

MEDIA RELEASE

21 January 2021

STUDENTS ARE ENGAGED IN THE COMMUNITY BUT TEST SCORES ON DEMOCRACY STALL

The results of the latest National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship (NAP–CC) have revealed Australian students’ performance has plateaued when it comes to understanding the importance of our democracy and appreciating our national values.

The 2019 report shows 38 per cent of Year 10 students have reached the proficient standard and 53 per cent of Year 6 students have achieved the benchmark.

But the student survey results published in the sixth National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship report have also revealed some interesting insights: many students are concerned about a range of problems affecting Australia, like pollution, climate change and water shortages, while fewer students are concerned about terrorism.

The program tests students’ understanding of Australian democracy and system of government, the rights and legal obligations of citizens and the social values that underpin Australian society. It is undertaken in a sample of schools across the country every three years. A survey of students’ attitudes and engagement with civics and citizenship is also included.

ACARA CEO, David de Carvalho, said while the percentage of Year 10 students achieving proficiency has not changed since 2016, it is considerably lower than in 2013 and 2010.

"The proficient standard is set at a 'challenging but reasonable' level of achievement, linked to the expectations in the Australian Curriculum. The report reveals important insights into students’ understanding and appreciation of democracy, civic processes and institutions, and how they are perceived," he said.

"It is disappointing that the results suggest our next generation isn’t demonstrating a sufficient level of understanding of the significance and history of our democracy and shared values."

However, Mr de Carvalho said it was positive to see that while performance has levelled off in some aspects of the report, survey results show students are still engaging in their community.

Nearly two-thirds of Year 10 students surveyed have collected money for a charity or social cause, and there was an increase in the proportion of students at both year levels who believed participating in peaceful protests about important issues was an important attribute of good citizenship.

“Year 6 and Year 10 female students continue to demonstrate higher levels of civic knowledge, and the vast majority of all students indicate increasingly positive attitudes towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and Australian diversity,” he said.

“High numbers of Year 10 students believe that immigrants should be encouraged to keep their cultural beliefs, practices and languages, and think that Australia benefits from having people from many cultures and backgrounds.”

Other results showed there were higher levels of trust in some civic institutions, like the police and law courts, than in the media and social media. In general, smaller proportions of Year 10 students expressed trust in civic institutions than Year 6 students.

The report also includes a chapter for teachers about how the Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship, and some aspects of the Australian Curriculum: History can be used to support teaching and learning of the knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin being an active and informed member of the Australian community.

Civics and Citizenship assessment key results:

- 53 per cent of Year 6 students were at or above the proficient standard. This result is not significantly different from previous NAP–CC cycles.
- 38 per cent of Year 10 students were at or above the proficient standard. This is not significantly different from the previous cycle in 2016 or the first two cycles in 2004 and 2007. However, it is significantly lower than the results achieved nationally in 2010 and 2013 (2016 – 38 per cent, 2013 – 44 per cent, 2010 – 49 per cent, 2007 – 42 per cent, 2004 – 39 per cent).
- At both year levels:
 - female students outperformed male students
 - there were large statistically significant differences between the achievements of non-Indigenous and Indigenous students
 - students with parents who were senior managers or professionals had significantly higher scores than students with parents who were classified as unskilled labourers, or office, sales or service staff.
- Scores achieved by students from metropolitan schools were significantly higher than those achieved by students from regional and remote schools at both year levels.
- In each of Year 6 and Year 10, students who had a parent with a bachelor’s degree or above achieved more than 130 scale points (one proficiency level) higher than students whose parents completed Year 10 or Year 9 as their highest level of education.

Student survey key results:

- 86 per cent of Year 6 students and 80 per cent of Year 10 students believed that learning about Australia’s history was an important attribute of a good citizen. These proportions have remained consistently high in both year levels since 2010.
- Both Year 6 and Year 10 students perceived pollution as the biggest problem affecting Australia in 2019, closely followed by climate change and water shortages.
- Nearly two-thirds of Year 10 students have collected money for a charity or social cause, (63 per cent, compared with 61 per cent in 2016).

- Approximately 9 out of 10 Year 6 and Year 10 students expressed positive attitudes towards Australian Indigenous cultures.
- A large majority of Year 10 students expressed positive attitudes towards Australian diversity.
- There was an increase in the proportion of students at both year levels who believed participating in peaceful protests about important issues was an important attribute of good citizenship (Year 10: 53 per cent in 2016, 56 per cent in 2019; Year 6: 61 per cent in 2016, 62 per cent in 2019).
- There was a significant decrease in the proportion of Year 6 students who believed that important attributes of being a good citizen included:
 - learning about political issues from the media (2019 – 67 per cent, 2016 – 74 per cent)
 - learning about what is happening in other countries (2019 – 69 per cent, 2016 – 77 per cent).
- There was a significant decrease in the proportion of Year 10 students who believed that important attributes of being a good citizen included:
 - learning about political issues from the media (2019 – 73 per cent, 2016 – 76 per cent).
- Previously there was little variation in these measures from 2010 to 2016.

Ends.

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