
2 School education

The focus of this chapter is on the performance of government funded schooling in States and Territories. Reporting relates to government funding only, not to the full cost to the community of providing this service. Section 2.1 outlines the coverage of services.

Government funded school education is reported at two levels:

- government primary and secondary schools; and
- systemwide (government and non-government primary and secondary schools).

A framework of performance indicators is outlined in section 2.3 and data are discussed in section 2.5.

As noted in previous Reports, only limited information is available that is comparable across jurisdictions for assessing the relative performance of school systems, particularly in relation to learning outcomes. All States and Territories agreed in 1997 to assess students against national literacy and numeracy benchmarks developed by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). Year 3 literacy benchmark data are expected to be released during 1999, with further data becoming available in future years. Sections 2.2 and 2.4 contain further information about changes to reporting.

2.1 Profile of school education

Both government and non-government schools provide school education. Government schools are the direct responsibility of State and Territory Governments, which provide the majority of government expenditure on government schools. Non-government schools operate under conditions determined by State and Territory Government registration authorities, and they receive significant Commonwealth and State and Territory Government funding. The focus of this chapter is on the return to government expenditure on education rather than the efficiency of non-government schools (which receive funding from other sources in addition to government funding).

This chapter defines schools as establishments whose major activity is the administration and/or provision of full time day primary, secondary or special education, or primary or secondary distance education.

Government schools educated 74 per cent of primary students and 66 per cent of secondary students in 1997 (table 2A.4). Governments own and manage these schools and are responsible for the efficiency of their operation. Governments also contribute to the funding of non-government schools and regulate some of their activities.

Size and roles

Roles

Several participants play important roles in the school education sector, contributing to the formation of policy, the development of curricula, the funding of schools and school based programs, and the management and delivery of school services. State and Territory Governments have constitutional responsibility for schooling. They determine curricula, regulate school activities and provide the majority of funding. The Commonwealth Government plays a major role in identifying national priorities for schooling, which it supports with specific purpose payments. MCEETYA — comprising Commonwealth, State and Territory education ministers — sets national priorities and strategies for schooling.

Funding

School education is one of the largest areas of State and Territory Government expenditure. Government schools account for most of this expenditure, but State and Territory Governments contribute to the funding of non-government schools and provide services that are used by both government and non-government schools.

The Commonwealth Government provides supplementary funding to both government schools and non-government schools. The Commonwealth Government relaxed the conditions under which non-government schools could receive federal funding in 1997. It abolished limitations on minimum and maximum enrolments, and removed restrictions locking new non-government schools into particular funding categories. It also introduced the Enrolment Benchmark Adjustment arrangements, under which Commonwealth funding ‘follows the student’. Grants to government schools are based on the proportion of students enrolled in government schools. Commonwealth recurrent grants to the States are reduced for every additional full time equivalent enrolment in a non-government school if the

proportion of students in non-government schools rises above a deemed benchmark level. Commonwealth funding is tied to the respective proportions of students in government and non-government schools; government schools may lose Commonwealth funding even while absolute enrolments are increasing, if non-government enrolments are increasing at a faster rate.

Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments spent a total of \$12.8 billion on government schools in 1996-97 and the Commonwealth spent \$1.9 billion on non-government schools. Commonwealth Government expenditure per full time student for all schools in 1996-97 ranged from \$992 in Tasmania to \$1137 in the NT. Total government expenditure (Commonwealth plus State and Territory) per full time student in government schools ranged from \$5577 in Victoria to \$8621 in the NT (tables 2A.6–2A.8).

Data for government and non-government schools are derived from different sources: government school data are compiled from system aggregates whereas the non-government school data are collected from a school based census. This may affect the direct comparability of data.

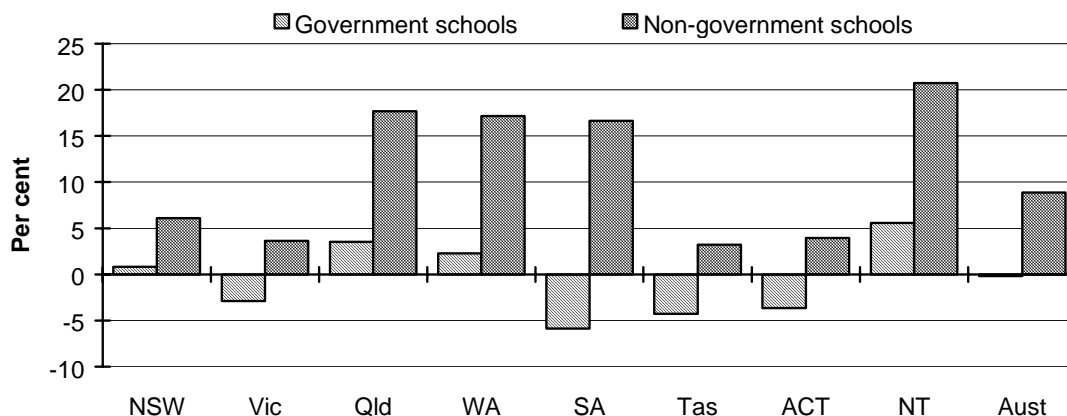
Student body

The number of students rose slightly in NSW, Queensland, WA and the NT between 1992 and 1997, and fell slightly in Victoria, SA, Tasmania and the ACT. There were 2.23 million government and 942 000 non-government full time school students in 1997. The proportion of students enrolled in government schools ranged from 65 per cent in the ACT and 66 per cent in Victoria to 75 per cent in Tasmania and 78 per cent in the NT.

Nationally, the number of students in government schools was fairly steady over the five years from 1992 to 1997. However, there was some variation between States. The government student population fell by 3 per cent in Victoria, by 6 per cent in SA, and by 4 per cent in the ACT; it increased by 6 per cent in the NT, by 3 per cent in Queensland and by 2 per cent in WA.

The number of non-government school students grew in all jurisdictions between 1992 and 1997, with a 9 per cent national increase. The largest increases were in the NT (21 per cent), Queensland (18 per cent), WA (17 per cent) and SA (17 per cent). The smallest increases were in Victoria (4 per cent) and Tasmania (3 per cent) (figure 2.1).

Figure 2.2 Change in full time students in government and non-government schools, 1992–97



Data source: table 2A.4.

The proportion of part time students should be considered when interpreting data that are sensitive to student numbers, because there are considerable differences in the proportions of part time students across jurisdictions. SA, Tasmania and the NT had the highest proportion of part time students among government secondary students; the ACT, NSW and Victoria had the lowest ratios of part time students (table 2.1).

Table 2.2 Part time secondary students in government schools, 1997^a

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
Number ^b	2 204	2 185	6 911	4 447	6 054	2 824	3	663	2 5291
% of all secondary students	0.7	1.0	4.5	5.2	9.5	9.4	0.0	7.7	2.8

^a Jurisdictions defined part time students differently. ^b Absolute number of part time secondary students (not full time equivalent).

Source: ABS (*Schools Australia*, cat. no. 4221.0).

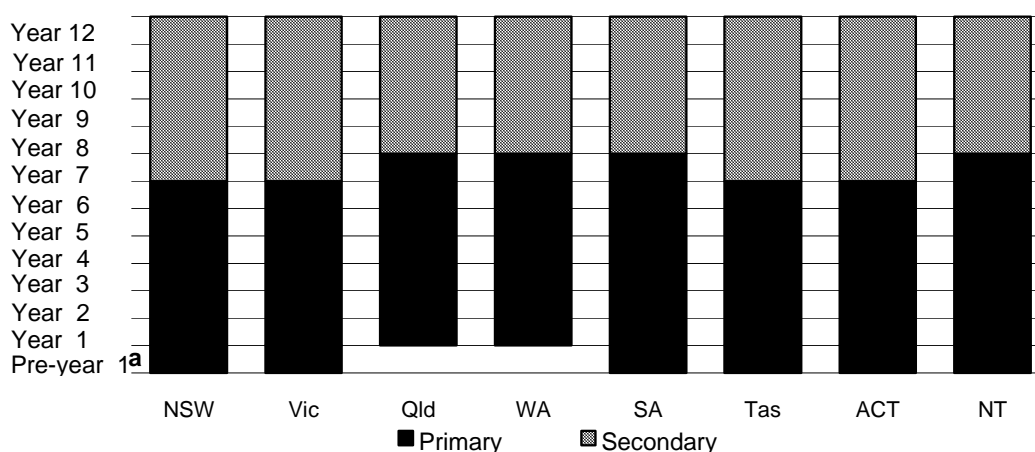
Mix of students and schools

Students

The proportion of the population at school, the breakdown of student numbers between government and non-government schools, and the breakdown between primary and secondary schools varied among jurisdictions. However, it should be

noted that the structure of primary and secondary schooling also varied between jurisdictions (figure 2.3).

Figure 2.4 Structure of primary and secondary schooling, 1997



^a Pre-year 1 was called kindergarten in NSW and the ACT, preparatory in Victoria and Tasmania, reception in SA and transition in the NT.

Data source: MCEETYA (1997).

The structure of primary and secondary schooling implies that SA and the NT would be expected to have a higher proportion of students in primary school, and that the other States and Territories would have a higher proportion in secondary school. Bearing this in mind, in 1997:

- the proportion of the population enrolled in schools was 17.1 per cent nationally, but ranged from 19.8 per cent in the ACT and 19.5 per cent in the NT to 16.8 per cent in SA; and
- the proportion of the population in all secondary schools ranged from 5.9 per cent in both SA and the NT to 9.2 in the ACT (table 2A.3).

The proportion of the Australian population enrolled in schools declined slightly from 17.7 per cent to 17.1 per cent between 1992 and 1997, largely reflecting a decline in the proportion of school age children in the population. This decline in enrolments was largest in the ACT (from 21.1 per cent to 19.8 per cent) and Queensland (from 17.7 per cent to 16.9 per cent). The national decline was similar for both primary and secondary schools, with enrolments for both falling by 0.3 percentage points (table 2A.3).

Special needs groups

Certain groups of students have been identified as having special needs in education. These special needs groups include:

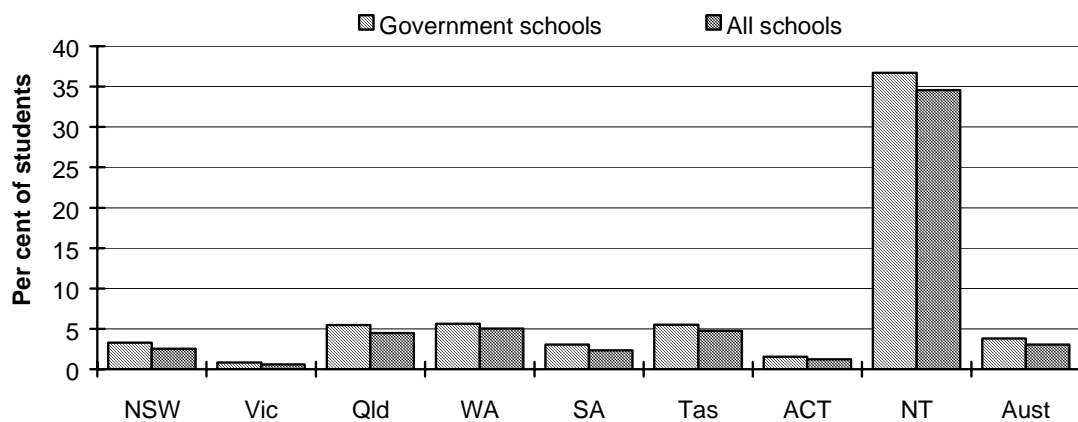
- students from low socioeconomic status;
- students who are geographically isolated;
- students from a language background other than English;
- indigenous students; and
- students with a disability.

There is also interest in reporting on the relative performance of female and male students. In all jurisdictions in 1997, just over 50 per cent of all school students were male. Female students were slightly more likely than male students to attend non-government schools (ABS 1998a).

It is difficult to compare the proportions of students having special needs in education because some definitions differ across States and Territories. This chapter reports on the proportion of indigenous students, the proportion of students from a language background other than English and gender breakdown.

The NT had the highest proportion of students in 1997 who identified themselves as being indigenous (34.6 per cent). Other jurisdictions with relatively high proportions of self identified indigenous students were WA (5 per cent), Queensland (4.5 per cent) and Tasmania (4.7 per cent). Victoria and the ACT had the lowest proportions of indigenous students (0.6 per cent and 1.2 per cent respectively) (figure 2.5). In absolute terms, NSW had the largest number of indigenous students (28 per cent of all indigenous students were enrolled in NSW schools). Other jurisdictions with high numbers of indigenous students included Queensland (27 per cent of all indigenous enrolments), WA (16 per cent of all indigenous enrolments) and the NT (13 per cent of all indigenous enrolments) (table 2A.10).

Figure 2.6 Indigenous students, 1997

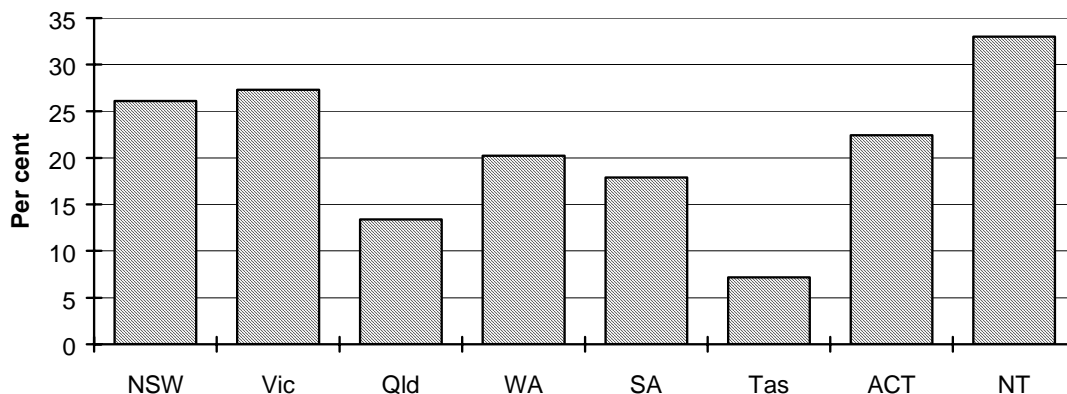


Data source: table 2A.10.

The Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) calculated the proportion of students from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE) in each jurisdiction as part of the process of determining Commonwealth Literacy Program funding allocations. The data reported in this section are based on the DETYA definition of LBOTE students and may not be based on the same definitions underpinning jurisdiction specific data reported under learning outcomes.

DETYA data on LBOTE students are drawn from the 1991 and 1996 ABS population censuses. In all schools (government and non-government combined) the NT had the highest proportion of LBOTE students (33.0 per cent) in 1996 (which may reflect the inclusion of indigenous students whose home language is not English in the DETYA definition of LBOTE). NSW and Victoria also had relatively high proportions of LBOTE students (26.1 per cent and 27.3 per cent respectively) while Tasmania had the lowest proportion (7.2 per cent) (figure 2.7).

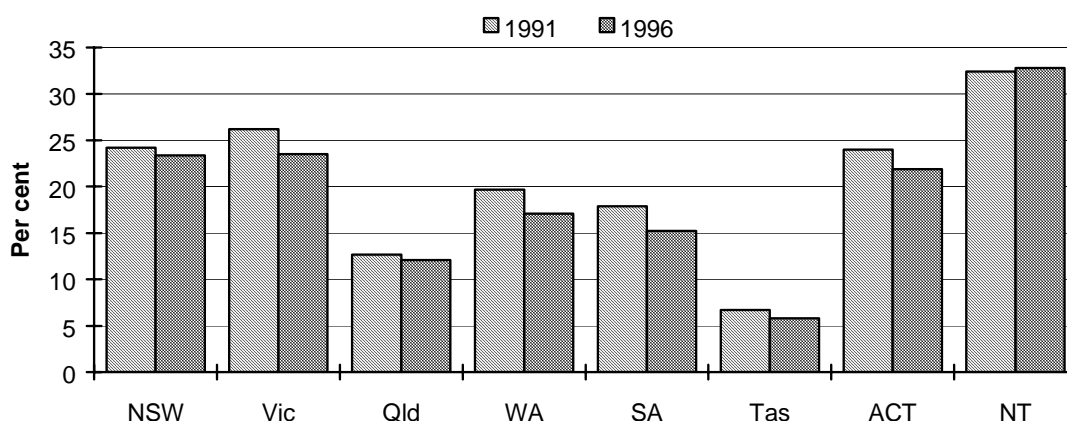
Figure 2.8 Students from a language background other than English — all schools, 1996



Data source: table 2A.11.

The proportion of LBOTE students was slightly lower in government schools than in all schools in all jurisdictions. The NT had the highest proportion of LBOTE students in government schools in 1996 (32.8 per cent) and Tasmania had the lowest (5.8 per cent). The proportion of LBOTE students in government schools declined between 1991 and 1996 in all jurisdictions except the NT; the most notable falls occurred in Victoria (down from 26.2 per cent to 23.5 per cent) and SA (down from 17.9 per cent to 15.2 per cent) (figure 2.9).

Figure 2.10 Students from a language background other than English — government schools



Data source: table 2A.12.

Pattern of year 12 enrolments by key learning area

There was substantial variation in the proportions of enrolments in key learning areas in year 12 in 1997, although differences in categorisation of subjects into learning areas mean that indices may not be directly comparable across jurisdictions. Systemwide, (excluding WA where combined government and non-government data were unavailable):

- Queensland had the highest proportion of enrolments in mathematics (21.4 per cent) and Tasmania had the lowest proportion (12.5 per cent);
- SA had the highest proportion of enrolments in society and environment (25.4 per cent) and Queensland had the lowest proportion (12.0 per cent);
- Tasmania had a relatively high proportion of enrolments in languages other than English (12.9 per cent), with all other jurisdictions below 4 per cent; and
- the ACT had by far the lowest proportion of enrolments in technology and applied studies (1.8 per cent) with other jurisdictions between 6 per cent and 13 per cent (table 2.3).

Government school enrolments in key learning areas in year 12 in 1997 (excluding Victoria and Tasmania where separate data on government enrolments were not available) also showed some variation:

- Queensland (10.7 per cent) and WA (11.5 per cent) had the lowest proportions of enrolments in society and environment, with all other jurisdictions between 16 per cent and 26 per cent;
- WA had the highest proportion of enrolments in health and physical education (10.6 per cent), with all other jurisdictions under 6.5 per cent (table 2.4).

Table 2.5 Enrolments in key learning areas in year 12, 1997 (per cent)^{a, b}

	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>
<i>All schools' students</i>								
English	17.5	20.9	21.8	na	13.8	14.8	22.3	16.8
Mathematics	18.8	15.9	21.4	na	16.9	12.5	17.3	17.8
Society and environment	23.3	17.1	12.0	na	25.4	24.7	20.4	23.6
Science	12.3	16.3	16.0	na	17.9	15.5	13.6	15.9
The arts	7.1	9.3	8.5	na	5.5	8.4	5.7	8.3
LOTE ^c	2.5	3.4	2.6	na	2.9	12.9	3.1	3.3
Technology	12.8	13.0	12.0	na	12.3	6.7	1.8	9.4
Health and PE	5.7	4.2	5.9	na	4.6	2.6	5.8	4.8
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0	na	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	na	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Government schools' students</i>								
English	17.4	na	22.2	18.6	13.7	na	23.5	16.7
Mathematics	18.7	na	21.7	17.3	15.7	na	17.9	17.7
Society and environment	25.6	na	10.7	11.5	24.5	na	16.2	22.8
Science	12.4	na	15.6	15.4	16.5	na	13.4	15.5
The arts	6.5	na	9.3	6.0	5.7	na	6.5	9.0
LOTE ^c	2.7	na	2.2	1.2	2.5	na	3.2	3.6
Technology	11.6	na	12.2	17.6	15.2	na	12.6	10.3
Health and PE	5.0	na	6.1	10.6	5.3	na	6.5	4.3
Other	0.0	na	0.0	0.0	0.0	na	0.0	0.1
Total	100.0	na	100.0	100.0	100.0	na	100.0	100

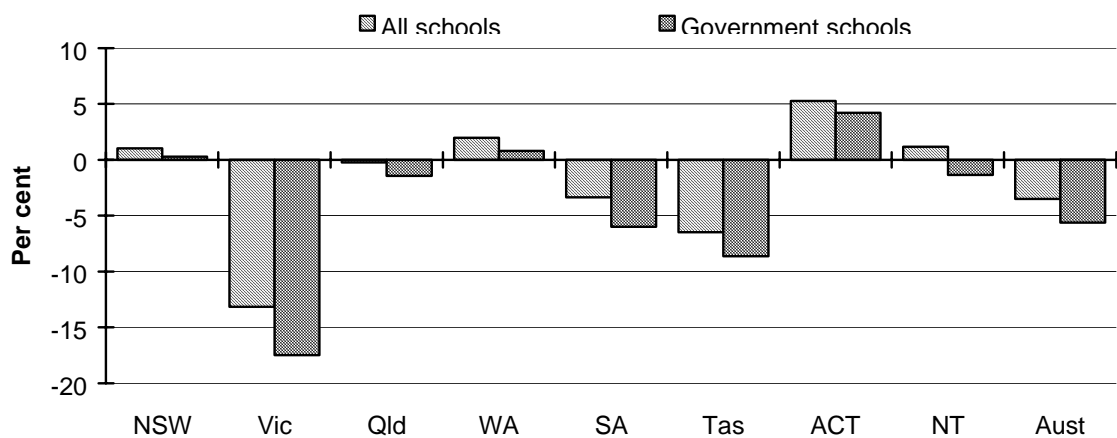
^a Data were full year equivalent enrolments in each subject as a proportion of total full year equivalent enrolments. Differences in categorisation of subjects into learning areas mean that indices may not be directly comparable across jurisdictions. ^b Totals may not add as a result of rounding. ^c Languages other than English. **na** Not available.

Source: table 2A.13.

Schools

The total number of schools in Australia fell by 3.5 per cent between 1992 and 1997. The total number of schools fell most in Victoria, down by 13.1 per cent. This compared with a decline in student numbers of 0.8 per cent, implying that the average number of students per school in that State increased over the period. The total number of schools rose by 5.3 per cent in the ACT. This compared with a 1.1 per cent fall in the number of students, implying that the average number of students per school fell in the Territory over the period. The number of government schools fell by 5.6 per cent across Australia between 1992 and 1997. The number of government schools fell by 17.5 per cent in Victoria and rose by 4.2 per cent in the ACT (figure 2.11).

Figure 2.12 Change in number of schools between 1992–97



Data source: table 2A.16.

Schools are broken down into the following school types:

- special schools, which provide special instruction for physically and/or mentally disabled or impaired students or those with social problems;
- combined schools, which include both primary and secondary students;
- primary schools; and
- secondary schools.

There was significant variation in the proportion of each type of school among States and Territories. The breakdown of schools by type will be influenced by the structure of schooling in each jurisdiction (figure 2.13). The breakdown of all schools (government plus non-government) by type in 1997 showed that:

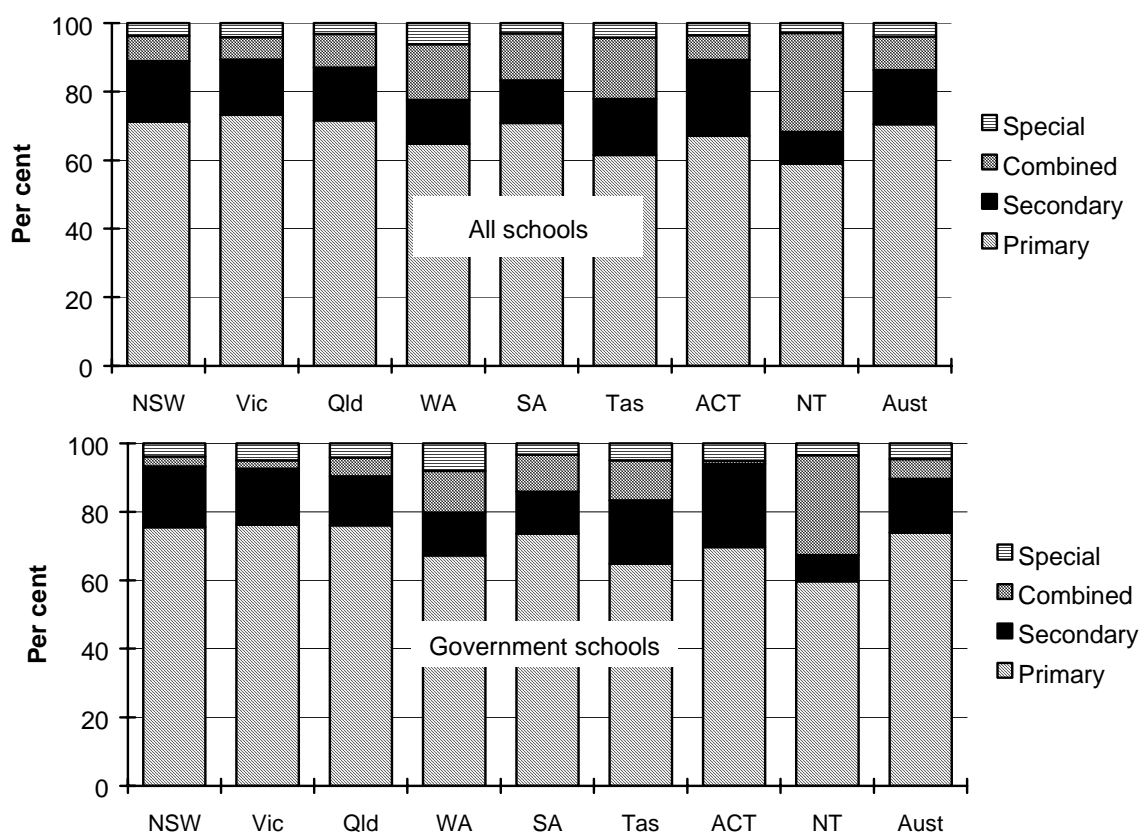
- Victoria had the highest proportion of primary schools (73.2 per cent) and the NT had the lowest (59.0 per cent);
- the ACT had the highest proportion of secondary schools (22.1 per cent) and the NT had the lowest (9.2 per cent);
- the NT (28.9 per cent) had the highest proportion of combined primary and secondary schools and Victoria had the lowest (6.5 per cent); and
- WA (6.2 per cent) had the highest proportion of special schools and the NT had the lowest (2.9 per cent) (figure 2.14).

The breakdown of government schools by type in 1997 showed that:

- Victoria had the highest proportion of government primary schools (76.3 per cent) and the NT had the lowest (59.7 per cent);

- the ACT had the highest proportion of government secondary schools (24.2 per cent) and the NT had the lowest (7.6 per cent);
- the NT had by far the greatest proportion of combined primary and secondary schools (29.2 per cent);
- WA (8.1 per cent) had the highest proportion of special schools and SA had the lowest (3.3 per cent) (figure 2.15).

Figure 2.16 Schools by type, 1997^a



^a Combined schools offer both primary and secondary education. Special schools required students to exhibit one or more of the following characteristics before enrolment was allowed: intellectual disability; physical disability; autism; social/emotional disturbance; or retention in custody or remand (ABS 1998b).

Data sources: tables 2A.1 and 2A.2.

Distribution of school sizes

Previous Reports used 'mean school sizes' to describe the typical scale of school operations in each jurisdiction. This Report has replaced that descriptor with the distribution of schools by number of students, to provide additional information about the spread of school sizes around the average. Both population dispersion and educational policy affect the distribution of schools by size.

Systemwide (government plus non-government schools) the NT and Queensland had the highest proportions of very small schools, with 8 per cent of schools in both jurisdictions having fewer than 20 students. The NT had the highest proportion of small schools, with 19 per cent of NT schools having fewer than 35 students and 44 per cent having fewer than 100 students (compared with national averages of 9 per cent and 24 per cent respectively). All the small schools in the NT were primary schools; there were no secondary schools with fewer than 100 students. The ACT had the highest proportion of larger schools, with 25 per cent of schools enrolling over 600 students. Only 5 per cent of NT schools were in this category (table 2.6).

Table 2.7 Distribution of school sizes, 1997 (per cent)^a

<i>No. of students</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
<i>All schools</i>									
1–20	4.4	2.8	8.0	3.9	1.6	2.2	0.7	7.8	4.3
21–35	5.6	4.5	6.0	5.1	3.6	2.5	1.5	10.8	5.1
36–100	13.6	13.4	15.4	15.2	15.5	12.6	4.4	25.7	14.3
101–200	12.4	17.1	11.4	14.8	17.5	20.9	10.4	11.4	14.3
201–300	14.7	19.4	11.8	19.2	22.0	23.1	20.7	15.0	16.8
301–600	29.4	27.9	25.3	27.0	28.9	27.1	37.0	24.0	28.0
601–1000	15.7	9.6	16.4	11.0	8.4	9.0	19.3	4.8	12.9
1001+	4.1	5.3	5.7	3.8	2.5	2.5	5.9	0.6	4.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Government schools</i>									
1–20	4.9	3.5	10.2	4.1	1.6	1.0	1.1	7.9	5.1
21–35	6.7	4.7	6.9	4.7	3.9	2.9	1.1	12.9	5.7
36–100	13.3	14.4	16.3	13.8	17.3	12.4	4.3	27.3	14.7
101–200	10.6	15.8	9.5	15.3	17.0	19.5	8.6	9.4	12.9
201–300	14.5	19.6	11.1	19.6	22.3	26.7	22.6	15.1	16.8
301–600	29.5	28.5	23.4	29.5	29.6	28.6	41.9	22.3	28.1
601–1000	16.6	8.9	17.2	9.2	6.1	7.1	19.4	4.3	12.6
1001+	3.9	4.5	5.4	3.8	2.3	1.9	1.1	0.7	4.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

^a The numbers of students in combined schools were estimated as the sums of the mid-points of their respective primary and secondary categories.

Sources: tables 2A.14 and 2A.15.

Government schools had a similar size distribution. Ten per cent of Queensland government schools and 8 per cent of NT government schools enrolled fewer than 20 students. In the NT, 48 per cent of government schools had fewer than 100 students, compared with a national average of 26 per cent (table 2.8). A breakdown by primary and secondary schools is reported in tables 2A.14 and 2A.15.

2.2 Policy developments in school education

Nationally comparable learning outcomes

The Steering Committee has an ongoing interest in the development of nationally comparable learning outcomes data for schools. It has placed on hold a detailed work program for establishing equivalences between existing jurisdictional testing programs, pending progress on a March 1997 MCEETYA resolution to provide for assessment of students against common literacy and numeracy benchmarks.

MCEETYA has established literacy benchmarks which provide nationally agreed minimum acceptable standards for literacy at years 3 and 5. These benchmarks enable State and Territory reporting of aggregated student achievement data against common standards to the Australian community through the Annual National Report on Schooling in Australia. States and Territories will report aggregated student data on the achievement or non-achievement of these benchmark standards for all students, by gender, by language background other than English, and by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background (unless small student numbers for a particular group mean that reporting would breach confidentiality protocols).

Ministers have approved the benchmarks in writing, spelling and reading for years 3 and 5. Draft numeracy benchmarks were trialed in 1998, and year 7 literacy and numeracy benchmarks are being developed.

The Steering Committee encourages Report users to seek out the benchmark data when they are reported as part of the *Annual National Report on Schooling in Australia*. It is anticipated that the benchmarks data on literacy outcomes for year 3 students will be released as a supplement to the 1998 *Annual National Report on Schooling in Australia* in early 1999.

The Steering Committee recognises the valuable work undertaken in developing national benchmarks. However, the MCEETYA learning outcomes data will be reported as a simple proportion of students achieving the benchmark in each jurisdiction. This is useful information about whether school students are reaching minimum standards, but it has serious limitations. It does not cover the abilities of school systems to achieve the wider objectives of school education (such as supporting students in need of intensive remedial assistance or students achieving excellence). Emphasising a single benchmark can also lead to distortions in the allocation of resources, by creating incentives to direct resources to students just below the benchmark so as to maximise the pass rate. This may lead to less attention being paid to the remedial and excellence aims of school education. It has been possible at the jurisdictional level to report learning outcomes data for a range of

achievement. The Steering Committee is working with MCEETYA to encourage broader reporting of performance against the national benchmarks.

Vocational education and training (VET) in schools

School–industry programs, which incorporate learning in the workplace for years 11 and 12 students, are increasingly important in Australia’s attempts to improve students’ skills bases and employment opportunities. However, the organisation and delivery of vocational education and training programs in schools differ between States and Territories (Dusseldorp Skills Forum 1997, p. i).

MCEETYA has established a steering committee and taskforce to develop a nationally consistent data collection on accredited VET programs offered through schools. The taskforce is examining how each State and Territory VET sector reports current activity in New Apprenticeships and VET in schools, and how that data could be translated into the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) for uniform reporting.

This would provide valuable information about the school education objective of providing students with ‘a foundation for, and positive attitudes towards, vocational education and training, further education, employment and life-long learning’ (MCEETYA National Goals Taskforce 1998).

Social objectives of schooling

The social development of young people has long been an objective of schools. This concern is recognised in many statements of education policy, such as the *Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia* and the draft revised goals (box 2.1). The Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA, now DETYA), on behalf of MCEETYA, commissioned a national sample study, *Schools and the Social Development of Young Australians*, which clarified some of the social objectives behind broadly stated purposes of schools in this area and investigated the extent to which Australian schools pursue and achieve social objectives (Ainley *et al.* 1998). The results of the study are reported in section 2.5.

2.3 Framework of performance indicators

This chapter reports on the government funded school sector as a whole and on school education directly delivered by government. Systemwide, this chapter

addresses the cost effectiveness of government expenditure; governments fund only a proportion of non-government school expenditure. For the government school level, the chapter focuses on the effectiveness and efficiency with which governments deliver school education.

The framework of indicators relates to general government objectives for the school system. Education ministers have begun a review of the 1989 Common and Agreed Goals for Schooling in Australia, and MCEETYA has released a draft set of revised National Goals for Schooling for public discussion. Objectives derived from these goals are listed in box **2.2**.

The school system as a whole and the subset of government schools share many common objectives. An indicator framework for all schools, built around these objectives, is summarised in figure **2.17**; it excludes any objectives that only apply within the non-government school sector. All indicators are defined in attachment 2A.

Box 2.3 Objectives of school education

'The draft revised *National Goals for Schooling* includes the following objectives:

Schooling should develop fully the talents and capacities of every student. In particular, when students leave school they should:

- have skills in analysis and problem solving and the ability to become confident and technologically competent members of 21st century society;
- have qualities of self-confidence, optimism, high self-esteem, and a commitment to personal excellence as a basis for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members;
- be active and informed citizens with the ability to exercise judgement and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics and social justice; and the capacity to make sense of their world, to think about how things got to be the way they are, to make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and to collaborate with others;
- have a foundation for, and positive attitudes towards, vocational education and training, further education, employment and life-long learning.

In terms of curriculum, students should have:

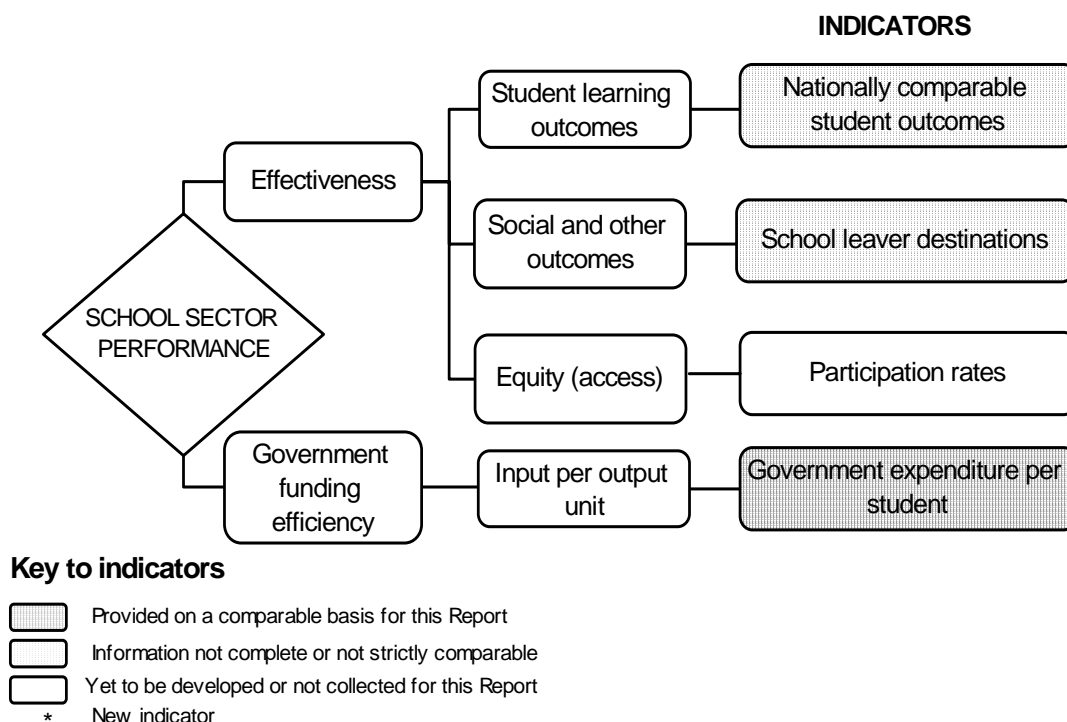
- attained high standards of knowledge, skills and understanding through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum encompassing the agreed eight key learning areas: the arts; English; health and physical education; languages other than English; mathematics; science; studies of society and the environment; technology; and the interrelationships between them;
- attained the skills of numeracy and English literacy; in particular, every child leaving primary school should be numerate, able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level;
- been encouraged to be enterprising and to acquire those skills which will allow them maximum flexibility and adaptability in the future.

In addition, schooling should be socially just, and should ensure that:

- outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students improve and match more closely those of other students;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equitable access, participation and outcomes;
- all students have understanding of and respect for Aboriginal cultures and Torres Strait Islander cultures to achieve reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians;
- all students have the knowledge, cultural understandings and skills which respect individuals' freedom to celebrate languages and cultures within a socially cohesive framework of shared values.' (MCEETYA National Goals Taskforce 1998)

In addition to these draft Common and Agreed National Goals, governments aim to deliver education services efficiently.

Figure 2.18 Performance indicators for all schools



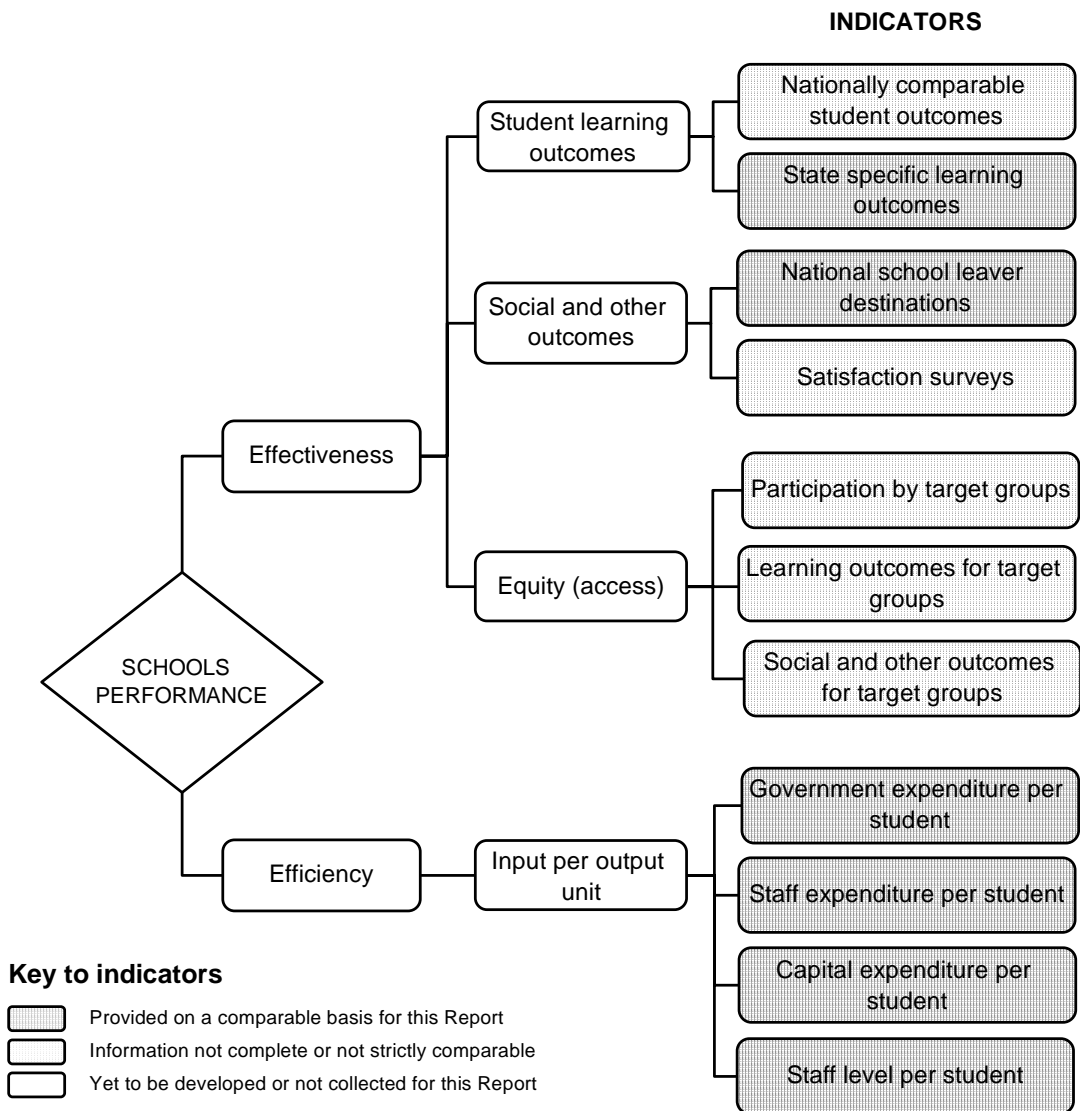
Governments own and operate government schools, and have a direct interest in the efficiency of their operation. Governments also have an interest in access and equity issues in government schools, given the government commitment to providing access to education for all. The reporting framework for government schools is shown in figure 2.19. All indicators are defined in attachment 2A.

2.4 Future directions

There remains scope to improve the quantity, quality and timeliness of information used to report on the performance of both the school system as a whole (government plus non-government schools) and government schools in particular. The Report aims over time to report both systemwide and government school performance, including indicators of:

- ongoing comparable learning outcomes for all students and for priority groups;
- equality of educational opportunities (that is, equal access by all students to the same standard and quality of education); and
- efficiency of delivery of school education within the different environments in which education is delivered.

Figure 2.20 Performance indicators for the government school sector



Reporting on learning outcomes

The Steering Committee completed a detailed work plan for establishing equivalences between existing jurisdictional testing programs in early 1997, but its implementation is on hold pending progress on a March 1997 MCEETYA resolution to provide for assessment of years 3, 5, 7 and 9 students against common literacy and numeracy benchmarks. As noted above, MCEETYA is expected to release year 3 literacy benchmark data during 1999, with further data becoming available in future years.

While jurisdiction specific data on learning outcomes are reported for a range of achievement, it is understood that the MCEETYA data will be reported as a simple

proportion of students achieving the national benchmark in each jurisdiction. This will limit the usefulness of the information. The Steering Committee is working with MCEETYA to encourage broader reporting of performance.

Reporting on social outcomes

The *Schools and the Social Development of Young Australians* study (Ainley *et al.* 1998) provided considerable information at the national level about the extent to which students think social outcomes are important to them. It is planned that future reports will include more detailed results (drawn from the study's survey) about students' views on social outcomes by jurisdiction.

Reporting on access and equity

Gaps remain in the reporting of access and outcomes for special needs groups. The limited information available on priority groups is generally not comparable across systems. Work is progressing on common definitions to allow the collection of comparable data.

Improving the treatment of superannuation

The Steering Committee plans to work with the MCEETYA Taskforce on School Statistics on the treatment of superannuation in the National Schools Statistics Collection. The aim will be to encourage the treatment of superannuation costs as recommended in *Superannuation in the Costing of Government Services* (SCRCSSP 1998). This should improve the comparability and accuracy of unit cost information in future reports.

2.5 Key performance indicator results

It should be noted that different delivery contexts and locations affect the effectiveness and efficiency of school education services. Differing student and jurisdictional characteristics may also affect reported performance. Appendix A contains detailed statistics and short profiles on each State and Territory, which may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this chapter.

Nationally comparable learning outcomes

Ongoing, consistent jurisdictional comparisons of learning outcomes are key outcome indicators for school education, but such data are still unavailable. All jurisdictions conduct learning outcome tests, yet generally use different tests (except NSW and SA) and test different year levels and subject areas. The Steering Committee's work plan for establishing equivalences between State and Territory testing programs would have allowed comparisons to be drawn between these tests.

Previous Reports have included nationally comparable data drawn from irregular surveys that covered limited year levels and subjects. No new data were available from that presented in the 1997 Report (SCRCSSP 1997).

State and Territory specific learning outcomes

The reporting of data from State and Territory specific tests provides some insight into how jurisdictions currently measure learning outcomes, and it may inform trends over time in particular jurisdictions. However, data are not comparable across States and Territories (even for NSW and SA, where the same test instrument is administered).

NSW Basic Skills Test

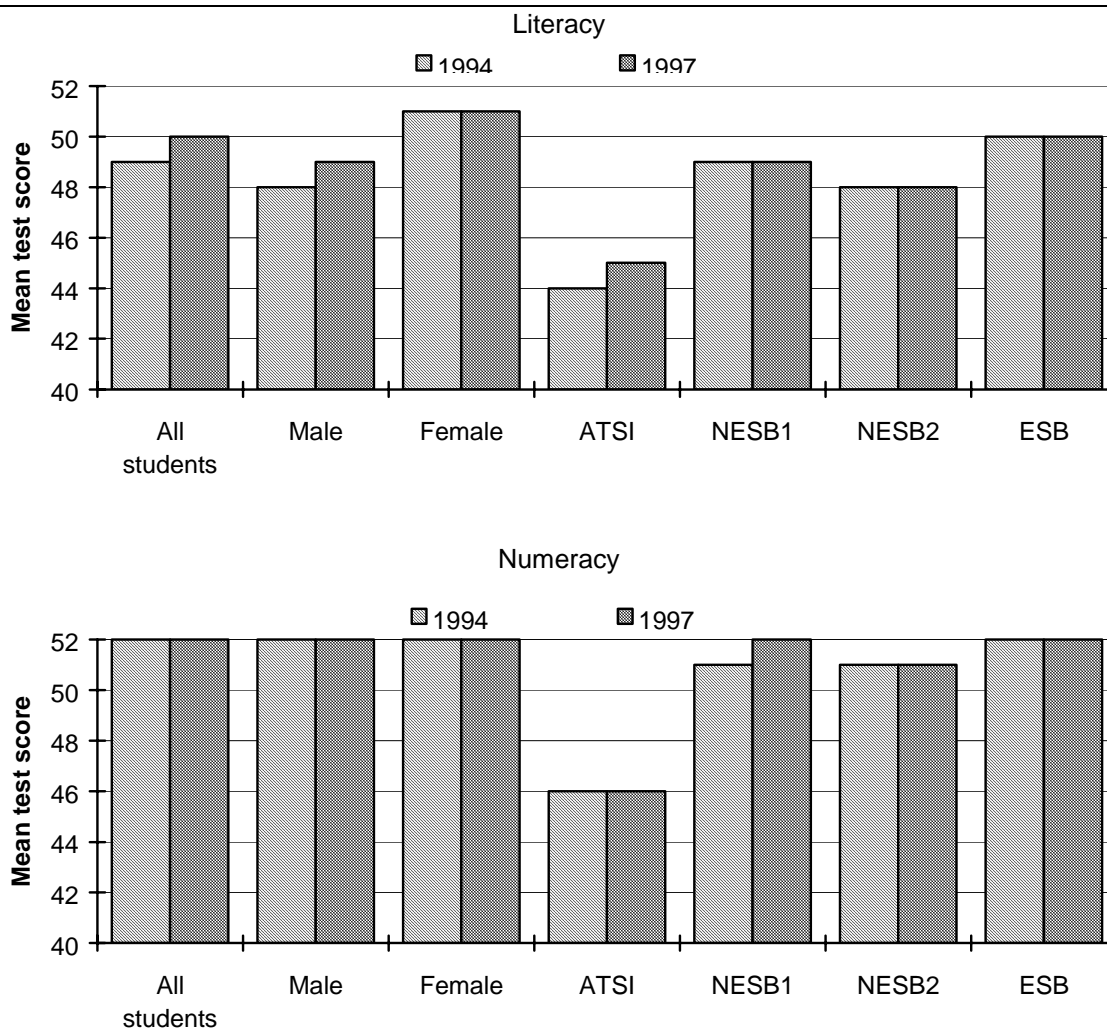
The NSW Basic Skills Test is an annual census program designed to indicate achievement of year 3 and 5 students in aspects of literacy and numeracy. Since 1996 students' achievement has been reported on the basis of mean test scores on a scale of 25 to 80. Information was available for only government schools.

A comparison of mean test scores over 1994 to 1997 showed that:

- overall year 3 literacy improved, reflecting increases in the mean scores of male students and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
- year 3 numeracy results changed little;
- there was small but consistent improvement in the year 5 mean scores for literacy;
- overall there was no change in the year 5 mean scores for numeracy, but slight improvements in the mean scores of male students and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
- overall, students from a non-English speaking background recorded consistently similar performances to the general population of students; and

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students had consistently lower mean test scores than those of students from the general population (figures 2.21 and 2.22).

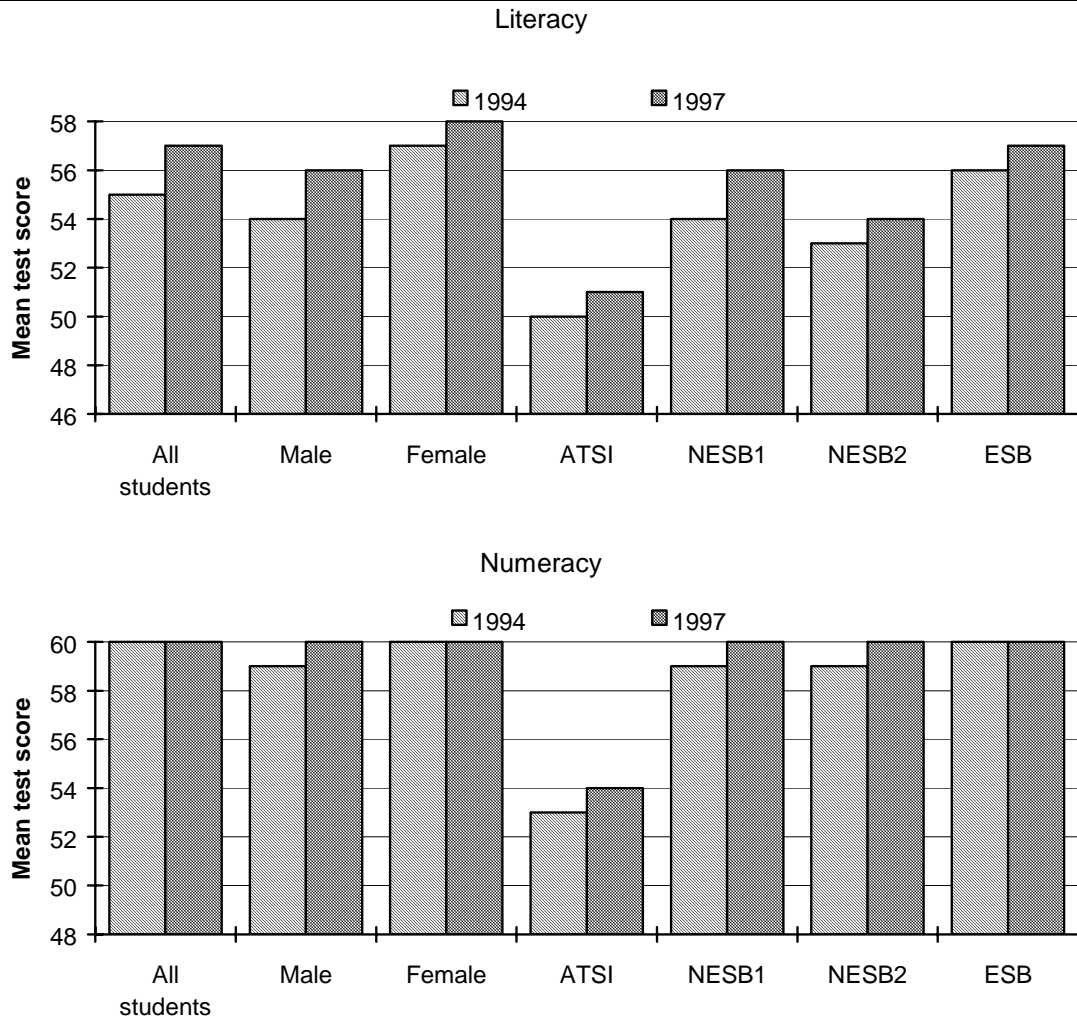
Figure 2.23 NSW Basic Skills Test results — year 3^{a, b}



^a Results are presented as a mean score on a scale of 25 to 80. ^b NESB1 are students who answered 'yes' when asked 'Does anyone speak a language other than English in your home?' NESB2 are students who have lived in Australia for four years or less and never or only sometimes speak English at home. ESB are students who answered 'no' when asked 'Does anyone speak a language other than English in your home?'

Data source: table 2A.28.

Figure 2.24 NSW Basic Skills Test results — year 5^{a, b}



^a Results are presented as a mean score on a scale of 25 to 80. ^b NESB1 are those students who answered 'yes' when asked 'Does anyone speak a language other than English in your home?' NESB2 are those students who have lived in Australia for four years or less and never or only sometimes speak English at home. ESB are those students who answered 'no' when asked 'Does anyone speak a language other than English in your home?'

Data source: table 2A.28.

Victorian Learning Assessment Project

The Victorian Learning Assessment Project (LAP) reports the proportions of students in years 3 and 5 who reach the Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF) levels expected at various points in schooling. Level 1 is the standard expected for students on completion of the first (preparatory) year of schooling; level 2 covers to the end of year 2; level 3 covers to the end of year 4; level 4 covers to the end of year 6; and level 5 covers to the end of year 8. Level 5 was not applicable for year 3 students and level 1 was not applicable for year 5 students. Year 3 and year 5 results cannot be compared.

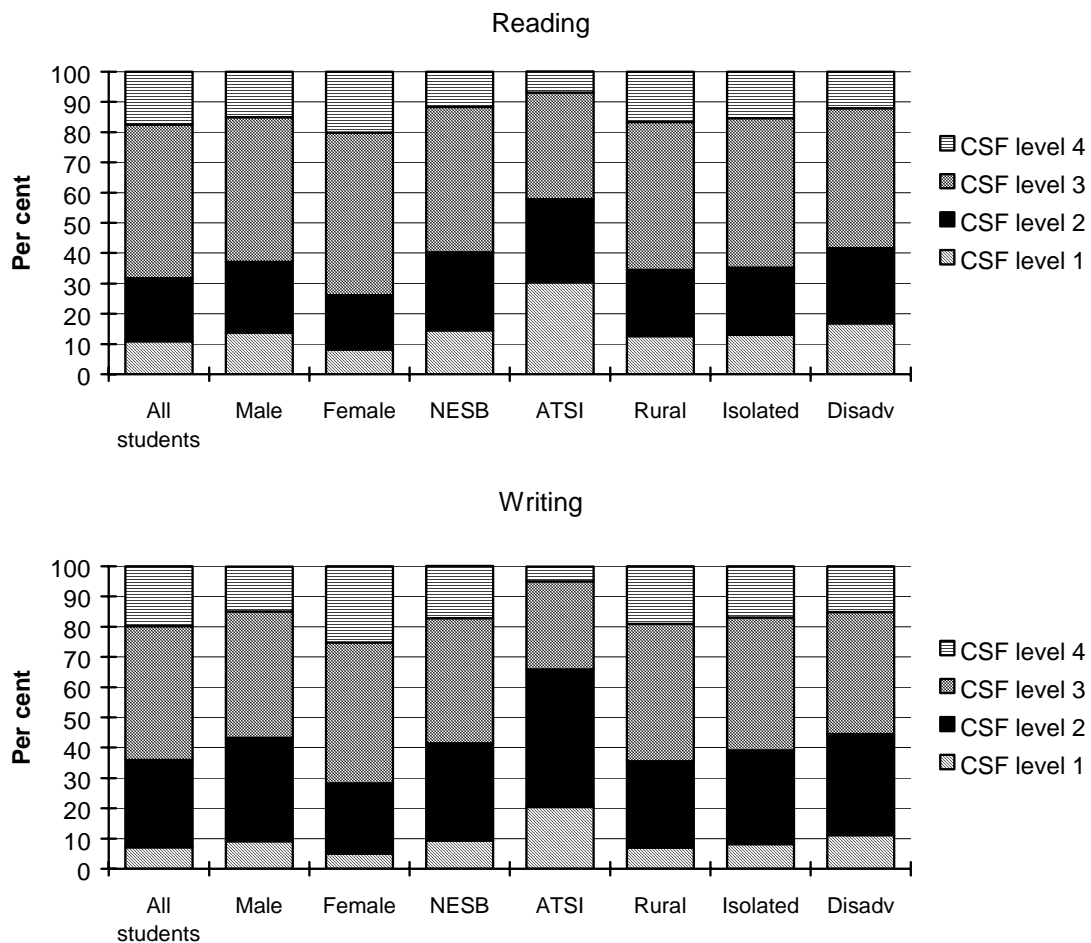
LAP tests are conducted early in the school year but students are not expected to reach the desired CSF level before the year's end. Hence results may be understated.

Information was available only for government and non-government schools combined. The LAP tested six areas of curriculum in 1998; results for English and mathematics are discussed here and other results are reported in attachment 2A.

The year 3 tests in English and mathematics in 1998 showed that:

- most students tested had already attained at least the expected level for year 4 (level 3);
- female students consistently scored better than male students in English, but male and female students scored similarly in mathematics (except at the highest level, where males scored better);
- students from a non-English speaking background and indigenous students consistently scored lower than the general population of students;
- rural and isolated students did not score significantly differently from the general population of students; and
- students classified as disadvantaged consistently performed worse than the general population of students (figures **2.25** and **2.26**).

Figure 2.27 Victorian Learning Assessment Project results, English — year 3, 1998



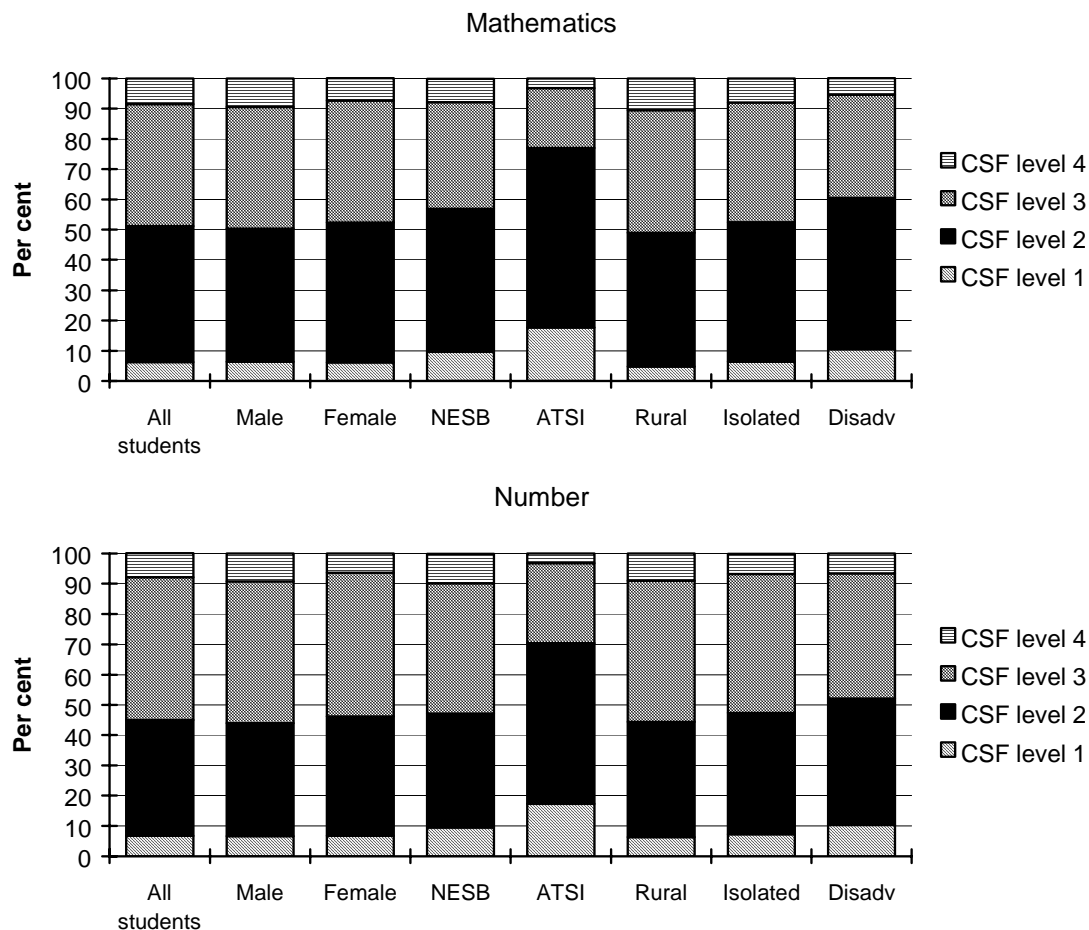
Data source: table 2A.38.

The year 5 tests in English and mathematics in 1998 showed that:

- most year 5 students tested had attained at least the level expected of year 4 students (level 3), and a significant proportion had attained the level expected of year 6 or year 8 students (levels 4 and 5);
 - female students scored consistently better in English, but male and female students scored similarly in mathematics;
 - students from a non-English speaking background scored lower than the general student population in English but scored similarly in mathematics;
 - indigenous students scored lower than the general student population, with a significantly larger proportion of indigenous students failing to reach the level expected of year 4;
 - rural and isolated students scored only slightly lower than the general population;
- and

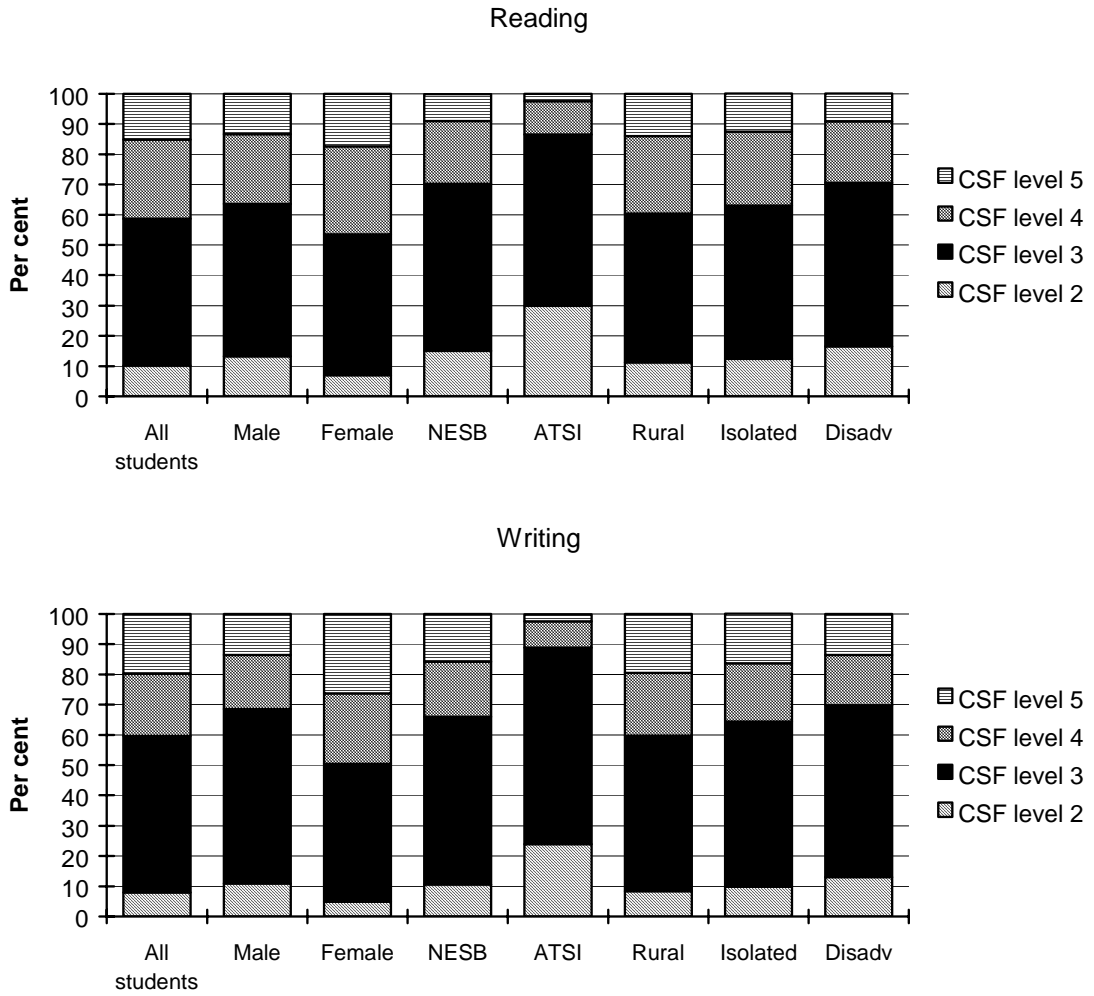
- students classified as disadvantaged scored lower than the general population (figures 2.28 and 2.29).

Figure 2.30 Victorian Learning Assessment Project results, mathematics, — year 3, 1998



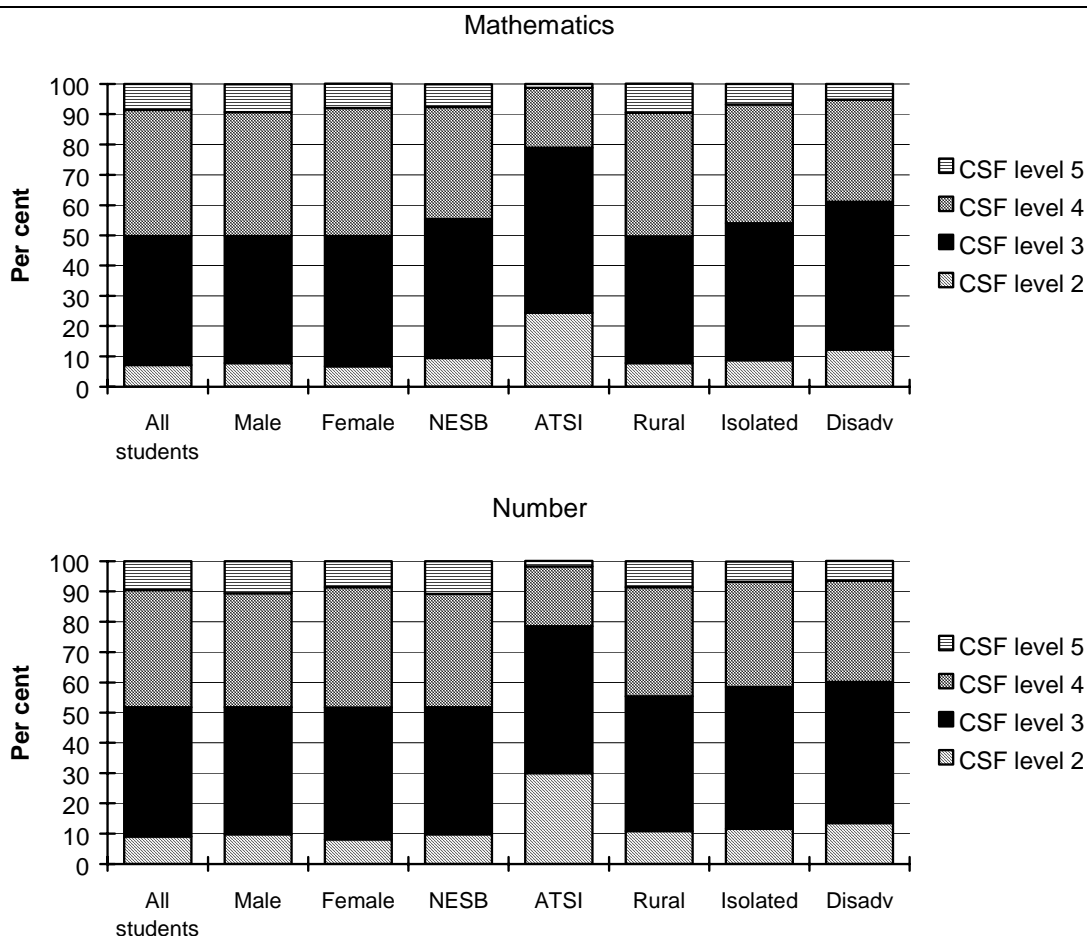
Data source: table 2A.39.

Figure 2.31 Victorian Learning Assessment Project, English — year 5, 1998



Data source: table 2A.40.

Figure 2.32 Victorian Learning Assessment Project, mathematics — year 5, 1998



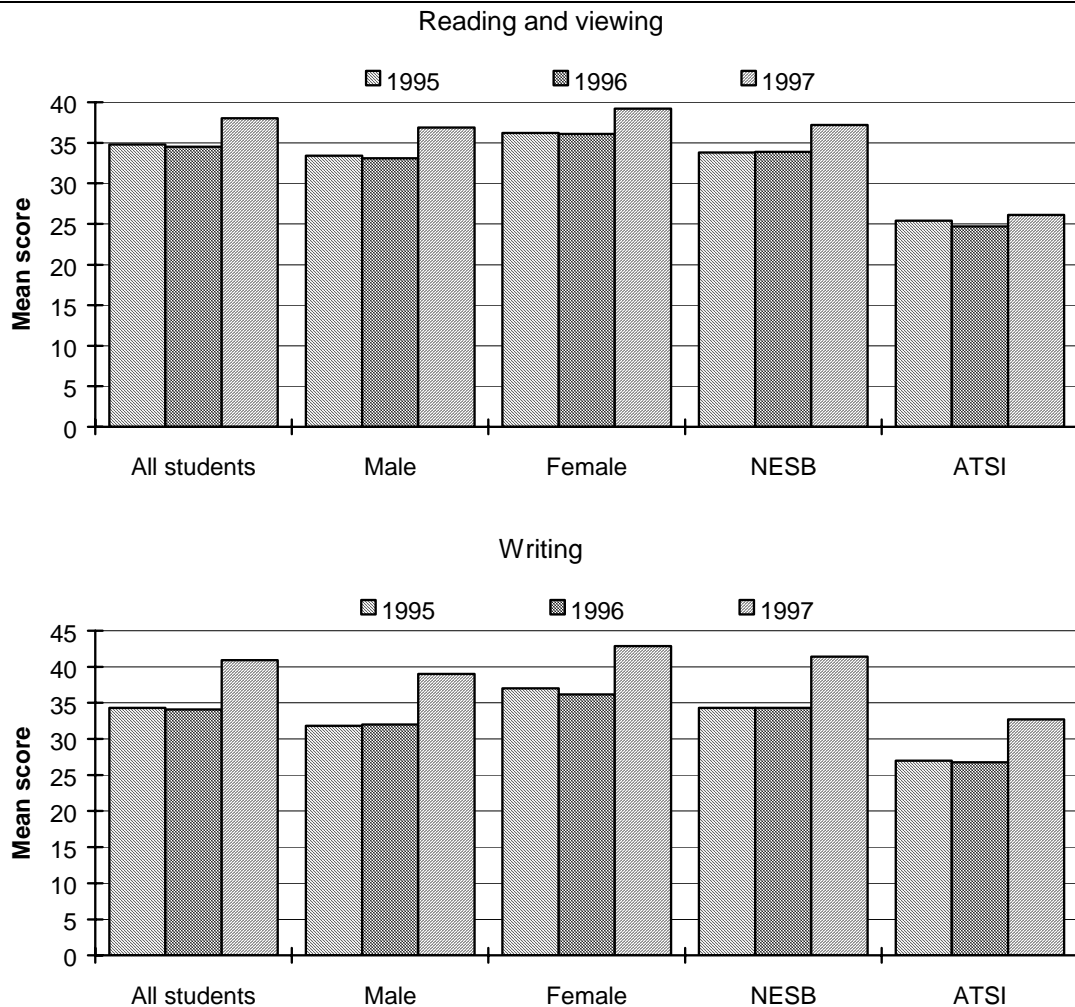
Data source: table 2A.41.

Queensland Year 6 Tests

The Queensland Year 6 Test in 1995, 1996 and 1997 provided information about student performance in aspects of literacy and numeracy. Results were expressed on a scale of 15 to 55. Data were reported for government school students only.

Analysis of the literacy test showed that the overall reading and viewing performance improved in 1997 for all students and all groups. The overall writing performance in 1997 improved on the performances in 1995 and 1996 for all students and all groups (figure 2.33).

Figure 2.34 Queensland Year 6 Test — aspects of literacy a, b



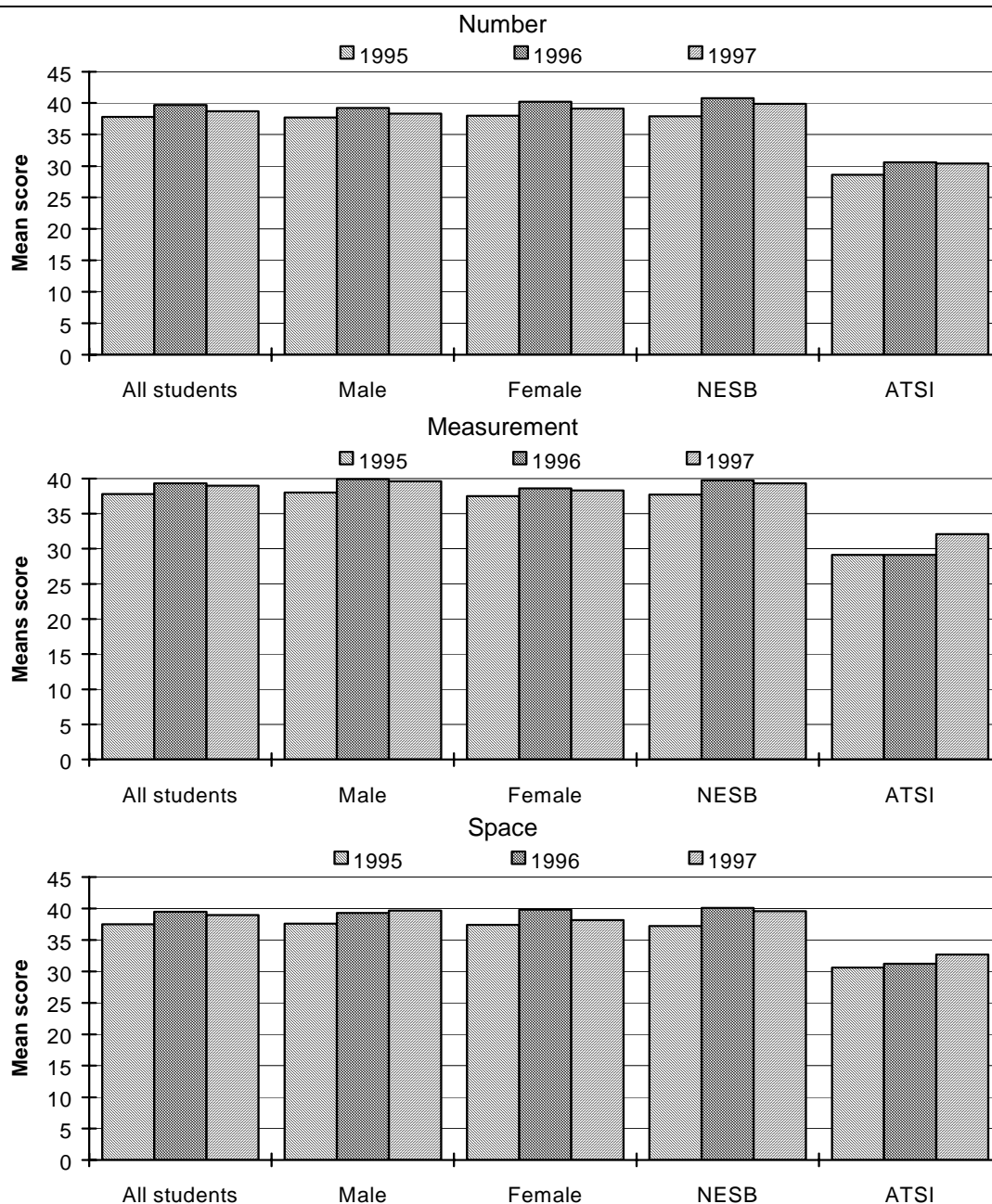
a Results are expressed on a scale of 15 to 55. **b** NESB (non-English speaking background) students are those who answered 'No' to either of the questions 'Is English the language you speak at home most of the time?' or 'Is English the first language spoken by both your parents or caregivers?' and who are not classified as ATSI. ATSI (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) students are those answered 'Yes' to either of the questions 'Are you an Aboriginal person' or 'Are you a Torres Strait Islander person?'

Data source: table 2A.51.

Analysis of the numeracy test showed that overall 'number' performances in 1997 were slightly lower than performances in 1996 for all students and for all groups. Female students, students from a non-English speaking background and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students showed slight improvements over their performance in 1995. Overall, 'measurement' performances in 1997 were similar to those in 1996 for all students and all groups except for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (whose performance improved in 1997). Overall, 'space' performances in 1997 were similar to those in 1996 for all students and all groups except for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (whose performance improved slightly in 1997). The performance of female students in 1997 was similar

to that in 1995, while marked improvements were recorded for male students, students from a non-English speaking background and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (figure 2.35).

Figure 2.36 Queensland Year 6 Test — aspects of numeracy^{a, b}



^a Results are expressed on a scale of 15 to 55. ^b NESB (non-English speaking background) students are those who answered 'No' to either of the questions 'Is English the language you speak at home most of the time?' or 'Is English the first language spoken by both your parents or caregivers?' and who are not classified as ATSI. ATSI (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) students are those answered 'Yes' to either of the questions 'Are you an Aboriginal person' or 'Are you a Torres Strait Islander person?'

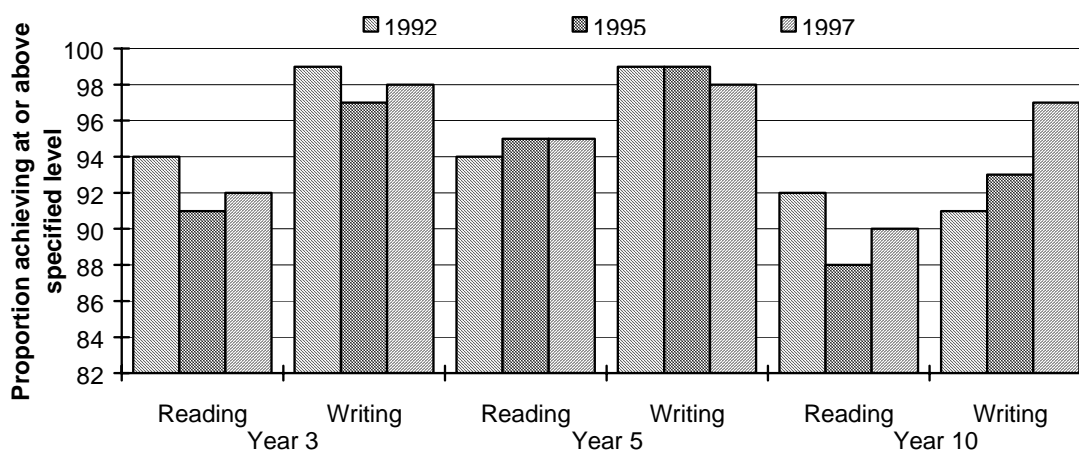
Data source: table 2A.51.

WA Monitoring Standards in Education

The WA Monitoring Standards in Education project tests the performance of a sample of students in years 3, 7 and 10 across a range of curriculum areas. The results are reported as the percentage of students achieving a specified standard. Results are for government school students only.

The proportion of students achieving the specified English level improved between 1995 and 1997 in all areas except year 5 writing. However, year 3 results in 1997 were still below those recorded in 1992. The most consistent trend appeared to be the increasing proportion of year 10 students achieving at or above the specified level in writing (figure 2.37).

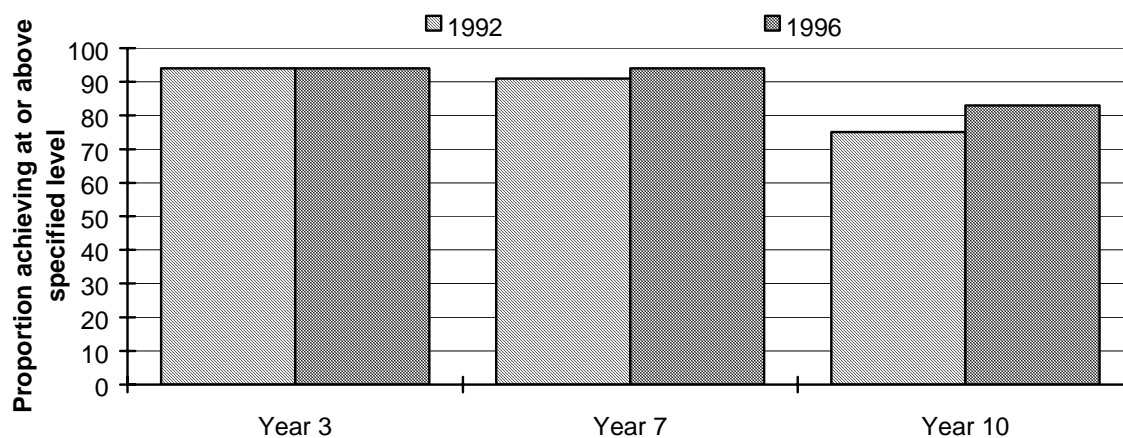
Figure 2.38 WA Monitoring Standards results, English^a



^a The specified levels for each year were: ↓ level 2 for year 3; ↓ level 3 for year 7; and ↓ level 4 for year 10.
Data source: table 2A.59.

The proportion of students achieving the specified mathematics level in year 7 and year 10 rose slightly between 1992 and 1996. The proportion of year 10 students achieving the specified level remained lower than the proportions of year 3 and year 5 students achieving their specified levels (figure 2.39).

Figure 2.40 WA Monitoring Standards results — mathematics^a



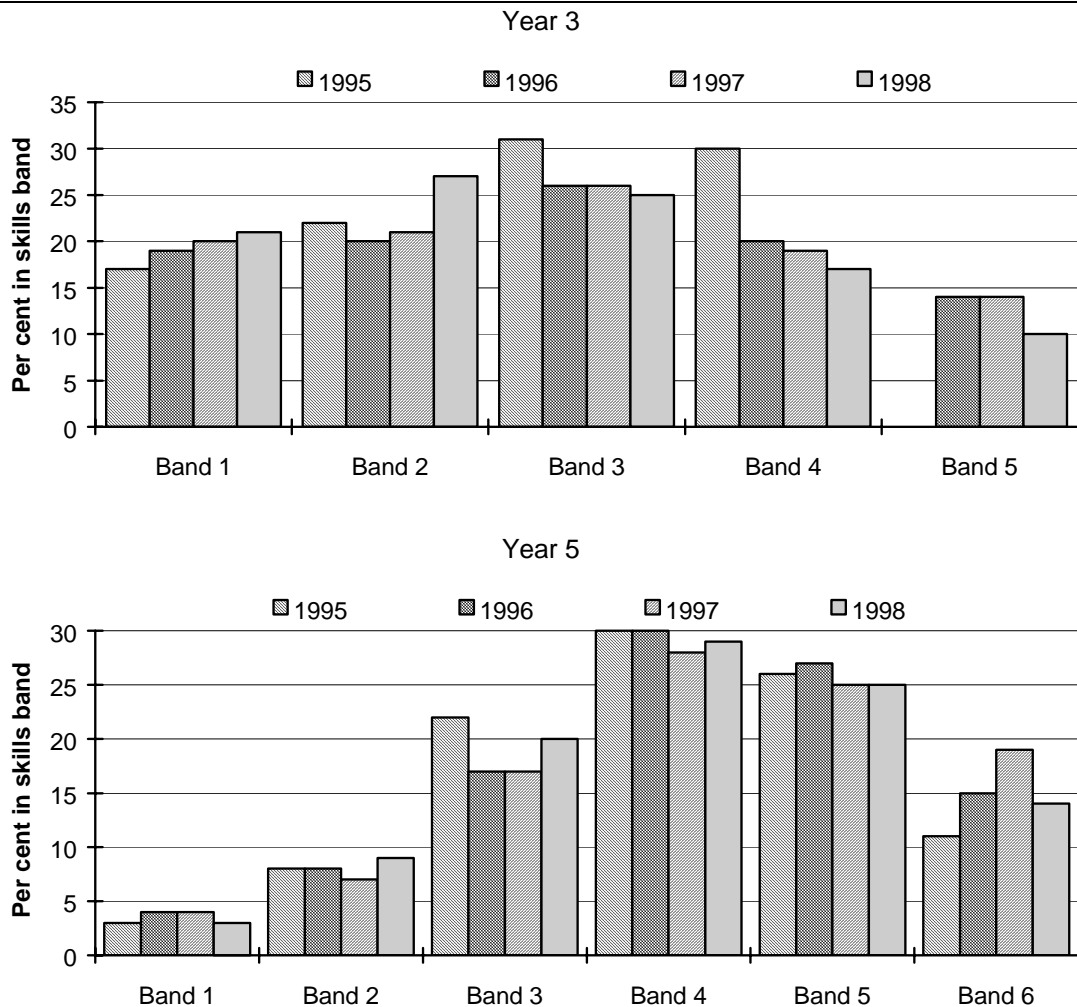
^a The specified levels for each year were: ↓ level 2 for year 3; ↓ level 3 for year 7; and ↓ level 4 for year 10.
Data source: table 2A.60.

SA Basic Skills Test

The SA Department of Education, Training and Employment has used the Basic Skills Test (the same test used in NSW) to test years 3 and 5 student achievement in aspects of literacy and numeracy since 1995. However, it is not possible to compare SA and NSW results because they are reported on different bases. SA reports the proportion of students achieving different skill levels: from band 1 (lowest level of skill) to band 5 (highest level of skill) for year 3 and from band 1 to band 6 for year 5.

The results of the Basic Skills Test for literacy between 1995 and 1998 showed a constant upward trend in the proportion of year 3 students in band 1 and a decrease in the proportion of students in bands 3, 4 and 5. There did not appear to be such a strong trend in year 5 results for literacy, but the proportion of students in skill band 6 rose between 1995 and 1997, then fell back slightly in 1998 (figure 2.41).

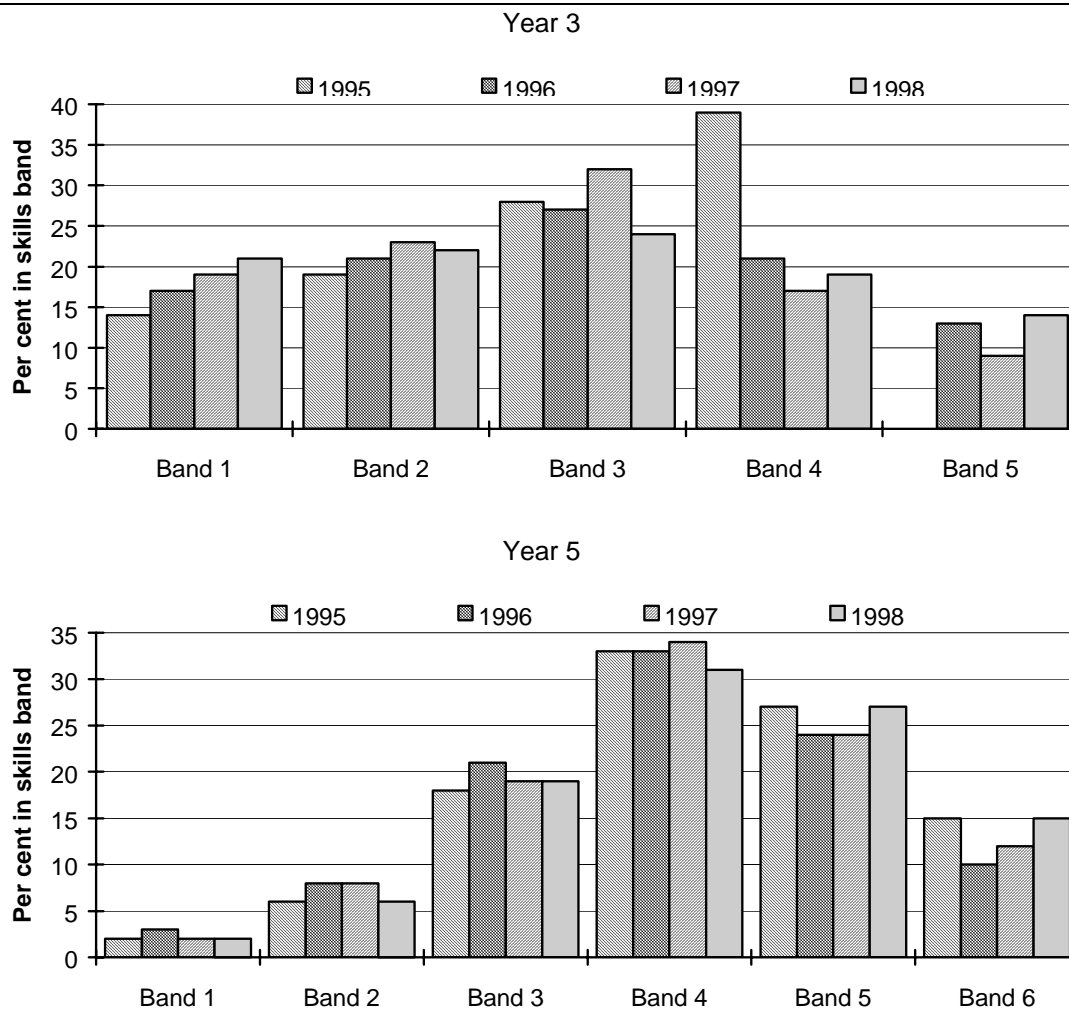
Figure 2.42 SA Basic Skills Test — literacy



Data source: table 2A.68.

The results of the Basic Skills Test for numeracy between 1995 and 1998 showed an increase in the proportion of year 3 students in skill bands 1 and 2, and a marked decrease in the proportion of students in skill band 4. The proportion of year 5 students in skill band 6 fell sharply between 1995 and 1996 but rose in both 1997 and 1998 to reach its 1995 level (figure 2.43).

Figure 2.44 SA Basic Skills Test — numeracy



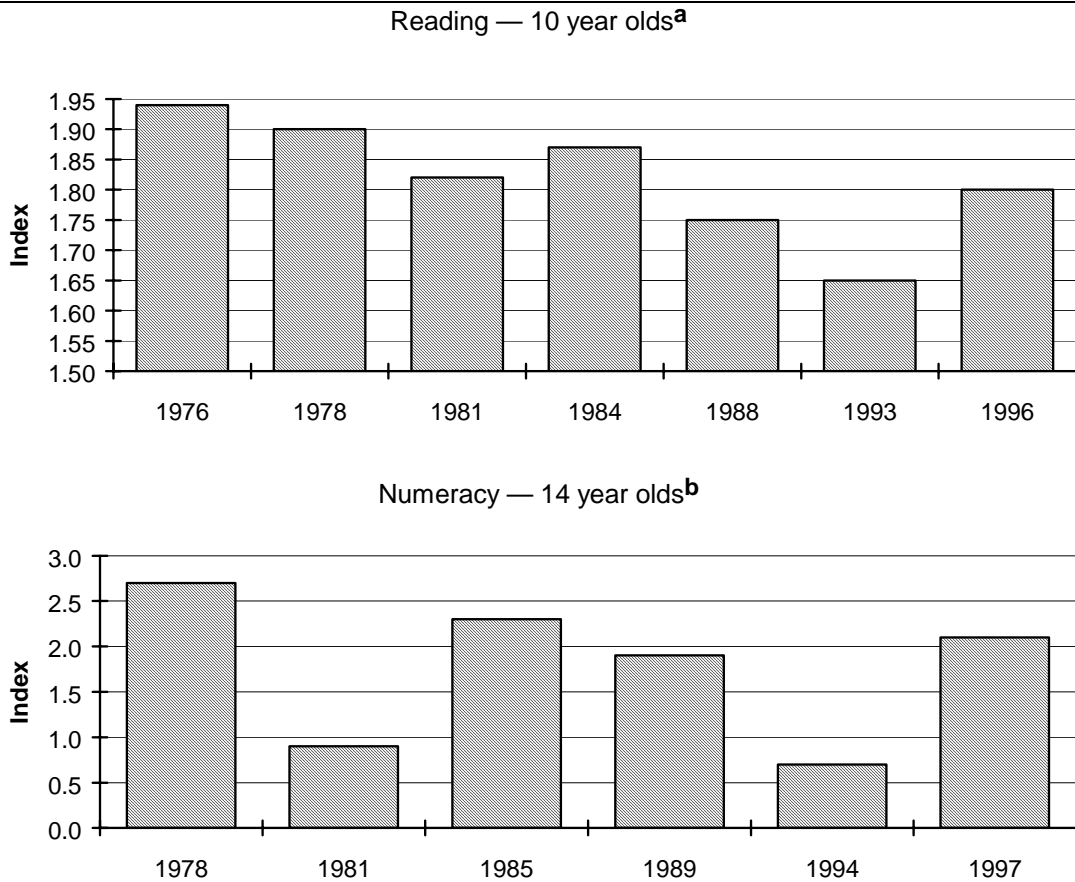
Data source: table 2A.69.

Tasmanian reading and numeracy tests

Tasmania tested literacy and numeracy outcomes in years 3 and 7 in 1998, but the results are not yet available. Tasmania tested years 5 and 9 in previous years, and reading and numeracy test results reported last year have been repeated this year. Tasmanian 1997 numeracy results can also be expressed as achievement against Key Intended Numeracy Outcomes (a subset of the National Mathematics Profile); these data are not included in this Report.

There was a slight downward trend in measured reading performance for 10 year olds tested between 1976 and 1993, but evidence of improvement between 1993 and 1996. There was a high degree of variability in numeracy performance over the 20 year period, and it is difficult to discern any firm trend (figure 2.45).

Figure 2.46 Tasmanian reading and numeracy tests

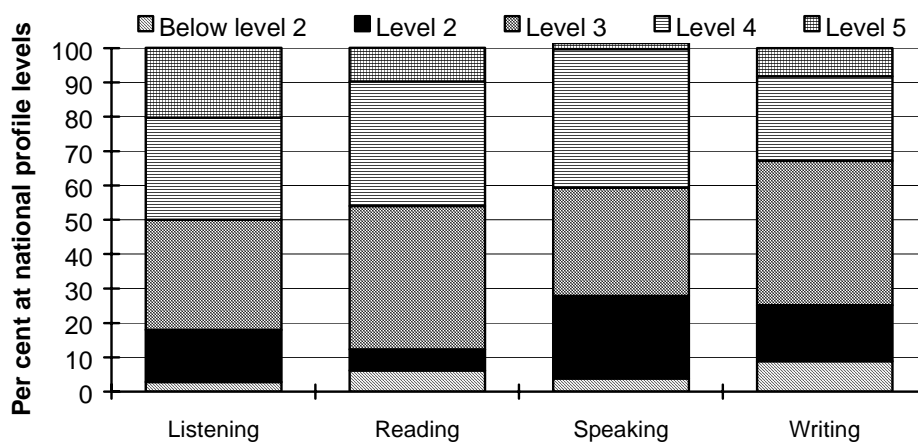


^a Between 1976 and 1993 reading performance results were for 10 year olds. The 1996 results were for students in year 5. ^b Between 1978 and 1994 numeracy performance results were for 14 year olds. The 1997 results were for students in year 9.

Data sources: tables 2A.79 and 2A.80.

Year 5 literacy scores for 1996 were also expressed as the proportion of students achieving each of the national English profile levels. The proportion of students achieving level 2 or below was greatest for speaking and writing, and lowest for reading. The proportion of students achieving level 4 or above was highest for listening (figure 2.47).

Figure 2.48 Tasmanian literacy — 1996



Data source: table 2A.81.

ACT primary student literacy assessment

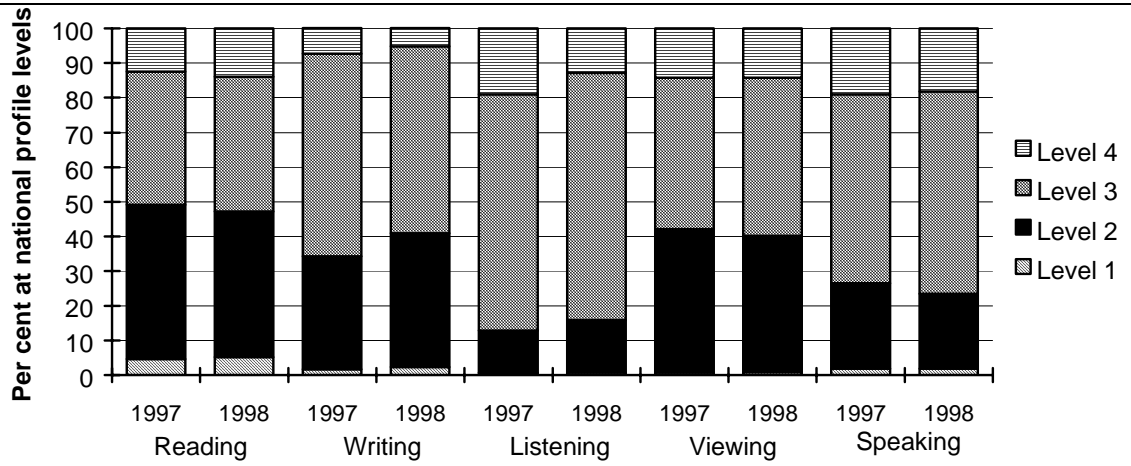
The ACT undertook literacy assessment in 1997 and 1998 and numeracy assessment in 1998. Tests were for government primary school students in years 3 (literacy) and year 5 (literacy and numeracy), and the results were reported as the proportion of students achieving particular national profile levels. Results were also reported by mean performance. Achievement tables for years 3 and 5 are reported in the attachment.

The proportion of year 3 students achieving level 3 or level 4 in 1997 and 1998 was much higher for listening than for the other areas of literacy. The proportion of year 3 students achieving level 1 or 2 increased for reading and writing but remained fairly constant for the other areas of literacy between 1997 and 1998 (figure 2.49).

The proportion of year 5 students tested in numeracy achieving level 2 was highest for data sense in 1998. The proportion achieving level 3 or below was highest for number. Minor variations in results from 1997 to 1998 were not statistically significant.

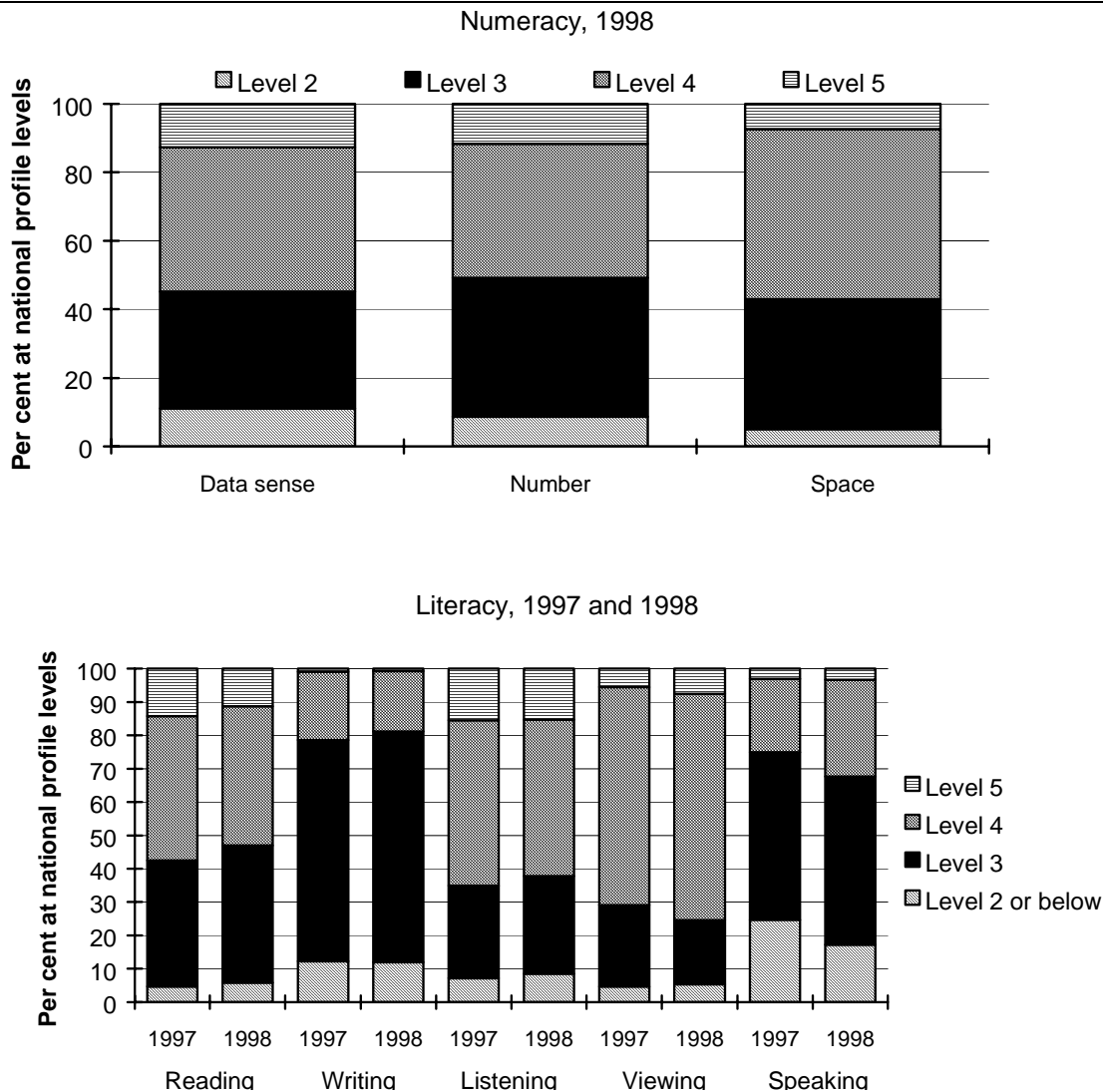
The proportion of year 5 students tested in literacy achieving level 2 or below was greatest for speaking, but decreased between 1997 and 1998. The proportion achieving level 3 or below was significantly greater for writing than for the other literacy areas (figure 2.50).

Figure 2.51 ACT literacy assessment — year 3



Data source: table 2A.92.

Figure 2.52 ACT literacy and numeracy assessment — year 5



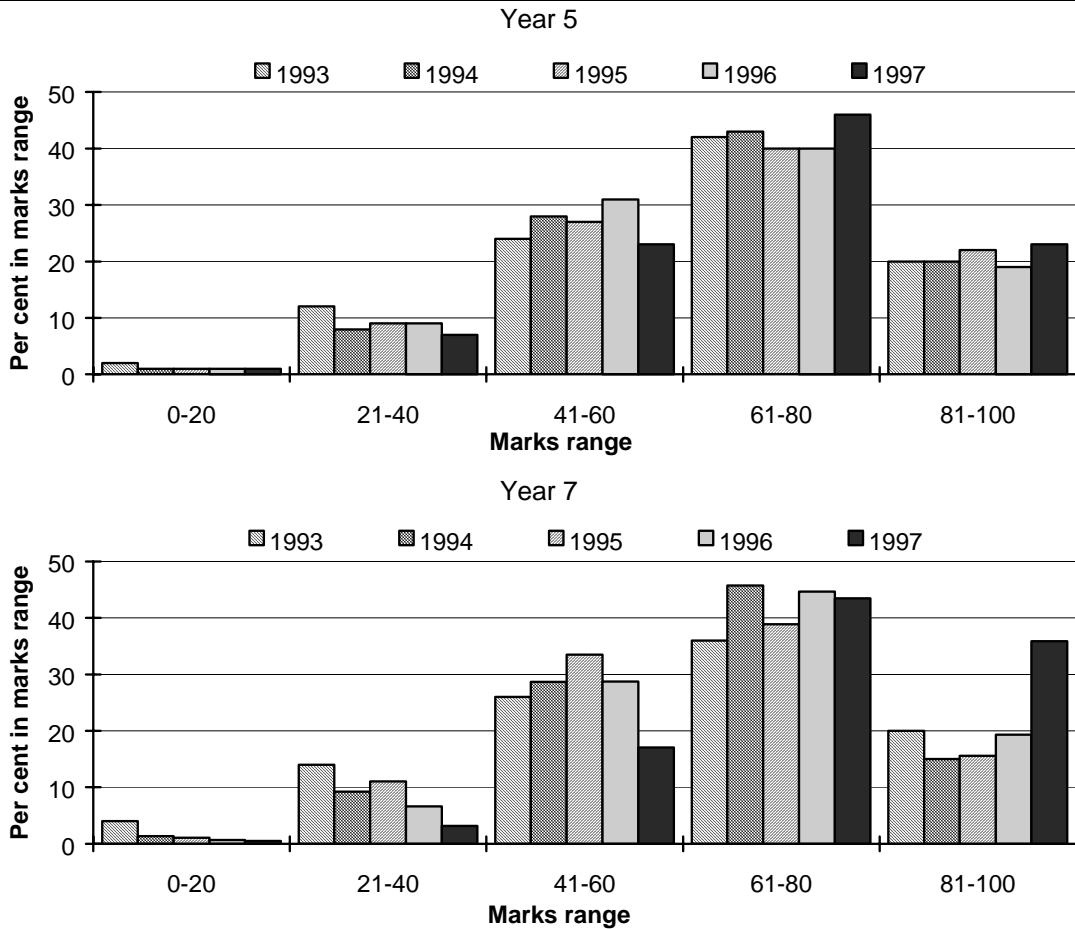
Data sources: tables 2A.92 and 2A.93.

NT Multi-level Assessment Program

The NT Multi-level Assessment Program collects systemwide data on student achievement in reading and mathematics for years 5 and 7. It has operated since 1990 but data are only available from 1992. Data reported are for government and non-government schools combined and for only urban, non-indigenous students.

It was difficult to identify any consistent trends in the performance of year 5 students tested in reading, although the proportion of students achieving over 60 per cent appeared to rise in 1997. The reading performance of students in year 7 appeared to improve between 1995 and 1997, with a large increase in the proportion of students achieving over 80 per cent (figure 2.53).

Figure 2.54 NT Multi-level Assessment Program — reading^{a, b, c, d, e}

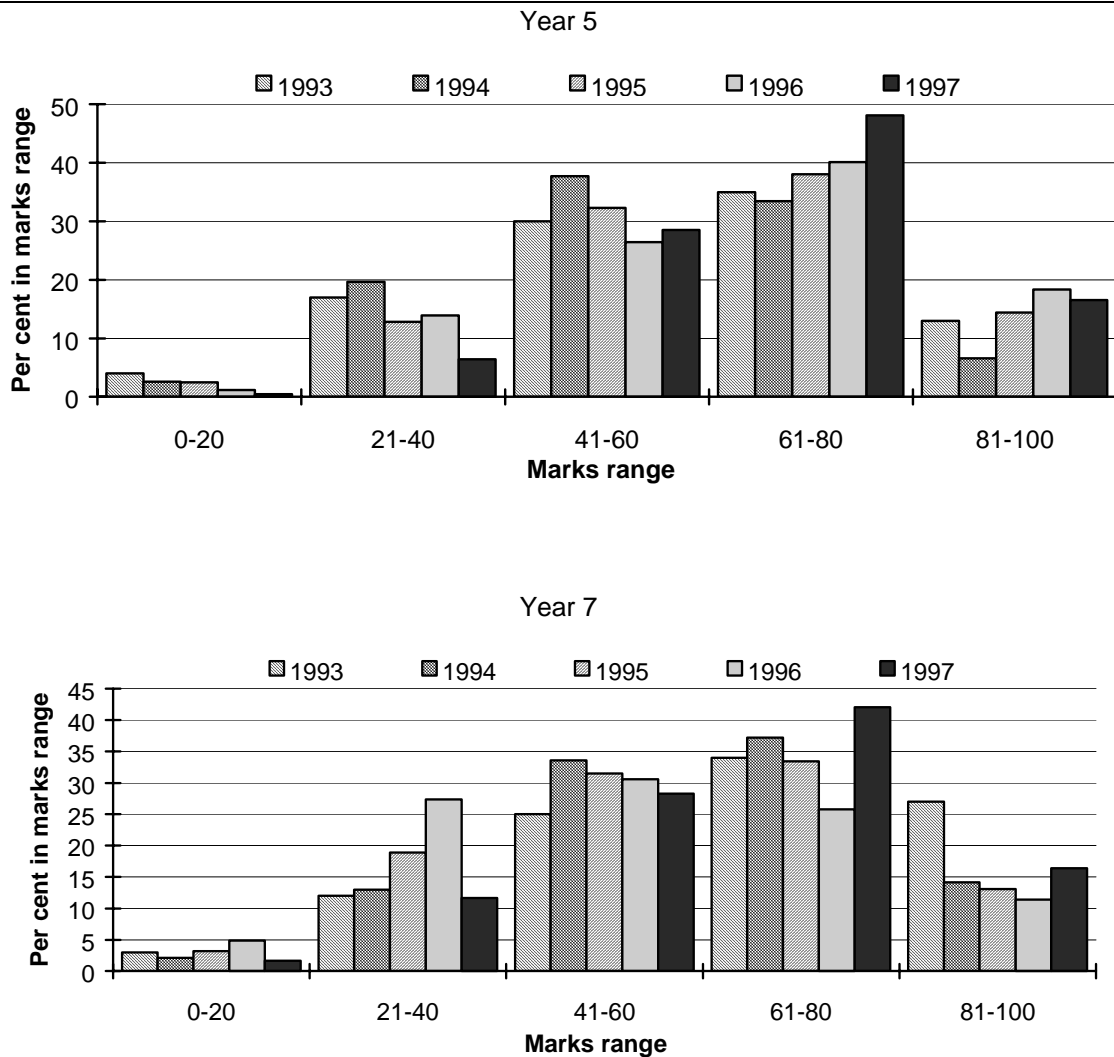


^a 1993 data are as published in public reports. ^b For 1994–97, if a student did not answer a question within a stage/level this was deemed an incorrect response (even if a whole passage or section was unanswered). ^c From 1994, the teacher was able to select at which stage/level a student commenced a test. For 1992 and 1993, the student had compulsory and optional sections. ^d The multi-level nature of the tests means that a student may attempt one section of a test, say 20 questions of a 80 question test. The result may be 15 out of 20, which would translate to an overall test result of 75 per cent. ^e In 1997, years 4 and 6 were tested.

Data source: table 2A.102.

There appeared to be a consistent improvement in year 5 performance in mathematics between 1994 and 1997. The year 7 performance in mathematics appeared to decline between 1993 and 1996, with a growing proportion achieving under 40 per cent. This trend appeared to reverse in 1997, with a marked increase in the proportion achieving over 60 per cent (figure 2.55).

Figure 2.56 NT Multi-level Assessment Program — mathematics^{a, b, c, d, e}



^a 1993 data are as published in the public reports. ^b For 1994–97, whenever a student did not answer a question within a stage/level this was deemed an incorrect response (even if a whole passage or section was unanswered). ^c From 1994, the teacher was able to select at which stage/level a student commenced a test. For 1992 and 1993, the student had compulsory and optional sections. ^d The multi-level nature of the tests means that a student may attempt one section of a test, say 20 questions of a 80 question test. The result may be 15 out of 20, which would translate to an overall test result of 75 per cent. ^e In 1997, years 4 and 6 were tested.

Data source: table 2A.102.

Other effectiveness indicators

There has been promising work on better defining the social objectives of schooling, which will contribute to better reporting of performance against those objectives in the future.

Some available indicators, such as age participation rates and apparent retention rates, were relevant to both the learning and social objectives of school education — for example, the longer a person attends school the greater their potential to acquire knowledge, work skills and employment.

Social objectives of schooling

DEETYA (now DETYA) on behalf of MCEETYA commissioned an investigation ‘to define and describe aspects of the social objectives of schooling, to obtain baseline data on achievements against the selected social objectives and to investigate the role and influence of schools in this regard’ (Ainley *et al.* 1998, p. xiii). The first stage of the study clarified the social or socialisation objectives of schooling through a literature review, the examination of each State and Territory’s policy documents and curricula, and visits to schools and education officials (box 2.4). The second stage measured the social attitudes of Australian school students through a survey of over 8000 students from over 500 schools. The survey examined students’ responses to questions about relating to others, community wellbeing, rules and conventions, interest in learning, self confidence and optimism for the future.

The study identified differences in the importance that students placed on social outcomes (table 2.9). The study noted that State differences in outcomes, after controlling for the influence of other factors in the analysis (including school environments) were very small in magnitude, and that year level, gender differences, plans for leaving school, non-English speaking background and socioeconomic background were more important factors in explaining differences in social outcomes than jurisdiction. However, the study found that:

Compared to their peers in NSW, year 10 students in Queensland and WA regarded relating to others as less important to them; year 10 students in Victoria considered rules and conventions as less important to them; year 10 students in WA expressed less strong interest in continued learning; and year 10 students in Victoria and SA were more optimistic about the future. (Ainley *et al.* 1998, p. 141)

Box 2.5 **Social objectives of schooling identified in *Schools and the Social Development of Young Australians***

Relating to others: concern for individuals in one's immediate range of contact, reflecting a sense of personal empathy (such as in trying to understand someone else's problem);

Commitment to community wellbeing: relations with a wider community of others in society (covering such issues as ensuring children have good homes, racial equality and reducing poverty at home and abroad);

Conformity to rules and conventions: seeing obedience to the laws and rules as important to one's life, as well as recognising the importance of honesty (such as being honest in commercial transactions);

Interest in learning: (sometimes called intrinsic motivation) a desire to find out more about a new idea, or how something works, and seeing as important the learning of new skills as part of work;

Self confidence: a sense of success in the things that are personally important, and being able to achieve one's goals (the term was chosen better to represent the goals concerned with a sense of self than the more specialised but related concept of self esteem);

Optimism about the future: a broad, rather than an individual, optimism about the world becoming better for most people, about looking after the environment more effectively and anticipating reduced conflict and war.

Source: Ainley et al. (1998).

Part of the survey invited students to rate some aspects of their school environment. High scores on this scale reflected a school environment that was seen as enjoyable, stimulating and supportive. The authors of the study found a correlation between mean school environment scale scores and student social outcome scales — that is, where the school environment is seen as supportive, interesting and enjoyable, students are likely to score more highly on the social outcome scales (table 2.10).

Table 2.11 Importance ratings for social objectives, 1997 (T scores)^a

	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>ACT</i>
<i>Relating to others</i>								
Year 5	50.8	51.3	50.8	50.3	52.5	53.1	50.9	50.9
Year 10	49.4	49.8	48.5	47.3	49.5	49.4	47.6	48.3
<i>Community well-being</i>								
Year 5	52.7	52.0	52.6	51.9	53.1	53.1	53.2	52.2
Year 10	47.8	48.5	47.7	46.3	48.7	47.6	47.3	48.3
<i>Conformity to rules and conventions</i>								
Year 5	53.8	53.1	54.4	52.9	53.9	55.3	54.3	53.0
Year 10	47.2	46.2	47.4	45.4	47.3	47.5	46.7	45.9
<i>Interest in learning</i>								
Year 5	52.2	51.1	51.9	50.7	51.4	52.6	53.1	49.3
Year 10	48.6	48.8	49.3	46.8	48.8	48.5	49.2	48.8
<i>Self-confidence</i>								
Year 5	51.5	50.3	51.2	51.2	51.6	50.5	50.4	51.1
Year 10	48.8	48.8	49.5	48.9	49.5	50.2	49.5	48.8
<i>Optimism for the future</i>								
Year 5	54.8	54.5	55.3	55.3	56.4	55.2	55.8	54.3
Year 10	45.5	46.3	45.4	45.3	46.4	44.2	45.3	45.4

^a The survey results are reported as T scores based on a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. The difference between two T scores, expressed in population standard deviation units (that is, the difference between two T scores, divided by 10), is referred to as the effect size. Interpretation of the effect size is based on Cohen's recommendation that an effect size of around 0.2 be treated as a small effect (for example, 52.0 compared to 50.0 has a difference of 2.0; divided by 10 this results in a 'small' effect size of 0.2), 0.5 a medium effect and 0.8 a strong effect.

Source: Ainley *et al.* (1998).

Table 2.12 Importance ratings for social objectives, 1997 (T scores)^a

	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>
<i>School environment</i>								
Year 5	53.9	53.4	53.3	52.4	54.1	54.6	51.2	51.5
Year 10	47.1	46.8	47.8	45.5	47.8	47.8	46.1	46.4

^a The survey results are reported as T scores based on a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. The difference between two T scores, expressed in population standard deviation units (that is, the difference between two T scores, divided by 10), is referred to as the effect size. Interpretation of the effect size is based on Cohen's recommendation that an effect size of around 0.2 be treated as a small effect (for example, 52.0 compared to 50.0 has a difference of 2.0; divided by 10 this results in a 'small' effect size of 0.2), 0.5 a medium effect and 0.8 a strong effect.

Source: Ainley *et al.* (1998).

The study collected valuable information on the extent to which students think social outcomes are important to them — a great deal of detailed information is reported at the national level. However, similarly detailed information is not provided for individual States and Territories, even though school policy is largely determined at a State and Territory level. Students' views on social outcomes by

jurisdiction are summarised into seven 'T scores' (one for each of six broad social outcomes and one for school environment); at the national level, data are reported on the percentage of students' responses to individual items by four or five categories and by primary and secondary school. A sample selection of primary school student responses to items concerned with school environments is reproduced in table 2.13.

Reporting survey results in the form of a single measure prevents analysis of the spread of responses around the average. Sometimes policy analysis is interested in the 'outliers' as well as the mean. Table 2.14 provides useful information on student responses spread across the range; it shows, for example, that 9 per cent of primary students feel that bullying is almost never 'not allowed'. This information is important, in addition to information about the average response to questions about school environment. The study's aggregation of State and Territory data to T scores, a complex concept, also makes interpretation difficult for the lay reader. Reporting on more detailed information at the jurisdictional level is planned for future reports.

In addition, the study only identified where differences between results were statistically significant at the 0.001 level. This imposes a high degree of certainty (99.9 per cent) before differences are regarded as statistically significant. It is possible that more of the differences in results are statistically significant at the 95 per cent level, and information on the results at this level would be useful for policy analysis.

Table 2.15 **Percentage of primary school students' responses to items concerned with school environments, 1998 (per cent)**

<i>My school is a place where ...</i>	<i>Almost never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Some-times</i>	<i>Mostly</i>	<i>Almost always</i>
<i>Supportive environment</i>					
I feel safe and secure.	4	5	17	34	40
I am made to feel important.	6	10	26	31	28
I enjoy learning.	5	5	17	31	42
Community and social service is encouraged.	4	5	17	35	38
Teachers are friendly and helpful.	4	5	14	26	51
I feel happy and interested.	4	5	18	34	38
I learn to get along with other people.	2	3	13	32	50
School rules are fair and just.	4	4	13	29	50
The things I learn will help me in the future.	2	2	7	24	65
<i>Prohibitions</i>					
Bullying is not allowed.	9	4	6	14	67
Racist remarks and behaviour are not allowed.	9	4	7	15	65
Sexist remarks and behaviour are not allowed.	11	5	7	14	63

Source: Ainley *et al.* (1998).

Age participation rate

The age participation rate is the number of full time students of a particular age and sex expressed as a proportion of the estimated resident population of the same age and sex. It is vulnerable to differences in the age/grade structures in different jurisdictions. In addition, some ACT rates exceed 100 per cent where enrolments include secondary school students who are not ACT residents but live in the surrounding NSW area.

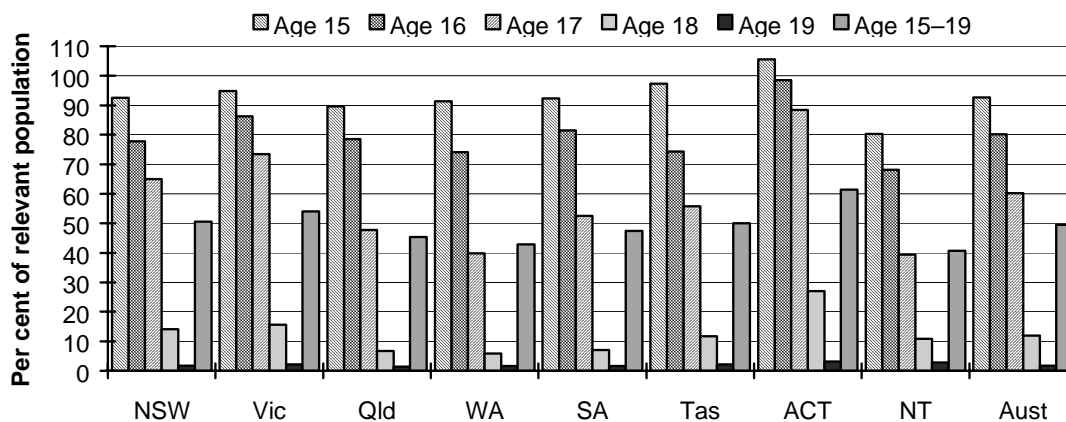
The age participation rate for 15 year olds in 1997 ranged from 80.2 per cent in the NT to 97.3 per cent in Tasmania, with rates in most jurisdictions close to the Australian average of 92.6 per cent (excluding the ACT where the rate was over 100 per cent). The participation rate for females was higher than for males in all jurisdictions except the NT and the ACT.

The age participation rate for 16 year olds ranged from 68.1 per cent in the NT to 86.3 per cent in Victoria (and 98.5 in the ACT). The female participation rate was higher than for males in all jurisdictions — higher by 5.3 percentage points nationally, 9.9 percentage points in the NT, 6.5 percentage points in Queensland and 6.4 percentage points in WA.

The age participation rate for 17 year olds ranged from 39.4 per cent in the NT and 39.9 per cent in WA to 73.5 per cent in Victoria (and 88.5 per cent in the ACT). Again, the rate was consistently higher for females than for males.

As would be expected, the age participation rate for 18 year olds was much lower in all jurisdictions (some students will complete year 12 by the time they are 17). The age participation rate for 18 year olds ranged from 5.9 in WA to 15.7 per cent in Victoria (and 27 per cent in the ACT). However, differences in age/grade structures in different jurisdictions may have particularly affected the rate for this age group. The age participation rate for all people aged 15–19 years ranged from a low of 40.7 in the NT to 54.1 in Victoria (61.4 in the ACT) (figure 2.57).

Figure 2.58 Age participation rates of students 1997^a



^a Some participation rates in the ACT exceeded 100 per cent, as a result of enrolment in ACT secondary schools of students who were not residents of the ACT but lived in surrounding NSW areas.

Data source: table 2A.20.

Student apparent retention

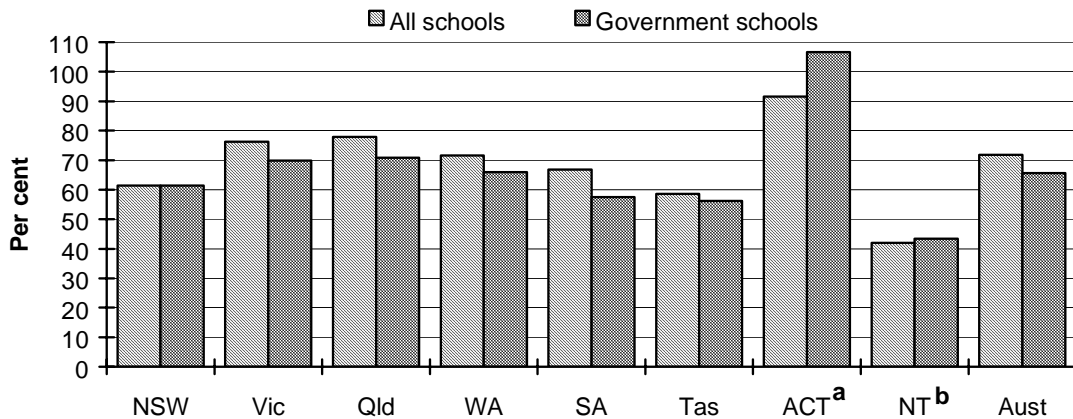
Student apparent retention rates (that is, the proportion of students who remain in school) help address the influence of different age/grade structures on age participation rates (see above). However, apparent retention rates are subject to many influences such as student perceptions of the benefits of schooling, the availability of alternative employment and education opportunities, and population movements. Thus, short term changes and variations between jurisdictions in apparent retention rates need to be interpreted cautiously. Further, the data reported refer to only full time students, so do not account for students who study part time; the effect of this exclusion varies between jurisdictions (see table 2.1 for proportions of part time students).

Apparent retention rates are reported here. Care should be taken in interpreting apparent retention rates, particularly comparisons between government and non-government schools, because a number of influences have not been taken into account — for example, students repeating a year of education, migration (international, inter-State and between government and non-government schools) and other net changes to the school population.

Systemwide, apparent retention rates to year 12 in 1997 ranged from 42 per cent in the NT to 77.9 per cent in Queensland, 76.3 per cent in Victoria and 91.6 per cent in the ACT. Nationally 77.8 per cent of females continued to year 12, compared with 66.2 per cent of males (a gap of 11.6 percentage points). The apparent retention rates for government schools ranged from 43.4 per cent in the NT (slightly higher

than the systemwide rate) to 70.8 per cent in Queensland (lower than the systemwide rate) and 106.6 in the ACT (higher than the systemwide rate) (figure 2.59).

Figure 2.60 Year 12 apparent retention rates, 1997

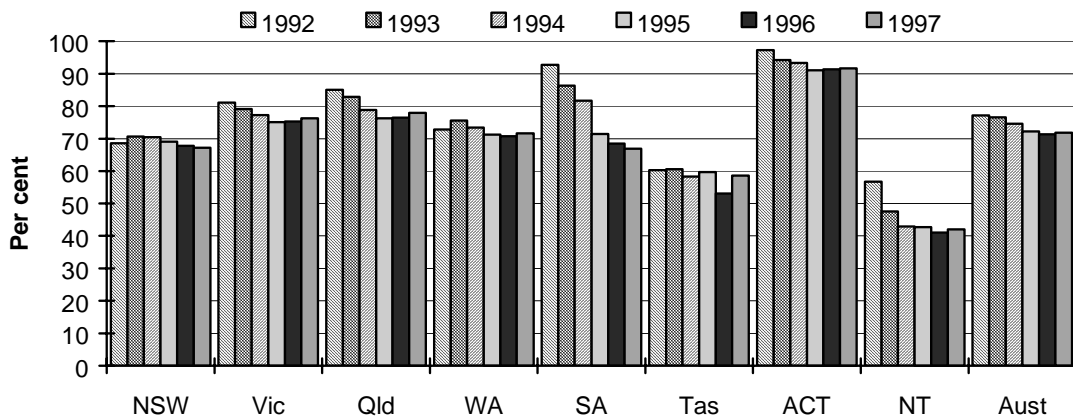


^a Retention rates can exceed 100 per cent as a result of transfer of students between government and non-government schools after the base year. ^b The NT rate may be influenced by a high proportion of ungraded students in secondary education, many of whom have been at school for 12 years.

Data source: table 2A.21.

Systemwide apparent retention rates to year 12 declined in all jurisdictions between 1992 and 1997. The largest decline occurred in SA (down 25.8 percentage points) and the NT (down 14.7 percentage points) (figure 2.61).

Figure 2.62 Year 12 apparent retention rates, all schools, 1992–97



Data source: table 2A.21.

Access and equity

Equity objectives can be assessed in terms of outcomes for special needs groups using indicators such as completion rates, apparent retention rates, age participation rates and learning outcomes.

Completion of secondary school

DETYA has developed a method of estimating the proportion of Australian youth who complete year 12, disaggregated by locality, the overall socioeconomic status of their postcode of residence, and gender. DETYA estimates 'completion rates' by calculating the number of students who obtain a year 12 certificate (or equivalent) in each calendar year as a proportion of the potential year 12 population (DEET 1991) (table 2.16).

Completion rates are indicators of trends, not precise measures. Although this is the best available source of comparable data on outcomes for target groups, certain factors should be noted when interpreting the data:

- completion rates are calculated on a different basis from the retention rates reported elsewhere in this chapter, and are not directly comparable;
- the potential year 12 population is estimated as the average of the 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 year olds in the population, and small changes in population or completions can affect rates quite significantly (particularly for the smaller States and Territories);
- the use of postcode areas to determine socioeconomic background means, where people from different backgrounds are spread relatively evenly through a jurisdiction, their numbers may not be statistically significant in any single postcode — for example, on this basis the ACT had no low socioeconomic deciles and the NT had no high socioeconomic deciles; and
- the minimum requirements for a year 12 certificate differ between jurisdictions, which affects the absolute levels of completion rates — that is why this chapter only compares the size of the gap in completion rates between target groups and the total population, not the absolute level of completions.

The limitations of these data highlight the need for further work on developing better outcome measures for target groups, more comparable definitions of rural and remote students, and improved identification of students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Table 2.17 Estimated rate of completion of secondary school, all schools, 1997 (preliminary) (per cent)^a

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas ^b	ACT ^b	NT ^b	Aust
<i>Locality^c</i>									
Urban ^d	65	69	68	54	65	83	83	46	66
Rural	61	67	68	50	60	70	.. ^e	41	64
Remote ^f	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	.. ^e	nc	nc
<i>Socioeconomic status^f</i>									
Low deciles	58	56	62	38	52	65	.. ^g	14	55
High deciles	76	78	77	60	80	99	84	.. ^h	76
<i>Gender</i>									
Males	59	61	64	44	57	68	81	29	59
Females	69	77	73	60	71	83	85	43	71
Total	64	69	68	52	64	75	83	36	65

^a Completion rates should not be compared across jurisdictions: they express the number of students who complete year 12 (year 12 certificates issued by State and Territory education authorities) as a proportion of the estimated population that could attend year 12 in that calendar year. Different jurisdictions have different minimum requirements for issuing year 12 certificates. Rates are preliminary pending updated estimated populations for 1997. ^b Low level disaggregations for these jurisdictions may be subject to 'small number' problems. ^c Definitions are based on Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas Classification (DPIE 1994). ^d Urban includes Darwin, Townsville/Thuringowa and Queanbeyan. ^e All of the ACT is defined as urban. ^f The Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage (IRSED) was used to calculate socioeconomic status on the basis of postcode of students' home addresses. 'Low' socioeconomic status is the average of the lowest three deciles and 'high' is the average of the top three deciles. Population deciles are calculated from the national 15–19 year old population. State socioeconomic status completion rates are based on national population deciles (for example, first decile rates are calculated for those postcode districts in a State which are part of the first national decile. ^g On the basis of this index, the ACT had no low socioeconomic deciles. ^h On the basis of this index, the NT had no high socioeconomic deciles. ⁱ The small number of observations does not allow for meaningful calculation of this ratio. .. Not applicable. **nc** Not calculable.

Source: DETYA unpublished (derived from data supplied by State and Territory secondary accreditation authorities and the Australian Bureau of Statistics; see DEET (1991) for a discussion of the methodology).

Completion rate by locality

DETYA adopted the methodology developed by the former Department of Primary Industry and Energy and the former Department of Human Services and Health for determining geographic isolation. This methodology is based on population density and distances to large population centres (DPIE and DSHS 1994). This methodology has been criticised on several grounds, such as not accounting for other restrictions on access to services such as socioeconomic disadvantage and socio-political boundaries that affect service delivery (Griffith 1998). Further, the aggregation of all locations into three categories means that there may be significant variation within categories (for example, 'remote' locations will range from extremely remote to moderately remote, and some jurisdictions will have a disproportionate number of extremely remote locations). The small number of observations at the remote level of disaggregation does not allow the meaningful calculation of this ratio. Reporting at a broader level of disaggregation (for example,

‘capital city’, ‘other metropolitan centres’, ‘rural centres’ and ‘other rural and remote’) is being examined for future Reports. However, the current methodology does indicate the performance of students in broadly defined locations.

Rural student completion rates (excluding remote students) were lower than those of students from urban areas in all jurisdictions except Queensland, where the completion rates were the same (table 2.18). Completion rates by locality for smaller jurisdictions may be subject to ‘small number’ problems; that is, relatively small changes in the estimated resident population or in the number of completions can lead to substantial changes in the completion rates.

Completion rate by socioeconomic status

Socioeconomic status has been determined according to the Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage developed by the ABS. ‘Low deciles’ refer to students from areas characterised as being in the lowest three deciles; and ‘high deciles’ refer to students living in areas characterised as being in the highest three deciles. The aggregation of all locations into three categories (low, medium and high deciles) means that there may be significant variation within categories (for example, the ‘low deciles’ will include locations ranging from extreme disadvantage to moderate disadvantage, and some jurisdictions may have a disproportionate number of extremely disadvantaged locations).

In all jurisdictions, completion rates for students from the lowest three deciles were well below the total completion rate in 1997; the widest gaps were in the NT, Victoria, WA and SA (the ACT had no students in the lowest three deciles). Completion rates for students from the highest three deciles were above those for total students in all jurisdictions (the NT had no students in the highest three deciles) (table 2.19).

Completion rate by gender

Completion rates for female students were higher than completion rates for males in all jurisdictions in 1997, with the widest gap in Victoria and WA and the narrowest gap in the ACT (table 2.20).

Learning outcomes for special needs groups

No nationally comparable learning outcomes data for special needs groups were available for reporting. The jurisdiction specific data that were available are discussed with the State specific learning outcomes in section 2.5.

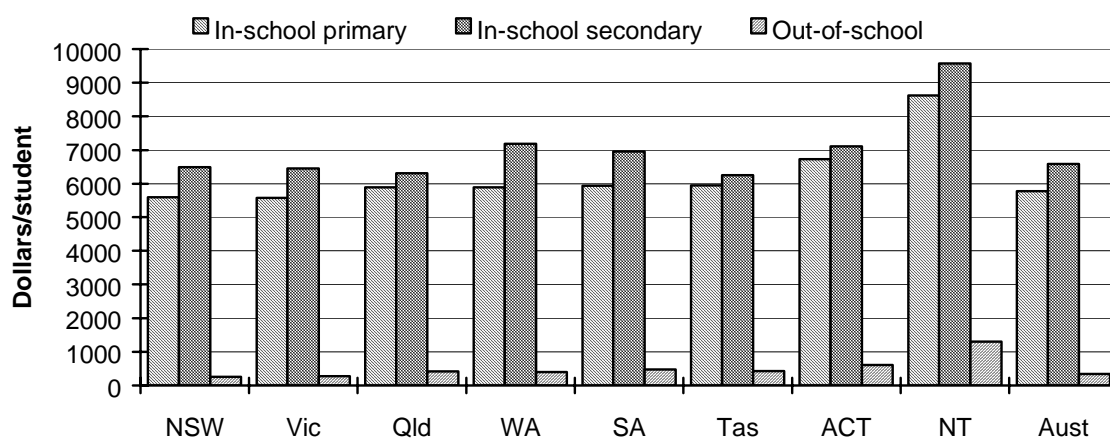
Efficiency

Governments have a direct interest in achieving the best results from their expenditure on schooling, both as owners and operators of government schools and as major funders of the non-government sector.

Government expenditure per student

A proxy indicator of efficiency is government inputs per unit of output (unit cost). In-school government expenditure per primary student in government primary schools ranged from \$4510 in Victoria to \$6458 in the NT in 1996-97. In-school government expenditure per secondary student in government secondary schools ranged from \$6247 in Tasmania to \$9563 in the NT. Out-of-school departmental overheads per student in government schools ranged from \$268 in Victoria to \$1304 in the NT (figure 2.63).

Figure 2.64 **Total government expenditure per full time student, government schools, 1996-97^a**

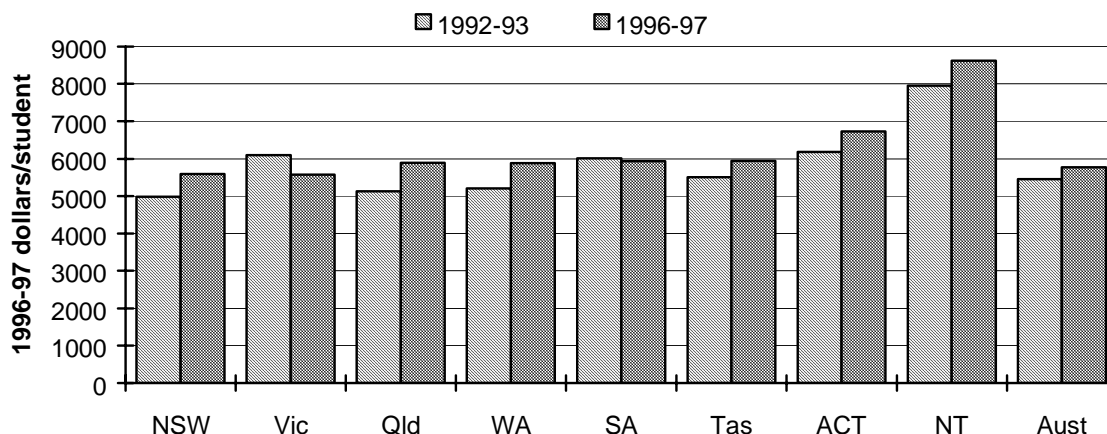


^a See notes to table 2A.8 for definitions and data caveats.

Data source: table 2A.8.

Total government expenditure per student in government schools increased in real terms (that is, adjusted for the effect of inflation) in all jurisdictions except Victoria and SA between 1992-93 and 1996-97 (figure 2.65).

Figure 2.66 **Total government expenditure per government school student, 1992-93 and 1996-97^{a, b}**



^a See notes to table 2A.8 for definitions and data caveats. ^b 1992-93 data have been adjusted to 1996-97 dollars using the GDP deflator.

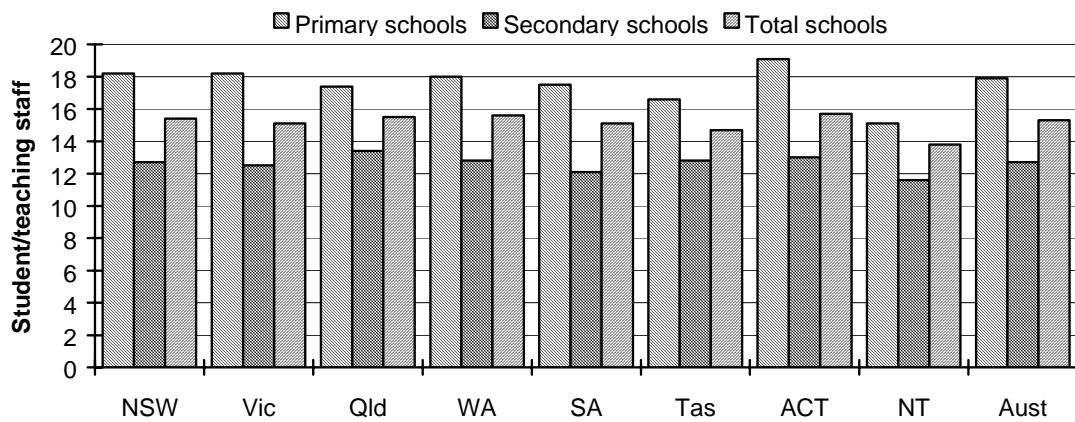
Data source: table 2A.9.

Students per full time equivalent teacher

The ratio of students to teachers should be interpreted with care; it is only a partial indicator of efficiency and it is a poor proxy indicator of the quality of an education system (box 2.6). It should be noted that a decline in a student to staff ratio implies there are fewer students per staff member (that is, the staff to students ratio will have increased).

Systemwide, the ratio of full time students to full time equivalent teaching staff in 1997 ranged from 13.8 in the NT to 15.7 in the ACT. The ACT had the most students per teacher for primary schools (19.1) and the NT had the least (15.1); for secondary schools, Queensland had the most students per teacher (13.4) and the NT again had the least (11.6) (figure 2.67).

Figure 2.68 Student-teaching staff ratios — all schools, 1997^{a, b}

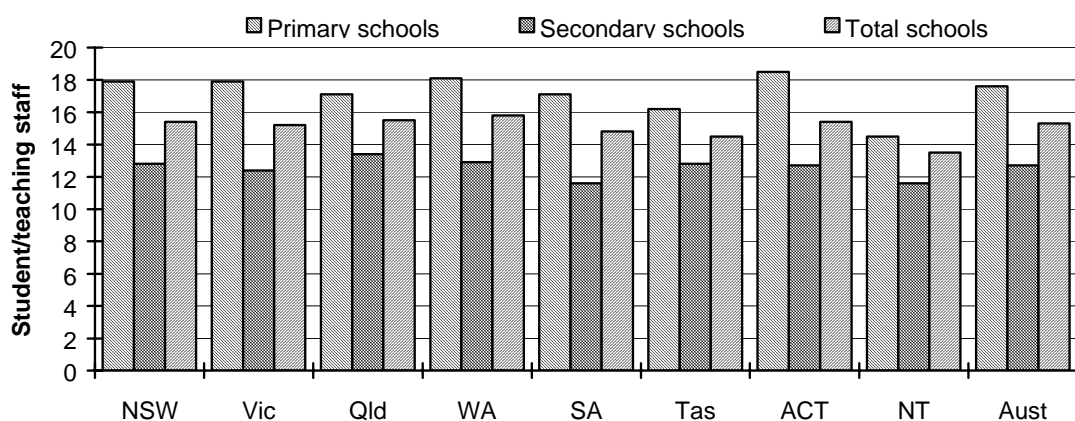


^a These data are not measures of class size; they are ratios of full time students to full time teaching staff.
^b Teaching staff are defined as staff who spend the majority of their time in contact with students and have teaching duties. They include principals, deputy principals and senior teachers who may be involved in administration.

Data source: table 2A.5.

The overall student-teaching staff ratio in the government schools sector in 1997 ranged from 13.5 in the NT to 15.8 in WA. For primary schools, the ACT had the most students per teaching staff (18.5) and the NT had the least (14.5); for secondary schools, Queensland had the most students per teaching staff (13.4) and the NT and SA had the least (both 11.6) (figure 2.69).

Figure 2.70 Student-teaching staff ratios — government schools, 1997^{a, b}



^a This table is not a measure of class size. It is the ratio of full time students to full time teaching staff.
^b Teaching staff are defined as staff who spend the majority of their time in contact with students and have teaching duties. They include principals, deputy principals and senior teachers, who may be involved in administration.

Data source: table 2A.5.

Box 2.7 **Interpreting students per teaching staff ratios**

Student to teaching staff ratios should be interpreted with care. The ratios can be influenced by a number of factors; for example, a large proportion of small rural schools can significantly lower the overall average student to teaching staff ratio, and conversely, a large proportion of students in metropolitan schools can raise the ratio.

Further, the ratio of students to teaching staff may be interpreted in different ways. One interpretation treats it as an indicator of the efficiency of a school system, on the basis that the school system is most efficient when the desired outputs are produced with the fewest inputs. This interpretation is subject to certain caveats. First, it is only a partial indicator and it does not allow for the affect of nonteaching staff inputs to school education (for example, computers, books and laboratory equipment). Second, a fall in inputs (fewer teaching staff) only improves efficiency if the quantity and quality of outputs remains constant. It is not possible to determine how changes in teaching staff numbers influence school outcomes until we have better indicators of those outcomes.

Another interpretation of the ratio of students to teaching staff treats it as an indicator of the quality of school education, assuming that it reflects typical class sizes and that smaller class sizes result in better outcomes. This interpretation is also subject to certain caveats. First, the ratio of students to teaching staff is not a good proxy indicator of typical class sizes; class sizes vary according to the degree of administrative work undertaken by staff classified as teaching staff (such as principals, deputy principals and senior teachers). Second, while smaller class sizes may be important for certain subjects or year levels, the student to teaching staff ratio is calculated across all subjects and year levels. Third, the ratio reports only the number of teaching staff, not their quality, nor even their experience or qualifications. Fourth, there is no clear agreement in international literature that smaller class sizes necessarily improve outcomes. It will not be possible to determine how changes in numbers of teaching staff influence quality in Australian schools until we have better indicators of school outcomes.

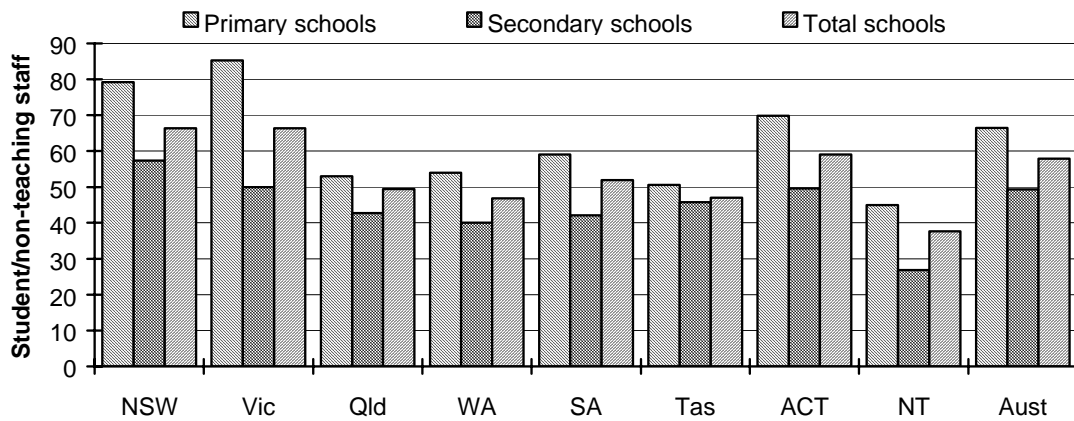
The ratio of students to teaching staff presents the number of people classified as teaching staff in a way that can be compared across jurisdictions. However, any interpretation of the ratio will depend on assumptions about the relationship between the number of teaching staff and school outcomes. The development of better outcome indicators will help inform interpretation in the future.

Students per full time equivalent, nonteaching in-school staff

The ratio of students to full time equivalent, nonteaching in-school staff should be interpreted with care. It can be affected by the amount of administrative work undertaken by staff nominally classified as teaching staff (such as principals, assistant principals and senior teachers) and the proportion of administrative work undertaken outside the school (administrative tasks such as personnel management are centralised in some jurisdictions, but undertaken at the school level in others).

Systemwide, the ratio of students to nonteaching in-school staff in 1997 ranged from 37.7 in the NT to 66.4 in NSW (figure 2.71).

Figure 2.72 Student–nonteaching in-school staff ratios — all schools, 1997^a

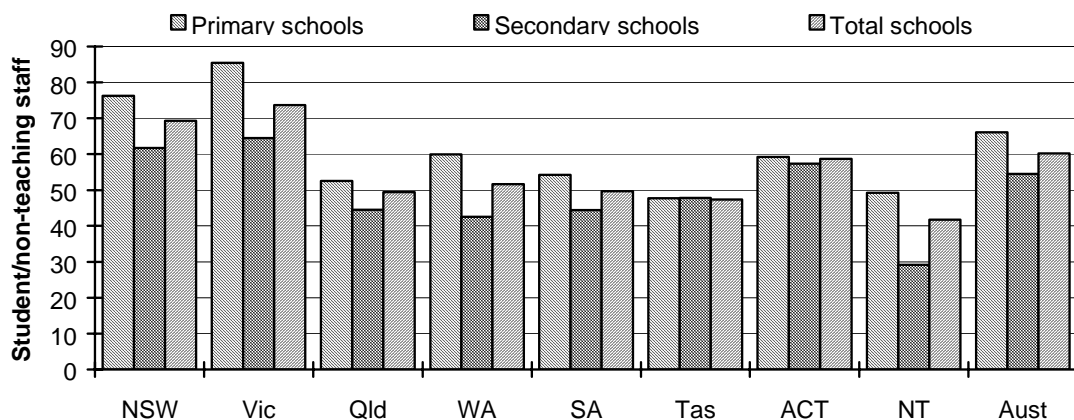


^a This table is not a measure of class size. It is the ratio of full time students to full time staff. ^b Teaching staff are defined as staff who spend the majority of their time in contact with students and have teaching duties. They include principals, deputy principals and senior teachers, who may be involved in administration. ^c All staff are defined as staff who usually spend the majority of their time engaged in duties at one or more schools (excluding cleaners and emergency and casual relief staff).

Data source: table 2A.5.

The ratio of students to nonteaching school staff in the government sector in 1997 ranged from 41.7 in the NT to 73.7 in Victoria (figure 2.73).

Figure 2.74 Students–nonteaching, in-school staff ratios — government schools, 1997^a



^a Full time students per full time equivalent nonteaching, in-school staff.

Data source: table 2A.5.

2.6 Jurisdictions' comments

This section provides comments from each jurisdiction on the services covered in this chapter. Appendix A contains detailed statistics and short profiles on each State and Territory, which may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this chapter. The information covers aspects such as age profile; geographic distribution of the population; income levels; education levels; tenure of dwellings; and cultural heritage (such as aboriginality and ethnicity).

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Commonwealth Government comments

A key objective for the Commonwealth in relation to schooling is to improve educational outcomes for all school students with particular emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills and successful transition from school to further education, training or employment. The Commonwealth is a strong advocate of reporting the outcomes of schooling, at all levels, and is involved in a range of activities to enhance reporting including the ongoing review of the Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling. This is expected to result in a revised set of goals during 1999 and the development of appropriate targets and indicators.

The first results of State-based assessments against nationally agreed benchmarks in literacy are expected to become available in early 1999. These will describe for all States and Territories the achievements of year 3 students against agreed benchmarks in reading, writing and spelling, with reporting against other benchmarks and for other year levels to follow.

This Report contains the first nationally available data on the social outcomes of schooling, obtained through a project conducted for the Annual National Report on Schooling in Australia (ANR) and supported financially by the Commonwealth. A recently concluded survey of Australian schools on the information technology skills of school students, also undertaken for the ANR, may provide relevant data for a future Report.

In the international arena, the Commonwealth is supporting Australian participation in several relevant studies. These include:

- a study on Civics education;
- a repeat of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study in respect of 13 year old students; and
- an OECD study of the achievements of 15 year old students in reading literacy, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy.

The Commonwealth has confirmed its strong commitment to improving the educational outcomes of indigenous students, including in the areas of literacy and numeracy as well as an accelerated effort to make the levels of educational outcomes for indigenous students similar to the levels achieved by other Australians.

In addition to involvement in the specific projects outlined above, the Commonwealth takes an active role in the work of the MCEETYA ANR Taskforce and the Taskforce on School Statistics, with a view to ensuring that outcomes measures are both consistent across States and Territories and can be reported for identified disadvantaged student groups as well as the total student population.

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New South Wales Government comments

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In 1997 there were 2221 government schools operating in NSW. Attending these schools were 764 173 students in total, a increase of 3135 since 1996. The creation of the Department of Education and Training in December 1997 is providing a smooth transition for students from school to further education, training and work.

The State Literacy Strategy, a comprehensive plan for integrating support for literacy teaching in government schools, was launched in 1997. The two areas of emphasis in this strategy were the middle years of schooling (years 5–8) and the early identification of reading difficulties. The government provided \$50 million in 1997 and \$60 million in 1998 to support literacy in the classroom.

The Reading Recovery program is a good example of how effective outcomes can be produced through the provision of additional resources at an early stage of schooling. Reading Recovery targets students in year 1 identified as the most in need of extra assistance with reading. Students are provided with one to one tutoring by a specially trained teacher in an individually designed program of instruction. This early intervention is highly effective, with 87 per cent of students going through the program requiring no further remedial literacy support. A total of \$50 million over four years has been provided for the Reading Recovery program.

In government schools literacy is tested through the Basic Skills Test for years 3 and 5. Analysis of the 1995 and 1997 results show that more than half of the year 3 students placed in the lowest band in 1995 moved to higher levels in 1997. The English Literacy and Language Assessment was piloted in 1997, with full cohort implementation in 1998. This involves testing the literacy skills of year 7 students. Most secondary schools took up the option of re-testing their year 8 students to continue monitoring literacy skills.

NSW is committed to providing the equipment and education needed to equip students for success in an increasingly technologically driven world. The implementation of the Computers in Schools program has provided quality curriculum, teaching and learning and support for students and teachers in government schools.

More than 22 000 computers were distributed to schools in 1997 in phase one of the Computers in Schools allocation. Phase two of the allocation provides a potential computer distribution of more than 33 000 computers for schools. Phase three will distribute an additional 22 000 computers to schools in early 1999, bringing the total allocation for government schools to 77 000.

The Department of Education and Training's priorities for the future include laying strong educational foundations in literacy and numeracy for students; enhancing the work of schools through professional development; building effective partnerships with parents, staff and students; and giving everyone a fair go through improved access to education and better outcomes for all students.

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Victorian Government comments

Young people are being provided with the experiences that give them the best chance for their future in a prosperous and globally competitive Victoria. All students need to be literate, numerate, adept at information technology and to have a strong knowledge base.

The Early Years Literacy and Numeracy initiatives provide a structured classroom program for students in the first two years of school, additional assistance for students with particular needs and professional development for teachers based on the best practice identified by research in Victoria and overseas.

The Learning Assessment Program (LAP) for years 3 and 5 has confirmed the quality outcomes in literacy and numeracy that are being achieved in Victorian schools. The Victorian Secondary Achievement Monitor (VSAM) is expected to confirm these results for years 7 and 9. In terms of outcomes of schooling, the age participation rate of Victorian 15–19 year olds in 1997 was higher than any other State at 54 per cent.

Review of the Victorian Certificate of Education has enhanced its capacity to encourage high levels of achievement for all students to equip them for work, further education and to participate in community life. Expansion of pathways from school to work and further education by the provision of accredited vocational education and training in schools has led to growth of participation in these programs by 15 per cent from 1997 to nearly 9000 students.

Victorian schools are widely recognised as leading Australia in the application of learning technologies and multimedia in support of education. Teacher training in learning technologies, availability of support materials in a range of media, and provision of infrastructure, including virtually universal linking by schools to Vic one, the whole of government wide area network, will ensure this leadership is maintained. The ratio of computers to students in primary schools is 1:8.4 and 1:5.4 in secondary schools, well on the way to achieving the government's target of 1:5 for all schools by 2000.

To enable school communities to respond more flexibly to the needs of their students, Schools of the Future have exercised increasing responsibility over their assets, staff and funding. The next stage of devolution will be the implementation of Self Governing schools, which will be given new powers to better manage their resources. This will strengthen the government school system by encouraging diversity and expanding links between schools and the community.

The delivery of government school education in Victoria is the most resource efficient in Australia. Commonwealth Grants Commission data indicate that the natural advantages Victoria has in this regard have been maximised by reduction of unproductive overheads, elimination of duplication and investment in information technology and shared services.

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Queensland Government comments

1997 saw Education Queensland consolidate the initiatives of recent years.

Technology

The \$84 million Schooling 2001 project was established, to build networks within schools, enhance hardware and educational software and support computer technicians and professional development of teachers.

The Connect-Ed project will link all departmental schools into the Education Queensland computer network and provide all schools with Internet access by December 1998. Communities in nonmetropolitan areas will also be able to benefit from the cheaper Internet access provided by the project.

Tracking student performance

For the third year running, all students in years 2 and 6 were assessed via the Year 2 Diagnostic Net and Year 6 Test. Teachers and principals now make use of the information provided by the tests to plan better services for students.

School-based management

Education Queensland's school based management program, Leading Schools, commenced. Given increased autonomy over their resources, the 304 participating schools reviewed and improved their services.

Accountability

A new School Planning and Accountability Framework was introduced, requiring schools to produce annual operational plans, with budget information for each school and annual reports. Two hundred and four schools produced annual reports to their communities in 1997-98.

Support for students

Additional support provided for students with disabilities included the appointment of an additional 60 specialist teachers. The Reading Recovery Program expanded its support to students with literacy difficulties identified by the Year 2 Diagnostic Net and proved highly successful.

New curricula

The number of vocational education subjects in senior secondary schools expanded considerably. Teachers and senior staff worked closely with the Queensland School Curriculum Council P-10 to develop new preschool guidelines and syllabuses for science and for health and physical education for years 1-10. The new syllabuses will be introduced in schools progressively from 1999.

Support for teachers

Education Queensland established the Centre for Teaching Excellence to coordinate professional development and training for teachers.

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Western Australian Government comments

WA occupies some 2.5 million square kilometres and agricultural, pastoral, mining, industrial and urban settlement patterns have historically required the provision of a large number of widely dispersed schools and relatively high per capita expenditures on the education of students in rural and remote areas.

In February 1998, 769 government schools provided comprehensive general education to 254 549 students, compared with 250 248 in February 1997. In the area of special provision education, there were 448 residential agricultural students, 1283 students of the Schools of Isolated and Distance Education, 2395 students at education support schools and centres, and 3923 students at senior colleges.

Expenditure on government schools in 1997-98 included \$1.194 billion from the State Government and \$164 million from the Commonwealth.

The number of education districts was reduced from 29 to 16: four metropolitan, ten country and two outer metropolitan. The replacement of district superintendents by district directors signalled an enhanced role for the new districts. The central office became smaller and more focused on strategic planning; the development of policy, guidelines and standards; resource deployment; the provision of professional leadership; quality assurance; and strategic initiatives and projects. Some central functions ceased and others were transferred to district offices.

Every government school was funded for the acquisition of an additional computer with Internet access and in mid-1998, 96 per cent of schools could obtain Internet access. A program to establish computer–student ratios of 1:10 in primary schools and 1:5 in secondary schools commenced. Virtually all schools had been connected to the electronic wide-area network EdNet by the end of 1998. EdNet provides schools with access to an e-mail facility, followed by access to the PeopleSoft decentralised human resources management system. In the longer term, EdNet will enable the electronic delivery of a wide range of curriculum and management services.

The Monitoring Standards in Education testing program evaluated the performance of samples of students in years 3, 7 and 10 in science, reading and writing, and the performance of all year 3 students in reading and writing was measured in terms of the national benchmarks for reporting to parents and individual schools at the end of 1998.

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South Australian Government comments

The Department of Education, Training and Employment was formed in October 1997, bringing together the former Departments of Education and Children's Services, and Employment, Training and Further Education. The formation has enabled the Department to plan for the effective and efficient provision and integration of services across schooling, children's services, vocational education and training, employment and youth.

In 1997, government schools in SA provided education to the full time equivalent of 179 322 students in 641 schools. SA has a high proportion of part time students and this must be taken into account when interpreting data in this report. Part time enrolments are particularly significant in the senior secondary years; in 1997 there were 2390 part-time students in year 12, representing 25.3 per cent of all government year 12 students.

Foundations for the Future, a declaration for SA public education and children's services, was launched in 1997. The product of a comprehensive consultative process spanning several years, the document makes explicit the core values underpinning public education and children's services. It identifies the key principles on which the department operates and sets out five strategic directions essential for preparing SA's young people for a successful future.

The Department of Education, Training and Employment is committed to raising standards, monitoring and reporting progress and improving outcomes for all students. The Early Years Strategy, a richly resourced state government initiative, maintains a rigorous focus on literacy and numeracy in the vital early years of schooling with extensive support materials, training and development and significant additional funding for students with learning difficulties. The Basic Skills Tests are in their fourth year and each year student achievement data is collected against the profiles in four of the eight learning areas. The data is used to chart students' progress, ascertain the effectiveness of programs, establish students' performance against the state profile and provide informative reports to parents.

Other major initiatives included the implementation of a five-year technology strategy to integrate information technology into the curriculum, provide appropriate training and development for teachers and significantly increase the levels of technology in schools with the aim of achieving a ratio of 1:5 computers per student by 2001; a three year, \$8.8 million program to build on the already extensive vocational education and work preparation in schools; and preparation of a plan to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of Aboriginal students.

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Tasmanian Government comments

In recent years one of the most significant developments in Tasmanian school education has been an increasing emphasis on an outcomes based approach. This in turn has led to the accumulation of a significant amount of student learning achievement data at both system level and at school level.

At system level Tasmania has changed from its previous practice of collecting literacy and numeracy data for 10 year olds and 14 year olds to a process of collecting literacy and numeracy data for students in each of grades 3, 5, 7 and 9. In the past the data was collected on one cohort and one learning area each year. This meant each set of results was collected once every four years. The new arrangements which are currently being phased in will collect both literacy and numeracy data in all four year groups every second year. Not only will this allow national reporting of benchmark data, but it will also allow longitudinal studies of individual students and schools. It will also result in the development of 'value added' comparative data.

At the school level all Tasmanian Government schools are involved in a process of Assisted School Self Review in a three year cycle. During the review a whole range of school performance data are collected and analysed. The outcome of this is the formulation of a partnership agreement between each school and its community which sets out the priorities to be addressed and the targets to be achieved for the next three years. Each year thereafter the school produces an annual report in which it describes progress towards the achievement of the targets in the partnership agreements.

Another significant development in Tasmanian education has been an increasingly interventionist approach in early childhood years. This approach has been the basis of the Flying Start program which involves early diagnosis and intervention in literacy, numeracy and social skills. The program is being monitored and evaluated and data on student performance in numeracy, reading and behaviour have already been published as well as a formal evaluation of parent responses to the Flying Start program.

School education in Tasmania is also greatly concerned about the progress of indigenous students in schools. During 1998 the Department published a report showing relative achievements of indigenous and non-indigenous students on a wide range of student outcomes in behaviour, literacy, numeracy, school leaving results, attendance, retention and grade progression. The progress of indigenous students is being monitored over time and initiatives put in place in accordance with the IESIP Funding Agreement.

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Australian Capital Territory Government comments

The ACT has a unique demographic, social and economic profile owing to its role as the seat of federal government and as a provider of regional services across a state border. This poses challenges to the ACT in the provision of education services.

The ACT has the highest proportion of its population aged 15–64 years, the second highest rate of growth of the population aged 70 and over, and the highest proportion of population born in non-English speaking countries. It also has the highest retention of students to year 12 and the largest proportion of students attending non-government schools.

A notable achievement in 1998 was the release of the *ACT Government Schools Plan 1998–2000: Partnerships for Excellence*. The plan supports the vision of Canberra as the clever, caring capital of Australia. It emphasises community partnerships with parents, school boards, local businesses, community and environment groups, sporting associations and the general community.

The ACT Literacy Strategy was release in 1998 to improve learning outcomes. Implementation of the ACT Literacy Assessment Program continued. It involves system wide literacy and numeracy assessment. Results for literacy in years 3 and 5 were released in 1998. In 1999 the program will include both literacy and numeracy assessment for years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Assessment and reporting will be done against national benchmarks.

To complement the Government commitment to making Canberra a leader in information technology, a package was introduced for improving the provision of computers in government schools. Around 2000 computers were provided for students and teachers during 1998. By the end of 1999 it is anticipated that 95 per cent of all permanent teachers will have a Pentium computer dedicated to the ACT Government Wide Area Network. School Based Management funding includes grants to schools of between \$10 000 and \$30 000 for information technology related activities. A new administration system is being introduced to improve school administration and student data collection.

Financial and administrative reforms are having a positive effect within ACT government schooling. They include adoption of accrual accounting and outputs budgeting and development of a benchmarking framework. These initiatives build on improved performance achieved through enhanced school based management implemented in 1997.

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Northern Territory Government comments

The statistical data for the NT must be interpreted with great care and any attempt to draw comparisons with other states and the ACT must take the following factors into account.

In 1997, the NT recorded 28 388 full time equivalent enrolments in government schools and 8206 in non-government schools. The NT continued to have the highest proportion of government schools enrolment in Australia. Non-government enrolments increased significantly in line with NT Government policy.

The geography of the NT presents very significant distance and isolation disadvantages. The NT has a population density of 0.1 persons per square kilometre compared with 2.4 persons per square kilometre nationally. Many small centres are accessible only by air or sea and are often not accessible at all during the wet season.

It is important to note that 54.8 per cent of NT schools and 26.8 per cent of students are located in remote areas — many of these are in the most isolated centres in Australia. Education services are provided to a diverse multi-cultural and multi-lingual population. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students make up about 35 per cent of the total student population. In other jurisdictions the proportion is between 1 per cent and 3 per cent. Over 70 per cent of school aged indigenous people have English as a second or third language and, for many, English is not in common use in their homes or communities. Many also suffer a significant degree of economic disadvantage.

While the NT welcomes the shift from input to outcome based reporting, readers should be made aware of the cost differentials applying in improving the literacy and numeracy of students with very low socioeconomic status and traditional lifestyles, together with their differing language proficiency levels and geographic locations.

The Territory and Commonwealth Governments provide significant funding for the delivery of education, health and community service programs to indigenous people, particularly in remote areas. In spite of this, many NT indigenous school aged children experience a range of living condition disadvantages which set them apart from other Australians. A high percentage of these children suffer from hearing and sight impairment and other health problems which inhibit educational participation and achievement. A high percentage live in housing conditions which are well below the standard for other Australian children. This is particularly so in the case of indigenous children in remote areas as opposed to those living in urban centres.

The factors noted above significantly influence all aspects of school education in the NT, being reflected, for example, in higher unit costs and lower student–teacher and student–nonteacher ratios.

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