continued to implement the School Leadership Strategy for NSW government schools, which aims to recognise and develop leadership and strengthen system leadership between leaders and networks of schools. In their first year all first-time principals are formally coached by a principal, school leadership or a coach mentor.
- The Primary Mathematics and Science Specialist (PMSS) initiative of the Victorian education department delivered a 2-year professional learning program to train 201 teachers as specialists in mathematics or science.
- The Queensland department of education established 7 Teacher Learning Centres (TLCs) across the state to support early career teachers (and their supervisors, mentors and school leaders) with coordinated high-quality teacher professional learning practices. This included professional learning, mentoring, coaching, networking, induction processes, support with Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and provision of funding for teacher release time.
- The Qld department continued to recognise and reward Highly Accomplished teachers and Lead teachers (HALTs) in state schools, who have achieved national certification against the higher career stages of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. At the end of 2020 there were 120 HALTs.
- The South Australian education department expanded the professional learning offering delivered through Orbis, its elite professional learning academy. Orbis engages leaders and teachers in purposeful, collaborative and empowering learning, focusing on the department's system-wide priorities including instructional leadership, literacy, numeracy and curriculum.
- In 2020, Western Australian government schools were provided with a new induction program for newly appointed principals who have not previously held a substantive principal position. The program aims to increase understanding of the key operational aspects of being a principal and provide the opportunity to forge important connections to leaders.
- Identification of Signature Strategies (evidenced-based, high-impact strategies) in schools' 2020 annual improvement plans enabled the NT department of education to align support and investment with school needs. The Leadership for School Improvement Program began in 2020, in partnership with the Queensland Education Leadership Institute, with 46 school leaders participating.
- ACT public school leaders accessed a centrally provided program of instructional leadership capacity building. The program uses an evidence base of effective leadership in education and includes external researchers.
- A Catholic sector national network group (Learning and Teaching Directors Group) was established to inform and support policy direction.

2.5 Strengthening early childhood education

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

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

As such, it is formally outside the scope of the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) and statistical data on early childhood education is not included in this report.

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

National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education

The Australian Government committed \$449.5 million for 2020 under the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education to support universal access to quality early childhood education programs. An additional \$453.2 million was committed for 2021.

The Australian Government also announced a \$2 billion Preschool Reform Agreement from 2022 to 2025, to be negotiated with states and territories. The new agreement will continue to support universal access to at least 15 hours of preschool each week (600 hours a year) for children in the year before they start school, with a new focus on improving preschool participation and maximising preschool outcomes.

Closing the Gap

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

National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy

In December 2019 education ministers endorsed the development of a 10-year National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy to support the recruitment, retention, sustainability and quality of the early childhood services workforce. The strategy is being facilitated by the [Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority \(ACECQA\)](#), working with governments, services and other stakeholders. A cross-sector stakeholder reference group was formed in October 2020 and met regularly to provide input to the co-design process.

Early Years Learning Framework

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

The Australian Government supports targeted early learning initiatives aligned with the EYLF. Specific programs support the overall early learning strategy: for example, the Early Learning Languages Australia (ELLA) program makes language learning engaging and interesting to children in preschool and Foundation to Year 2 through interactive apps.

The Australian Government funded development of a phonics check for Year 1 students to help identify those students who need more support in learning to read. This includes a hub for early literacy resources and targeted assistance for disadvantaged schools in 2021.

There are also 3 early learning initiatives that provide foundational STEM skills and promote positive experiences in science and mathematics for children aged 3 to 5 years: the Early Learning STEM Australia pilot, Let's Count and Little Scientists.

National Quality Framework

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

State, territory and sector initiatives

- In 2020 New South Wales continued to roll out the Start Strong program and introduced free preschool for community and mobile preschools to support access during COVID-19. NSW remains committed to ensuring all children in NSW are able to access 600 hours of quality preschool education.
- In Victoria, early childhood education is being strengthened by the Education State Early Childhood Reform Plan. This encompasses 3-year-old kindergarten, school readiness funding and initiatives to support access and engagement for vulnerable cohorts. It includes early childhood education and parenting and family support programs delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.
- South Australia began engagement with key stakeholders and community consultation to shape development of the department's Early Learning Strategy which will inform the future of early learning.
- Preschool educators in South Australia were provided with high-quality, evidence-based advice about learning through the publication of Preschool Literacy and Numeracy Guidebooks.
- KindiLink operated in 48 public schools and one Catholic school in Western Australia in 2020. The play and learn sessions were designed for Aboriginal children and their parents, and were also available to non-Aboriginal children at some sites. KindiLink supports children's learning before starting school, forges positive home-school partnerships, and builds the confidence and capability of families.
- The Catholic sector in WA worked on building the capacity of leaders through early years leadership program, in consultation with Notre Dame University. Catholic school authorities also supported schools to build relationships with all families, especially Aboriginal families, through establishment of playgroups such as Aboriginal Families as First Educators (AFaFE) playgroups.

- The Northern Territory continued to expand the Families as First Teachers (FaFT) program to 55 sites, providing early learning and family support. The Preschool Curriculum and Preschool STEM Games continued to support programming in preschool, long day care and family day care services.
- Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the Australian Capital Territory includes initiatives to strengthen early childhood education, including through equitable access to quality early childhood education for all children (with an initial focus on priority children), seamless transitions between settings, and improved skills and qualifications across the sector.
- The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) surveyed all Catholic childcare services to gain a better understanding of the national landscape for early childhood education and care services operating within Catholic education authorities. The data collected is to be used for future policy planning.
- The Catholic sector nationally has been engaged in various initiatives to foster greater access to early childhood. For example, Catholic Education Tasmania in partnership with CatholicCare supported the delivery of 3–4-year-old early learning on school sites supporting early intervention.
- A Catholic sector national network group (Early Childhood Education Network Group) was established to inform and support policy direction.

More information on early childhood education is available on the [AGDESE website](#).

2.6 Building foundational skills in the primary school years

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

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

Update to the Framework for School Age Care in Australia

School age care provides care to school-aged students outside of formal school settings, typically before and after school hours and during school holidays. The Framework for School Age Care, published in 2012, is designed to be used by school age care educators, and aims to extend and enrich children's wellbeing and development in school age care settings. Education ministers recently commissioned an update to ensure it continues to reflect contemporary developments in practice and knowledge.

STEM initiatives

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

- \$9.6 million to extend and evaluate the Primary Connections, Science by Doing and reSolve: Mathematics by Inquiry science programs to support student learning, including resources for teachers
- \$5.7 million to support the Foundation to Year 2 expansion of the Early Learning STEM Australia (ELSA) program to improve STEM literacy and numeracy in Australian schools.

State and territory initiatives

- New South Wales extended the appointments of 529 instructional leaders and 21 trainer positions in 525 public schools to drive improvement in K–2 literacy and numeracy, supporting 54,320 K–2 students, as at August 2020. This highlights NSW's continued focus on early intervention through the Literacy Numeracy Action Plan – Early Action for Success initiative.
- In Victoria 2,427 Koorie learners in Prep to Year 6 who were not meeting expected standards in literacy and numeracy were supported through the Koorie Literacy and Numeracy Program.
- The Queensland Early Start, P–10 Literacy continuum and P–10 Numeracy continuum are used to monitor student learning and inform differentiation across the early years.
- \$81.3 million was allocated from 2017–18 to 2020–21 to strengthen STEM in Queensland primary schools.
- South Australia implemented the Phonics Screening Check for all Year 1 students in government schools from 2018. In 2020, results showed a significant overall improvement, with 63% of students scoring at or above the expected achievement level, up from 52% in 2019.
- In Western Australia, 20 public and 3 non-government schools participated in the Kimberley Schools Project (KSP). These schools were supported to intensify and accelerate children's learning through targeted teaching practices in Kindergarten to Year 2.

- The Catholic sector in WA supported the development of the Literacy Framework to support schools in literacy pedagogical practice.
- In 2020 the Northern Territory continued to deliver targeted literacy and numeracy strategies, including specifically to the needs of students across government schools in remote and very remote areas²⁰. This included ongoing implementation of intervention strategies such as Read, Write Inc.

²⁰ School locations are classified based on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) remoteness indicator. See Part 5 Glossary – Location for the five Remoteness Areas for Australia

2.7 Enhancing middle years development

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

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

State, territory and sector initiatives

- In New South Wales the *What Works Best* publication and accompanying practice guide was updated in 2020, with one of the 7 themes being student wellbeing. This is particularly important in the middle years of schooling where cognitive, social and emotional skills are developed.
- Victoria continued to deliver the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, including the \$183 million Middle Years Literacy and Numeracy Support initiative for secondary school students who are at risk of finishing school without the literacy and numeracy skills they need for future work or study. In 2020 direct support was provided to more than 4,700 Year 10 and Year 11 students.
- The Queensland Virtual STEM Academy is an initiative of *Advancing education: An action plan for Education in Queensland* focusing on engaging highly capable students from Years 5 to 9. Other initiatives that support STEM in the middle years include the Queensland Coding Academy, Premier’s Coding Challenge, Robotics Lending Library, and Solid Pathways – STEM online for high-achieving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- Queensland Catholic schools in Years 7–9 participated in Reading Comprehension and Writing Immersion programs aimed at building students’ explicit understanding of reading comprehension strategies and success criteria for NAPLAN writing.
- The South Australian education department designed the Learning+ pilot program, an online tutoring program that will deliver individual tutoring sessions in mathematics for up to 2,000 Year 6 and Year 8 students in 2021. Tutoring occurs after school and on weekends so that students do not miss out on any classroom time.
- Catholic education in South Australia developed an academic engagement and wellbeing support program or pulse check during the COVID-19 pandemic to support targeted interventions and student resilience.
- The Northern Territory continues to identify and support students at risk of disengaging during their transition to senior years. The Transition Network comprising 7 schools (including 2 schools classified as remote) researched and shared practices to support student transition into, through and beyond the middle years of schooling. This included monitoring a new data dashboard for middle years students.
- Catholic school authorities ran Year 7 transition programs across states and territories where students undertook a literacy and numeracy test in Year 7 as a part of the transition process. The program captures data supplied by the students’ primary schools.

2.8 Supporting senior years of schooling

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

Senior secondary certificates of education

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

The curriculum, assessment and certification authority (ACACA agency²¹) in each jurisdiction is responsible for determining course content and how the agreed Australian Curriculum content and achievement standards are integrated into its courses. These state and territory government authorities also determine assessment and certification specifications for successful course completion.

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

Table 2.1

Senior secondary certificates of education (SSCEs), Australian states and territories, 2020

State/territory	SSCE(s)
New South Wales	Higher School Certificate (HSC)
Victoria	Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE)
	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL)
Queensland	Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE)
South Australia	South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE)
Western Australia	Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE)
Tasmania	Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE)
Northern Territory	Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET)
Australian Capital Territory	Australian Capital Territory Senior Secondary Certificate (ACTSSC)

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

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

²¹ These authorities are member organisations of [Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities \(ACACA\)](#).

Senior Secondary Pathways Review

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

State and territory initiatives

State and territory initiatives in 2020 included:

- New South Wales launched the HSC hub to support teachers and students during COVID-19. The NSW education department provided programs to ensure young people are prepared for higher education, training and work including school-based apprenticeships and traineeships; and programs specifically targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, refugee students and young people at educational risk.
- The Victorian education department commenced work to replace VCAL with a specialist vocational pathway in the VCE with improved access for all senior secondary students. This was in response to the Review into Vocational and Applied Learning.
- Melbourne Catholic schools ran a professional learning English project involving 50 Catholic secondary schools and an online community of more than 200 VCE English teachers. The project provided practical and targeted VCE English support to teachers through professional learning masterclasses and online resource support.
- The current QCE system began with Year 11 students in 2019, who became the first cohort of Year 12 students to exit their senior studies in the new system in 2020.
- The Queensland Catholic sector worked closely with the Queensland curriculum and assessment authority throughout the implementation of the new system for senior assessment and tertiary entrance.
- The Queensland STEM Girl Power initiative built a statewide network of young STEM ambassadors who are inspired to take on STEM learning pathways.
- Through a new state initiative, Western Australian government school students were supported in Years 11 and 12 to access work placements in state and local government agencies. Students can use these placements to contribute to their WACE and VET qualifications.
- The WA Catholic sector undertook further development of the Virtual School Network to give access to a range of senior secondary courses to students throughout the state.
- In the Northern Territory in 2020, 27% of students used VET to complete their NTCET. To meet the needs of students from remote and very remote communities, the Northern Territory delivered an alternative secondary program (Employment Pathways), a vocational-based secondary education program, across 21 schools in remote or very remote areas²². Flexible learning options in alternative education settings continued to be offered in 2020 to meet the wellbeing needs of vulnerable students who are less able to engage in mainstream schools.
- The ACT education directorate engaged Legal Aid ACT to offer free services to ACT senior secondary students and their families. This service allows students to obtain confidential legal advice within the setting of their college environment, either independently or with the support of college staff, parents and carers or peers.

²² School locations are classified based on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) remoteness indicator. See Part 5 Glossary – Location for the five Remoteness Areas for Australia

2.9 Embedding pathways for learning throughout life and supporting effective transitions

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

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

Senior Secondary Pathways Review

A review of senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training is a national policy initiative under the NSRA. The review panel presented the final report, [Looking to the Future: Report of the Review of senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training](#), to education ministers in June 2020.

The review included an examination of senior secondary arrangements in Australia, particularly how they support student pathways to post-school destinations including through the VET sector, university participation or direct employment, including through apprenticeships. It also considered the barriers faced by some students, including students with disability; students in regional, rural and remote areas; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. More information is available on the [AGDESE website](#).

In December 2020, education ministers agreed to focus on specific aspects of the review, including:

- literacy, numeracy and digital literacy
- developing a sample Learner Profile
- agreeing on a common language for skills and capabilities
- improving career guidance and education (jointly with skills ministers)
- development of a national strategy on VET delivered to secondary students (jointly with skills ministers).

VET delivered to secondary students

Programs for the delivery of VET to secondary students²³, including school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, operate in all states and territories. Under these programs, school students can combine school study with training towards an accredited AQF²⁴ VET qualification. The achievement of a VET qualification signifies that a student has demonstrated competency against the skills and knowledge required to perform effectively in the workplace. All VET qualifications must be issued by registered training organisations (RTOs).

Participation of school-aged students including secondary students in VET in 2020 is reported in Part 3: Measuring performance and in the National Report on Schooling data portal. VET course enrolments and VET qualifications completed by senior secondary students are reported at the school level on the [My School website](#).

²³ The Preparing Secondary Students for Work framework uses the term 'VET delivered to secondary students' to describe accredited VET undertaken by school students. This was previously known as 'VET in Schools (VETiS)'.

²⁴ The AQF is the national framework of qualifications in the school, VET and higher education sectors in Australia. The SSCE, Certificate II and Certificate III are qualifications within the AQF.

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

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

State, territory and school sector initiatives

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

- In 2020 the NSW Government provided fee-free short-term skills courses to Year 12 school leavers under the Summer Skills program. The program provided training across agribusiness, business, creative experiences, and construction and health industries, giving students a preview of future courses while learning valuable skills.
- To respond to the Review into Vocational and Applied Learning, the Victorian department of education will reconsider the way VET is funded and delivered to government schools to increase access to high-quality vocational pathways for school students. These reforms will build on initiatives such as Head Start Apprenticeships and Traineeships, transforming careers education, and more VET and VCAL teachers and trainers in secondary schools.
- Queensland invested \$8 million from 2018 to 2022 to deliver the Link and Launch initiative to assist disengaged Year 12 school completers to engage in education, training or employment. The program operates in 23 youth unemployment hotspots, and will increase to 30 sites by 2022. It has supported 1,100 young people from more than 90 different schools.
- In Qld, students who identified as needing further assistance around literacy and numeracy were invited by Catholic school authorities to participate in the Certificate II Foundational Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways to improve their functional literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills in the context of work.
- The South Australian education department developed Flexible Industry Pathways (FIPs) to employment, endorsed by the Training and Skills Commission's Industry Skills Councils, in key growth sectors for the state. FIPs support students to get a head start on their career by commencing VET while at school completing their SACE.
- Funded by the Australian Government, the Connected Beginnings program and 6 child and family centres continued to operate in the Northern Territory in 2020, supporting young children and their families to improve their preparedness for schooling. Schools were also supported to assist students between phases of schooling through the Middle Years Transition Framework and alternative education programs.
- Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT supports a transitioning process for children and families through the sector-wide Continuity and Transitioning Framework 2020/21. Sixteen Communities of Practice sites have also been established between ACT public schools and early childhood education and care services to support transitions.

- Various activities were undertaken by the Catholic sector to support effective transitions. For example, the NCEC consulted with state and territory diversity experts in developing a response to the 2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education with clear advice for supporting transition points from early childcare to kindergarten, primary to secondary, secondary to VET as well as those students moving between education sectors.

2.10 Delivering world-class curriculum and assessment

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

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority



The [Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority \(ACARA\)](#) is an independent statutory authority responsible to Education Council, established in legislation.²⁵ ACARA's functions in curriculum and assessment are to:

- develop and administer a national school curriculum, including content of the curriculum and achievement standards, for school subjects specified in the ACARA Charter²⁶
- develop and administer national assessments
- provide school curriculum resource services
- provide information, resources, support and guidance to the teaching profession.

2.10.1 Australian Curriculum



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



²⁵ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act (2008).

²⁶ Education Council determines the ACARA Charter. The current charter took effect from November 2016. The charter specifies subjects to be included in the Australian Curriculum in the learning areas for Foundation – Year 10 and for the areas of English, Mathematics, Science, and Humanities and Social Sciences for Years 11 and 12.

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

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

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

Senior secondary curriculum

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

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

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

Review of the Australian Curriculum

In January 2020 ACARA published the *Monitoring the effectiveness of the Foundation – Year 10 Australian Curriculum report 2019*. The report contains feedback from departmental, school and curriculum authorities in all Australian states and territories. Respondents were asked to comment on key themes emerging from the previous 4 monitoring reports and ACARA's program of research. The key findings in the report supported the refinement of the Australian Curriculum within its existing structure and design: 3 dimensions (learning areas, general capabilities, cross-curriculum priorities); content descriptions, elaborations and achievement standards; and years/bands F–10.

In June 2020 education ministers asked ACARA to review the Foundation – Year 10 Australian Curriculum. ACARA is to complete the review by the end of 2021, with the revised Foundation – Year 10 Australian Curriculum released on a redesigned Australian Curriculum website by early 2022.

ACARA has undertaken a program of research and consulted widely with key education stakeholders and groups to define the approach and scope of the review. This work informed the review's terms of reference. The program of research benchmarked the Australian Curriculum against the curricula of British Columbia, Finland, New Zealand and Singapore, and collated feedback from state and territory jurisdictions through ACARA's annual monitoring process.

Learning Progressions and Online Formative Assessment

Learning Progressions and Online Formative Assessment is a national policy initiative under the NSRA.

In 2020 ACARA, AITSL and ESA continued to collaborate on the alpha phase of the online formative assessment initiative, building on work done in the discovery phase.

ACARA's work in the 'alpha phase' of the initiative focused on:

- developing a machine-readable form of the national literacy and numeracy learning progressions
- constructing numerical measurement scales to underpin the progressions
- providing indication of achievement expectations against the Australian Curriculum
- developing student-friendly and parent-friendly versions of the progressions
- building the evidence base for the progressions and supporting teachers of students with diverse needs
- continuing research into the development of a learning progression for critical and creative thinking.

More information is available from the [Online formative assessment initiative](#) web page.

Curriculum projects

An illustration of practice demonstrating the implementation of the Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages was published in May 2020. Refreshed content and resources to support student diversity, including new and revised illustrations of practice, were published on the Australian Curriculum website in March 2020. In April 2020 resources for parents and carers were published on the ACARA website to support student learning.

ACARA continued to manage the National Innovation and Science Agenda Digital Technologies in focus project. Approximately 160 disadvantaged schools in urban (capital cities), rural (inner and outer regional), remote and very remote locations²⁷ across all states and territories, incorporating more than 2,300 teachers and more than 30,000 students, are participating in this project. Curriculum specialist support is provided for each of the schools, with the integration of Digital Technologies being showcased through the publication of school stories, resources and professional learning on the Digital Technologies in focus section of the Australian Curriculum website.

The Australian Government continued to support ACARA in its role in national curriculum and assessment. The government finalised a review into Civics and Citizenship education resources. A key outcome of the review is to implement a digital resources hub to provide teachers with easy access to high quality, age-appropriate and current Civics and Citizenship resources aligned with the Australian Curriculum.

The Australian Government also funded the Constitution Education Fund Australia, including the development of resources for teachers that align with the Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences.

²⁷ School locations are classified based on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) remoteness indicator. See Part 5 Glossary – Location for the five Remoteness Areas for Australia

State and territory initiatives

- The NSW Curriculum Review final report was released in June 2020. The NSW Government response to the review outlines a program for streamlining and strengthening what is taught in NSW schools over the next 4 years.
- In 2020 curriculum delivery in Victoria changed significantly through the periods of remote learning with schools taking a strong focus on literacy and numeracy through online delivery. The education department supported schools through a new digital learning hub (Arc), to support Victorian government schools to provide high-quality, engaging virtual learning experiences.
- In Queensland the P–6 Curriculum Planning Model provides contextually aligned Australian Curriculum assessment and planning resources for multilevel classes in diverse school contexts. The learning@home website for parents and teachers provides P–10 resources for student absence or school closures due to COVID-19, including lessons broadcast on television, and learning activities.
- The South Australian Quality Music Education Framework was developed and launched in October 2020. The framework guides approaches to music education and provides guidance to all stakeholders involved in implementing and enabling a high-quality music education.
- The South Australian department of education published resources to support teachers and schools to implement the Australian Curriculum. This included new curriculum planning resources, learning area scope and sequence documents and units of work in Mathematics, English, Science and Humanities and Social Sciences. Teachers were also provided with high-quality evidence-based advice, resources and professional learning to drive literacy and numeracy improvement through the school improvement planning cycle.
- The Australian Curriculum continued to be taught across all Northern Territory government schools from transition to Year 10 and the SACE Curriculum in Years 11 and 12 for students undertaking the NTCET. To support curriculum delivery, a range of teaching and learning programs, instructional support and materials were delivered. These included the STEM in the Territory Strategy 2018–22, STEM School Matrices, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and Culture Curriculum, bilingual education programs, masterclasses to review and revitalise whole school instructional models and workshops to support the delivery of the curriculum in schools.
- The Australian Capital Territory has a comprehensive approach to teacher professional learning, particularly focused on the Australian Curriculum. This is supported with high-quality teacher professional development targeting the interconnectedness between curriculum, assessment and reporting.
- NCEC and Independent Schools Australia representatives participated in Curriculum and Teacher Reference Group meetings as part of the Australian Curriculum review process.

2.10.2 National Assessment Program



The NAP consists of:

- annual national literacy and numeracy tests (NAPLAN)
- 3-yearly sample assessments in science literacy, civics and citizenship, and ICT literacy
- Australia's participation in international assessments.

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

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

NAPLAN

NAPLAN is an annual national assessment for all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Students in these year levels are assessed through tests in reading, writing, language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and numeracy.

NAPLAN is a nationwide measure to see whether young Australians are developing the literacy and numeracy skills that provide the critical foundation for other learning and for their productive and rewarding participation in the community. The tests are aligned with the Australian Curriculum: English F–10 and the Australian Curriculum: Mathematics F–10.

ACARA is responsible for the development and oversight of the delivery of the NAPLAN tests. States and territories are responsible for the administration of the tests in each jurisdiction. NAPLAN began the transition from a paper test to an online test in 2018. The national platform for administering NAPLAN online was built by ESA and funded by the Australian Government. Around 15% of students accessed NAPLAN online in 2018, increasing to 50% in 2019. Results for online and paper tests are reported on the same assessment scale. NAPLAN reporting on *My School* identifies results where the test was taken on the online platform.

In March 2020 Education Council agreed to cancel NAPLAN for 2020 due to COVID-19. The Item Trial Test planned for August 2020 was also cancelled. Given the cancellation of NAPLAN and the impacts on schooling due to COVID-19, education ministers decided in June 2020 that the timeline for full transition to NAPLAN Online will be deferred from 2021 to 2022.

NAPLAN results data for 2019 is available in interactive form on the 'Results' page of the ACARA [National Assessment Program website](#). The Results page and the [NAPLAN National Report for 2019](#) provide comparisons of performance by state and territory; by student characteristics such as gender, Indigeneity, and parental education; and by school characteristics such as location. The 2019 NAPLAN National Report and Test Incident Report were published in April 2020.

Independent NAPLAN review

A joint review of NAPLAN was commissioned by the governments of New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory in 2019. The final [report](#) was provided to Education Council in August 2020. Recommendations for change made in the report included changing the timing of testing to earlier in the school year, assessing in Year 10 instead of Year 9, and introducing Critical and Creative Thinking in STEM.

NAP – sample assessments

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

In June 2020 Education Council decided to postpone the NAP–ICTL sample assessment scheduled for 2020 by 12 months to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ministers agreed that the NAP sample assessment cycle will continue from 2021, resulting in a one-off 4-year gap (as opposed to the normal 3-year gap) in the time series for each of the sample assessments.

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

NAP – Civics and Citizenship

The sixth NAP – Civics and Citizenship assessment of a sample of Years 6 and 10 students was delivered online in October and November 2019 and, for the first time, incorporated aspects of the Australian Curriculum: History. The report on its key findings will be released in 2021.

NAP – Science Literacy

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

NAP – ICT Literacy

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

NAP – international assessments

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

Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

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

Programme for International Student Assessment

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

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

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is a 5-yearly assessment of reading literacy for Year 4 students. The IEA is responsible for PIRLS. Results for the most recent cycle of PIRLS (2016) were released in December 2017. The next cycle of PIRLS is planned for 2021.

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

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

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

Closing the Gap

All Australian governments are working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their communities, organisations and businesses to implement the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap at the national, state and territory, and local levels.

This is a shift in the way governments have previously worked to close the gap. It acknowledges that to close the gap, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must determine, drive and own the desired outcomes, alongside all governments.²⁸

Indigenous Advancement Strategy – Children and Schooling Program

In 2019 the Australian Government established the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA). The agency provides policy leadership and advice on issues, initiatives and programs with the aim of improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education outcomes.

The 2019–20 Commonwealth budget included \$200 million for an Indigenous Youth Education Package to fund scholarships, academies and mentoring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. The package has invested in a suite of projects providing more than 20,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with increased access to secondary education opportunities and additional support and mentoring throughout their studies.

Through the Children and Schooling program of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy the NIAA provides over \$220 million each year in targeted complementary funding to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational outcomes. More information on the program is available on the NIAA website.

The Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS) is a community-based strategy to help students attend school. During 2020 the RSAS operated in 84 schools across remote Northern Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia, but was subject to disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

State and territory initiatives

- The Connected Communities Strategy is being implemented in 24 NSW government schools. It is designed to bolster areas such as implementing culturally responsive teaching practices, family and community engagement at school, attendance and retention, and improved literacy and numeracy results for Aboriginal students.
- Victoria continues to implement the *Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016 – 2026*. Through

²⁸ Text quoted from the [Closing the Gap](#) website

Marrung, Victoria is working in genuine partnership with the Koorie community to ensure Aboriginal peoples' cultures, knowledge and experiences are celebrated and that Victoria is a state where all universal service systems are inclusive, responsive and respectful of Koorie people. The Community Understanding and Safety Training is being rolled out to all government school staff to ensure a positive learning environment for Koorie students.

- Victoria is working alongside the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated, and other Aboriginal Community stakeholders, to ensure that Koorie learners and families are actively supported throughout the COVID-19 response and recovery.
- In Queensland the Every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Succeeding strategy lifts the expectations and academic outcomes for Queensland's First Nations students. Solid Pathways – STEM, an online academic extension program, supports high-achieving First Nations students; and Be Well Learn Well provides allied health therapy services to First Nations students in state schools in remote locations.
- The South Australian education department released the Aboriginal Education Strategy in 2018 to support Aboriginal students in reaching their full potential. Highlights from 2020 include:
 - partnering with external agencies such as the Clontarf Foundation, Shooting Stars Foundation, and the South Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Consultative Council to support the mentoring and engagement of Aboriginal students
 - expansion of the South Australian Aboriginal Secondary Training Academy program from 16 to 21 academies, providing support to Aboriginal high school students with a unique sporting and educational program.
- In 2020, a pilot On Country Teacher Education Program commenced in Western Australia with 28 Aboriginal government school staff. The program, developed with and delivered by Curtin University, will support Aboriginal staff working in support roles to complete a Bachelor of Education (Primary Education) part-time to become qualified teachers while continuing to work in their existing roles.
- Catholic education in Western Australia continued to implement its Transforming Lives 2025 strategy, which sets goals for Aboriginal education (students, families and staff) and which aligns with Closing the Gap targets. The Catholic sector also opened a new Curriculum and Re-engagement Education (CARE) school in Broome to cater for disengaged Aboriginal students from Years 8 to 10.
- In 2020 the Northern Territory continued implementation of the Indigenous Education Strategy 2015–24 (IES). The strategy is a long-term approach to improving outcomes for Aboriginal students and ensuring all students, regardless of where they live, have access to quality and engaging learning. Key programs delivered under the IES include the Transition Support Unit, FaFT, Community-Led Schools and Local Decision Making.
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Engagement Program in the Australian Capital Territory provides case management to disengaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The program has a student-centred approach and focus on transitions and personalised learning plans, providing support for students and their families.
- The Catholic sector worked with colleagues in the state and federal governments to ensure the safe travel of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote communities and secure the continued payment of ABSTUDY to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families who were not able to physically attend school.

- Through the Australian Parliament Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training Inquiry into Education in remote and complex environments, the NCEC advocated for greater funding for Catholic boarding schools with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to access additional health, tutoring and special programs, and wellbeing support.

2.12 Supporting all young Australians at risk of educational disadvantage

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

Needs-based school funding

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

For most non-government schools²⁹, the base amount is discounted by the estimated capacity of parents to contribute towards the school’s operating costs.

The areas of student and school disadvantage addressed through the loadings are: students with disability; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; students from low socio-economic backgrounds; students with low English proficiency; location of the school (remoteness); and size of the school.

Further information is provided in Part 4: School funding.

Review of the Disability Standards for Education

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

The Smith Family’s Growing Careers Project

The Australian Government is providing \$38.2 million over 4 years (2020–21 to 2023–24) to support The Smith Family’s Growing Careers Project. The project will support up to 76,725 disadvantaged high school students from Year 7 to Year 12 (or equivalent) across Australia to access a suite of career programs that aim to support successful transitions from school to work or to further education and training.

Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award Australia – Disadvantaged Youth Program

The Australian Government is providing an additional \$3 million to support 4,500 disadvantaged young people over 2021–22 to 2023–24 to access the Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award. The Disadvantaged Youth Program provides young people with disability, aged 14 to 24 years, and young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, refugee, and regional and remote communities, aged 14 to 18 years, with opportunities to develop non-academic and academic competencies. It has received \$5.86 million in Australian Government funding since it began in 2015 and has supported more than 6,750 young Australians to participate in the award.

²⁹ The capacity to contribute does not apply to government schools, non-government special schools or special assistance schools, non-government majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools, or non-government sole provider schools.

State, territory and sector initiatives

- New South Wales allocates specialist English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) teachers as part of the English language proficiency equity loading for government schools. NSW also provides evidence-based professional learning to build the capacity of teachers to identify and meet the needs of students learning English as an additional language, including those from refugee backgrounds.
- Victoria established the Report Racism Hotline to provide an additional avenue to raise concerns about religious or racial discrimination or abuse in schools.
- The Mental Health Practitioners (MHP) initiative in Victoria allows every government secondary school campus, including government specialist schools with secondary-aged students, to employ a suitably qualified MHP.
- The new Disability Inclusion package in Victorian schools will introduce a functional needs-based assessment approach for students with disability, new school funding allocations and initiatives to develop systemic capability in inclusive education.
- The Queensland education department continues to engage the Community Resource Unit (an external organisation) to support parents of students with disability through the Families for Inclusive Education Project. The project aims to support families of students with disability to be clear, informed, confident and connected, so that they can work as respected and valued partners with Queensland state schools.
- Queensland's Centres for Learning and Wellbeing supported rural and remote state school teachers and school leaders, focusing on: leadership capability development; mentoring and coaching for teachers; resilience building for staff new to rural and remote locations; and inter-agency wellbeing support for staff and students.
- South Australia supported students to learn from home in 2020 through the department's new website, Our Learning SA. The website supports continued learning between school and home by providing parents and caregivers with resources and guidance to support learning at home and teachers with resources to support them in remote teaching.
- Preschool and school children and students in SA government schools and preschools continued to access teaching and learning support via the department's Inclusive Education Support Program, a functional needs-based funding model for preschool and school students with disability.
- The Northern Territory department of education continued to implement phase 1 of the Framework for Inclusion 2019–2029. Under the framework, strategies, policies and support practices address the needs of children and young people with disability, or who exhibit challenging behaviours, or with mental health needs or who are vulnerable for another reason, such as being involved in the child protection or juvenile justice systems.
- The NT department continued to support schools and teachers to ensure students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds develop their proficiency in English. This included support for the delivery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and culture including bilingual education. To enhance engagement in learning, the EAL/D Hub was implemented to build teacher capability in supporting learning of English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) learners.

- In the ACT the first phase of the quality early childhood education for 3-year-olds initiative prioritised places for children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage. A suite of trauma informed training was also being delivered to educators in the education and care sector so they could support children affected by trauma.
- The NCEC developed national strategic priorities (2021–2023) to support the continual improvement of educational outcomes for all students; address issues of access to Catholic education for families, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds; promote improved student results in key performance measures across the full range of students; and continue to strengthen faith formation and religious education.

2.13 Strengthening accountability and transparency with strong meaningful measures

In the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (p 19) Australian governments commit to:

continuing to provide public reporting that:

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

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

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

ACARA

The data collection and reporting functions of ACARA are to:

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

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

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

Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia

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

National Report on Schooling in Australia

In 2020 ACARA published the *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2018* following endorsement by Education Council. The *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2019* was prepared in consultation with representatives of state and territory education authorities, other government agencies and non-government school sectors. The report will be published in 2021.

National Report on Schooling data portal

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

It includes current statistics and time series data on school numbers, enrolments, staffing and funding, and data on the agreed KPMs for schooling, including attendance, retention, assessment and Year 12 or equivalent attainment. The portal allows users to view and download data at the national level, and also to disaggregate data by state and territory, by school sector, by calendar year and by available breakdowns of equity groups such as sex and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status. Updated data for existing data sets was added in April and December 2020.

My School

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

In December 2019 education ministers agreed that the focus of NAPLAN reporting on *My School* will move from school averages to reporting on the gains made by students at the school. The updated *My School* was released in March 2020 and a number of changes to NAPLAN reporting were introduced including:

- removal of the 'similar schools' page
- removal of the 'results in bands' page
- removal of the 'participation' page and instead report participation in at least one test on the 'results in numbers' page
- a move from reporting statistically similar schools' results to reporting statistically similar students' results to avoid a focus on school comparisons
- a relative gain model in the gain page.

My School was also updated in March 2020 with 2019 school profile and population data, 2019 NAPLAN results and 2018 school financial information. The 2019 data for senior secondary outcomes and VET in schools was added in November 2020. Student attendance rates were not included for 2020 due to inconsistencies in the data. This was a result of varying health advice and schooling arrangements across the country in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Australian Schools List website

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

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

Unique student identifier

Establishing a national unique student identifier (USI) is a policy initiative under the NSRA. During 2020 work progressed on options to implement the USI, with further consideration on a recommended approach to be made by education ministers in early 2021. The USI model agreed by Education Council allows systems and schools to maintain their existing arrangements and map local identifiers to a national identifier. The USI is expected to support teaching, learning and student wellbeing; provide for more efficient administration; and facilitate research to inform policy development.

Australian Education Research Organisation

In December 2020 Education Council launched the Australian Education Research Organisation ([AERO](#)), a company jointly owned by the Commonwealth and all states and territories and led by an independent board. The establishment of AERO is a national policy initiative to improve the national evidence base under the NSRA.

AERO's scope covers both the schooling and early childhood sectors, focusing on:

- generating high-quality evidence
- presenting high-quality evidence that is relevant and accessible
- encouraging adoption and effective implementation of evidence in practice and policy.

Teacher workforce data

Throughout 2020 AITSL continued to implement the Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) collection to provide the first national, longitudinal picture of the teacher workforce. By linking data on initial teacher education students and current teachers, the data collection provides information to assist in managing workforce needs and understanding teacher supply and demand; and provide insights into the teaching experience. The first report from the ATWD initiative, *National Initial Teacher Education Pipeline: Australian Teacher Workforce Data Report 1*, provides an analysis of the characteristics of students who are entering, are currently enrolled in, or have completed initial teacher education (ITE).

State and territory initiatives

- In New South Wales the Leading Evaluation, Evidence and Data (LEED) project supports 450 government schools to undertake a rigorous situational analysis of their school context, developing the capabilities of school executive in the use of data, evidence and evaluation to drive strategic school improvement.
- The School Success Model is the NSW education department's approach to continuously improving student outcomes within government schools. It drives school improvement by clarifying responsibility for school and system performance, by providing improved support for schools – especially those that need it most – and by identifying and sharing best practice.

- The Victorian education department has a system of collecting data and reporting to schools through the Panorama dashboards which drive school improvement in discussion with senior education improvement leaders. System-level performance is monitored through the department's Outcome Framework. Regional performance is monitored through the Regional Performance Framework.
- The Queensland department of education continues to explicitly measure improvement for students with disability through 4 success measures (A–E performance, school disciplinary absences, QCE and full-time enrolments) as outlined in the *Every student with disability succeeding plan 2017–2021*, with data provided annually to regions and schools to support them to monitor and track their improvement journey.
- In 2020 Standards of Evidence were established by the Northern Territory department of education to assess qualitative and quantitative measures for system and school planning, implementation and evaluation. The Education System Improvement Tool, developed by Australian Council for Educational Research, was implemented as an evidence-based framework to assess system performance and improvement.
- Australian Capital Territory education ensured that the education function plays a central role in the whole of the ACT Wellbeing Framework. This role is supported by strategic outcome indicators that focus on student learning growth, equity of student outcomes and the strength of students' sense of identification, or belonging, to their school.

2.14 Arrangements for student learning during COVID-19

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

In most jurisdictions the need for alternative arrangements to normal school operations was limited to Terms 1 and 2. But in Victoria, further community lockdowns in the second half of the year meant that remote learning arrangements were also adopted for Term 3 and the start of Term 4.

The extent of disruptions to school operations in 2020 in each state and territory, and responses of school systems within each jurisdiction are summarised in Table 2.1. Further details, provided by each state and territory and the Catholic sector, are listed following the table.

Table 2.1

School operations and remote learning arrangements in response to COVID-19 by state and territory, 2020

Week beginning	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT
27/01/2020								
3/02/2020								
10/02/2020								
17/02/2020								
24/02/2020								
2/03/2020								
9/03/2020								
16/03/2020								
23/03/2020		Red	Yellow					
30/03/2020	Blue	Grey	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red
6/04/2020	Blue	Grey	Grey	Red	Yellow	Grey	Red	Red
13/04/2020	Grey	Blue	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey
20/04/2020	Grey	Blue	Blue	Grey	Grey		Green	Grey
27/04/2020					Blue		Green	Blue
4/05/2020					Blue		Green	Blue
11/05/2020					Blue			
18/05/2020							Green	
25/05/2020	Green	Blue	Green				Blue	
1/06/2020								Green
8/06/2020								Green
15/06/2020								Green
22/06/2020								Green
29/06/2020		Grey	Green					Green
6/07/2020		Grey						
13/07/2020		Green	Grey					
20/07/2020	Green	Blue	Green		Green	Green	Green	
27/07/2020		Blue	Green					
3/08/2020		Blue	Green					
10/08/2020		Blue	Green					
17/08/2020		Blue	Green					
24/08/2020		Blue	Green					
31/08/2020	Green	Blue	Green					
7/09/2020		Blue	Green					
14/09/2020	Green	Blue	Green					
21/09/2020		Grey	Green		Green	Green	Green	
28/09/2020		Grey						
5/10/2020		Blue	Green					
12/10/2020		Blue	Green					
19/10/2020		Blue	Green					
26/10/2020		Green	Green					
2/11/2020		Green	Green					
9/11/2020								
16/11/2020								
23/11/2020								
30/11/2020								
7/12/2020								
14/12/2020			Grey					
21/12/2020	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey

Key

School holidays
Normal school operations
Some school closures/reduced attendance
School closures/pupil-free days
Remote learning available

Source: State and territory education departments

New South Wales

- The NSW Premier encouraged parents to keep their students at home where practical from 24 March 2020. Frontline workers and those employed in essential services were still able to send their children to school.
- The initial phase of transition back to school-based learning occurred from 11 May 2020. The Premier announced a return to full-time face-to-face teaching and learning for all students from 25 May 2020.
- NSW commenced the rollout of a COVID Intensive Learning Support Program to assist students who may have been negatively impacted by remote learning. The 3 education sectors consulted extensively on planning and worked collaboratively in developing and sharing digital teaching and learning resources.
- NSW continued to roll out the Start Strong program and introduced free preschool for community and mobile preschools to support access during COVID-19.

Victoria

- Schools closed a few days earlier at the end of Term 1.
- Term 2 started from 15 April but parents were advised that all children who can learn at home must learn from home – with exceptions only in extremely limited circumstances. Onsite learning was made available for children whose parents could not work from home and vulnerable students without access to a suitable learning environment at home.
- The phased return to face-to-face lessons began on 26 May with students in Prep to Year 2, Years 11 and 12, and special schools returning to school. Two weeks later, on 9 June, the remaining students (Years 3 to 10) returned to school.
- Term 3 started on 13 July with parents advised that remote learning would again apply from 20 July to 4 August for metropolitan Prep to Year 10 students, and the Mitchell Shire.
- On 5 August remote learning restrictions were extended until 18 September for all students in metropolitan, rural and remote areas.
- In Term 4, which began on 5 October, remote learning remained in place for all metropolitan students until 12 October. These restrictions were then lifted and applied only to Years 8 to 10 metropolitan students until 22 October.
- The Victorian Catholic sector provided an optional remote learning survey to students, staff and parents during June and July to capture feedback about the first remote period, and repeated the survey in September. Schools received their data so they could evaluate the impact of their practices.

Queensland

- A pupil-free week was announced for the last week of Term 1, 2020 (30 March to 3 April) for teachers to prepare to move to remote learning from home. Schools remained open until the end of term to allow for the children of essential workers and vulnerable children to attend.
- A home-based learning model was implemented for the first 5 weeks of Term 2 (20 April to 22 May) for the majority of students. Until 8 May, state school students in all year levels were expected to participate in home-based learning, with the exception of vulnerable students (including children in out-of-home care), children of essential workers and students in designated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. For students attending school, onsite supervision was provided while students participated in the learning activities set by classroom teachers. During Term 2, while students were learning from home, school staff were asked to contact students daily regarding their attendance and wellbeing.
- From Monday 11 May, students in kindergarten, Prep, Year 1 and Years 11 and 12 returned to normal schooling.
- From Monday 25 May, students in all year levels were expected to return to normal schooling. For students who continued learning from home, their attendance and wellbeing was monitored.
- The Qld *learning @home* Work Integrated Learning initiative was introduced as an alternative to graduate-stage professional experience placements for final-year initial teacher education (ITE) students as a solution to restrictions placed on schools resulting from COVID-19. Across 5 universities, 211 ITE students were engaged in this initiative which provided them a pathway to mid-year graduation in 2020.

South Australia

- Before Week 11, Term 1 (declared student-free days for all schools), some parents were keeping their children at home and some schools were offering Learning at Home materials.
- There were 4 pupil-free days before Easter (6–9 April) for all schools and preschools to give staff some space to help to plan and prepare for new models of learning that could be delivered consistently to students at home and at school.
- When schools returned for Term 2 on 27 April 2020, many schools were offering both learning at school and learning at home lessons.
- The majority of students had returned to learning at school by the start of Week 3 Term 2 (11 May).

Western Australia

- Term 1, Week 9: Schools were open, but parents were encouraged to keep their children at home if they had the capacity to do so.
- Term 1, Week 10: Schools were open for supervision, as required, but not for instruction.
- Term 2, Weeks 1–3: Schools opened for instruction but parents were not required to send children. Students kept at home due to COVID-19 were provided with remote learning options.
- From Term 2, Week 4: Students were required to attend school, and remote learning was only provided for COVID-19 health compromised students.

- In early 2020, a COVID-19 response team was established in Western Australia to support schools. Government school teachers were given access to a hub of teaching and learning materials and a new website provided resources, activities and information to support schools, and parents with children and young people learning at home.

Tasmania

- From 25 March 2020, parents and carers could choose to keep their children at home should they wish.
- All government schools remained open for the children of essential workers and for children who could not learn at home.
- From 30 March, parents who were able to supervise their children at home were asked to keep their children at home. Schools were still open for children whose parents had to go to work and so could not provide supervision.
- In the final week of Term 1 (Week 10), all Tasmanian government schools were closed to students to allow staff to prepare for Learning at Home in Term 2; that is, school holidays commenced one week early.
- All schools in the north-west of Tasmania were closed for the first week of Term 2 due to the lockdown in relation to an outbreak of COVID-19 in the region. Schools in other regions were open for students who were unable to be supervised or supported to learn at home.
- Tasmanian government schools returned to learning at school for primary school students and Years 11 and 12 students on 25 May.
- Students in Years 7 to 10 returned to learning at school on 9 June.

Northern Territory

- The last week of Term 1 was changed to pupil-free days to allow teachers to prepare alternative education delivery options for Term 2, with only children of emergency workers or vulnerable children catered for in this designated pupil-free week.
- From the start of Term 2 (week commencing 20 April) physical school attendance was mandated. Allowance for remote education delivery was made and available only for students directed to self-isolate or students with vulnerabilities to COVID-19.

Australian Capital Territory

- Public schools were pupil free for Term 1, Weeks 8–10. Some students continued to attend due to their parents being frontline essential workers or other reasons.
- For the first 3 weeks of Term 2, students were engaged in remote learning.
- ACT public school students and teachers started back to the classroom from Monday 18 May.
- The return was managed and staged over 3 weeks to ensure students, teachers and staff were safe and schools had appropriate measures in place based on specific advice from ACT Health.
- From Monday 18 May, or week 4 of Term 2, pre-school, kindergarten, Years 1, 2 and 7, and colleges returned to face-to-face schooling at their own school. Year 11 and 12 students attended a combination of on-campus and remote learning, with colleges making arrangements to support learning on campus for students and subject matter that required it. To support school staff to return to work, their children were able to attend their usual school.

- Safe and Supervised Sites ceased operation from Friday 15 May and from Monday 18 May, all students registered for Safe and Supervised Sites returned to their usual schools, irrespective of their year level, where they were supervised to engage in remote learning with their usual teachers and classes until their respective year level returned to face-to-face education.
- From Week 5 of Term 2, Years 3, 4 and 10 returned to their usual schools for face-to-face learning.
- From Week 6, the remaining year levels of Years 5, 6, 8 and 9 returned to their usual schooling.

Catholic sector

- A special taskforce, the National Operations Standing Committee, was established for the Catholic sector to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parents' experience of remote learning

To explore whether the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated experience of remote learning at home had an impact on how parents viewed and assessed their child's performance, ACARA commissioned some initial [research](#) which included facilitated interviews and focus group sessions with 50 parents of primary and secondary school students around Australia.

Some key messages included:

- Parents said that they had greater insight into and involvement with their children's learning.
- Many parents felt they had a greater idea of the importance of social aspects of class learning.
- Some parents felt that their children coped with remote learning relatively well and even progressed beyond expectations. But others sensed that 2020 felt like a 'write-off' – their children largely disengaged or avoided learning and generally struggled without structure and face-to-face class time.
- Pre-COVID, parents prominently relied on conversations with teachers to determine how their child is progressing. As a result of arrangements for COVID-19, some parents felt more empowered to bring their own observations of their child to those conversations.
- Parents had a better understanding of student assessments such as NAPLAN and the ability to use results as a resource.
- There was more acknowledgement that, particularly for the first years of primary school, children who were struggling needed more support and contact from educators.

Part 3:Measuring and reporting performance



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

3.1 Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia

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

The measurement framework 2020 edition is updated and revised to reflect the [Alice Springs \(Mparntwe\) Education Declaration](#). It replaces the *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2019*.³⁰ The measurement framework defines 32 national KPMs for schooling, specifies the data sources for these KPMs and outlines the reporting cycle for the period 2020–2023.

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

³⁰ The *Measurement Framework for Schooling Australia 2019* is available on the ACARA website along with the 2010, 2012 and 2015 editions of the framework that also reference the Melbourne Declaration. Previous editions of the framework (originally known as the Measurement Framework for National Key Performance Measures) are available in the [Trove](#) archive.

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

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

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

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

Because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, only 7 KPMs are reported for 2020.

No 2020 data is available for KPMs on achievement in the National Assessment Program (NAP) or for the KPMs on attendance. This is due to the cancellation of NAPLAN tests for 2020, the postponement of NAP sample and international assessments and the effect of COVID-19 community lockdowns on school operations and attendance data. These impacts are discussed in Part 2: Policies and priorities.

In addition, 6 KPMs for proficient and highly proficient standards for NAP reading, writing and numeracy are not due for reporting until 2022³¹, and data for the enrolment KPM, based on the Census of Population and Housing, is not applicable to 2020. The available measures are reported at the national level, and by various breakdowns, such as state and territory, school sector and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status. For relevant KPMs, time series for the previous 10 years (2010–2019) are also included.

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

Where relevant breakdowns or time series for the available KPMs are not reported in Part 3, they are provided in the National Report on Schooling data portal. Data for 2019 and earlier for KPMs not reported in 2020 is also available in the data portal and in previous editions of this report.

³¹ The reporting of proficiency standards, and the timing of this, are dependent on a full transition to NAPLAN online, and on separate endorsement of the standards by education ministers.

3.2 Student participation

Part 3.2 reports on KPMs for student enrolment, attendance and apparent retention specified in the *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020*.

3.2.1 Enrolment rate

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

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

Key Performance Measure 1(a)

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

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

Data for this KPM is drawn from the 5-yearly Australian Census of Population and Housing.³² At the most recent census (2016), the national enrolment rate for 6–15-year-olds was 99.4%. At approaching 100%, KPM1(a) provides evidence that longstanding policies for universal access to schooling and for compulsory education for this age group are implemented in practice.

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

Before 2019, an annual measure for the enrolment KPM, based on the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC), was also reported. From 2019, this measure was deleted as a measure of the KPM because of statistical inconsistencies. However, data drawn from this source is reported in the National Report on Schooling data portal. Based on this measure, the national enrolment rate for 6–15-year-olds in 2020 was 99.3%.

³² The Census of Population and Housing is Australia's largest statistical collection undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). It is conducted every 5 years. Data from the 2021 Census is expected to be available in 2022.

3.2.2 Attendance

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

Key Performance Measure 1(b)

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

Key Performance Measure 1(c)

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

All school sectors in all states and territories use a common reference period – Semester 1 in each school year – for the collection of attendance data for national reporting.

In 2020, this coincided with the period in which school operations in most jurisdictions were affected by responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Because of the different arrangements for schooling across the country that were put in place in response to health advice, attendance data was not consistent across states and territories. As a result, student attendance data is not published for 2020.

The extent of disruptions to school operations in 2020 in each state and territory, and responses of school systems within each jurisdiction are detailed in Part 2.14: Arrangements for student learning during COVID-19.

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

3.2.3 Apparent retention

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

These rates are designated as ‘apparent’ because they are based on aggregate enrolment data and do not record the progression of individual students.³³ Apparent retention rates do not distinguish between students progressing at a ‘normal’ rate of one grade per calendar year and students who repeat a grade or are promoted, thus moving between cohorts; students who choose to adopt flexible study patterns in senior years; or students who join or leave a cohort through migration.

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

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

Key Performance Measure 1(e)

Apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12

Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1 show KPM 1(e) by school sector for the period 2010–2020.

Table 3.1

Apparent retention rates (uncapped), Year 10 to Year 12, by school sector, Australia, 2010–2020 (%)

School sector	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Government	74.1	75.0	74.8	76.7	78.6	79.2	79.5	79.8	79.2	78.0	78.2
Catholic	81.8	83.9	84.2	85.4	86.8	86.3	86.4	86.5	85.4	84.9	85.5
Independent	89.8	90.1	89.0	88.9	90.9	90.0	89.7	90.9	91.1	91.0	90.5
All	78.5	79.5	79.3	80.7	82.5	82.7	82.9	83.3	82.8	82.0	82.1

Notes:

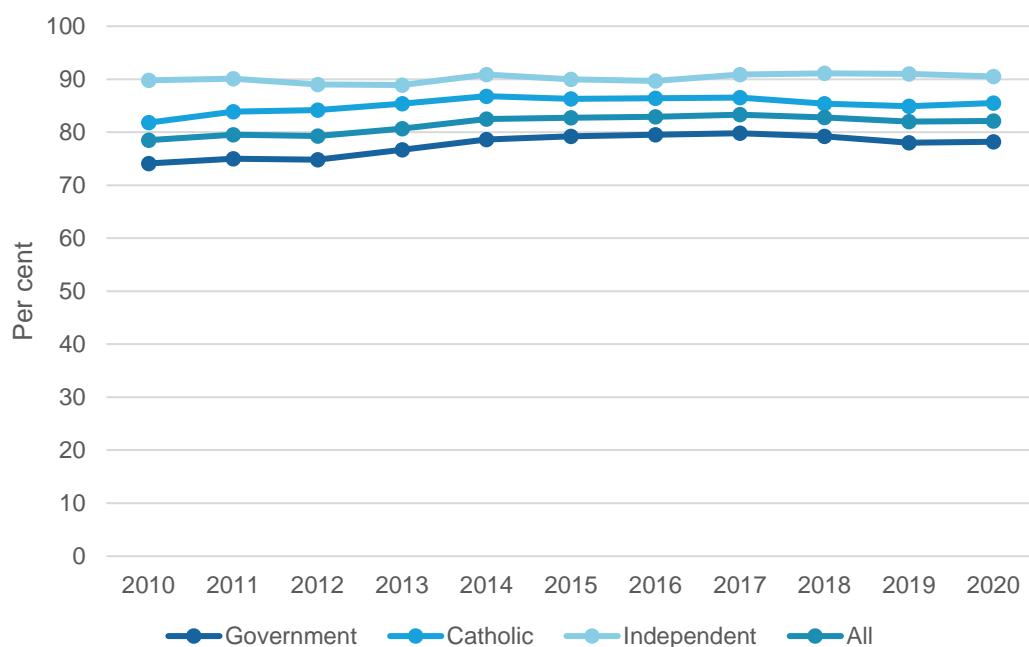
The apparent retention rate measures the number of full-time school students in a designated level year level of schooling as a percentage of their respective cohort group in a base year. The base year for apparent retention rates Year 10 to Year 12 is Year 10, 2 years before. Enrolments are as at the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

Since 2015, *Schools, Australia* has included apparent retention rates that are capped at 100%, as well as the uncapped apparent retention rates reported historically. This report continues to publish uncapped apparent retention rates because, due to student movements and international migration, it is quite possible for a state, school sector or school to have higher enrolments in Year 12 than in Year 10 2 years previously, resulting in apparent retention rates above 100%. Uncapped rates are more suitable for undertaking time series analysis of the data than capped rates.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020 and previous releases.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

³³ Unit record enrolment data by student is not currently collected at the national level for all states and territories or for non-government schools.

Figure 3.1**Apparent retention rates (uncapped), Year 10 to Year 12, by school sector, Australia, 2010–2020 (%)**

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020 and previous releases.

This series records an overall upward movement in apparent retention from Year 10 to Year 12, following the implementation of strengthened participation requirements for 15- and 16-year-olds in 2010.³⁴

After 5 successive years of growth from 2012, the national apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12 decreased by 0.5 percentage points in 2018, and by 0.8 percentage points in 2019 but rose by 0.1 percentage point in 2020. The rise between 2019 and 2020 was not statistically significant. The Key Performance Measures data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal reports a long-term upward trend in this measure of 0.4 percentage points per annum for the period 2010–2020.

In 2020, apparent retention rates from Year 10 to Year 12 increased in the government and Catholic sectors but fell in the independent sector. The gap in the rates between the government and independent sectors narrowed from 15.7 percentage points in 2010 to 10.2 percentage points in 2016, but, by 2020, this had widened to 12.3 percentage points, a net reduction in this gap of 3.4 percentage points over the 10-year period 2010–2020.

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

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

Table 3.2 shows KPM 1(e) by state and territory.

³⁴ These included the mandatory requirement for all young people to participate in schooling until they complete Year 10, and the requirement to participate full time in schooling or other education, training or employment, or a combination of these activities, until the age of 17. These were implemented progressively in all states and territories between 2006 and 2010.

Table 3.2

Apparent retention rates (uncapped), Year 10 to Year 12, by state and territory, Australia, 2010, 2019 and 2020 (%) and changes 2019–2020 and 2010–2020 (percentage points)

State/territory	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
2010	74.5	82.1	81.0	80.6	76.5	70.7	61.4	91.8	78.5
2019	75.8	83.3	88.1	89.1	85.5	74.3	64.1	89.8	82.0
2020	77.5	83.9	83.7	88.6	85.8	73.9	70.4	90.1	82.1
Change 2019–2020	1.7	0.6	-4.4	-0.5	0.3	-0.4	6.3	0.3	0.1
Change 2010–2020	3.0	1.8	2.7	8.0	9.3	3.2	9.0	-1.7	3.6

Notes:

See notes for Table 3.1.

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

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020 and previous releases.

In 2020, KPM 1(e) rose in 5 of the 8 states and territories.

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

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

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

Table 3.3 and Figure 3.2 report this KPM for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students for the period 2010–2020.

Table 3.3

Apparent retention rates (uncapped), Year 10 to Year 12, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students (%) and gap between rates (percentage points) Australia, 2010–2020

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	52.5	53.5	53.3	55.8	60.4	60.6	60.9	63.0	62.6	60.0	61.5
Non-Indigenous	79.5	80.6	80.4	81.9	83.6	83.8	84.0	84.3	83.9	83.2	83.3
Gap	27.0	27.1	27.1	26.1	23.2	23.2	23.1	21.3	21.3	23.2	21.8

Notes:

See notes for Table 3.1.

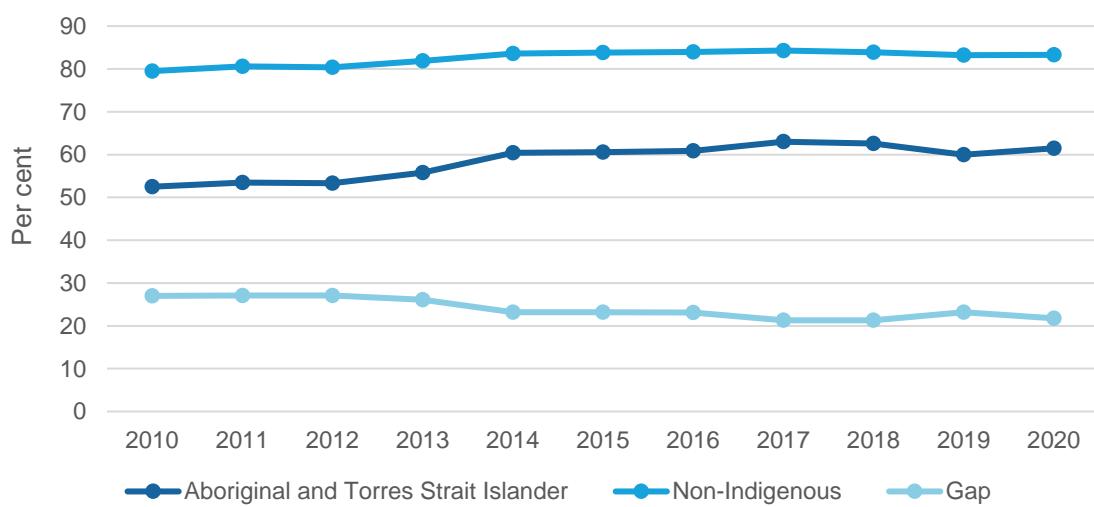
Apparent retention rates can be affected by changes over time in whether individuals identify (or are identified) as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020 and previous releases.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Figure 3.2

Apparent retention rates (uncapped), Year 10 to Year 12, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, Australia, 2010–2020 (%)



Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020 and previous releases.

In 2020 the apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students increased, but not significantly. The rise of 1.5 percentage points in 2020 followed a fall of 2.6 percentage points in 2019.

Year 10 to Year 12 retention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has increased substantially – a net rise of 9.0 percentage points since 2010. This is notably more than the rise for non-Indigenous students of 3.8 percentage points over this period, leading to a narrowing of the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students by 5.2 percentage points. This gives rise to a long-term upward trend in Year 10 to Year 12 apparent retention for Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander students of 1.0 percentage point per annum for the period 2010–2020.

With the gap at 21.8 percentage points, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are still significantly less likely to proceed to Year 12 than other students.

However, as noted above, retention rates for ‘all students’ are inflated by students entering the cohort since Year 10, both as permanent migrants and as temporary international students. This also applies to rates for non-Indigenous students but not to those for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who, by definition, are Australian residents. The gap would therefore be smaller if recent immigrants and overseas students were excluded from the Year 12 count.³⁵

Table 3.4 reports KPM 1(e) by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status and state and territory for 2010, 2019 and 2020. The table displays variations between states and territories in apparent retention rates for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students and in the percentage point gap between these rates.

Table 3.4

Apparent retention rates (uncapped), Year 10 to Year 12, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students (%) and gap between rates (percentage points), by state and territory 2010, 2019 and 2020

2010	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	45.3	51.2	64.0	64.9	45.4	41.9	41.4	75.0	52.5
Non-Indigenous	75.5	82.3	82.0	81.1	78.4	72.9	71.9	92.1	79.5
Gap	30.2	31.1	18.0	16.2	33.0	31.0	30.5	17.1	27.0
2019	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	48.5	65.4	72.9	78.3	66.0	61.0	43.8	80.7	60.0
Non-Indigenous	77.4	83.6	89.3	89.6	86.7	75.5	77.7	90.1	83.2
Gap	28.9	18.2	16.4	11.3	20.7	14.5	33.9	9.4	23.2
2020	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	53.1	66.8	68.4	73.3	63.1	58.4	51.9	93.6	61.5
Non-Indigenous	79.0	84.2	84.9	89.3	87.2	75.4	81.7	90.0	83.3
Gap	25.9	17.4	16.5	16.0	24.1	17.0	29.8	-3.6	21.8
Change in gap 2019–2020	-3.0	-0.8	0.1	4.7	3.4	2.5	-4.1	-13.0	-1.4
Change in gap 2010–2020	-4.3	-13.7	-1.5	-0.2	-8.9	-14.0	-0.7	-20.7	-5.2

Notes:

See notes for tables 3.1 and 3.3.

Source: ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020 and earlier releases.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

³⁵ These students are not separately identified in the NSSC. There may be instances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students returning from living overseas who were also not counted in the Year 10 cohort 2 years before.

In 2020, the apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students increased in New South Wales, Victoria and the 2 territories but fell in the other states. The gap in apparent retention between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students narrowed in NSW, Vic, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, and widened in Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania.

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

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

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

3.3 Student achievement – National Assessment Program

Part 3.3 would normally report on the KPMs for student achievement in the NAP specified in the [*Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020*](#). These are the majority of KPMs, and for 2020 were scheduled to include KPMs for NAPLAN in Reading, Writing and Numeracy and for the NAP – ICT Literacy sample assessment.

In 2020, all NAP assessments scheduled for 2020 were cancelled or postponed because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Education ministers agreed to cancel 2020 NAPLAN tests and to postpone the NAP – ICT Literacy sample assessment scheduled for 2020 to 2022. These decisions are reported in Part 2.1: National policy context.

As a result, no data for student achievement KPMs is available for 2020.

Student achievement data for 2019 and earlier is available in previous editions of this report, in the National Report on Schooling data portal, and in public reports for NAPLAN and sample assessments for previous years.

3.4 Senior schooling and youth transitions

Part 3.4 reports on KPMs for schooling for the:

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

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

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

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

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

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

The requirements for each level of VET qualification are set out in the [Australian Qualifications Framework \(AQF\)](#), which also provides guidelines for SSCE (Year 12) qualifications and qualifications in the higher education sector.³⁶

Secondary school students in all states and territories can undertake nationally recognised VET courses³⁷ as part of their school program, usually in the senior years of schooling, as part of the SSCE in each jurisdiction.

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

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

³⁶ The AQF is the national framework of qualifications in the school, VET and higher education sectors in Australia. The Senior Secondary Certificate of Education (SSCE), Certificate II, III and IV, Diploma and Bachelor Degree are examples of qualifications within the AQF. SSCEs issued by each state and territory are listed in Part 2.8: Supporting senior years of schooling and Part 5 Glossary.

³⁷ The term ‘VET delivered to secondary students’ has replaced the term ‘VET in Schools (VETiS)’ historically used for these programs. However, in 2020, the term ‘VET in Schools’ continued to be used in the VET sector to identify VET delivered to secondary students and for data collection and reporting purposes.

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

VET KPM and program measures

The KPM for participation in VET includes all 15–19-year-old VET students (whether or not they are enrolled in school) as a proportion of the 15–19-year-old population. The specification for participation is the completion of at least one unit of competency (or accredited course module) in a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above.³⁸

Key performance measure 1(f)

Participation of young people, including secondary students, in VET

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

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

Table 3.5 and Figure 3.3 show national data for this KPM for the period 2010–2020.

Table 3.5

Number and proportion of 15–19-year-olds who successfully completed at least one unit of competency as a part of a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above, Australia, 2010–2020

Australia	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of 15–19-year-olds successfully completing at least one unit of competency at AQF II or above ('000)	374.0	399.2	418.5	395.5	494.8	435.6	413.4	412.6	401.1	407.5	392.1
15–19-year-old population ('000)	1,460.0	1,453.5	1,459.7	1,466.7	1,474.7	1,469.9	1,475.2	1,482.6	1,490.7	1,499.1	1,490.9
Proportion of 15–19-year-olds successfully completing at least one unit of competency at AQF II or above (%)	25.6	27.5	28.7	27.0	33.6	29.6	28.0	27.8	26.9	27.2	26.3

Note:

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

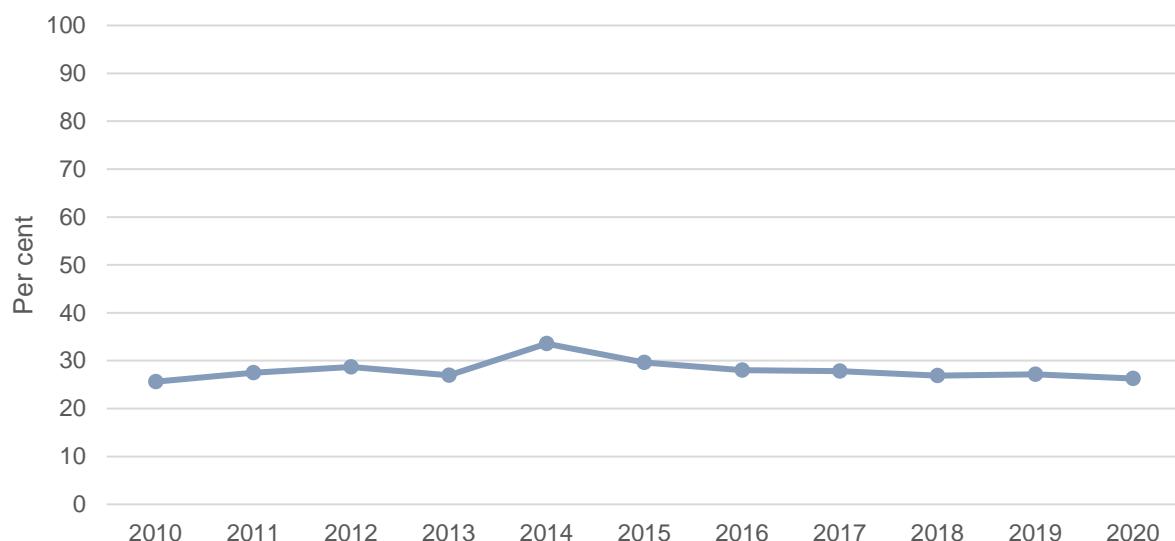
Sources: NCVER, National VET in Schools Collection 2010–20; NCVER, National VET Provider Collection 2010–19; ABS, *Australian Demographic Statistics*, December 2020 (release date 17/06/2021).

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

³⁸ AQF Certificate II is regarded as entry-level training for employment.

Figure 3.3

Proportion of 15–19-year-olds successfully completing at least one unit of competency at AQF II or above (%), Australia, 2010–2020



Note:

See note for Table 3.5

Sources: NCVER, National VET in Schools Collection 2010–20; NCVER, National VET Provider Collection 2010–20; ABS, *Australian Demographic Statistics* December 2020 (release date 17/06/2021).

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

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

There is a further break in the series between 2014 and 2015, following the introduction of a national unique student identifier (USI) (student number) for VET students. The USI allows all training activity undertaken by a student to be electronically linked, irrespective of where the training took place. This enabled the removal of many duplicate student entries from 2015, resulting in reductions in the KPM and a break from data reported for 2014.³⁹

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

The decrease in the KPM between 2019 and 2020 is not statistically significant. There is a long-term downward trend of -0.6 percentage points per annum over the period 2015–2020.

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

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

³⁹ However, as data for many VET in Schools students was provided without a USI, some duplication may occur in the count of these students.

VET program measure 1

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

Table 3.6 reports VET program measure 1 for 2020 using the Australian standard classifications for field of education as a proxy for occupation and industry profile.

Table 3.6

Number of 15–19-year-olds successfully completing at least one unit of competency as part of a VET qualification at AQF Certificate II or above, by field of education, Australia, 2020

Field of education	No. of students by field	%
01 – Natural and physical sciences	2,963	0.8
02 – Information technology	13,687	3.5
03 – Engineering and related technologies	77,537	19.8
04 – Architecture and building	50,433	12.9
05 – Agriculture, environmental and related studies	17,752	4.5
06 – Health	25,907	6.6
07 – Education	4,946	1.3
08 – Management and commerce	74,751	19.1
09 – Society and culture	79,274	20.2
10 – Creative arts	29,327	7.5
11 – Food, hospitality and personal services	70,205	17.9
12 – Mixed field programs	35,092	8.9
13 – Other	2	0.0
Unique count of students	392,116	

Notes:

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

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

Sources: NCVER, National VET in Schools Collection 2020; NCVER, National VET Provider Collection 2020.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

The methodology for this measure has changed in 2020. Before 2020 it was calculated as the number of 15–19-year-old students participating in VET at AQF Certificate II or above disaggregated by the field of education of their major course. The ‘major course’ was defined as the ‘highest qualification attempted by a student in the reporting year’.

From 2020, students undertaking multiple courses in different fields of education are counted once within each relevant field. This provides a more accurate distribution of VET participation by field of education.

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

VET program measure 2

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

Table 3.7 reports on the number of VET qualifications completed by 15–19-year-olds in 2020, by the AQF level of qualifications.

Table 3.7**VET qualifications completed by 15–19-year-olds, by qualification level of major course, Australia, 2020**

Qualification level	Number
Certificate I	22,138
Certificate II	115,415
Certificate III	67,157
Certificate IV	10,410
Diploma or higher	9,911
Total	225,031

Notes:

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

Sources: NCVER, National VET in Schools Collection 2020; NCVER, National VET Provider Collection 2020.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

In 2020, 51.8% of qualifications gained by 15–19-year-olds were at AQF level II and 29.8% were at AQF level III.

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

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

VET delivered to secondary students

KPM 1(f) and the VET program measures include all 15–19-year-old students undertaking VET. The data in this section refers to VET delivered to 15–19-year-old secondary school students. For the purposes of the national VET in Schools data collection⁴⁰, these are students who are undertaking accredited VET as a part of a SSCE.⁴¹ This data is not restricted to Certificate II or above, or to students who have successfully

⁴⁰ The national VET in Schools data collection is compiled by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) from data provided by states and territories.

⁴¹ In some jurisdictions, students who have left school (that is, they are not secondary students) but are receiving credit for a VET course towards a senior secondary certificate may be included in these counts. To the extent that these students are included, this inflates the data as a measure of the number of secondary school students undertaking VET.

completed at least one unit of competency.

Table 3.8 shows the number of 15–19-year-old students undertaking VET delivered to secondary students each year in the period 2010–2020 with school-based apprentices and trainees disaggregated.

Table 3.8

Number of 15–19-year-old students undertaking VET delivered to secondary students (VET in Schools) Australia, 2010–2020

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
School-based apprentices and trainees ('000)	17.3	18.1	22.5	21.7	20.5	19.7	16.9	19.7	18.0	17.0	17.8
Other VET in Schools program students ('000)	203.6	218.3	219.8	218.1	216.1	226.8	216.9	218.0	208.9	214.8	220.3
Total VET in Schools students ('000)	220.9	236.4	242.3	239.7	236.6	246.5	233.7	237.7	226.8	231.8	238.1

Note:

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

Sources: NCVER, National VET in Schools Collection, 2020; NCVER 2021, [VET in Schools 2020: Students DataBuilder](#).

In 2020 there were 238,078 students aged 15–19 years enrolled in VET in Schools/VET delivered to secondary students. Based on this data, it is estimated that nearly half of senior secondary students undertook one or more VET courses in 2020 as part of their SSCE.⁴²

Of these students, 17,777 (7.5%) were undertaking a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship. Most of these students – 54.4% – were enrolled in Certificate II qualifications and a further 37.0% were enrolled in Certificate III qualifications.

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

Between 2019 and 2020, the number of secondary students aged 15–19 years undertaking VET increased by 2.7%. There was a rise of 4.3% in the number of students undertaking school-based apprenticeships and traineeships.

Further detailed information, including data disaggregated by state and territory, data definitions and data quality issues, are provided in the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) publication [VET in Schools 2020](#) and in the NCVER [DataBuilder](#).

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

⁴² This estimate is calculated as the number of VET in Schools students as a proportion of the number of senior secondary students (full-time plus part-time) as reported in Part 1.2 (Table 1.4) of this report. It is an estimate only, as there are some disparities between the counting of VET in Schools students and of Year 11 and 12 students in the NSSC.

3.4.2 Participation in education and work

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

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

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

Key performance measure 1(g)

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

Key performance measure 1(h)

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

Key performance measure 1(i)

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

KPMs 1(g) and 1(h) for the period 2010–2020 and for census years 2011 and 2016 are shown in Table 3.9. Figure 3.4 illustrates KPMs 1(g) and 1(h), as measured by SEW, over the period 2010–2020.

Table 3.9

Proportions of 15–19-year-olds and 20–24-year-olds in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training, Australia, 2010–2020 (%)

Calendar year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Full-time participation rates for 15–19-year-olds	84.8	85.3	86.5	86.3	87.2	87.4	88.4	89.0	88.6	87.0	85.4
CI \pm	1.5	1.4	1.0	1.2	1.1	0.3	1.3	1.0	1.2	0.9	1.2
Full-time participation rates for 15–19-year-olds (Census measure)		86.0					86.4				
Full-time participation rates for 20–24-year-olds	77.2	77.0	76.6	73.8	74.1	73.6	76.1	75.0	74.6	75.5	71.0
CI \pm	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.1	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.8	2.2
Full-time participation rates for 20–24-year-olds (Census measure)		74.7					72.2				

Notes:

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

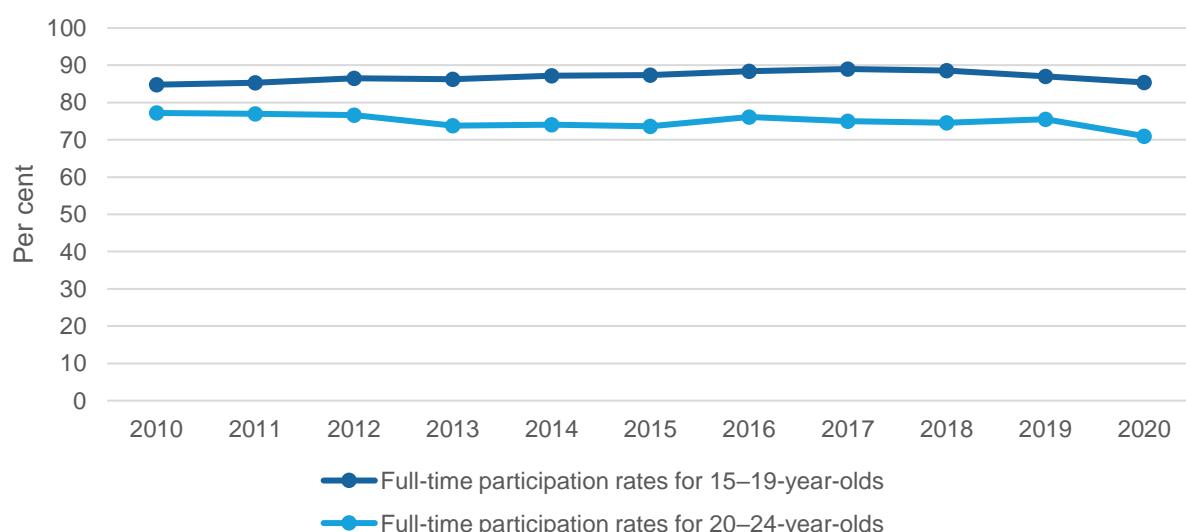
SEW includes people in very remote areas but excludes people in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in very remote areas. This exclusion has only a minor impact on national estimates.

Sources: ABS, *Education and Work*, May 2020; ABS, *Census of Population and Housing*, 2011, 2016.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Figure 3.4

Proportions of 15–19-year-olds and 20–24-year-olds in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training, Australia, 2010–2020 (%)



Source: ABS, *Education and Work*, May 2020.

As shown in Table 3.9 and Figure 3.4, full-time participation rates for young people in their mid to late teens are consistently higher than for those in their early to mid-20s. This is to be expected, as the 15–19-year age group includes a high proportion of secondary school students for whom full-time participation in education, training or work is compulsory, at least until age 17.

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

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

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

There was a decrease in full-time engagement in education and/or work across all states and most age groups 15–64, but this impacted more on younger people in the 20–24 age group, particularly males. The ABS reports that the drop in the rates of full engagement for young men aged 20–24 was primarily driven by a drop in full-time employment, with 42% of young men this age engaged through full-time employment in 2020, down from 46% in 2019. Young people were more likely to be not working or studying at all, rising from 11% of people aged 20–24 years in May 2019 to 16% in May 2020.

There was also a fall in the number of people both studying and working. Between May 2019 and May 2020, the proportion of students aged 15–64 who were employed fell from 59% to 50%.

In addition, international travel restrictions and the impact on net overseas migration including overseas students led to decreases in some key sub-populations of the survey, in particular the number of people currently studying for a non-school qualification.⁴³

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

The ABS advises that care should be taken when comparing SEW 2020 data with results from previous survey years, particularly for populations that are likely to have been impacted by COVID-19.

Trend data for the annual SEW measures of these KPMs for the period 2008–2020 is included in the Key Performance Measures data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal. This shows a long-term upward trend in KPM 1(g) of 0.2 percentage points per annum, and a long-term downward trend in KPM 1(h) of -0.4 percentage points per annum over this period.

As a participation measure of 17–24-year-olds, KPM 1(i) includes people from the 15–19-year-old and 20–24-year-old age groups but excludes school students from both the numerator and the denominator. This measure is informative as an indicator of the transition of young people from school to post-school education and/or work, and the performance of schooling in facilitating this.

SEW data for this KPM is reported for the period 2010–2020 in Table 3.10 and Figure 3.5. Census data for the years 2011 and 2016 is reported in Table 3.10.

⁴³ ABS, *Education and Work*, May 2020.

Table 3.10

Proportion of 17–24-year-olds who have left school that are in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training, Australia, 2010–2020 (%)

Calendar year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Full-time participation rates for 17–24-year-olds who have left school	75.0	75.1	75.5	72.7	73.2	72.9	75.5	74.7	74.3	74.0	69.3
CI±	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.1	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.6	1.6	1.8
Full-time participation rates for 17–24-year-olds who have left school (Census measure)				73.0				71.0			

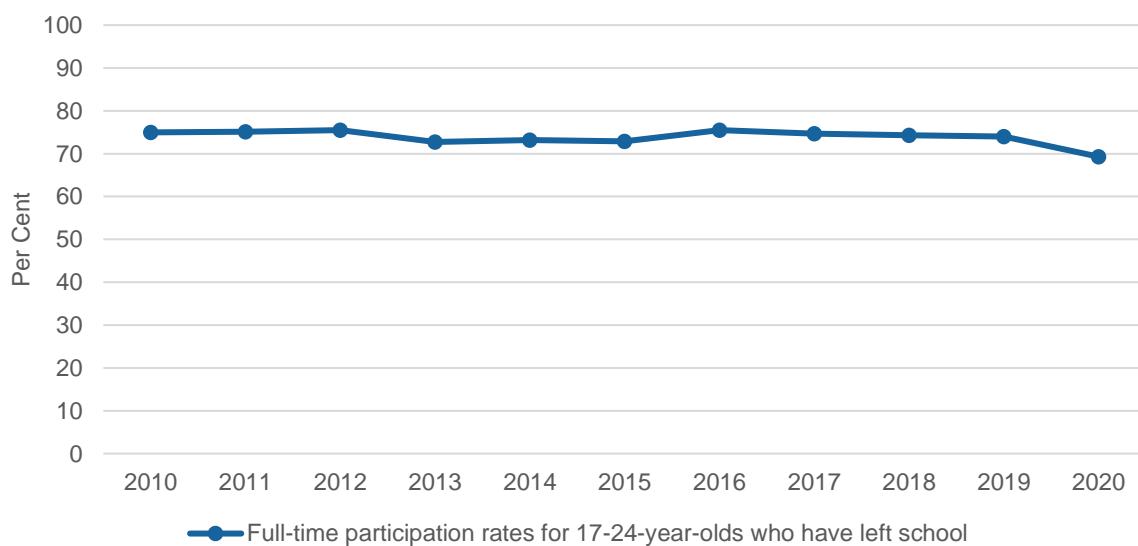
See notes for Table 3.9.

Sources: ABS, *Education and Work*, May 2020; ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2011, 2016.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Figure 3.5

Proportion of 17–24-year-olds who have left school that are in full-time education or training, in full-time work, or both in part-time work and part-time education or training, Australia, 2010–2020 (%)



Source: ABS, *Education and Work*, May 2020.

There was little change in KPM 1(i) between 2010 and 2019. However, like other groups of young people, 17–24-year-olds who had left school were affected by the impact of COVID-19 and the fall in this measure of 4.7 percentage points between 2019 and 2020 was statistically significant. There was a downward trend of -0.3 percentage points per annum in this measure over the period 2008–2020.

Data on KPMs 1(g), 1(h) and 1(i) by state and territory is provided in the National Report on Schooling data portal in the Key Performance Measures data set and the Participation and Attainment data set. However, because of sample size and other factors, SEW data for particular age groups is less reliable when disaggregated by state and territory, especially for smaller jurisdictions.⁴⁴ Because the survey is not conducted in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in very remote areas, and because of sample size, SEW data cannot be disaggregated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status.

Census data provides more robust measures by state and territory, and can be disaggregated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, but is only available every 5 years. Census data for these KPMs by state and territory and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status is also reported in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

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

⁴⁴ The survey sample covers the full working-age population, so numbers of 15–19-year-olds and 20–24-year-olds surveyed are relatively small in some states and territories.

3.4.3 Student attainment

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

Key performance measure 7(a)

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

Key performance measure 7(b)

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

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

Table 3.11 reports KPMs 7(a) and 7(b) at the national level for the period 2010–2020. It also includes these proportions as measured by the 2011 and 2016 censuses.

While the attainment KPMs 7(a) and 7(b) refer to the completion of Year 12 or equivalent or an AQF VET Certificate, this does not imply equivalence between the award of a SSCE on the completion of Year 12 and either AQF Certificate II or AQF Certificate III. SSCE qualifications are not located at a particular level in the AQF.⁴⁵

For comparison purposes, Table 3.11 also reports the proportion of the 20–24-year-old population in each of these years that had completed Year 12 or equivalent. This is not, by itself, a KPM for schooling, but is the main component of both KPMs 7(a) and 7(b).

⁴⁵ The volume of learning required to attain an AQF Certificate II is typically 0.5–1 year; for Certificate III it is typically 1–2 years, and for a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education it is typically 2 years (AQF, second edition, p 14). In some instances, senior secondary students undertaking VET have the opportunity to complete several Certificate II qualifications as a part of a SSCE.

Table 3.11

Proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate II or above; proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate III or above; proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent; Australia, 2010–2020 (%)

Calendar year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate II or above	85.6	84.1	85.9	86.7	86.1	88.4	90.2	87.1	90.0	89.3	89.9
CI±	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.1	1.6	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.2
Proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate II or above (Census measure)		85.3					88.6				
Proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate III or above	84.5	82.7	84.6	85.7	84.9	87.1	89.2	86.4	88.8	88.2	89.4
CI±	1.5	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.1	1.6	1.2	1.2	1.6	1.2
Proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate III or above (Census measure)		84.6					87.9				
Proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent	78.0	74.9	76.3	77.2	76.8	78.7	81.3	79.1	82.1	82.5	84.6
CI±	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.8	1.6	1.9	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.8
Proportion of the 20–24-year-old population that has attained at least Year 12 or equivalent (Census measure)		75.3					79.5				

Notes:

See notes for Table 3.9.

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

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

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

Sources: ABS, *Education and Work*, May 2020; ABS, *Census of Population and Housing*, 2011, 2016.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

As measured by SEW, the proportion of 20–24-year-olds who had attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate II or above – KPM 7(a) – rose from 85.6% in 2010 to 89.3% in 2019 and to 89.9% in 2020. The rise in this measure between 2019 and 2020 was not statistically significant.

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

As measured by SEW, the proportion of 20–24-year-olds who had attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate III or above – KPM 7(b) – rose from 84.5% in 2010 to 88.2% in 2019 and to 89.4% in 2020. The rise in this measure in 2020 was not statistically significant.

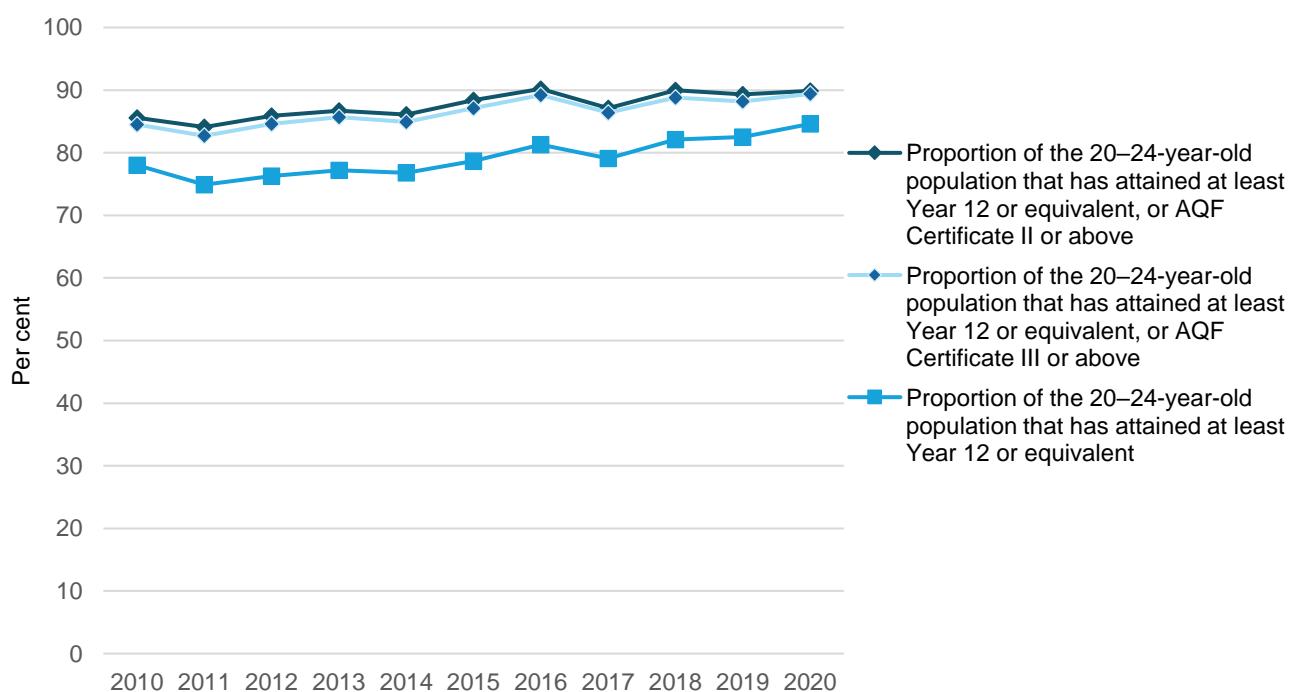
The COAG target for this measure was 90% by 2020. The Australian Government's [Performance reporting dashboard](#) reports that there was no improvement in this measure in 2020.⁴⁶

Trend data for the annual measures of these KPMs for the period 2008–2020 is available in the Key Performance Measures data set in the National Report on Schooling data portal. This shows long-term upward trends of 0.5 percentage points per annum for both KPM 7(a) and KPM 7(b) over this period.

Figure 3.6 depicts the annual movement in the 2 attainment measures from 2010 to 2020, as measured by SEW, along with the proportion of 20–24-year-olds having attained at least Year 12 or equivalent.

Figure 3.6

Proportions of 20–24-year-olds having attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate II or above; 20–24-year-olds having attained at least Year 12 or equivalent, or AQF Certificate III or above; and 20–24-year-olds having attained at least Year 12 or equivalent; Australia, 2010–2020 (%)



Source: ABS, *Education and Work*, May 2020.

⁴⁶ Productivity Commission 2021, Performance Reporting Dashboard (accessed September 2021).

As shown in Figure 3.6, the 2 attainment KPMs have generally moved in parallel over the period 2010–2020. There has been little difference between the 2 measures with an average difference of 1.1 percentage points. In 2020, the 2 measures converged further with a difference of only 0.5 percentage points.

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

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

In 2020, 84.6% of 20–24-year-olds had attained at least Year 12 or equivalent. This was a rise of 2.1 percentage points from 2019 and of 6.6 percentage points from 2010. A further 4.8%, who had not attained Year 12, had attained Certificate III or above, and a further 0.5% had attained Certificate II, but not Year 12 or Certificate III. The proportion of 20–24-year-olds with equivalent VET qualifications but who have not completed Year 12 has declined from 9.7% in 2015 to 5.3% in 2020.

The qualifications held by 20–24-year-olds in May 2020 would have been attained in 2019 or earlier and there is no observable impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the SEW measures of KPMs 7(a) and 7(b) in 2020.

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

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

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

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

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

Part 4: School funding



Part 4 reports data on government spending on Australian schooling and data on school income and capital expenditure.

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

The bulk of funding for government schools comes from the state or territory government that owns and administers the school, with contributions from the Australian Government. A smaller contribution comes from fees, charges and other private sources.

Most of the income for non-government schools comes from Australian Government funding and private sources (including fees and other charges), with smaller contributions from state and territory governments.

Intergovernmental funding arrangements for school education

The National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) came into effect in 2019. As part of this agreement each state and territory government has a separate agreement with the Australian Government which includes state-specific actions to improve student outcomes and minimum state and territory funding contribution requirements. Parties agreed to contribute to funding for government and non-government schools, and committed to meeting agreed funding levels.

Agreed funding levels are expressed as a proportion of Schools Resource Standard (SRS). The SRS is an estimate of how much public funding a school needs to meet its students' educational needs.

The *My School* finance data collection of 2016 was used to inform the Commonwealth school funding model as described in the *Australian Education Act 2013*. The SRS funding amounts are derived from analysing the funding levels reported in the *My School* data collection for 'reference schools'.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Reference schools are schools where at least 80% of students achieved above the national minimum standard for reading and numeracy in NAPLAN for 3 years in a row.

The *My School* source data was also used to help determine share of funding contributed by state and territory governments towards the SRS as required in the bilateral agreements with the Australian government.

The *Australian Education Act 2013* outlines the Australian Government funding arrangements for government and non-government schools. This includes the application of the SRS for determining funding for schools. The SRS of a school is made up of a base amount for every student along with up to 6 loadings to provide extra funding for disadvantaged students and schools.

The 6 loadings which attract funding in addition to the base amount are:

- a loading for students with disability
- a loading for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- a loading for socio-educational disadvantage
- a loading for students who have low English proficiency
- a loading for schools that are not in major cities
- a loading for schools that are not large schools.

The amount of funding received by a school will change from year to year depending on the number of students enrolled at the school and the loadings the students and school attract.⁴⁸

The base amount for most non-government schools is discounted by the capacity of the school's community to contribute financially to the operation of the school relative to other non-government schools, known as the Capacity to Contribute (CTC). In 2020 the CTC was based on the school's socio-economic status (SES) score or Direct Measure of Income (DMI). The SES score is based on the average SES score of each area in which the students at the school reside. The DMI is based on actual parental income. From 2020, schools started to transition away from SES to DMI in the determination of CTC.

In 2020 (and 2021), non-government school funding was based on whichever measure provided a school with the greatest level of funding: their 2011 Census SES score; their 2016 Census SES score; or their DMI score. The DMI will apply to most non-government schools by 2022. The CTC does not apply to government schools, or non-government schools which are special schools, special assistance schools, majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools, or sole provider schools.

The Capacity to Contribute also does not apply to distance education students. Instead, distance education students at schools with CTC scores contribute a proportion, prescribed in the Australian Education Regulation, of the primary or secondary SRS funding amount to their schools' SRS base amount.

Conditions of funding, accountability and financial reporting requirements for government and non-government schools are outlined in the *Australian Education Act 2013* and the respective legislation of state and territory governments. Further information on the use of Australian Government recurrent funding by schools can be found in the [Use of Recurrent Funding Guide](#).

There is no single collection of school funding data. Because of differences between the various collections, not all data reported in this part is directly comparable. Each section that follows deals with one of 4 separate collections, with additional data available on the National Report on Schooling data portal. Table 4.6 at the end of Part 4 gives an overview of the key features and differences between the 4 collections.

⁴⁸ More information on loadings is available under [Quality Schools Package](#) on the AGDESE website.

4.1 Government recurrent funding for schools

This section provides comparable information on government expenditure (by state/territory and the Australian Government) for government and non-government schools. Government school funding is historically reported on a financial year basis. Calendar year data for non-government schools has been adapted in this section to report on a comparable basis to government school financial data.

In 2019–20 total government recurrent funding of \$70.63 billion was provided for school education:

- \$48.22 billion (68.3%) was provided through state and territory budgets, compared with \$45.72 billion (69.7%) in 2018–19
- \$22.40 billion (31.7%) was provided through the Australian Government budget, compared with \$19.86 billion (30.3%) of total in 2018–19.

Of total government recurrent funding:

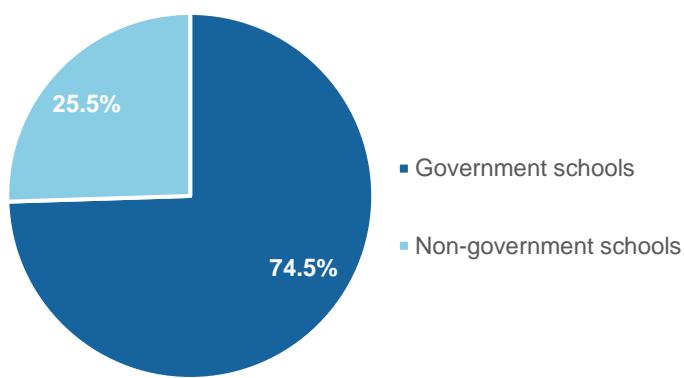
- the government school sector received 74.5% (compared with 75.8% in 2018–19)
- the non-government sector received 25.5% (compared with 24.2% in 2018–19).

This breakdown is shown in Figure 4.1.

The relative increases in funding shares to the non-government school sector, and in contributions by the Australian Government were in part due to 2020-21 financial year payments being brought forward to the 2019-20 financial year for some non-government schools. Increases were also in part due to increased assistance provided in 2020 by the Australian Government to non-government schools, in response to COVID-19.

Figure 4.1

Share of recurrent government funding for school education by school sector, Australia, 2019–20 financial year



Sources: Education Council, National Schools Statistics Collection (Finance), unpublished, 2020; Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP), *Report on Government Services 2022*, Productivity Commission; ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020.

Total recurrent school education funding was:

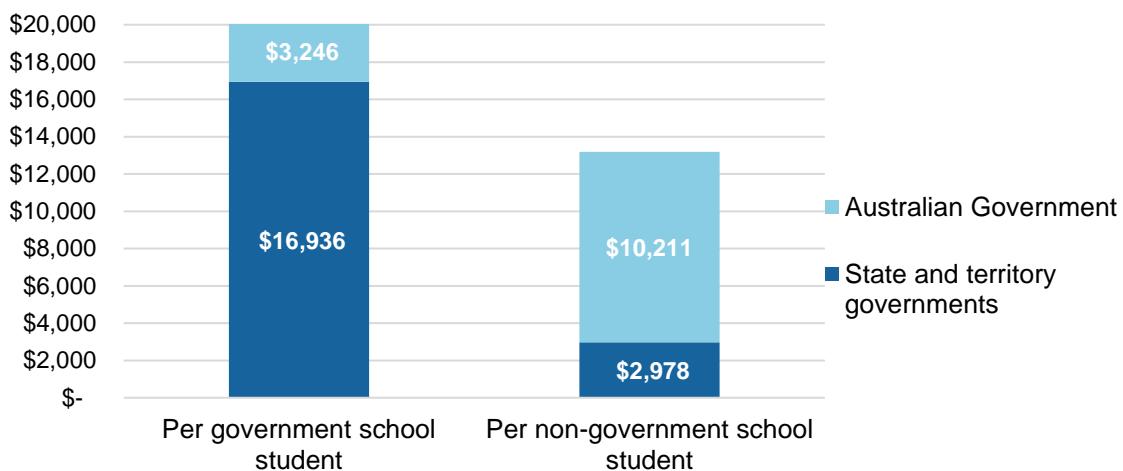
- \$20,182 per student for government schools, compared with \$19,328 in 2018–19
- \$13,189 per student for non-government schools, compared with \$11,813 in 2018–19.

Figure 4.2 shows the contribution of state and territory governments and the Australian Government to

the government and non-government school sectors, on a per-student basis.

Figure 4.2

Government recurrent funding for school education by funding source and school sector, Australia, 2019–2020, (\$ per student)

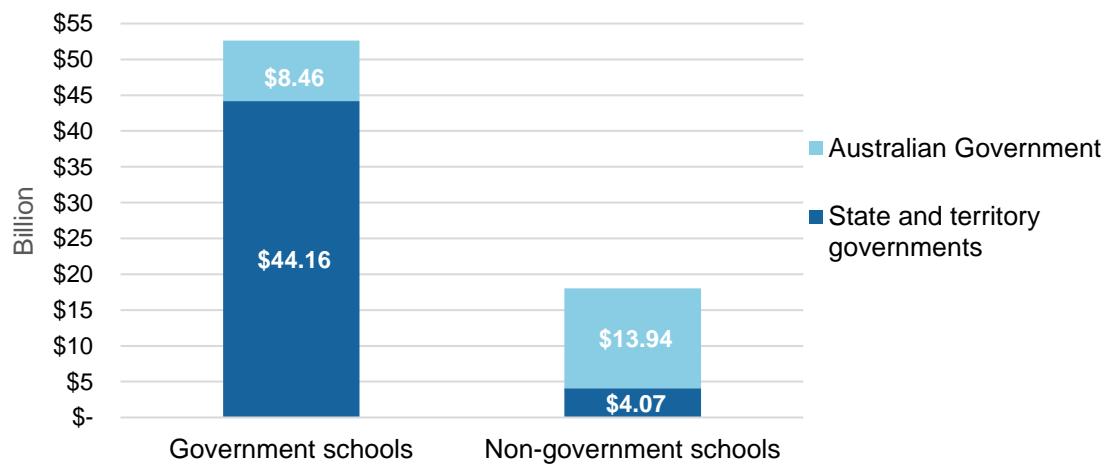


Sources: Education Council, National Schools Statistics Collection (Finance), unpublished, 2020; Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP), *Report on Government Services 2022*, Productivity Commission; ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020.

Total recurrent expenditure on government and non-government schools from all government sources in 2019–20 is reported in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3

Total government recurrent funding for school education by funding source and school sector, Australia, 2019–20 (\$ billion)



Sources: Education Council, National Schools Statistics Collection (Finance), unpublished, 2020; Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP), *Report on Government Services 2022*, Productivity Commission; ABS, *Schools, Australia*, 2020.

More data on government recurrent expenditure on government and non-government schools is available on the National Report on Schooling in Australia data portal.

4.2 School income and capital expenditure – *My School* financial information

Part 4.2 provides data on funding for the 2019 calendar year both for government and for non-government schools. Data is shown for government, Catholic and independent schools, and includes income from private sources and expenditure on capital projects. This data is reported for individual schools on the *My School* website. Due to reporting timeframes, the *My School* financial data lags behind other data sets. Note that in this section non-systemic Catholic schools are included in the independent school data to reflect their financial status.⁴⁹ The National Report on Schooling data portal provides an option to allow these schools to be included in the Catholic or independent sector in the *My School* finance data collection.

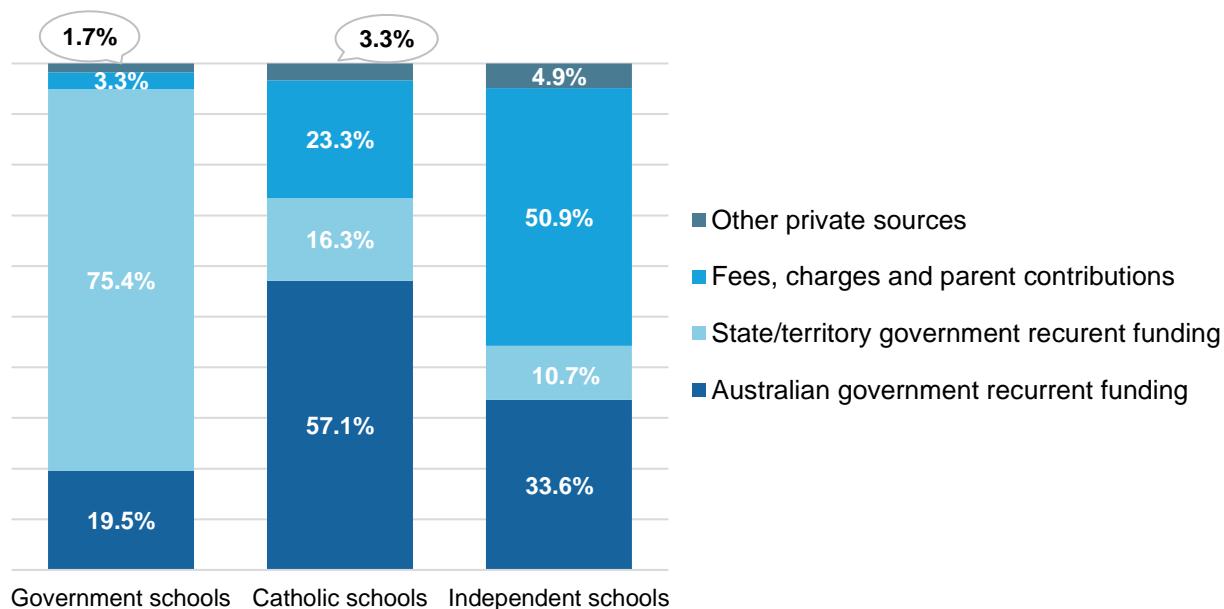
Gross income

For 2019, Australian Government funding accounted for 19.5% of the total gross income for government schools, with state and territory governments providing 75.4% of funds.

For non-government schools, the Australian Government contributed 57.1% of Catholic sector gross income and 33.6% of independent sector gross income. Income from fees, charges and parent contributions contributed 23.3% of Catholic sector income and 50.9% of independent sector income. These contributions are shown in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4

Gross school income by funding source and school sector, Australia, 2019 (%)



Source: ACARA, *My School* finance data collection.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

⁴⁹ This is an exception to the general statement that non-systemic Catholic schools are counted as Catholic in this report. See Part 5 Glossary – School sector for further information

Net recurrent income per student

Net recurrent income per student (NRIPS) represents income per student from all sources, public and private, minus deductions per student due to debt and capital expenditure.

In 2019, the NRIPS was \$16,598. Between 2018 and 2019, the growth in NRIPS was 4.0%. In contrast, the ABS Wage Price Index for education and training⁵⁰ grew by 1.9% over the same period.

The compound annual growth in NRIPS for all schools from 2015 to 2019 was 4.3%. Compound annual growth in the Wage Price Index (education and training) was 2.3% for the same period.

Between 2018 and 2019, the NRIPS increased 3.9% for the government sector (to \$15,511), increased 4.5% for the Catholic sector (to \$16,060), and increased 3.9% for the independent sector (to \$21,744). This is shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Net recurrent income per student by funding source and school sector, Australia, 2018 and 2019 (\$ per FTE student)

Source of income	2018	2019	Change %
Australian Government	4,866	5,151	5.9%
State/territory government	8,298	8,600	3.6%
Fees, charges and parental contributions	2,865	2,942	2.7%
Other private sources	449	461	2.5%
Total gross income	16,478	17,154	4.1%
Deductions	526	556	5.9%
Total NRIPS	15,953	16,598	4.0%
NRIPS (government)	14,931	15,511	3.9%
NRIPS (Catholic)	15,375	16,060	4.5%
NRIPS (independent)	20,927	21,744	3.9%
FTE student numbers (no.)	3,907,056	3,962,377	1.4%

Source: ACARA, *My School* finance data collection.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Capital expenditure

My School allows for comparable reporting of capital expenditure by all schools. In 2019, capital expenditure was:

- \$3.63 billion in government schools
- \$1.67 billion in Catholic schools
- \$2.34 billion in independent schools.

⁵⁰ ABS, Wage Price Index (in education and training, combined public and private sector), series ID A2603449J. Wage index growth is a useful comparator as the majority of school expenditure is due to salary costs.

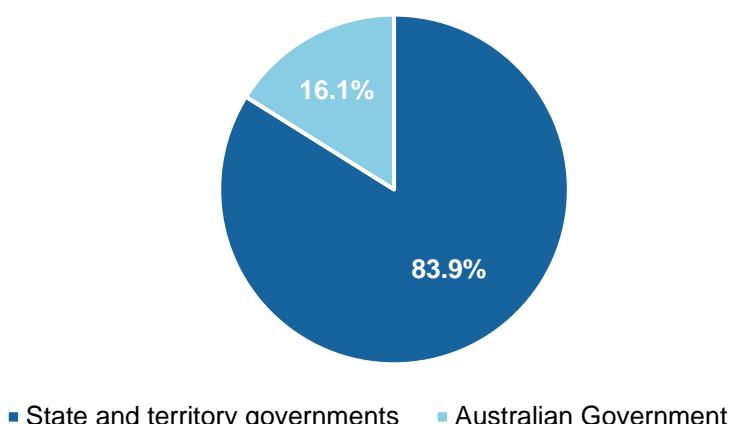
4.3 Government funding for government schools

The National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) – Finance comprises data provided by the various state and territory and federal education departments. This is a financial year, annual collection of total government expenditure data (expenditure on salary and non-salary costs) on government schools only. The collection provides education ministers with consistent data on government expenditure on school education, across government school systems and over time.

State and territory governments are the major funders of government schools: in 2019–20 they contributed 83.9% (\$44.16 billion) of total recurrent funding, with the Australian Government contributing the remaining 16.1% (\$8.46 billion). The relative proportions are shown in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5

Share of total government recurrent expenditure, by funding source, government schools, Australia, 2019–20 financial year



Sources: Education Council, National Schools Statistics Collection (Finance), unpublished, 2020; Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, unpublished; Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP), Productivity Commission, *Report on Government Services 2022*.

Government recurrent expenditure, government schools – in-school and out-of-school

The major component of funding for government schools directly funds schools' day-to-day operations, via in-school expenditure. In-school expenditure encompasses expenses related to teaching, learning, school administration and library functions. Out-of-school expenditure includes state office costs, and regional and local functions which support schools.

Salaries are by far the largest component of expenditure on schools, with teacher salaries comprising the majority of this expenditure.

- Teaching salary costs represented 76.2% of total salary costs in 2019–20 and 48.7% of total expenditure inclusive of user cost of capital.
- Teaching staff salaries changed marginally from 76.8% in 2018–19 to 76.2% of total salary costs in 2019–20.
- Non-teaching staff salaries were 23.8% of total salary costs in 2019–20.
- All other costs constitute 36.1% of total operating expenditure inclusive of user cost of capital.

Further details are provided in Table 4.2 and in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

Table 4.2

Operating expenditure by government education systems, Australia, from 2015–16 to 2019–20 financial years (accrual basis), (nominal \$'000)

Area of expenditure	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20
In-school					
Salaries (teaching)	21,161,119	21,775,001	22,870,538	24,486,320	25,629,930
Salaries (non-teaching)	4,974,562	5,346,145	5,800,908	6,143,754	6,631,037
All in-school expenditure	40,658,094	41,924,697	44,670,182	47,389,882	50,158,837
Out-of-school					
Salaries (teaching)	0	0	0	0	0
Salaries (non-teaching)	970,581	1,016,970	1,050,087	1,232,218	1,378,184
All out-of-school expenditure	1,721,764	1,806,886	1,941,749	2,318,477	2,462,081
TOTAL	42,379,858	43,731,583	46,611,931	49,708,359	52,620,918

Notes:

Amounts are expressed in actual dollars (nominal) and are not adjusted for inflation. User cost of capital is included in totals.

Components do not add to totals due to exclusions and rounding.

Redundancy payments have been excluded from salaries (teaching and non-teaching).

Sources: Education Council, National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) (Finance), unpublished, 2020; *National Report on Schooling in Australia* (previous years).

See also National Report on Schooling in Australia data portal.

Capital expenditure

As shown in Table 4.3, capital expenditure in government schools was \$5.50 billion in the 2019–20 financial year. This table includes state and territory sourced funding and funding provided by the Australian Government to states and territories.

Table 4.3

Capital expenditure by state and territory governments in government schools, Australia, from 2014–15 to 2019–20 financial years (accrual basis) (\$'000)

Financial year	Australia
2014–15	1,553,883
2015–16	1,497,396
2016–17	2,044,704
2017–18	3,263,695
2018–19	4,916,579
2019–20	5,504,166

Note: Amounts include Australian Government funding used for capital purposes.

Sources: Education Council, National Schools Statistics Collection (Finance), unpublished, 2020; *National Report on Schooling in Australia*, (previous years).

4.4 Income and expenditure by non-government schools

Non-government school funding is reported on a calendar year basis and reflects income and expenditure for the 2020 calendar year. This data allows income and expenditure for Catholic and independent schools to be reported separately, and includes information on income from private sources, including school fees. It excludes amounts related to boarding facilities and direct payments by the Australian Government to students and/or parents. Note that, in this data collection, compiled by the Australian Government, non-systemic Catholic schools are counted as Catholic.

Per capita income

Non-government schools derive their income from Australian Government and state/territory government grants, from school fees and charges, and from private sources including fundraising, and donations. The per capita income shown in Table 4.4 was used to fund both recurrent and capital purposes.

Table 4.4 also shows expenditure per student by school type. Expenditure in independent schools declined slightly since 2019 (from \$24,149 for all schools, reflecting a decline in expenditure in combined schools). Expenditure per student in Catholic secondary schools has also declined slightly – from \$20,291 per student to \$20,285 per student in 2020. This is contrary to historical trends in expenditure in the non-government sector, where per-student expenditure generally increases each year.

Table 4.4

Non-government school income per student by funding source and expenditure per student by school type, by school sector, Australia, 2020 calendar year (\$ per student)

	Catholic	Independent
Income per student by source		
Australian Government grants	\$10,739	\$10,021
State/territory grants	\$2,977	\$2,628
Total government grants	\$13,716	\$12,649
Private income	\$4,759	\$12,277
Total income	\$18,475	\$24,926
Expenditure per student by school type		
Primary	\$15,132	\$18,885
Secondary	\$20,285	\$29,004
Combined	\$22,289	\$23,598
All schools	\$18,297	\$23,550

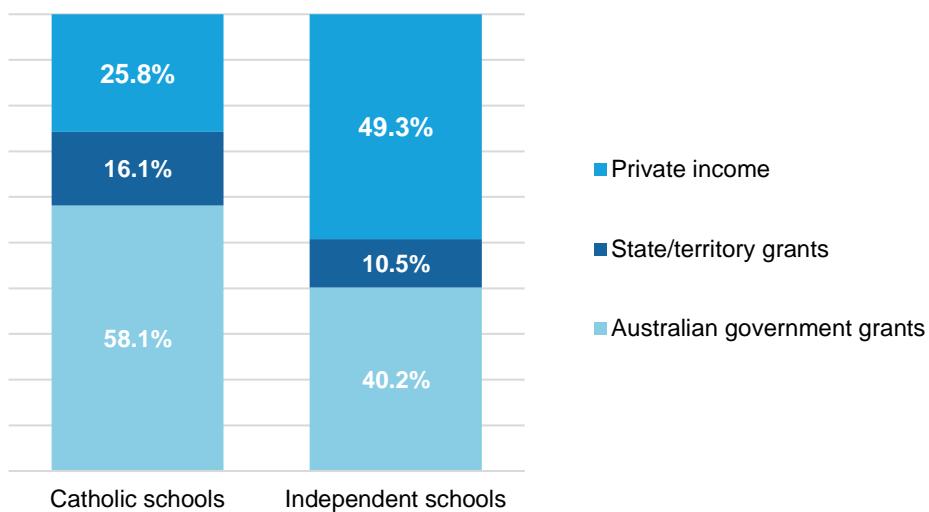
Source: Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, unpublished data.

See also National Report on Schooling in Australia data portal.

Figure 4.6 shows that for Catholic schools, 74.2% of per capita income was from government grants; for independent schools 50.7% of per capita income was from government grants. This was the first year that government grants have constituted more than half the total income for independent schools. This was in part due to a fall in private income. Table 4.5 has further information.

Figure 4.6

Non-government school income per student by funding source and school sector, Australia, 2020 calendar year (%)



Source: Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, unpublished data.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Table 4.5 shows substantial increases in Australian Government grants between 2019 and 2020. In part, this reflected eligibility for Australian Government assistance provided to non-government schools in 2020 in response to COVID-19. Overall, on a per-student basis, Australian Government grants grew by 12.3% for non-government schools, while private income decreased by 5.7% per student. While per capita income grew for non-government schools overall, total per-student expenditure decreased slightly between 2019 and 2020 (by 0.2%), mostly due to a 3.5% decrease in capital expenditure per student over this period.

Table 4.5

Non-government school income by funding source, and expenditure by function, by school sector, Australia, 2019 and 2020 calendar years (\$ per student)

	Catholic			Independent			All non-government		
	2019	2020	Change	2019	2020	Change	2019	2020	Change
Income per student by source									
Australian Government grants	\$9,946	\$10,739	8.0%	\$8,423	\$10,021	19.0%	\$9,286	\$10,425	12.3%
State/territory grants	\$2,913	\$2,977	2.2%	\$2,610	\$2,628	0.7%	\$2,782	\$2,824	1.5%
Total private income	\$5,031	\$4,759	-5.4%	\$13,106	\$12,277	-6.3%	\$8,531	\$8,046	-5.7%
Total income	\$17,890	\$18,475	3.3%	\$24,139	\$24,926	3.3%	\$20,599	\$21,295	3.4%
Expenditure by function									
Capital expenditure	\$2,388	\$2,444	2.3%	\$3,835	\$3,507	-8.6%	\$3,015	\$2,909	-3.5%
Recurrent expenditure	\$15,561	\$15,853	1.9%	\$20,315	\$20,044	-1.3%	\$17,621	\$17,686	0.4%
Total expenditure	\$17,949	\$18,297	1.9%	\$24,149	\$23,550	-2.5%	\$20,636	\$20,594	-0.2%

Source: Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, unpublished data.

See also National Report on Schooling data portal.

Table 4.6 An overview of the key features and differences between the 4 school funding data collections

	Government expenditure on government schools	Non-government schools income and expenditure	School income and capital expenditure for government and non-government schools	Government recurrent expenditure on government and non-government schools
Reporting period	Financial year 2019–20 (ending in reporting year)	Calendar year 2020 (same as reporting year)	Calendar year 2019 (reporting year minus one)	Financial year 2019–20 (ending in reporting year)
Scope of reporting	Government schools only Disaggregation by state/territory No disaggregation by funding source	Non-government schools receiving Australian Government recurrent funding Disaggregation by state/territory, Catholic and independent schools Catholic non-systemic schools are reported as Catholic schools.	Government and non-government schools receiving government funding Disaggregation by state/territory, Catholic and independent schools Catholic non-systemic schools are reported as independent schools in aggregated data.	Government and non-government schools receiving government funding No disaggregation by state/territory
What is reported	Capital and recurrent expenditure In-school costs (e.g. teacher salaries) Out-of-school costs (e.g. state office, regional and local functions which support schools)	Income from all sources Capital expenditure and recurrent expenditure	Recurrent income from all sources Capital expenditure	Government recurrent expenditure on government schools and non-government schools No disaggregation by state/territory or primary/secondary
Income or expenditure based	Expenditure based (based on payment of expenses)	Income and expenditure based	Income and capital expenditure based	Expenditure based (based on payment of expenses)
Treatment of private funding	Not reported	Private income reported	Private income reported	Not reported
Inclusions	Payroll tax (real or notional) Notional user cost of capital in government school funding Non-salary costs include other operating expenses, grants and subsidies and depreciation	Recurrent and capital grants Debt servicing of loans Australian Government assistance as part of the COVID-19 response	Government funding Private funding	Australian Government funding for schools, joint programs apportioned to government schools, assistance in response to COVID-19 Expenditure by state and territory government education departments Staff allowances for accommodation
Exclusions	Funds raised by schools, school councils or community organisations	Amounts related to boarding facilities	Items are treated differently across sectors, such as user cost of capital, payroll tax and boarding	Funds raised by schools, school councils or community organisations
Agency responsible for collecting data	State and territory governments	Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (AGDESE)	AGDESE (non-government schools) State/territory governments (government schools)	Productivity Commission
Source	National Schools Statistics Collection (Finance)	AGDESE financial questionnaire	<i>My School</i>	NSSC Finance Collection, federal budget papers and data provided to the Productivity Commission

Part 5: Glossary



Note on data sources and terms

A main source of data reported in the *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2020* and in the National Report on Schooling data portal is the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) (non-finance). This is a count of schools, students and staff involved in primary and secondary education, in government and non-government schools, for all Australian states and territories. The schools census collection date for the collection is the first Friday in August each year.

Data for government schools is submitted to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) by state and territory departments of education.

Data for non-government schools in all states and territories is collected by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment and a subset is provided to the ABS for the NSSC.

Data from the collection is published by the ABS in [Schools, Australia](#). Definitions of terms in this glossary are, for the most part, quoted or adapted from the *Schools, Australia* glossary and explanatory notes.

Other major data sources for the *National Report on Schooling in Australia* include the National Student Attendance Data Collection (ACARA); the Survey of Education and Work (ABS); the Census of Population and Housing (ABS); National, state and territory population (ABS); the NSSC (finance) collection (states and territories); NAP national reports (ACARA) and National VET Provider and National VET in Schools collections (NCVER).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) status

A student is classified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin, based on information provided by the student, or their parent or guardian, on the school enrolment form.

Accrual accounting

A recording method in which revenues, expenses, lending and borrowing are recorded as they are earned, accrued or incurred regardless of when payment is made or received.

Apparent retention rate

An indicative measure of student progression through secondary school. It is a measure of the proportion of full-time school students who have stayed at school from one year to another. The rate is calculated by dividing the number of students in a year group (cohort) in one calendar year by the number of students in the same cohort in a previous calendar year. For example, an apparent retention rate from Year 10 to 12 in 2020 measures the percentage of Year 10 students in 2018 that continued to Year 12 in 2020.

From 2015 onwards, the ABS has released rates tables in 2 formats: one with rates exceeding 100% capped to a maximum value of 100.0 (capped), and one where rates exceeding 100% continue to be reported as the raw calculated value (uncapped). This report continues to report uncapped rates for apparent retention.

See [Schools, Australia](#) explanatory notes for further information.

Attendance

The National Student Attendance Data Collection is conducted by ACARA for Semester 1 of each school year. Data is collected for full-time students in Years 1–10 (including ungraded secondary). Data is provided to ACARA by state and territory education departments for government schools and by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment for non-government schools.

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

The attendance level is defined as the proportion of full-time students in Years 1–10 whose attendance rate in Semester 1 is equal to or greater than 90%.

Specifications for the collection are provided in the [National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting](#).

Capital expenditure

Expenditure by a school or school system to purchase or improve land, buildings and other capital assets and equipment.

Census of Population and Housing

Australia's largest statistical collection, undertaken by the ABS. The Census of Population and Housing is conducted every 5 years. The aim of the census is to accurately collect data on the key characteristics of people in Australia on census night, and the dwellings in which they live. In 2016 the census counted 9.9 million dwellings and approximately 23.5 million people.

Estimated resident population

The estimated resident population (ERP) is used as a denominator to calculate students as a proportion of the population. The ERP is an estimate of the population of Australia, based on data from the Census of Population and Housing, updated quarterly using information on births, deaths, and overseas and interstate migration. For further details see ABS, [National, state and territory population, June 2020](#).

Full-time equivalent students

The FTE value of students is a measure used for funding purposes. It is calculated by adding the number of full-time students and the FTE value of part-time students.

A full-time student is one who undertakes the prescribed minimum workload required to complete a given year level in a calendar year. This may vary between states and territories and from year to year. A part-time student is one who undertakes a workload less than that prescribed as full-time. Methods for estimating the FTE value of part-time students vary between states and territories due to different policy and administrative arrangements. The recorded FTE value for each student is capped at 1.0.

Full-time equivalent teaching staff

The FTE value of teaching staff is a measure of the level of staffing resources. Staff who are employed full time and engaged solely on activities that fall within the scope of the NSSC have an FTE value of 1.0. All FTE values are rounded to one decimal place.

For staff not employed on a full-time basis, and/or engaged in a combination of in-scope and out-of-scope activities, the FTE value is calculated on the basis of the proportion of time spent on in-scope activities compared with staff who would be considered full time.

The FTE value of teaching staff is calculated by adding the number of full-time teaching staff and the FTE value of part-time teaching staff.

Full-time equivalent student–teacher ratios

Student–teacher ratios are calculated by dividing the FTE student number by the FTE teaching staff number. They are an indicator of the level of staffing resources used and should not be used as a measure of class size. They do not include teacher aides and other non-teaching staff who may also assist in the delivery of school education.

Location

School locations are classified based on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) remoteness indicator. The five Remoteness Areas for Australia are:

- major cities
- inner regional
- outer regional
- remote
- very remote.

A map, showing the location of these areas, is available on the [ABS website](#).

Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia

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

The measurement framework defines national key performance measures (KPMs) for schooling, specifies the data sources for these KPMs and outlines the reporting cycle for the period 2020–2023.

The framework is maintained by ACARA on behalf of education ministers and is published on the ACARA website. It is periodically revised by ACARA in consultation with jurisdictions and sectors.

National Assessment Program

The National Assessment Program (NAP), as specified in the *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020*, encompasses all assessments endorsed by education ministers for participation by students nationally:

- NAPLAN – annual, full student cohort literacy and numeracy assessments in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9
- NAP sample assessments – triennial domestic sample student population assessments in Years 6 and 10 in Science Literacy, ICT Literacy and Civics and Citizenship
- Australia's participation in international sample student population assessments: Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS).

ACARA is delegated to manage the development and oversee the delivery of assessments and reporting for NAPLAN, and for domestic NAP sample assessments, as directed by education ministers. PISA is conducted by the OECD. TIMSS and PIRLS are conducted by the IEA.

National Schools Statistics Collection

The scope of the NSSC consists of all 'establishments' that have as their major activity the administration or provision of full-time day primary, secondary and/or special education, or primary or secondary education by distance education. The statistics in the NSSC do not include students engaged in school-level education conducted by other institutions; in particular, TAFE, except where this is part of a school program, such as VET delivered to secondary students.

The NSSC consists of government and non-government statistics. Government statistics comprise all establishments (as defined) administered by departments of education under directors-general of education (or equivalent) in each state or territory. Non-government statistics comprise all such establishments not administered by departments of education.

The 2 sections of the NSSC are:

- non-finance statistics (numbers of schools, students and staff) collected for government and non-government schools and published by the ABS in its annual *Schools, Australia* publication
- finance statistics (expenditure on salaries and non-salary costs) collected for government school systems only, and published in this report and in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

Primary education

See *School level and school year*.

Recurrent funding

Annual funding provided to schools/school systems for expenditure relating to ongoing operating costs of the school (for example, teaching and non-teaching staff salaries, school operating costs).

Remoteness

See *Location*.

School

A school is an education establishment that satisfies all the following criteria:

- Its major activity is the provision of full-time day primary or secondary education or the provision of primary or secondary distance education.
- It is headed by a principal (or equivalent) responsible for its internal operation.
- It is possible for students to enrol and be active in a course of study for a minimum of 4 continuous weeks, excluding breaks for school vacations.

The term ‘school’ in this publication includes schools in institutions and hospitals, mission schools and similar establishments.

The term ‘school’ in this publication excludes preschools, early learning or long day care centres, senior technical and agricultural colleges, evening schools, continuation classes and institutions such as business or coaching colleges.

Multi-campus arrangements are counted as one school. Changes to school counts in this publication can occur when multiple schools amalgamate into a single multi-campus school, or multi-campus schools divide into separate schools.

School level and school year

All states and territories provide for 13 years of formal school education. Typically, schooling commences at age 5, is compulsory from age 6 until at least the completion of Year 10, and is completed at age 17 or 18.

For national reporting purposes, primary education comprises a Foundation year⁵¹ followed by Years 1–6 in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia⁵², Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. Primary education generally comprises a Foundation year followed by Years 1–7 in South Australia.⁵³

Junior secondary education includes the years from commencement of secondary schooling to Year 10,

⁵¹ The Foundation Year (first year of full-time schooling) is known as Preparatory in Vic, Qld and Tas, Kindergarten in NSW and the ACT, Reception in SA, Pre-primary in WA and Transition in the NT. In some jurisdictions, part-time programs that precede the Foundation Year are conducted in primary schools (for example, Kindergarten in WA). However, these programs are outside the scope of the NSSC and of data sets included in this report.

⁵² Year 7 became part of secondary education in Qld and WA from 2015. This change affects some comparisons with previous years of student and staff data by school level.

⁵³ In 2018, the SA Government announced that Year 7 will be moved from a primary school year to a secondary school year. In 2020 in SA, Year 7 was counted as a secondary school year for a number of non-government schools and 3 government schools, with other government schools to adopt this structure from 2022.

including ungraded secondary.

Senior secondary education comprises Years 11 and 12 in all states and territories.

Categories used in tables and graphs showing ‘school level’ are ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’. In some tables, the categories ‘primary’, ‘junior secondary’, ‘senior secondary’ and ‘total secondary’ are used.

Students attending special schools are allocated to either primary or secondary education on the basis of school year or school level, where identified. Where a school year or school level is not identified, students are allocated to primary or secondary level of education according to the typical age level in each state or territory. Ungraded students (ungraded primary and ungraded secondary) are those who have not been placed in a specific year level.

See also *School type*.

See also *Special school*.

School sector

This report and the National Report on Schooling data portal use the term ‘school sector’ to distinguish between government schools, which are established and administered by state and territory governments through their education departments, and non-government schools, usually with some religious affiliation, which are established and operated under conditions determined by state and territory governments through their registration authorities.

‘School sector’ is also used to further distinguish between non-government schools as Catholic or independent. Catholic schools make up the largest group of non-government schools. Independent schools may be associated with other religions, other denominations, particular educational philosophies, or operate as single entities.

Schools, Australia uses the term ‘affiliation’ rather than ‘school sector’ to make these distinctions.

A further distinction is sometimes made between systemic and non-systemic non-government schools. Systemic schools are formally affiliated with a group or system of schools. Non-systemic non-government schools do not belong to a system.

In *Schools, Australia* and in this report, Catholic systemic and non-systemic schools are counted as ‘Catholic’.

Exception: For the purposes of financial reporting in Part 4.2, based on data drawn from the *My School* data collection, a number of Catholic non-systemic schools, mainly in New South Wales, are counted as ‘independent’. Government funding for these schools is distributed directly to the schools rather than through Catholic school system authorities. This affects comparisons between school sectors in some states and nationally. Financial data reported in Part 4.2 should not be compared with financial data included elsewhere in this report.

Categories used in tables and graphs showing ‘school sector’ are ‘government’, ‘Catholic’ and ‘independent’. In some tables, the category ‘total non-government’ (total of Catholic and independent data) is also used.

School type

Categories used in tables and graphs showing ‘school type’ are:

- ‘primary’ – school delivers primary education
- ‘secondary’ – school delivers secondary education
- ‘combined’ – school delivers primary and secondary education
- ‘special’ – students may include primary students, secondary students, ungraded students or a combination of primary, secondary and ungraded students.

See also *Special school*.

Secondary education

See *School level and school year*.

Senior secondary certificate of education

Senior secondary certificates of education (SSCEs) are Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications issued by the curriculum, assessment and certification authority in each state and territory to students meeting the requirements for successful completion of secondary schooling. These have different titles in each jurisdiction:

New South Wales	Higher School Certificate (HSC)
Victoria	Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE)
	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL)
Queensland	Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE)
South Australia	South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE)
Western Australia	Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE)
Tasmania	Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE)
Northern Territory	Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET)
Australian Capital Territory	Australian Capital Territory Senior Secondary Certificate (ACTSSC)

Special school

A special school satisfies the definition of a school (see *School*), and requires one or more of the following characteristics to be exhibited by a student before enrolment is allowed:

- mental or physical disability or impairment
- slow learning ability
- social or emotional problems
- in custody, on remand or in hospital.

Special schools include special assistance schools, as defined under the *Australian Education Act 2013*. These are non-government schools that are:

- likely to be recognised by the state minister as a special assistance school
- primarily established to cater for students with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Staff

Staff are people engaged in the administration and/or provision of day primary, secondary or special school education, or primary or secondary education by distance education at in-scope education establishments.

The functional categories for school staff are as follows:

- (a) Teaching staff are employees who spend the majority of their time in contact with students. They support students either by direct class contact or on an individual basis and are engaged to impart school curriculum. For the purposes of this report, teaching staff includes principals, deputy principals, campus principals and senior teachers mainly involved in administration.
- (b) Specialist support staff are employees who perform functions to support students or teaching staff. While these staff may spend most of their time in contact with students, they are not employed or engaged to impart the school curriculum.
- (c) Administrative and clerical staff are employees whose main duties are generally clerical or administrative. Teacher aides and assistants are included in this category, as they are seen to provide services to teaching staff rather than directly to students.
- (d) Building operations, general maintenance and other staff are employees involved in the maintenance of buildings and grounds. Also included are staff providing associated technical services, other janitorial staff and staff who service equipment. School cleaners, whether salaried or employed on contract, are excluded.

For further details on the definition of staff, see [*Schools, Australia, glossary*](#).

States and territories

Australia has a federal system of government comprising the national government, and the governments of the 6 states and 2 territories. In this report, the national government is generally referred to as ‘the Australian Government’.

In tables and graphs in this report and the National Report on Schooling data portal, states and territories are listed in the order of New South Wales (NSW), Victoria (Vic), Queensland (Qld), South Australia (SA), Western Australia (WA), Tasmania (Tas), the Northern Territory (NT) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). This is the order used in ABS publications, including *Schools, Australia*.

Student

A student is a person who, on the NSSC census date, is formally enrolled at a school and is active in a primary, secondary and/or special education program at that school. Students may be enrolled at more than one school; however, jurisdictions employ strategies that ensure that, as far as possible, students are reported only once in this collection.

Students not present at a school⁵⁴ on the NSSC census date are included as students if they were expected to be absent for less than four continuous weeks (excluding school vacations).

School students undertaking VET (including through TAFE), school-based apprenticeships or traineeships, work placements or tertiary extension studies as a part of the student’s school enrolment are in scope for the NSSC. The workload of these subjects or programs (which may take place outside the school premises) is included in a student’s aggregate workload to determine whether a student is classified as full-time or part-time, and in calculating the FTE for part-time students.

Student attendance

See *Attendance*.

Survey of Education and Work

The SEW, conducted annually by the ABS, provides selected information on participation in education, highest educational attainment, transition from education to work, and current labour force and demographic characteristics for the population aged 15–74 years. Data from Education and Work is used to report participation and attainment data, including KPMs for schooling, in this report.

See [ABS, Education and Work, Australia, May 2020](#) methodology for more information.

Teaching staff

Teaching staff are staff who spend most of their time in contact with students. They support students either by direct class contact or on an individual basis and are engaged to impart school curriculum.

For the purposes of this report, teaching staff includes principals, deputy principals, campus principals and senior teachers mainly involved in administration. Teacher aides and assistants, and specialist support staff are excluded, except assistant teachers working in homeland learning centres and community schools in the Northern Territory.

⁵⁴ For the schools census 2020, students were considered to be enrolled and active in an education program, even if that program had been temporarily disrupted by COVID-19. This included where programs were temporarily delivered online or remotely and even where schools were temporarily closed for COVID-19 related reasons.

User cost of capital

In the government budget context, the user cost of capital is usually defined as the opportunity cost of funds tied up in capital assets used to deliver government services.

Capital charging is the actual procedure used for applying this cost of capital to the asset management process. As such, it is a means of representing the cost of capital used in the provision of government budgetary outputs.

VET for secondary students, VET in Schools

Data on vocational education and training delivered to secondary students / VET in Schools was derived from the National VET in Schools Collection and the National VET Provider Collection, compiled by NCVER under the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) release 8.0.